

PREPARATORY MEETING FOR THE OCEAN CONFERENCE: OUR OCEANS, OUR FUTURE: PARTNERING FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 14: 15-16 FEBRUARY 2017

The Preparatory Meeting for the Ocean Conference: Our Oceans, Our Future: Partnering for the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development) convened at UN Headquarters in New York, from 15-16 February 2017, with side events taking place from 14-16 February. The Ocean Conference will take place in New York, from 5-9 June 2017.

The meeting considered the themes for seven partnership dialogues that will convene during the Ocean Conference, based on proposals contained in a background note prepared by the UN Secretary-General. At the end of the meeting, the co-facilitators indicated their intention to convey to UN General Assembly President Peter Thomson that participants had expressed broad support for most of the themes, but suggested changing the theme that refers to international law to more closely reflect Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 14.c.

The meeting also included a lengthy exchange of views on elements for the “Call for Action” that will result from the June Conference. Before closing the meeting, the co-facilitators highlighted the importance of listening to each other at this early stage, and noted commonality among the highlighted elements, including the importance of a concise, action-oriented declaration that is easy to understand by the public and captures a common vision for action on SDG 14. The co-facilitators plan to produce a zero draft of the “Call for Action” by early March, and to convene consultations beginning on 7 March 2017.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE OCEAN CONFERENCE

In September 2015, Heads of State and Government adopted “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” The core of the 2030 Agenda is the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Among these goals is SDG 14: “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.” SDG 14 contains ten targets, addressing: marine pollution; marine and coastal ecosystems; ocean acidification; overfishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and destructive fishing practices; conservation; harmful fisheries subsidies; economic

benefits for small island developing states (SIDS) and least developed countries (LDCs); and, as means of implementation, increasing scientific knowledge, market access for small-scale artisanal fishers, and implementing international law, among others.

In December 2015, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted resolution 70/226, which decided to convene a high-level UN conference to support the implementation of SDG 14 (the Ocean Conference), in Fiji. However, the venue was reconsidered “in view of the exceptional circumstances” related to the impacts of Tropical Cyclone Winston, which struck Fiji in February 2016. So on 9 September 2016 Member States, in UNGA resolution 70/303, agreed to hold the Conference at UN Headquarters in New York from 5-9 June 2017. They also agreed that Fiji and Sweden will continue to serve as co-hosts.

By the same resolution, the UNGA decided that the conference will adopt: a concise, focused, intergovernmentally-agreed declaration in the form of a “Call for Action” to support the implementation of SDG 14; a report containing the conference co-chairs’ summaries of the partnership dialogues; and a list of voluntary commitments for the implementation of SDG 14, to be announced at the conference. It also agreed that the conference will include: eight plenary meetings; a special event commemorating World Oceans Day; and seven partnership dialogues. The partnership dialogues are to take place in parallel with the plenary meetings, to be interactive and multi-stakeholder in nature, and to focus on recommendations to support the implementation of SDG 14.

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Resolution 70/303 also requested the President to convene a two-day preparatory meeting for the conference in February 2017. The UN Secretary-General was requested to prepare a background note ahead of the preparatory meeting, including a proposal of themes for the partnership dialogues. The note proposes seven themes for partnership dialogues for the conference, as follows:

- Theme 1: Addressing marine pollution. This theme would address target 14.1.
- Theme 2: Managing, protecting, conserving and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems. This theme would address targets 14.2 and 14.5.
- Theme 3: Minimizing and addressing ocean acidification. This theme would address target 14.3.
- Theme 4: Making fisheries sustainable. This theme would address targets 14.4 and 14.6.
- Theme 5: Increasing economic benefits to SIDS and LDCs and providing access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets. This theme would address targets 14.7 and 14.b.
- Theme 6: Increasing scientific knowledge, and developing research capacity and transfer of marine technology. This theme would address target 14.a.
- Theme 7: Implementing international law, as reflected in UNCLOS. This theme would address target 14.c.

On 24 October 2016, the President of the UN General Assembly, Peter Thomson, announced that he had appointed two co-facilitators to oversee the preparatory process and to conclude the intergovernmental consultations on a “Call for Action” by May 2017: Álvaro Mendonça e Moura, Permanent Representative of Portugal, and Burhan Gafoor, Permanent Representative of Singapore.

REPORT OF THE MEETING

On Wednesday, 15 February 2017, the Preparatory Meeting for the Ocean Conference: Our Oceans, Our Future: Partnering for the Implementation of SDG 14 was opened by Co-Facilitator Álvaro Mendonça e Moura, Permanent Representative of Portugal. Noting that the process will pave the way for effective implementation of SDG 14, Moura said a successful Ocean Conference depends on active contributions from all stakeholders, including ministries, intergovernmental organizations, and UN agencies.

Co-Facilitator Burhan Gafoor, Permanent Representative of Singapore, highlighted the process’s strong foundation within the 2030 Agenda. He said a plan for successful implementation of SDG 14 should be concrete, action-oriented and could be built upon the Paris Agreement on climate change, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.

President of the UN General Assembly Peter Thomson declared “we have got momentum,” noting the many registered observers and side events taking place during the meeting, and that countries, agencies and organizations everywhere are discussing the aims of SDG 14. Reporting that we dump one “garbage truck’s worth” of plastic into the ocean every minute, he said SDG 14 is “humanity’s solution to the problems we have created for oceans.” Thomson highlighted the compilation of voluntary commitments that will result from the conference, which he said will represent “humanity’s best efforts” to implement SDG 14.

Isabella Lövin, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for International Development Cooperation and Climate, Sweden, said that without changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, the prospects for fulfilling international commitments are “grim and uncertain.” She underscored the need for business, civil society and academia to actively engage in implementation and for their broad participation leading up to and at the conference in order to develop sustainable solutions.

Semi Koroilavesau, Minister for Fisheries of Fiji, noted that the Conference was created to “provide a home” for SDG 14, which he said is an “orphan” with regard to fora dedicated to its follow-up and review. He encouraged delegates to reach early agreement on the seven themes of the partnerships dialogues, so that the co-chairs of each dialogue can be appointed in a timely manner.

Wu Hongbo, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and Secretary-General of the Conference, said the conference must be “a conference of solutions and a conference of partnerships.” He noted that the online registry of voluntary commitments, which was launched in a side event also on 15 February, will underscore the urgency of the need to find solutions to ocean-related challenges.

Stephen Mathias, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Legal Affairs, speaking on behalf of the Legal Counsel and Special Advisor to the co-hosts of the conference on oceans and legal matters, called for enhancing the implementation of commitments made within existing legal instruments through: raising awareness and enhancing cross-sectoral collaboration on commitments; increasing scientific research and dissemination; and enhancing the financing of oceans initiatives and developing the capacity of Member States to implement them.

