

SUMMARY OF THE OCEAN CONFERENCE: 5-9 JUNE 2017

The high-level UN Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14 – Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development) was held from 5-9 June 2017, at UN Headquarters in New York, co-hosted by the Governments of Fiji and Sweden. Approximately 4,000 delegates attended the conference, including 16 Heads of State or Government, two deputy Prime Ministers, 86 Ministers, 16 Vice Ministers, and other government representatives; and participants from the UN system, other intergovernmental organizations, international and regional financial institutions, civil society, academic and research institutions, indigenous peoples and local communities, and the private sector.

The Ocean Conference aimed to: identify ways and means to support the implementation of SDG 14; build on existing successful partnerships and stimulate innovative and concrete new partnerships to advance the implementation of SDG 14; involve all relevant stakeholders; share experiences gained at the national, regional and international levels in the implementation of SDG 14; and contribute to the follow-up and review process of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda), by providing an input to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF).

The conference comprised plenary meetings, partnership dialogues and a special event on 8 June, commemorating World Oceans Day. Partnership dialogues focused on: addressing marine pollution; managing, protecting, conserving and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems; minimizing and addressing ocean acidification; making fisheries sustainable; increasing economic benefits to small island developing states (SIDS) and least developed countries (LDCs) and providing access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets; increasing scientific knowledge, and developing research capacity and transfer of marine technology; and enhancing the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Spearheaded by Fiji and Sweden, the conference was largely considered a success in building momentum for the implementation of SDG 14, as a central rather than isolated component of the 2030 Agenda. It produced three outcomes: an intergovernmentally agreed Call for Action; a registry of voluntary commitments; and key messages from the partnership dialogues. The Call for Action reconfirms the commitment of

UN Member States to the implementation of SDG 14 within the context of the 2030 Agenda, and to mobilize resources in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. In addition, the registration of 1328 voluntary commitments by governments and other stakeholders was celebrated as a major achievement. The voluntary commitments cover a wide range of topics, from creation of marine protected areas (MPAs) and action on plastic and other marine debris, to funding for scientific research and capacity-building activities. Finally, the partnership dialogues were instrumental in facilitating knowledge and experience sharing between conference participants, and clarifying interlinkages between SDG 14 and the other goals.

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,” including the 17 SDGs and 169 targets. 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 SIDS and LDCs; and, as means of implementation,

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increasing scientific knowledge, providing access to resources and markets for small-scale artisanal fishers, and implementing international law, among others.

In December 2015, the UN General Assembly decided to convene a high-level UN conference to support the implementation of SDG 14 in Fiji (resolution 70/226). The venue was reconsidered due to the impact of Tropical Cyclone Winston, which struck Fiji in February 2016. In September 2016, the General Assembly decided to hold the conference at UN Headquarters in New York, co-hosted by Fiji and Sweden (resolution 70/303). By the same resolution, the General Assembly agreed on the structure and outcomes of the conference; requested the President to convene a two-day preparatory meeting in February 2017; and requested the UN Secretary-General to prepare a background note ahead of the preparatory meeting, including a proposal of themes for partnership dialogues to convene during the conference.

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

PREPARATORY MEETING: The Preparatory Meeting for the Ocean Conference was held from 15-16 February 2017, at UN Headquarters. Delegates discussed the themes for the partnership dialogues, and held an exchange of views on elements for the Call for Action. UN Member States noted the importance of a concise, action-oriented declaration, which is easy for the public to understand and captures a common vision for action on SDG 14.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONSULTATIONS: The zero draft of the Call for Action was issued by the co-facilitators on 10 March 2017, and was followed by the first round of consultations from 20-22 March. Member States exchanged views on the zero draft, and generally favored it as an accurate reflection of the discussions that took place during the preparatory meeting. Discussions addressed, among others, references to: climate change issues; means of implementation of ocean-related targets, including reference to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda; UNCLOS; and World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations on fisheries subsidies.

Following circulation of a revised zero draft on 10 April 2017, the second round of consultations convened on 24-25 and 27 April. Main areas of disagreement included references to: the negotiations on marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction (BBNJ); UNCLOS; and the WTO negotiations on fisheries subsidies. Governments also discussed the process for the follow-up and review of SDG 14; and debated references to “blue economy,” plastics and microplastics, CBDR, and special considerations for particular groups of countries in relation to means of implementation.

The second revised draft of the Call for Action was circulated on 9 May 2017, and the third round of consultations was held on 22-23 and 25 May. Following extensive discussion, Member States reached agreement on the Call for Action. The US noted its intention to dissociate itself from the agreed text on the WTO negotiations, adding it will make known its position on this, and possibly other paragraphs, at the conference.

OCEAN CONFERENCE REPORT

On Monday, 5 June 2017, the Ocean Conference opened with the “Kava Ceremony,” a traditional Fijian welcome, followed by a “Life on Earth” video on the ocean, narrated by Sir David Attenborough, outlining the benefits of, and threats faced by, the ocean, and opportunities to address them.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres opened the conference. Josai Voreqe (Frank) Bainimarama, Prime Minister of Fiji, and Isabella Lövin, Minister for International Development Cooperation and Climate and Deputy Prime Minister of Sweden, were elected Conference Co-Presidents.

Recalling the borderless nature of the ocean, Co-President Lövin thanked Fiji for its critical role in raising the ocean issue on the global agenda, and expressed hope for the conference to be the “game changer” the ocean needs. Co-President Bainimarama highlighted the threats of climate change and ocean litter, declaring no government can afford to ignore the magnitude of such threats, adding that greedy nations and commercial interests threaten livelihoods in SIDS.

