

## UN Ocean Conference Highlights: Tuesday, 28 June 2022

On Tuesday, the second UN Ocean Conference continued in Lisbon, Portugal. Delegates met in plenary to hear general statements. Two interactive dialogues also took place during the day.

### General Debate

Prime Minister Ulisses Correia e Silva, Cabo Verde, stressed the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships to strengthen the country's blue and green economy pathways. Prime Minister Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila, Namibia, prioritized opportunities for ocean wealth, health and equity, in line with the High-Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy.

Jorge Lopes Bom Jesus, Prime Minister, São Tomé and Príncipe, shared efforts to transition to a blue economy, adopting a strategic macro-vision to link all parts of society. Prime Minister Johnny Briceño, Belize, underlined the need to cease the approval of new fossil fuel projects, which he called "carbon bombs," and drew attention to the country's issuance of the region's first blue bond.

Morocco, for the AFRICAN GROUP, highlighted the African Union's Agenda 2063 which prioritizes the blue economy, calling for inclusive and innovative partnerships to mobilize the support for implementation. For MOROCCO, he reiterated commitment to legal instruments governing the marine environment.

TONGA called for a strong agreement on plastic pollution, supported the conclusion of negotiations on the exploitation guidelines under the International Seabed Authority (ISA); and with SINGAPORE, the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ).

NEW ZEALAND welcomed the conclusion of the agreement on fisheries subsidies under the World Trade Organization (WTO). NORWAY encouraged the world to "act as though the plastic pollution treaty already exists."

SINGAPORE, PERU and THAILAND shared additional voluntary commitments, including on, respectively: research into renewable energy for ocean action; sustainable aquaculture; and observation and research of ocean acidification.

On national efforts, INDONESIA announced the issuance of a sovereign blue bond and ARGENTINA highlighted a draft law to manage plastic packaging production. QATAR outlined efforts and positive results from preserving marine resources through integrated management, banning single-use plastic bags, and supporting marine sciences.

TIMOR-LESTE and INDIA expressed interest in establishing a marine education center and a regional sustainable coastal and ocean research institute.

SEYCHELLES emphasized the blue economy to overcome threats of climate change and to source innovative solutions to economic and social challenges. The US urged for decarbonizing ocean transport, and increasing high seas protected areas, and announced the signing of the US National Security Memorandum to Combat IUU Fishing and Associated Labor Abuses, and the IUU Fishing Action Alliance, with the UK and Canada.

KENYA announced the establishment of a blue economy bank fund. CHINA announced, among others: the restoration and

protection for 31 marine and coastal zones in the next five years; technical support and assistance to developing countries and small island developing States (SIDS) through its Global Development Initiative; and 5 million RMB to launch a global blue partnership and network.

GERMANY highlighted the G7 Ocean Deal which prioritizes, among others, the conclusion of the BBNJ negotiations and stringent environmental management plans and standards under the ISA. PALESTINE urged for implementation of UNCLOS, calling on states who have not done so to ratify to ensure "a global vision rooted in national and regional realities."

SAINT LUCIA and BARBADOS called for scientific partnerships and BAHAMAS underscored the need to work together towards decarbonization and a sustainable and equitable blue and green economy. TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO called for evidence-based approaches for integrated coastal zone management, and, with MEXICO, stressed access to donor funding and climate finance of developing countries. GUYANA urged moving away from official development assistance to manage ocean resources.

RUSSIAN FEDERATION stressed the need to stop the production and use of single-use plastics and, with BRAZIL, supported a legally-binding agreement on plastic pollution.

SOLOMON ISLANDS highlighted electronic monitoring plans to deter IUU fishing. CYPRUS supported the Barcelona Convention emissions control area for sulphur oxides, and with CROATIA, discussed land-based pollution. The NETHERLANDS outlined the 2020 North Sea Agreement as part of its sustainable blue economy ambitions.