DISCUSSION ON THE THEMES FOR THE PARTNERSHIP DIALOGUES

Co-facilitator Gafoor introduced the discussion on the themes for the partnership dialogues and invited comments on the seven possible themes presented in the Secretary-General’s Background Note. He said the possible themes are a “means to an end” and aim to facilitate the substantive partnership dialogues at the June conference.

Ecuador, for the Group of 77 and China (G-77/China), supported the themes, which he said portray convergence and comprehensively address the ten SDG 14 targets. However, he called for Theme 7 (“Implementing international law, as reflected in UNCLOS. This theme would address target 14.c.”) to be more specific by including “enhanced conservation and sustainable use of oceans by implementing international law as reflected in UNCLOS,” which reflects the language of SDG target 14.c.

Supporting the proposed themes, the European Union (EU) said cross-cutting themes need to be considered, including regional dimensions of implementing SDG 14, linkages with other SDG targets, UNCLOS, the role of oceans within climate change, and issues of governance and effectiveness. He suggested conducting a gap assessment in the lead-up to the dialogues, on the effectiveness of existing partnerships.

Maldives, for the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), expressed satisfaction with the proposed themes and especially welcomed the SIDS emphasis found in Theme 5 (“Increasing economic benefits to SIDS and LDCs and providing access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets. This theme would address targets 14.7 and 14.b.”). She noted,

however, that links to SIDS should be highlighted in all of the other themes as well. She also cautioned against renegotiating the SDG targets “implicitly or explicitly.”

Bangladesh, for the LDCs, noted that, with regard to Theme 7 (international law), 46 of the 48 LDCs are states party to UNCLOS. He said that while Theme 5 (SIDS, LDCs, small-scale artisanal fishers) is aimed at addressing the two LDC-specific targets, LDCs’ issues are cross-cutting and should be addressed, as appropriate, under other themes. He looked forward to having the voices of LDCs heard in all of the dialogues, as well as in the concept papers and the co-chairs’ summaries, and encouraged experts from LDCs to be included among the moderators and panelists of the partnership dialogues. He also called for national consultations leading up to the June conference.

Belize, for the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), underscored the need for the “special case” of SIDS to be treated in a cross-cutting manner. On the preparation of the concept papers, she asked for an indicative timeline for the collection of stakeholders’ submissions, to enable all regional stakeholders to provide input. She also called for contributions to the voluntary trust fund to support conference preparations and the participation of developing country representatives.

Nauru, for the Pacific small island developing states (PSIDS), said the proposed themes capture the key priorities for discussion, which must address: marine pollution; managing, protecting, conserving and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems; minimizing and addressing acidification and other impacts of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions; making fisheries sustainable; and increasing economic benefits to SIDS and LDCs, and providing access to marine resources and markets for small-scale artisanal fishers.

The Federated States of Micronesia, for the Pacific Island Forum (PIF), said the themes are well-crafted and relevant to the ten targets of SDG 14, while providing a good way to discuss partnerships for their implementation. PIF expressed support for a triennial cycle of conferences to continue tracking and advancing implementation and follow-up.

Zambia, for the Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), said the sustainability of seas and oceans is a shared heritage of all mankind, whether or not a country has direct access to the sea. He said the themes should reflect the need to build capacity and achieve technology transfer in developing countries, including in LLDCs. He also noted that more than half of LLDCs are states party to UNCLOS, which gives rights to landlocked states to utilize oceans, seas and maritime resources. He described stakeholder involvement and participation as critical to realizing SDG 14.

Supporting the proposed themes, Monaco noted that Theme 3 (“Minimizing and addressing ocean acidification. This theme would address target 14.3.”) addresses ocean acidification, which she said is a result of climate change, and noted that neither SDG 14 nor the dialogue themes directly reference climate change.

The Netherlands stressed the need for the dialogues to address sustainable tourism and community outreach, particularly with coastal communities. He said aquaculture should be included in either Theme 4 (“Making fisheries sustainable. This theme would address targets 14.4 and 14.6.”) or Theme 5 (SIDS, LDCs, small-scale artisanal fishers).

China proposed amending Theme 7 (international law) to use wording from SDG target 14.c: “Enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in UNCLOS.”

Indonesia called for an “update” of Theme 4 (sustainable fisheries) to fully reflect the language of SDG targets 14.4 and 14.6.

Peru said the themes should not cover only the SDG 14 targets, but also other relevant SDG targets, such as the SDG 12 target on sustainable consumption and production.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) stressed the need to curb plastic pollution and highlighted the Blue Carbon Initiative.

Iceland said UNCLOS is the framework within which all ocean-related activities must be carried out.

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) called for an enhanced focus on the link between oceans and climate change.

Costa Rica stressed the importance of Theme 2 (“Managing, protecting, conserving and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems. This theme would address targets 14.2 and 14.5”). In relation to Theme 7 (international law), he recalled that no legally binding instrument currently exists on ocean acidification, or on protecting biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction (BBNJ), and appealed to governments to take action to achieve these.

Recalling Pope Francis’s 2015 encyclical, “*Laudato si’*,” which addresses the urgent need to protect the planet, the Holy See urged that partnerships include faith-based communities and other civic organizations, which reliably foster better care of oceans, seas and resources.

India said the proposed themes broadly cover the needed areas for discussion and pertain to important concerns contained in SDG 14. He noted that efforts to “green the blue economy” are in the collective interest.

The Scientific and Technological Community Major Group, represented by Future Earth and the International Council for Science, said that in a time when facts increasingly are being questioned, strong partnerships between scientific and technological communities and all other parts of society are all the more important. He announced that Future Earth will launch a multi-stakeholder platform called the Ocean Knowledge Action Network to catalyze research and networks.

Expressing commitment to the SDG 14 targets, Canada shared its domestic priority to protect 10% of marine and coastal areas, 5% of which is prioritized before the end of 2017, and called for an increase in science-based decisions influencing fisheries management, noting this relates to Theme 4 (sustainable fisheries).

Brazil said discussions held on each topic should inform the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF).

Tonga noted that the seven themes address key national interests. He welcomed further discussion on: expanding scientific knowledge technology and resources; addressing IUU fishing, and the concept of a blue economy.

Cabo Verde supported the proposed themes, noting that the dialogues should address the needs of the seas beyond fisheries. He called for follow-up and monitoring mechanisms to ensure the implementation of SDG 14.

France stated that the thematic dialogues do not exhaust certain cross-cutting elements, including climate change and blue economy activities, particularly aquaculture and sustainable tourism.

Noting that UNCLOS is the “bedrock for implementing SDG 14,” Morocco noted that a domestic law passed in June 2016 prohibits the manufacturing of plastics, citing it as an example of implementing SDG 14.

Honduras noted that: solid waste from land should be considered in Theme 1 (marine pollution); cooperation between states is crucial to the implementation of SDG targets 14.2 and 14.5; and underwater cultural heritage should be considered within Theme 4 (sustainable fisheries).

