

## UN Ocean Conference Highlights: Wednesday, 29 June 2022

Wednesday marked the mid-point of the second UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon, Portugal. Delegates met in plenary to hear general statements and participated in two interactive dialogues which also convened during the day.

### General Debate

HSH Prince Albert, Monaco, shared initiatives such as: the MedFund providing EUR 20.5 million for sustainable marine biodiversity conservation; and the Beyond Plastic Med initiative providing EUR 1.3 million for 69 projects in 15 countries.

Pakistan, for the Group of 77 and China (G-77/CHINA), stressed that to mobilize the required means of implementation to accelerate the achievement of SDG 14, the world needs an institutional framework such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), for the ocean.

GREECE announced a partnership with the US to host the ninth Our Ocean Conference in 2024. GABON reported 26% marine protected area (MPA) coverage and called for a “blue REDD+ programme” to address seagrass degradation. ISRAEL announced plans to declare the Palmachim Disturbance as an MPA. PANAMA shared goals to make the Panama Canal carbon neutral by 2030; finalize the national action plan for marine litter; and increase MPAs by 40% by 2030. ECUADOR highlighted the addition of the Hermandad MPA to the Galápagos protected area. COMOROS warned that the number of climate migrants would increase unless the world takes tangible climate action, with CUBA announcing their climate mitigation “Life Task Plan.”

GEORGIA, IRAQ, and several others expressed readiness to join global efforts to establish a legally binding instrument on plastic pollution by 2024.

ITALY called on others to join the Blue Leaders initiative, sharing the launch of a restoration programme with EUR 400 million. CHILE called for cooperation in the establishment of additional marine protected corridors. AUSTRALIA emphasized the need to lift up Indigenous voices, sharing ambition to reach zero emissions by 2050 and protect 30% of land and sea by 2030. VENEZUELA affirmed indivisibility of all SDGs and reiterated commitment to achieve goals.

The REPUBLIC OF KOREA described efforts to scale up investment in ocean renewable and hydrogen energy production. SAUDI ARABIA highlighted a 2020 research and development programme on coral. OMAN noted the creation of 13 MPAs. TURKIYE highlighted a “zero waste blue project” addressing marine pollution. PAKISTAN highlighted, among others, the planting of 7.5 million mangroves along the country’s coastline.

MADAGASCAR shared plans for a meteorological system to enhance climate resilience among fisherfolk. TUVALU called for international support to ensure that the exclusive economic zones (EEZ) of Pacific-island nations are not affected by sea-level rise. BENIN highlighted the value of scientific research and its national strategy for development of the blue economy.

NEPAL underlined the need to fully implement the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) alongside the SDGs and Paris Agreement. SPAIN underscored the value of sustainable fishing, and ESTONIA confirmed plans to address marine pollution from industrial and pharmaceutical hazardous waste.

JAMAICA noted action to address plastic pollution and committed to designating a further 10% of their marine area as protected. SRI LANKA highlighted their leadership role in the Action Group on Mangrove Ecosystems and Livelihoods, which may soon include ethical carbon trading.

The EUROPEAN COMMISSION announced 50 voluntary contributions worth EUR 7 billion, including EUR 1 billion to protect high seas biodiversity. The PHILIPPINES discussed their 2021 national plan of action on marine litter. SENEGAL called for implementation of the Paris Agreement, the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, and the Convention on Biological Diversity to effectively address ocean threats.

KIRIBATI underlined that the “fishing for profit” mindset has led to illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, highlighting that it is “one of the greatest threats to ocean health and wealth.” IRAN called to address ocean pollution by military fleets. CANADA announced 20 new voluntary contributions, including CAD 1.7 million to address IUU fishing in developing countries. LUXEMBOURG announced a recently-launched Blue Natural Capital Fund Facility for blue economy investments. LATVIA highlighted the role of the Baltic Sea Action Plan in addressing ocean threats.

EGYPT expressed hope that COP 27 outcomes will take into account the need for ocean action. TUNISIA prioritized a plastic-free coastline, and among others, called for greater cooperation to implement national action plans. The GAMBIA described their commitment to banning single use plastics, as well as fighting IUU fishing.