ZIMBABWE lamented that landlocked countries have limited ocean access, in spite of UNCLOS stipulations, and called on rich nations to accelerate greenhouse gas emissions reductions. MALDIVES pointed to a national phase-out plan for single-use plastic and a plan to protect 20% of their marine area and, with MOZAMBIQUE, raised challenges of financial limitations. SWEDEN noted the need for "new blue capital" to invest in the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean, and announced USD 5 million to prevent an oil spill off the coast of Yemen.

IRELAND shared commitments, *inter alia*, to expand marine protected areas to reach 30% and obtain 5gW of offshore renewable energy by 2030; and pledge EUR 10 million for international ocean action to support a research partnership with SIDS.

UK highlighted commitments to double climate finance to GBP 11.6 billion, spending a third on nature-based solutions with GBP 500 million invested in the Blue Planet Fund; and invest GBP 154 million into the new coast programme helping vulnerable communities adapt to climate change.

MARSHALL ISLANDS stressed the need for zero-emissions shipping by 2030, with the imposition of a USD 100 carbon levy by 2025; and called for strengthened labor protection measures for sustainable fisheries. VANUATU shared that a coalition of the willing has proposed to lodge a case at the International Court of Justice to protect vulnerable nations from climate change.

JAPAN reported USD 24 million in new voluntary commitments has been registered and ALGERIA announced three additional voluntary commitments, including on marine protected areas.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA highlighted progress in MPAs and noted the International Maritime Organization's recognition of the country's particularly sensitive sea areas (PSSAs).

### Interactive Dialogues

**Promoting and strengthening sustainable ocean-based economies, in particular for SIDS and Least Developed Countries (LDCs):** Co-Chair Espen Barth Eide, Norway, noted "ground-breaking" progress, including agreements on plastic pollution and fisheries subsidies. Co-Chair Abraão Vicente, Cabo Verde, emphasized investing in ocean security, science and research.

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, WTO Director-General, highlighted the WTO's recent Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, saying, "without global solidarity we cannot solve problems of the global commons."

Mari Pangestu, World Bank, outlined blue economy benefits for livelihoods, the environment, and economic growth. Usha-Rao Monari, UN Development Programme (UNDP), highlighted the need for regulatory and institutional reform, and increased internal and external investment.

Sanda Ojiambo, Executive Director, UN Global Compact, said a well-managed ocean could generate more than 12 million new jobs and contribute to 21% of emission reductions. Ricardo Mourinho Félix, European Investment Bank, valued the benefits of public-private partnerships for an equitable and just transition towards a net-zero economy by 2050. Danny Faure, Chairman, Danny Faure Foundation, and Former President of Seychelles, called for strengthening food security, restoring and building resilience for planetary health, and creating sustainable and equitable livelihoods.

FIJI, on behalf of the PACIFIC ISLAND FORUM, stressed that their governments do not need scientific reports to tell us oceans are at risk. "We can see it and feel it; the ocean crisis is coming."

TONGA called for the full recognition of the special circumstances of SIDS. Antigua and Barbuda, for the ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES (AOSIS), stressed implementing the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) for SIDS instead of using GDP to determine access to financing.

ARUBA described bans on plastics and a regional management plan for mangroves, sea grass, and coral reefs. BELIZE announced their expectation of reaching 30% marine protected areas before 2030. TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO highlighted an integrated approach to coastal and marine spatial planning, and lamented the anachronistic approach to financing for SIDS. SWEDEN said the ocean is key to poverty reduction and supported strengthening regional capacity. The AFRICAN UNION announced the establishment of a high-level African Commission on the ocean.

MALDIVES said high taxes penalize sustainability efforts and called for implementing the MVI. DOMINICAN REPUBLIC highlighted marine spatial planning efforts and the need for blue finance, such as debt swaps, blue bonds, and taxes on tourism.

IRELAND described commitments of almost EUR 10 million, under the World Bank Blue Economy programme to address impacts of sea level rise, drinking water, and coastal erosion. FAO, MEXICO and CHINA showcased projects demonstrating the ocean as a source of wealth.