Venezuela recalled its reservation to SDG target 14.c, and said Theme 7 (international law) should both quote SDG target 14.c and also include “other relevant instruments,” so as to complement UNCLOS with “anthropogenic activities taking place outside of the ocean,” including the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

Russia cautioned against prejudging the negotiations on a legally binding instrument on BBNJ. He added that the conference’s added value will come from generating new partnerships with different stakeholders.

Germany called for discussion on a number of cross-cutting issues, including: governance structures; the follow-up and review of commitments; capacity building and financing. He asked whether these issues will be addressed by each of the dialogues, or if a dedicated dialogue is needed on cross-cutting issues.

Nepal said oceans’ broad ecosystem includes mountains, because of the interdependence between them. He proposed that Theme 2 (marine and coastal ecosystems) refer to “wider” ecosystems.

Norway called for addressing cross-cutting issues such as capacity building and technology transfer, and noted that UNCLOS provides the legal framework for all ocean-related activities, including IUU fishing.

Fiji expressed support for the seven themes.

Turkey said Theme 7 (international law) should either be more specific regarding conservation or merged with Theme 2, which addresses conservation and sustainable use.

The US expressed concern that several stakeholders had been excluded from the meeting, and that the accreditation system allows a single Member State to block a stakeholder’s participation without public explanation. She said the SDGs cannot be achieved without the robust engagement of all stakeholders, and expressed her hope that the Conference will be completely open to all interested stakeholders.

Japan stressed the importance of Theme 1 (marine pollution), since 80% of marine pollution originates from land-based sources, and said his country will make a voluntary contribution to the Conference trust fund.

Italy said ocean-related problems are never only local or single-sector. He called for using the agreed language in the 2030 Agenda in the conference process, in support of those states that have already engaged in SDG 14 implementation activities.

Sierra Leone suggested steps to engender capacity building for LDCs and SIDS through technical support for waste generation systems, including incineration facilities. He said the conference should emphasize utilizing and applying UNCLOS and other relevant international instruments.

Australia stressed the importance of Theme 4 (sustainable fisheries) and the “full and robust” participation of all stakeholders.

Timor Leste also underlined the importance of Theme 4, and said the process should be based on UNCLOS and the 2030 Agenda.

Mauritius highlighted SDG targets 14.7, 14.a and 14.b as critically important for SIDS and said sustainable fisheries should be addressed as in UNCLOS.

The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and its Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) announced that it will put forward a number of commitments, including on ocean acidification and capacity building.

The World Bank called for bringing blue economy into the discussions.

UN Environment (UNEP) proposed two new themes, one on the regional ocean partnership and one on land-based sources of marine pollution.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) said a blue economy would help SIDS and LDCs create jobs and improve their livelihoods.

The World Ocean Council, speaking on behalf of the Global Business Alliance 2030, called for including industry in all partnership dialogues.

Deep Ocean Stewardship noted that the deep ocean and high seas cover two thirds of the world and play a critical role in climate change and marine biodiversity. She proposed that Theme 6 (science, research and marine technology transfer) and Theme 7 (international law) include deep ocean observation, research and geospatial planning.

The NGO Major Group expressed concern that within the global framework of SDG indicators, most of SDG 14 indicators are classified as “Tier 3,” reflecting lack of data collection and methodological agreement. She stressed the need for an inclusive and transparent process for the Ocean Conference.

The Science and Technological Community noted the need to include geospatial data in the partnership dialogues.

DISCUSSION ON ELEMENTS OF THE CALL FOR ACTION

On Wednesday afternoon, Moura opened the discussion on elements for the “Call for Action” to be adopted at the conference, and encouraged participants to reflect on priorities for the declaration.

The G-77/China agreed that the “Call for Action” should be concise, focused and intergovernmentally agreed. He noted the importance of maintaining political momentum for the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda in a balanced and integrated manner, and enhancing support for developing countries. He said the outcome document should address partnerships at the national, regional, and international levels, and provide input to the HLPF.

Noting that ocean problems are “interrelated and must be considered as whole,” the EU said the “Call for Action” should: be short, concise, with concrete actions; relate to SDG 14 and other relevant targets, while recognizing the integrity and indivisibility of the 2030 Agenda; and make use of integrative management and decision-making tools. He stressed that the declaration should urge Member States to honor commitments under the 2030 Agenda to swiftly conclude a WTO agreement on the prohibition of harmful fisheries subsidies and recognize the importance of a “well-managed” blue economy. He further supported the development of a new instrument under UNCLOS for sustainable use of BBNJ.

Maldives, for AOSIS, said the SDGs are to be nationally implemented. The “Call for Action,” he said, must reflect: the need for capacity building and technology transfer to SIDS, including on data to support reporting on SDG 14 and the 2030 Agenda; the need for sufficient means of implementation (MOI) to achieve SDG 14 targets; a call to enhance investment in

science and research to better understand the state of oceans; and a call for sustained and predictable support and measures that aim to enhance ocean resilience.

Nauru, for PSIDS, said MOI must be the center of the “Call for Action.” On specific elements for the declaration, she said PSIDS would support: a global strategy to phase out single-use plastics; establishing effective marine protected areas (MPAs) that are science-based and account for local settings and knowledge; a call for a timely, comprehensive conclusion to the BBNJ preparatory committee and convening a time-bound intergovernmental conference by the 73rd session of the UNGA; and the need for modern tools for fisheries management and for depriving IUU fishing offenders of benefits.

Belize, for CARICOM, noted that of SDG 14’s ten targets, four are to be met by 2020, in three years, so the “Call for Action” must convey a sense of urgency. She suggested that the declaration reaffirm a commitment to integrate SDG 14 into relevant national development plans and address support for strengthening data capacity. Regarding the regional and international levels, she proposed highlighting cooperation in monitoring the oceans-related targets and indicators, and said that existing bodies, networks and NGOs could be rationalized, connected and strengthened to provide a governance framework for SDG 14.

Zambia, for the LLDCs, said the “Call for Action” should include support for developing countries, including LLDCs, since technology transfer and capacity building are necessary for LLDCs too.

Vanuatu proposed including in the “Call for Action” a call for: eliminating all subsidies for fisheries; banning the use of micro-plastics; and accelerated ratification of the Paris Agreement.

Tonga called for creating a genuine multi-stakeholder platform for collaboration in advancing SDG 14 implementation. He proposed including a call for implementing waste-management and reduction programmes, the “polluter pays” principle, and an ecosystem-based approach.

The Holy See said the “Call for Action” should emphasize a call for intergenerational solidarity, and appeal to the international community to create a more unified and harmonized system of global governance for oceans.

Australia announced a US\$50,000 contribution to the voluntary trust fund for the conference to support SIDS participation. She said the “Call for Action” should complement rather than undermine other UN processes, such as the BBNJ negotiations and the UN Fish Stocks Agreement. She emphasized the centrality of law, “particularly UNCLOS, with regards to ocean governance, which must remain the foundation of our efforts.”