HOLY SEE underlined the need for an integrated, human-centered approach to environmental protection. UKRAINE called for international cooperation and coordination to protect humanity and nature. MALTA announced that they would prioritize the climate-ocean-security nexus at the UN Security Council.

SLOVENIA renewed their commitment of 30% protection of global land and sea by 2030. POLAND shared their interest to develop offshore renewable energy and address marine pollution. BOLIVIA reiterated that the ocean is the common heritage of humankind, calling for fair distribution of marine genetic resources.

MAURITIUS reported the planting of 400,000 mangroves to restore degraded ecosystems, and shared plans to establish a new MPA in the Chagos Archipelago. The UK registered their ongoing jurisdiction over this area.

BELGIUM expressed optimism to turn the tide on ocean degradation by achieving the 30 x 30 target related to protected areas, and with SOUTH AFRICA, the FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA and others, finalizing negotiations on the agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) negotiations. EL SALVADOR underlined the importance of scientific data and financial resources to achieve SDG 14, emphasizing meaningful inclusion of women, youth and Indigenous Peoples for innovative solutions.

LATIN AMERICA DEVELOPMENT BANK announced USD 1.25 billion over five years in direct funding to promote, *inter alia*, the blue economy, marine and coastal ecosystems recovery, and blue carbon.

## Interactive Dialogues

### Ocean acidification, deoxygenation and ocean warming:

Co-Chair John Kerry, Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, US, announced: joining the International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification (OA Alliance); the initiative on Green Shipping Challenge, with Norway; and USD 15 billion over five years for climate change adaptation in developing countries.

Co-Chair Matthew Samuda, Minister, Office of the Prime Minister, Jamaica, highlighted vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), noting lack of political will and capacity and funding gaps, saying 50% of Jamaica's energy will come from renewable sources by 2030.

Moderator Stephen Widdicombe, Plymouth Marine Laboratory, emphasized the scale and speed at which climate change impacts are accelerating and the urgent need to scale up ocean action.

Rafael Mariano Grossi, Director-General, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), shared research on the marine environment that, *inter alia*, uses nuclear techniques, demonstrates how acidification impacts marine life, and assesses coastal area carbon sequestration capacity.

Johan Stander, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), underscored the need for accessible information and data for ocean action, pointing to the Southern Ocean as an under-sampled area. Jessie Turner, Director, OA Alliance, called for more multilateral funding to study ocean acidification.

Hans Otto-Pörtner, Co-Chair, IPCC Working Group II, highlighted contributions to the Sixth Assessment Report of the IPCC, including that: warm water corals have surpassed adaptation limits and global and regional risk analyses provide orientation for action. Inti Keith, Charles Darwin Foundation, Ecuador, described restoring coral reefs of the Galápagos Islands, saying if not done now, we will not have any coral reefs left.

Loreley Picourt, Executive Director, Ocean Climate Platform, *inter alia*, encouraged countries to increase ambition and ocean-based actions under their nationally determined contributions (NDCs), create enabling conditions, leverage funding, and evaluate how we can do better.

During discussions, Marshall Islands, for the PACIFIC SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (PSIDS), called for a significant increase in funding for PSIDS. SWEDEN announced, *inter alia*: its contribution of SEK 14 million to IOC-UNESCO for the Decade of Ocean Science.

ICELAND recalled past major mass extinctions from ocean acidification, calling for more action on climate mitigation. FINLAND shared lessons learned from scientific studies in the Baltic Sea.

UNFCCC reminded that the Paris Agreement is an essential legal tool to protect the ocean, calling Parties to show how they put it to work. TIMOR-LESTE asked developing countries to take the lead in establishing a Loss and Damage financial facility. TANZANIA reflected on the combined impacts of ocean acidification on mangroves, coral reefs and economic activities.

VIET NAM and TURKIYE highlighted the value of monitoring and evaluating the state of the ocean. SAVE THE WAVES COALITION discussed focusing on areas where iconic waves overlap with biodiversity hotspots and their efforts to create a network of MPAs and national policies with a goal of protecting 1,000 ecosystems by 2030.

