



OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER
HON MARK BROWN
GOVERNMENT OF THE COOK ISLANDS

Honourable Mark Brown address at the
World Oceans Day Event 2022

8 JUNE 2022

Kia Orana and Greetings to you all as we celebrate World Oceans Day.

A day which allows us to come together and reaffirm our commitment to protecting our ocean, not just for today, but also for tomorrow – for our children and grandchildren.

We are blessed with an Exclusive Economic Zone of around 2 million square kilometers – our Moana Nui O Kiva – our Marae Moana.

The oceans cover about 70% of the earth's surface. Here in the Cook Islands, our country, our ocean takes up 99.99% of our country. We truly are an Ocean state.

As people of the ocean – we care for our Marae Moana and we take our role as Ocean Stewards very seriously.

Our ocean connects, it sustains, and supports us all. However our oceans health is at a tipping point. Around the world, our oceans are becoming more

acidic due to climate change, there is plastic pollution everywhere – putting marine biodiversity and essential food chains in jeopardy.

It is only fitting then, that this year's theme is 'Revitalization: Collective Action for the Ocean'.

We as a community, across all oceans and seas – must work together to ensure balance with the ocean, to restore its vibrancy and bring it new life.

I am proud to acknowledge that in the Pacific, our leaders have long held a commitment to working together to protect our Pacific ocean in a manner that resonates with our unique vulnerabilities, our cultures and our traditions, our social, economic and environmental landscape.

Here in the Cook Islands, we understand the vital importance of our ocean space to our security, our prosperity, and indeed to our very survival. But such is the complexity of the challenges we're confronted with, we must act now and we must act collectively.

Over a decade ago, the Cook Islands embarked on a journey to create an Oceans Governance framework that would provide long-term, intergenerational benefit and security for our people and by extension, our Pacific.

This framework drew upon the oceans management practices and wisdom of our ancestors, and the best available science, allowing us to strike a balance between our economic interests and conservation ambitions. It is science that has empowered us and science that must continue to inform our oceans management approaches into the future.

I refer here of course to our Cook Islands multi-use marine park, our Marae Moana, which covers our entire Exclusive Economic Zone.

Importantly, our Marae Moana brings together all the sectors of our society so that we are taking action collectively. Our government, the aronga mana, religious leaders, civil society, the business community and our people all have an important role to play in our Marae Moana.

We have progressed far in terms of our whole-of-society approach to managing our Marae Moana. We have established robust legal frameworks that align with our high environmental, social and cultural values. We have taken decisive steps for how we as a people intend to live, and what we can offer future generations so that their opportunities know no bounds – This is our vision of providing solutions, now.

Today's celebration of World Oceans Day is yet another reflection of our collective action. Today I see our government agencies, civil society and private sector all here together in acknowledgement of the importance of our ocean.

Our government agencies here today are just some of those working in the ocean space, from securing the best outcomes for us in terms of fisheries, climate finance, shipping, and seabed minerals, to combatting biodiversity decline, pollution, and climate change.

I want to also acknowledge our stakeholders across the private sector and civil society who have consistently contributed to the health of our Ocean. To name a few:

- Our Aronga Mana, who are a wealth of Traditional Ecological Knowledge
- Our Environmental NGOs, who play a role in bringing awareness to ocean issues, including on waste management, invasive species control, and youth empowerment.

- Our Tourism operators, who provide tourists with safe and environmentally friendly ways to enjoy our lagoons, reefs, and fish.
- There are many others operating in our ocean space. One of those key stakeholders is you, our people. Thank you for doing your part to look after our oceans – whether it is something as small as cleaning up our beaches of litter – every bit counts.

At this point, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge a champion of environmental conservation – Joseph Brider – who recently and unexpectedly passed away.

Joseph was the Director of the Cook Islands Natural Heritage Trust, as well as a former Director of National Environment Service. He had a true curiosity for understanding the wonders of our environment that we live in – and generously shared his wealth of knowledge with others. His passing is a huge loss to the Cook Islands, and to the Pacific region.

Joseph will be truly missed by us all. My thoughts and well wishes go to his family and loved ones.

If I may end with some concluding remarks.

Much has been done, and there is much still to be done.

I am confident that our Ocean will continue to sustain our lives and livelihoods, so long as we continue to protect and sustainably use our Marae Moana.

Meitaki e Kia Manuia.

Word count: 5220

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