Canada stressed the need for strong and scientifically sound indicators for SDG 14, and called for integrating the gender dimension in the “Call for Action” to highlight women’s participation in SDG 14 implementation.

France said the “Call for Action” should mark the transition to a blue economy, which should be a maritime economy that takes into consideration sustainable development, and address marine debris and plastic waste, among other issues.

Noting the value of existing mechanisms, Mexico said the “Call for Action” should achieve synergies throughout various bodies and processes. It should also not be limited to the legal framework of ocean activities as regulated under UNCLOS, but also take into account other existing mechanisms, added

Mexico, noting decisions taken at the Convention on Biological Diversity’s 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CBD COP13) related to fishing and tourism.

Peru said the conference should mobilize the international community to change consumption and production patterns, citing current levels of marine pollution. He suggested that a multilateral legal agreement similar to that of the Montreal Protocol could address this.

Germany stressed the need to focus on strategic and procedural structures to address the “who” and “how,” rather than the “what” of effective implementation. He said the “Call for Action” should address the governance of SDG 14, and proposed: establishing new partnerships for regional ocean governance; preparing a streamlined global assessment (thematic review) on oceans; and developing a systematic approach to follow up on commitments.

Brazil noted the need to develop legal frameworks. He said a universal regime on BBNJ consistent with UNCLOS aims to address marine environment conservation and access to sustainable use in a way that “benefits all states and peoples,” and that the BBNJ process should be referenced in the declaration.

The Netherlands said all actions in the “Call for Action” should fall within UNCLOS, and reiterated the Convention’s universal character, describing it as the strategic basis for all cooperation in the marine sector. He highlighted: initiatives to address land-based sources of marine pollution, especially plastics; reducing emissions from shipping; the value of regional cooperation among SIDS; and the role of regional efforts to manage marine and coastal ecosystems, such as the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR). He also: supported Canada’s call to account for gender; expressed support for actions that involve local coastal communities; called for building on existing partnerships, scaling up what is working, and boosting innovative ways to secure financing.

Argentina said UNCLOS is a binding legal framework, including for non-state parties, per customary law. He said scientific knowledge is vital for conservation and managing natural resources. He called for enhancing cooperation for capacity building and technology transfer for developing countries, and highlighted the need to reduce marine pollution, combat IUU fishing, and raise awareness of the hazards of fishing subsidies, which distort global fishing markets.

Norway said the “Call for Action” should reiterate the equal importance of all 17 SDGs, while noting the “life-or-death stakes” of ocean health. Plastics and micro-plastics will be a priority for Norway at the conference, he said. He added that the declaration must reflect “in no ambiguous terms” that the multi-stakeholder approach is the conference’s real added value. He called for a focus on implementing existing legal frameworks, especially UNCLOS, and cautioned against re-litigating issues from other fora.

Cabo Verde, referring to SIDS as “sea-locked states,” noted that the ocean regulates the entire planet’s climate and temperature, and said the “Call for Action” should address: ocean health as a driver of economic growth, MOI, data collection, and follow-up and review of the partnerships to be announced at the conference.

India suggested that the “Call for Action” provide guidance on facilitating international cooperation on the SDG targets, and to address some of the constraints to effectively implementing the existing legal and normative frameworks on oceans, seas and marine resources.

Iceland said the “Call for Action” should not renegotiate prior agreements or resolutions, and it should recognize the central role of the HLPF in the implementation, follow-up and review of SDG 14, as well as of the UN’s oceans-related departments, agencies and processes. He stressed the importance of capacity building, which includes the effective implementation of UNCLOS, and for which partnerships are needed.

China said the “Call for Action” should be based on the principles of state ownership, independence, and voluntarism, and said countries will implement SDG 14 independently. He further proposed including references to the blue economy and to the Maritime Silk Road.

Mauritius stressed the need for capacity building, affordable and accessible technology through technology transfer, and additional financial support for SIDS. He said the development of a SIDS Global Fund would be vital.

Iran underscored the importance of transitioning to sustainable consumption and production and for the “Call for Action” to highlight capacity-building activities, especially in developing countries.

Sudan noted the need for financing and capacity building on blue economy, sustainable fisheries, and protecting the marine environment. He said the “Call for Action” should support scientific efforts and technology transfer with regard to using marine resources, and stressed that countries must have the resources to implement their own strategic approaches.

Egypt said the “Call for Action” should respect the balance between the three pillars of sustainable development and that it should not focus solely on marine environments, but general ecological systems. He highlighted as social aspects of SDG 14: managing IUU fishing; accounting for small fishers and other local producers; marine protection in the context of tourism; and accountability for marine debris.

Morocco supported UNCLOS as the universal legal framework, noted the indivisibility of all SDGs, and emphasized the need for scientific research, technology transfer, and capacity building in developing countries. He highlighted combating pollution as a priority.

The Republic of Korea said “we are all in the same boat” in the effort to implement SDG 14. He called for introducing comprehensive and innovative MOI in the “Call for Action,” said solutions must be tailored to each SDG target, and called for strong regulatory frameworks for target 14.1 on pollution and target 14.4 on IUU fishing. He noted the value of regional cooperation on ocean acidification and resilience, as well as the need for more countries to join the FAO Port State Measures Agreement.

Japan reported that it has established an “SDGs Promotion Headquarters,” headed by its prime minister and composed of all ministers, to ensure a “whole-of-government” approach to implementing the 2030 Agenda. On Japan’s priorities for elements of the “Call for Action,” he highlighted: support for SIDS and LDCs; ocean acidification; encouraging practices of “reduce-reuse-recycle”; and the need to base conservation and sustainable management of marine ecosystems on the best available scientific measures.

Noting their contribution to the voluntary trust fund to support the participation of SIDS and LDCs, New Zealand said the “Call for Action” should, *inter alia*, recognize the findings of the World Ocean Assessment; include effective implementation of UNCLOS and related instruments; and reaffirm the sustainable use of fisheries in order to ensure achievement of target 14.6 on

prohibiting certain forms of fisheries subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, and eliminating subsidies that contribute to IUU fishing.

The US said the “Call for Action” should be action-oriented, inclusive, transparent and fully grounded in the 2030 Agenda. She encouraged that the declaration: be comprehensible and meaningful to both Member States and regular citizens; take note of, and not duplicate, extensive work within and outside of the UN system; include the engagement of all relevant stakeholders; and prioritize coordinated efforts on reporting. On reporting, she highlighted the need for scientific knowledge, open data sharing, and sharing of best practices.

Turkey said regional coordination, marine research activities, and developing countries’ scientific activities and capacities should be emphasized in the “Call for Action.” Explaining that Turkey is not a party to UNCLOS, he asked for participants to pay attention to this sensitivity, urging the focus to be on SDG 14 implementation, rather than a legal discussion.