INDIA urged unlocking tailored resources, new development options in digital space and the blue economy. The OCEAN RISK AND RESILIENCE ACTION ALLIANCE advised delegations to spearhead the development of a new finance architecture. PAPUA NEW GUINEA called for scientific collaboration addressing impacts of climate change and SINGAPORE advised strengthening institutional capacities. PORTUGAL reminded to go beyond the "false notion" of incompatibility of environmental protection and economic growth.

**Managing, protecting, conserving and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems:** Ximena Fuentes, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chile, opened the session calling to strengthen the social dimension of sustainable development. Tanya Plibersek, Environment and Water, Australia, urged acting seriously, cleverly, and immediately on climate change. Moderator Isabella Lövin, Stockholm Environment Institute, said progress has been made but not enough, noting the absence of an operational definition of marine ecosystem health.

Elizabeth Mrema, Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity, said the unprecedented level of attention on oceans, the availability of proven tools and approaches, and this historical gathering set the tone for the final stage of negotiations for the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. Martha Rojas-Urrego, Secretary-General, RAMSAR Convention on Wetlands, prioritized, *inter alia*, an integrative ridge-to-reef approach; using area-based measures; and increasing participation and equity.

Zhang Zhanhai, Ministry of Natural Resources, China, offered examples of protection and restoration projects, including a satellite ocean monitoring project that shares data with 20 other countries. Marco Lambertini, Director General, WWF International, promoted ocean conservation and delegating management rights to local communities in coastal areas.

Torgny Holmgren, Chief Executive Officer of Stockholm International Water Institute, shared how a downstream approach could help coastal ecosystem management through increased understanding of the effects of mismanaged resources. Mami Mizutori, Head, UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, urged including disaster risk into decision-making, reminding delegates that only 40% of developing countries have early warning systems in place.

MONACO emphasized local solutions, and innovative funding tools and technology. Fiji, speaking for the PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM, called for support for capacity building and finance, saying, "If you breathe oxygen, you have a stake in the Pacific's future." BELIZE described how they restructured their national debt to support marine conservation. Vanuatu, for PSIDS, offered the Pacific's traditional "taboo" approach as an example of successful marine protected area management.

EQUATORIAL GUINEA highlighted progress in creating a network of protected areas. IUCN highlighted other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). THE NETHERLANDS emphasized evidence-based ocean policy and cooperation among government, private sector, and civil society. FRENCH POLYNESIA emphasized the need for more sharing of both scientific and traditional knowledge. NORWAY also stressed the need to act on shared knowledge.

TIMOR-LESTE spoke about including mangrove conservation in vulnerable coastal areas. The AUSTRALIAN SEAWEED INSTITUTE shared different ways seaweed can be used to help marine and coastal ecosystems. SPAIN affirmed their commitment to have 30% of marine protected areas by 2030.

INDONESIA recommended a multi-level governance approach for the protection and sustainable use of marine ecosystems. ECUADOR said that being a country rich in biodiversity is a privilege and a responsibility towards future generations. CUBA reminded of the common but different responsibilities of states in ocean protection.

The US described how subnational governments in the US adopted marine spatial planning in advance of national action. GREECE shared their sustainable island initiative, focused on a green economy, energy autonomy, digital innovation and ecological mobility.

### In the Corridors

Tuesday brought a sense of pressure to move from talk to action. Several delegations seemed frustrated at the seemingly endless "blah-blah," in the face of "the coming ocean catastrophe." One exasperated participant said, "the ocean we depend on is dying right now, not in a few years, but now." The day was also filled with new and renewed voluntary commitments, tallying tens of millions of dollars dedicated to ocean action around the world. "Maybe we just need to connect the dots better," opined one delegate, pointing at the discrepancy.

As is becoming common in these types of meetings, in Lisbon, veteran speakers also talked about the importance of young people, but several delegates pointed out that youth representatives were missing. Groups of young people, very present at recent multilateral conferences—particularly in Stockholm+50—remind seasoned delegates that more words will not help to fight the triple planetary crisis. "Perhaps if more young people were present in Lisbon, they would push us to talk less, and do more," quipped one participant.