SPAIN pointed to a multiplatform observation system and boosting artificial intelligence technology. IOC-UNESCO reflected on providing observational and scientific evidence on ocean acidification and deoxygenation, and THE OCEAN FOUNDATION shared examples of their work. OCEANIUM highlighted the potential to replace resource-intensive food production with seaweed.

WMO-IOC noted that the capacity to monitor ocean content and warming remains marginal for ocean acidification and deoxygenation. The ACADEMY OF FISHERIES AND MARINE SCIENCE highlighted abrupt drops in biodiversity experienced by small-scale fisheries.

OCEAN VISIONS spoke of research efforts focused on removing CO<sub>2</sub> from the air and water to increase the capacity of the ocean to store carbon and ZERO-ASSOCIAÇÃO SISTEMA TERRESTRE SUSTENTÁVEL proposed renewable fuel use and modernizing port infrastructure.

**Making fisheries sustainable and providing access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets:** Co-Chair Derek Klazen, Minister, Fisheries and Marine Resources, Namibia, shared Namibia's protection of fish stocks through policies that restrict trolling and longlining within a 200m isobath. Co-Chair Lawrence Hanson, Fisheries and Oceans, Canada, highlighted actions on ghost gear, and capacity building efforts to stop IUU fishing.

Gim Huay Neo, World Economic Forum, emphasized that artisanal fisheries are blue food systems that address inclusion, accessibility to food, nutrition, and environmental sustainability.

Qu Dongyu, Director-General, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), said oceans, rivers, and lakes can feed the world only if managed responsibly, equitably, and sustainably.

Henry Puna, Secretary-General, Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), described efforts to address overfishing, participate on regional fisheries councils, and implement the Agreement on Port State Measures to reduce IUU fishing.

Shakuntala Thilsted, WorldFish, listed international instruments for small scale fisheries, such as the FAO State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture, the Discussion Paper on the role of aquatic foods and the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition. Santiago Wills, Chair, WTO Fisheries Subsidies Negotiations, highlighted the conclusion of the WTO agreement on fisheries subsidies as the first legally-binding agreement on ocean sustainability.

Elisa Morgera, Director, One Ocean Hub, shared research on a human rights-based approach to small scale fisheries and marine resources to implement SDG 14. Editrudith Lukanga, Co-President, World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers, pointed to the Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries as a positive approach to secure sustainable small-scale fisheries, with the AFRICAN UNION emphasizing the need to implement the guidelines and ensure that women are represented and recognized.

PAKISTAN, for G-77/CHINA, encouraged the exchange of best practices including through south-south and triangular cooperation. SOLOMON ISLANDS, for PSIDS, supported the WTO agreement on fisheries subsidies, the BBNJ process, and ecosystem-based approaches for fisheries management.

FRENCH POLYNESIA, for the PIF, called for increased investment and research for a blue food system. NORTH-EAST ATLANTIC FISHERIES COMMISSION highlighted their use of area-based measures to protect vulnerable species and strict monitoring to ensure control and enforcement of their management measures.

CABO VERDE emphasized the potential benefits of transitioning from artisanal to small-scale fishing including allowing vessels to operate in wider areas. INDONESIA described a project that helped a small-scale tuna fishery obtain certification of fair-trade tuna, and other policies to empower small scale fisheries.

An artisanal woman fisher, with COSTA HUMBOLDT, called for empowering women through equal access to land and sea, processing facilities, capacity building and investment.

## In the Corridors

Depending on where you stood on Wednesday, the atmosphere was completely different. In the formal meeting rooms, with the air conditioning cranked up, the mood was chilly and muted. Familiar comments and statements were offered and important voluntary commitments announced, but the response seemed lacklustre. Outside the plenary room, warmth and hope emanated from participants in side-event rooms, energized by multiple examples of partnerships and actions from around the world working to save the ocean. "We're really moving the needle here," gushed one delegate.

But under a warm Lisbon sun at the end of the day, the atmosphere was charged: street protesters shouted messages: "Voluntary commitments are not commitments" and, "The ocean is rising and so are we," expressing their disdain or anger at the work from inside the conference center. "It feels like we're attending very different meetings," one delegate shouted over the trans-music from the love+freedom protest box. The question that remained was how to reconcile all the different sentiments, and really #SaveOurOcean.