Noting the lack of data on the depth and shape of the sea floor, the International Hydrographic Organization encouraged support for collecting sea floor data, saying that it will contribute to the achievement of SDG 14 targets.

The Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission said the Baltic Sea Action Plan is aimed at achieving SDG 14, and contracting parties will meet in a High-Level Session on 28 February 2017 to discuss regional activities to implement the SDGs.

Noting the importance of regional cooperation, OSPAR said the “Call for Action” should address joint activities.

IUCN suggested including references to marine spatial planning and innovative financing mechanisms.

IOC-UNESCO called for adding references to a proposed International Decade of Ocean Science (2021-2030), and to the protection of underwater cultural heritage.

The NGO Major Group said the “Call for Action” should emphasize the science on MPAs that shows not only that SDG target 14.5 can be achieved, meaning that by 2020 at least 10% of coastal and marine areas will be conserved, but that it can be surpassed.

Closing the discussion on Wednesday, Co-Facilitator Gafoor noted the richness of this preliminary discussion, welcoming participants’ commitment to making the conference successful, and observed a “clustering” among the issues mentioned. Gafoor invited participants to interact and respond to the suggestions they heard so far.

On Thursday morning, Co-Facilitator Gafoor opened the meeting, which continued the previous day’s discussion on possible elements for the “Call for Action.”

The World Ocean Council, on behalf of the Business and Industry Major Group, advocated for engaging the private sector in the “Call for Action,” and for making the references as specific and constructive as possible.

The Ocean Policy Research Institute of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, on behalf of the Scientific and Technological Community, said the “Call for Action” should highlight the importance of capacity building for ocean issues and climate change. He called for a long-term commitment on “networking” and noted the Institute’s efforts to foster a strong network of scholars.

The WWF, also for Conservation International, the Waitt Foundation, The Nature Conservancy and the Wildlife Conservation Society, said the “Call for Action” must include

a timeline for implementing SDG 14 by 2030 and reporting on commitments and partnerships to ensure accountability, with a link to the HLPF. On MOI, she called for incentivizing the private sector to engage in delivery of SDG 14. She said the “Call for Action” should be based on focal areas, including: build more resilient oceans to support human health and wellbeing, including through achieving Aichi Target 11; build a climate-resilient, carbon neutral economy; adopt a sustainable, inclusive blue economy approach; implement integrated ocean planning and management; and secure additional financing.

Bangladesh, for the LDCs, called for reaffirming the interface between SDG 14 and other agreements, including the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the CBD and the Sendai Framework. He said the “Call for Action” should focus on commitments and solutions for mainstreaming the blue economy or blue growth into national development strategies. Other important elements in the “Call for Action” would include, he said: health of oceans, with exemptions or provisions for LDCs with regard to marine pollution; sustainable fisheries, including the gender dimension, and the need to advance multilateral negotiations on subsidies; MOI, including debt swaps, blue bonds and support for national legislative development; and partnerships on marine spatial planning, marine renewable energy, and marine biotechnology.

Noting that integrated ocean management disproportionately falls upon coastal states, PIF said urgent, concerted actions are required on: sustainable fisheries management; coastal and marine environmental protection and conservation; and investments supporting ocean science and research. She supported tracking progress of these activities with a triennial conference.

Fiji highlighted the need to focus on: preventing marine pollution; addressing ocean acidification through making GHG emission cuts consistent with the Paris Agreement; the protection and sustainable management of coastal ecosystems, noting they are vulnerable to land-based activities; and sustainable fisheries, noting the need to include regulatory arrangements, particularly those that curb IUU and other unsustainable fishing practices.

Saying humanity is inextricably bound together by the oceans and 80% of marine pollution comes from land-based sources, Sri Lanka noted that this can be reversed with the political will of each Member State and achieved through legal frameworks, such as UNCLOS.

Tuvalu proposed adding references to: a call for a global ban on micro-beads and micro-plastics; the establishment of a consortium of universities to find ways to minimize ocean acidification; and revision of UNCLOS to better align it with other SDGs and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway.

Thailand said the “Call for Action” should: be short and action-oriented, and avoid renegotiating any of the SDG 14 targets; reaffirm the commitments under the Paris Agreement; and call for eliminating fishing subsidies.

The Solomon Islands said “we are all in this together to save whatever is left of our oceans,” and stressed the need for global support for partnerships. He further highlighted the importance of: an integrated ocean-management approach, with MPAs a key tool to ensure that marine resources are sustainably used and conserved; eliminating IUU fishing particularly on the high seas; and regional collaboration, especially for an integrated ocean-management approach.

Indonesia said the “Call for Action” could include: ways to collect better ocean data; creating an ocean platform to enhance

partnerships and collaboration; and a call for integrating wider multi-disciplinary science in designing ocean management policies.

Viet Nam said the “Call for Action” should focus on innovative solutions and aim to mobilize the widest possible participation of all states and stakeholders in making and implementing concrete commitments, and include: increasing knowledge of oceans and raising awareness on the state of the marine environment; concrete measures to reduce negative industrial impacts, such as coastal pollution; enhanced international cooperation and partnerships, especially scientific research, dissemination, and technology transfer to developing countries to enable them to contribute to conservation and sustainable use; and UNCLOS as the legal framework.

Venezuela outlined 20 proposals to be included in the “Call for Action,” to enable everyone to become “the force for change” in the environment. The proposals included: mandatory education on ocean issues and the need to responsibly produce and consume; warning labels and a hard tax on non-reusable plastics, and for the UN to ban plastic straws and water bottles; regional, cross-regional and bilateral cooperation in ocean-related campaigns; observer systems, based on the UNESCO-IOC proposal; improving corporate responsibility through fines and rewards; installing GPS on fishing vessels to eliminate IUU fishing; and declaring a state of emergency of the oceans and marine debris as a common concern of humanity.

Greece said the “Call for Action” should specifically reference climate change. He highlighted that, for some countries, the quality of the marine environment is directly linked to economies and livelihoods.

Ghana said the “Call for Action” should reflect that matters pertaining to the sustainable use of oceans and seas cannot be delinked from one another, and called for providing for additional and adequate financing.

In Palau’s view, the “Call for Action” should prioritize ocean financing and MPAs. He said 80% of Palau’s marine environment is an MPA.

Marshall Islands highlighted that the “Call for Action” should: be a “sharp, focused document, which is truly readable by a public audience”; recognize the cross-cutting interdependent nature of sustainable oceans and fisheries; and recognize the unique and transformative impact of oceans and fisheries on SIDS economy, society and culture.

Nepal said the “Call for Action” should: be concise, action-oriented, scientifically informed, binding and with commitments; consider UNCLOS as the legal basis for implementing SDG 14 and recognize linkages between the oceans and mountains; address the linkages between effective implementation of the Paris Agreement and SDG 14; and include a matrix of the 2030 Agenda’s targets to present “complementarities within implementation.”

Algeria said the “Call for Action” must include technology sharing, capacity building, financing, and a roadmap for SDG 14 implementation in line with follow-up and review of all SDGs.

Italy said MPAs are essential to achieving both the SDG 14 and Aichi Targets. On climate, he called for creating partnerships with research centers and linkages with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Paraguay said the Ocean Conference should recognize the needs of countries in vulnerable situations, and that the “Call for Action” should be “firmly anchored” in UNCLOS.

Chile stressed the importance of sustainable fishing and ending harmful fishing subsidies. He noted that SDG 14 is an “orphan” because of the fragmentation of the UN system in managing oceans.

Kenya supported a “Call for Action” that is forward-looking and implementable, and balances conservation with the sustainable use of oceans.

Honduras called for addressing the conservation of under-water cultural heritage.

Belgium stressed the need to address land-based sources of marine pollution.

Iceland said the added value of the conference will be to bring together relevant stakeholders and foster partnerships that address ocean challenges. He called for using scarce resources to invest in action, not special follow-up conferences, instead encouraging the use of existing processes to follow up on commitments. He also called to: focus on implementing the Paris Agreement to combat ocean warming and acidification; avoid renegotiating the goals, targets or indicators of the SDGs; base the process on the modalities resolution, and avoid “engaging in complex, delicate legal issues discussed elsewhere.”

Monaco said Mars and the moon are better mapped than the oceans, and stressed the need for improved scientific research to combat climate change and ocean acidification, share marine research and data, and improve hydrology and marine mapping. She strongly supported the UNESCO-IOC initiative to create a decade of oceanography for sustainable development.

Papua New Guinea suggested that the conference agree on actions that are doable and can be sustained over time. On ocean governance, he said that while UNCLOS is the central plank, regional and national instruments consistent with UNCLOS need to be supported. He said MOI is critical, including financing, capacity building, marine scientific knowledge and technology transfer, with LDCs and SIDS deserving special attention. He also called for: enhancing sustainable fishing by addressing harmful subsidies, which are the root causes of IUU and destructive fishing, and overfishing; vessel monitoring; and deterring marine pollution, including through formal education to enable the young generation to “grow up to be environmental warriors.”

Philippines highlighted oceans governance as its main priority, and said the responsibility devolves on Member States and stakeholders within their own countries. He highlighted oceans governance as a cross-cutting theme in the seven partnership dialogues.

The International Sea Bed Authority, noting that it is an instrument created by UNCLOS, emphasized the centrality of UNCLOS in implementing various SDG 14 targets and stressed the importance of achieving ultimate universality of UNCLOS.

The International Chamber of Commerce said the “Call for Action” should be concise, action-oriented, include political commitments, and foster partnerships. She urged incentivizing collective action involving all stakeholders and highlighted the value of public-private partnerships.

The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) noted existing opportunities in renewable energy technology, particularly ocean energy, which provide employment.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) highlighted its development of a global database of policies within the fishing sector.

The World Bank said the “Call for Action” should, through the scope of a blue economy: undertake comprehensive evaluation of marine resources and corresponding ecosystem services;

provide for improved livelihoods and address food security, done through a human-centered approach; and provide innovative and responsible finance to contribute to blue economy.

Noting that 31% of fish stocks are currently fished at unsustainable levels, the FAO invited all states to become members of the Port State Measures Agreement.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) highlighted that the ocean and sea are a workplace, and called for including references to working conditions at sea.

The CBD Secretariat highlighted the linkages between SDG 14 and the Aichi Targets.

UN Environment suggested adding reference to a call for action on regional partnerships and to a call for action on the Global Partnership on Marine Litter from land-based activities.

The UN Development Programme (UNDP) encouraged the development of nutrient reduction plants to recycle and reuse nutrients from waste water. He also supported including a call to eliminate harmful fishing subsidies.

The Global Ghost Gear Initiative favored establishing a series of conferences on SDG 14 implementation. He suggested including a reference to lost and abandoned fishing gear, a major source of marine pollution.

The Monterrey Bay Aquarium said Member States must commit to leading action and being transparent and accountable to commitments, by “setting and keeping smart objectives.” She suggested that the conference outcome include a strong call to action for data submission, and said the outcomes should be understandable and relatable to the public.

The High Seas Alliance said that the aspiration set in SDG target 14.5 should be “only the starting point,” and called for a firm commitment that 30% of the ocean will be protected through a network of highly protected MPAs.

Conservation International said the “Call for Action” should include indicators, and the current set of global indicators for SDG 14 needs to be “strengthened and added to.” She also highlighted the Ocean Health Index currently being used in 28 countries.

The Ocean Frontier Institute, for the Scientific and Technological Community, said all themes of the partnership dialogues should have an overt emphasis on knowledge mobilization and ocean literacy, especially for young people.

Germany described the conference as a “kick-off” to the implementation process, and said a clear follow-up and review process is required. He noted the crucial role of marine regions in the implementation process.

The United Arab Emirates said the conference should mobilize voluntary commitments, and an Ocean Conference should be held every three years until 2030.

Timor-Leste favored including blue economy principles in the “Call for Action.”

The World Health Organization (WHO) said two areas are of key importance: the poor management of chemicals that leads to ocean pollution; and the nutritional benefits to humans from eating fish, which should be sustainably consumed and produced.

The Women’s Major Group said the “Call for Action” should include: solutions for reducing ocean acidification; innovative financing mechanisms such as crowdfunding; and strong recognition of the key role of women in implementing SDG 14.

The Global Ocean Oxygen Network supported broadening the consideration of ocean acidification to include climate change.

The NGO Major Group called for including citizen science and NGO monitoring both in the “Call for Action” and in the preparatory process of the Conference.

The Center for Oceanic Research and Education proposed adopting a “strong precautionary approach” including through the UN assuming a role in reducing plastic production, arguing that “the more plastic we create, the more we will have to pick up.”

The Marine Stewardship Council highlighted the role of certification and eco-labeling schemes, and called for the elimination of IUU fishing and implementation of sustainable fishing practices.

Canada recognized the work of FAO on marking lost and abandoned fishing gear that creates marine debris, and welcomed further discussions on the topic.

CLOSING SESSION

On Thursday afternoon, having concluded discussion on elements for the “Call for Action,” Co-Facilitator Gafoor said the list of speakers had been long, but it was important to listen, at this early stage, to all contributions. He reiterated his appreciation for participants’ continued energy, optimism, and constructive spirit. Gafoor then presented the co-facilitators’ sense of the common elements that emerged in the discussion of the “Call for Action.”

On general principles, he highlighted that the 2030 Agenda is seen as the overarching framework for the process, and noted the importance of the mandate defined in UNGA Resolution 70/303 on the purpose of the conference being to support implementation of SDG 14. He said “almost everyone” had supported a “Call for Action” that is concise and action-oriented, as well as easy to understand by the public. Among other common elements, he cited: balance between the three dimensions of sustainable development, the indivisible nature of the 17 SDGs; urgency due to the state of the oceans, as well as the shorter deadlines for some SDG 14 targets; the “fundamental character” of UNCLOS; and the need to take account of countries in special situations. He said that participants had offered very concrete ideas on challenges and opportunities in the areas of marine pollution, ocean acidification, sustainable fisheries, MPAs, and blue economy. He also noted that monitoring, follow up and review were mentioned repeatedly, along with capacity building, marine technology transfer and finance, including through innovative financing mechanisms, as well as scientific knowledge, data collection, and data sharing.

As next steps, Gafoor said the co-facilitators will prepare a zero draft of the “Call for Action,” using the preparatory meeting’s discussions as their “base material.” He noted that while they plan to produce a concise document, they also want it to be ambitious. He informed participants that consultations on the zero draft have been scheduled for 7, 9, 20 and 21 March 2017, and that the text should be circulated before the first consultation.

Mendonça e Moura reported to participants on the co-facilitators’ next steps regarding the themes for partnership dialogues. He noted that the themes must be grounded in the targets of SDG 14, and that this process cannot lead to reopening the discussion on the targets, which reflect a “delicate balance that took us so long to achieve,” noting that this is in accordance with resolution 70/303. He shared the co-facilitators’ conclusions that: participants were strongly supportive of the proposed themes; participants referred to many cross-cutting issues, and proposed

changes to broaden the discussions in the partnership dialogues; and a “significant number” of delegations suggested changing proposed Theme 7 to more closely reflect SDG target 14.c.

Based on these elements of the discussion, Mendonça e Moura suggested communicating to the UNGA President that a general consensus had emerged to change Theme 7 to reflect the text from target 14.c: “enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in UNCLOS.” In addition, he suggested that the themes be considered as “broad chapeaux” for the partnership dialogues, allowing delegations to raise other elements they consider relevant. In this regard, the themes should be “interpreted in a large way” to account for cross-cutting issues, and the concept papers on each theme should account for this as well.

The issues highlighted by participants as cross-cutting, he reported, included: regional cooperation in implementing SDG 14; interlinkages with other ocean-related targets in the 2030 Agenda; the legal framework of UNCLOS; the essential role of oceans for climate change; and the importance of follow-up and review. Regarding UNCLOS, he noted that participation in the preparatory process and conference would not affect the legal status of either non-parties or parties to UNCLOS or any other related agreements.

Appreciating the determination and resolve to make the Ocean Conference a success anchored on action, voluntary commitments and partnerships, Ocean Conference Secretary-General Wu said the meeting had offered a timely platform to receive the views and perspectives of all stakeholders. He added that the conference will be a “game changer” in reversing the decline of the health of oceans and seas, and in advancing the implementation of SDG 14.

Gafoor thanked the Office of Legal Affairs for his legal counsel, and closed the meeting at 4:23 pm.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE MEETING

Preparatory meetings can take on all forms. The preparatory meeting for the UN Ocean Conference performed the role of a stocktaking meeting, serving to allow all interested parties to exchange their views and listen to each other. Indeed, the co-facilitators said that “at this early stage, it’s really important that we listen” to everyone who wants to speak, and that the meeting’s aim was to increase collective understanding of the issues under discussion.

In this way the discussion alerted participants to each other’s positions, and set out some of the key points of divergence that will have to be worked out when consultations begin on the zero draft of the political declaration in early March 2017. Based on the discussions heard in the two-day gathering, such points of divergence could include: whether to raise ambition or avoid “renegotiating” the targets of SDG 14; whether to hold recurring conferences on SDG 14 implementation, or rely on existing mechanisms for governance of ocean issues and the follow-up and review of commitments; how to characterize UNCLOS in relation to the implementation of SDG 14; and approaches to the means of implementation.

RENEGOTIATING TARGETS

Many speakers registered their support for the ten targets agreed in SDG 14. Further, government delegations, including the US, Thailand and AOSIS, cautioned against renegotiating, “explicitly or implicitly” any of the SDG 14 target and indicators.

On target 14.5, however, some participants said the international community has the chance to be more ambitious than the “starting point” presented in the 2030 Agenda, in the words of the High Seas Alliance. SDG target 14.5 calls to “By 2020, conserve at least 10% of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information.” As noted by a few speakers during the preparatory meeting, this commitment is aligned with Aichi Target 11 under the Convention on Biological Diversity, which also states that 10% of coastal and marine areas should be “conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscape and seascape.” by 2020.

In comments during the preparatory meeting, the NGO Major Group highlighted findings that SDG target 14.5 not only can be achieved, but it can be surpassed. The High Seas Alliance called for a firm commitment that 30% of the ocean will be protected through a network of highly protected MPAs.

In wrapping up the discussion of themes, however, Co-Facilitator Mendonça e Moura said the process cannot lead to reopening the discussion on the targets, which reflect a “delicate balance that took us so long to achieve.” Perhaps partnerships can be developed and resourced that aim higher than the targets set in SDG 14, but according to most signals from the meeting, this will need to take place on a voluntary basis, outside of the negotiated “Call for Action.”

GOVERNANCE MECHANISMS

Providing opening remarks to the meeting as one of the co-hosts of the Ocean Conference, Fiji’s Minister for Fisheries said the conference was created to “provide a home” for SDG 14, which is an “orphan” with regards to fora dedicated to its follow-up. Similarly, Chile described SDG 14 as an “orphan” because the UN system’s management of ocean issues is fragmented. In order to rectify the gaps in governance—whether in terms of managing implementation or follow-up on commitments—the Pacific Islands Forum and others advocated for a triennial cycle of ocean conferences.

Others, however, preferred to rely on existing processes and mechanisms. Iceland called for using scarce resources to invest in action, not in special follow-up conferences, and CARICOM said that existing bodies, networks and NGOs could be rationalized, connected and strengthened to provide a governance framework for SDG 14. Mexico and others joined the calls to avoid duplication of governance efforts.

The issue to be resolved in the preparatory process going forward will be if the UN system’s various bodies that currently address ocean issues will move toward a “more unified and harmonized system” of global governance, in the words of the Holy See, and whether this will include plans for a subsequent Ocean Conference to advance implementation of SDG 14.

UNCLOS

The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea was adopted in 1982 and serves as the overarching international agreement regulating the various uses of the world’s oceans and seas. Of the 193 UN Member States, 168 are states party to UNCLOS. During the negotiations on the SDGs, Venezuela and others not party to UNCLOS objected to referring to UNCLOS in SDG target 14.c, which calls to: “enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law,

as reflected in UNCLOS, which provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources, as recalled in paragraph 158 of The Future We Want.” With the UNCLOS reference supported by the majority of governments, Venezuela refrained from blocking consensus on the SDGs but placed a reservation on the record.

During the meeting, Venezuela recalled its reservation on this target, and encouraged the addition of a reference to “other relevant instruments” in Theme 7 for the partnership dialogues. Turkey, another non-party, called for “sensitivity” to those who are not party to UNCLOS.

However, a majority of participants strongly supported UNCLOS as “the legal framework upon which SDG 14 implementation is based,” explaining that it provides the structure to address “all ocean-related activities” dealing with marine protection and conservation as defined in the SDG 14 targets. Morocco called UNCLOS the “bedrock” for implementing SDG 14, with Australia similarly saying it must remain the foundation of efforts on the ocean. Argentina went so far as to note that per customary law, UNCLOS is a binding legal framework even for non-parties.

Before the preparatory meeting concluded, Co-Facilitator Mendonça e Moura told participants that general consensus had emerged on introducing changes to Theme 7, to more closely reflect what was agreed in SDG target 14.c: “enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in UNCLOS.” This will be conveyed in the co-facilitators’ messages to President Thomson, he noted.

MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

What should be the conference’s added value to the 2030 Agenda and the existing set of mechanisms for addressing sustainability challenges for the ocean and seas? Several said the conference’s value added would be found in advancing the multi-stakeholder approach to implementing the SDGs, through the active engagement of business, advocacy groups, and scientists and researchers. Others seemed interested in counteracting an emphasis on voluntary commitments by securing specific commitments from governments and other partners, including in the area of means of implementation.

Numerous governments called for the conference to address “innovative and comprehensive” MOI, while others preferred to frame the discussion around “new and additional” MOI, without a shared understanding of “new” or “innovative” having crystallized at this stage. There were few details on whether they referred to new sources, new amounts or new ways of providing it.

Several developing countries, including Argentina, Ghana, Iran, Mauritius, Morocco, Sierra Leone and Viet Nam, called for enhancing cooperation for capacity building and technology transfer for developing countries in the area of marine science, research and technology. The LDCs, meanwhile, focused on innovative MOI including debt swaps, blue bonds and support for national legislative development.

An outstanding question remains: how will the actions agreed at the conference be resourced?

The preparatory meeting sought to fulfill the promise of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in bringing everyone together to realize the aspirations for “the future we want.” Participants debated, in both direct and indirect remarks, the added value of the Ocean Conference. Among their diverse visions, they mentioned that the conference’s value will lie in: catalyzing

partnerships; filling governance gaps; mobilizing financial and other resources; providing input to the HLPF; and raising awareness among the public and the international community. The preparatory meeting, however, clearly illustrated one type of added value: to catalyze energy around an SDG of immediate importance to the planet and its people.

As one observer noted, the themes for the partnership dialogue and the call for action could have been discussed through informal consultations among New York-based delegations, without gathering officials and stakeholders from around the world for two days. But the convening of a face-to-face preparatory meeting not only demonstrated the interest in SDG 14 and the ocean agenda, but raised the energy level and excitement for the Ocean Conference itself. The first consultations on the “Call for Action” in a few weeks will reveal whether that enthusiasm can help bridge the remaining divergent positions on key issues.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Fourth World Ocean Summit: This Summit will address financing for a sustainable ocean economy, aiming to mobilize discussion on how capital and the private sector can drive scalable, sustainable investment in the ocean. **dates:** 22-24 February 2017 **location:** Bali, Indonesia **contact:** Economist Events **email:** oceanspeakers@economist.com **www:** <http://econ.st/1NEx9pT>

HELCOM High-Level Session: Regional Take on Ocean-Related Sustainable Development Goals: High-level representatives of the Baltic Sea countries and the EU will meet on the occasion of the 38th Meeting of the Helsinki Commission to discuss how to achieve ocean-related Sustainable Development Goals in the Baltic Sea and progress in addressing regional environmental challenges. **date:** 28 February 2017 **location:** Helsinki, Finland **phone:** +358-207-412-649 **email:** helcom.secretariat@helcom.fi **www:** <http://helcom.fi/>

First Meeting of the WECAFC Regional Working Group on IUU Fishing: The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission will hold a working group meeting on IUU fishing. **dates:** 1-3 March 2017; **location:** Barbados **contact:** Raymon Van Anrooy, WECAFC Secretariat **email:** WECAFC-Secretariat@fao.org **www:** www.fao.org/fishery/rfb/wecafc/en

Informal Consultations in Preparation for the Ocean Conference: The co-facilitators of the preparatory process for the Ocean Conference will hold informal consultations on the zero draft of the “Call for Action.” **dates:** 7, 9, 20 and 21 March 2017 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UN Division for Sustainable Development **email:** <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/contact> **www:** <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/preparatoryprocess>

BBNJ PrepCom 3: The third meeting of the Preparatory Committee established by General Assembly Resolution 69/292: Development of an international legally binding instrument under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction will address marine genetic resources, area-based management tools, environmental impact assessments, capacity building, transfer of marine technology, and crosscutting issues. **dates:** 27 March - 7 April 2017 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (UNDOALOS) **phone:** +1-212-963-3962 **email:** doalos@un.org **www:** <http://www.un.org/depts/los/biodiversity/prepcom.htm>

18th Meeting of the UN Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea: The 18th meeting of the UN Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (ICP 18) will take place in New York, US, from 15-19 May 2017. **dates:** 15-19 May 2017 **location:** New York City, US **contact:** UNDOALOS **phone:** +1-212-963-5915 **fax:** +1-212-963-5847 **email:** doalos@un.org **www:** http://www.un.org/depts/los/consultative_process/consultative_process.htm

First Meeting of the Parties to the 2009 FAO Agreement on Port State Measures: The FAO Agreement on Port State Measures entered into force on 5 June 2016 and will convene its first Meeting of the Parties. **dates:** 29-31 May 2017 **location:** Oslo, Norway **contact:** Matthew Camilleri, FAO **email:** matthew.camilleri@fao.org **www:** <http://www.fao.org/fishery/psm/agreement/en>

High-Level UN Conference to Support the Implementation of SDG 14: This high-level UN Conference, co-hosted by the Governments of Fiji and Sweden, will coincide with the World Oceans Day, and seeks to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development). **dates:** 5-9 June 2017 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** Permanent Missions of Fiji and Sweden **phone:** +1-212-687-4130 (Fiji); +1-212-583-2500 (Sweden) **www:** <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/oceans/SDG14Conference>

GLOSSARY

AOSIS	Alliance of Small Island States
BBNJ	Marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN
GHG	Greenhouse gases
HLPF	High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
IOC	UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IUU	Illegal, unreported and unregulated (fishing)
LDCs	Least developed countries
LLDCs	Land-locked developing countries
MOI	Means of implementation
MPAs	Marine protected areas
OSPAR	Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic
PIF	Pacific Island Forum
PSIDS	Pacific small island developing states
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small island developing states
UNCLOS	UN Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNESCO	UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNGA	UN General Assembly