Secretary-General Guterres highlighted how SDG 14 serves as a roadmap towards a clean ocean, including: ending the dichotomy between economic activities and ocean health; building strong partnerships and political leadership based on the existing legal framework, such as on MPAs and fisheries management; making new funding commitments; deepening our knowledge base; and sharing best practices.

UN General Assembly President Peter Thomson considered the UN Ocean Conference the “best opportunity we will ever have to reverse the cycle of decline in which human activities have put the ocean”; pointed to IUU fishing and harmful fisheries subsidies as driving fish stocks to tipping points, in combination with climate change; and called for: “fidelity” to SDG 14 and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

Frederick Masiwa Makamure Shava, President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), called for resilient infrastructure, sustainable industrialization, and holistic implementation of SDG 14 within the 2030 Agenda. Wu Hongbo, Secretary-General of the Conference and Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, emphasized the need for urgent and concrete action to save the ocean, as well as capacity building and enhanced financing.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: Delegates adopted the conference’s rules of procedure, agenda and organization of work (UN/CONF.230/1-3); elected as Vice-Presidents: Algeria, Kenya and Morocco, for Africa; Indonesia and Maldives for Asia and the Pacific; Croatia, Estonia and Poland for Eastern Europe; Guatemala, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela for Latin America and the Caribbean; and Ireland and New Zealand for the Western Europe and Others Group; and elected Arthur Amaya Andambi (Kenya) as the conference’s Rapporteur.

GENERAL DEBATE

Delegates engaged in a general debate in plenary from Monday to Friday afternoon. The following section summarizes statements delivered during the week, clustered around broad thematic areas.

IUU FISHING: President Robert Mugabe, Zimbabwe, urged ending IUU fishing, with Enele Sosene Sopoaga, Prime Minister of Tuvalu, also underscoring the need to set fish catch limits below the maximum sustainable yield. President Baron Waqa, Nauru, highlighted agreement with neighboring countries on proactive measures for sustainable tuna management, and called for the conference to consider the efficacy of multilateral action in addressing the interlinked challenges related to climate change

and IUU fishing. President Tommy Remengesau, Palau, urged countries to ratify the Port State Measures Agreement of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) to combat IUU fishing. Spain highlighted commitment to combat IUU fishing, including operations resulting in financial penalties and a ban on fishing activities for violators. The US highlighted its role in creating the Safe Ocean Network to combat IUU fishing. Noting unprecedented levels of IUU fishing in their exclusive economic zones (EEZ), Papua New Guinea, with Cambodia, called for support to improve monitoring and surveillance. New Zealand announced a US\$54 million contribution for addressing IUU fishing and managing fisheries in the Pacific. The Republic of Korea drew attention to its capacity-building assistance for SIDS and LDCs; and announced the creation of a catch documentation scheme to combat IUU.

The League of Arab States outlined efforts to address fisheries- and aquaculture-related challenges in the region, including on capacity building and addressing IUU fishing. The European Commission highlighted the opportunity to advance a holistic approach to ocean management; called for urgent action on overfishing and pollution, unregulated fisheries in the Arctic high seas, and fisheries subsidies; and urged ratification of the FAO Port State Measures Agreement and rapid conclusion of negotiations on BBNJ.

MPAs: President Ali Bongo Ondimba, Gabon, highlighted the designation of a 5,000 square-kilometer MPA, and establishment of a national council of the sea and an integrated marine strategy. Henry Puna, Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, reported on closing 60% of his country's ocean space to commercial harvesting and 50% renewable energy use, with a target of 100% use by 2020. Vice-President Vincent Meriton, Seychelles, committed to protecting 30% of the Seychelles EEZ.

Greece pledged to expand MPA coverage from 6 to 17% by 2020. Grenada highlighted establishing the world's first underwater sculpture and coral rehabilitation parks. French Polynesia pledged to classify its entire EEZ as an MPA called "the Great Far Ocean" MPA. Kiribati highlighted the designation of its entire EEZ as a shark sanctuary, the designation of 11% of the EEZ as a tuna spawning ground, and the creation of community- and village-based MPAs. Jamaica committed to increase MPA coverage from 13.5% to 15.5% by 2019 and adopt an improved MPA governance framework by 2020. South Africa announced its intention to designate 22 new MPAs. Belize promised to increase the number of its no-take zones by 2020.

Israel committed to increase MPAs from 1 to 3%. United Arab Emirates reported a 17% increase in mangroves from 1990 to 2015. Chile announced plans for two new MPAs totaling 520,000 square kilometers by 2018, noting its total MPA area will then exceed 1 million square kilometers. Portugal emphasized its commitment to protect at least 14% of its coastal and marine areas. The Dominican Republic reported on protecting more than 30% of its marine and coastal areas. Spain highlighted efforts to reach 10% MPA coverage of its waters by 2020. Tonga committed to devoting 30% of its EEZ as MPAs for restoration and conservation. Italy underscored establishing two new MPAs to reach 20% MPA coverage in its waters, and financing an expert group meeting on Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 (protected areas, including MPAs). Cuba noted that 18.9% of its waters are MPAs. Argentina pledged to increase MPA coverage from 3 to 10% by 2020. Panama announced coverage of 14% of its waters as MPAs. Lebanon unveiled plans for 15 MPAs. Malta reported 30% coverage of its waters through MPAs. As member of the 10x20 Ocean Sanctuary Initiative's steering committee,

Poland encouraged other countries to join this effort to promote the restoration of oceans by establishing science-based marine sanctuaries. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines highlighted a commitment to protect 20% of their waters by 2020 as part of the Caribbean Challenge Initiative.

Canada announced creation of a new MPA of 4,000 square kilometers, and the goal to reach 10% MPA coverage by 2020. Antigua and Barbuda reported on establishing a marine economic system protection trust to ensure that MPAs are properly managed. Brazil called attention to the Brazilian Blue Fund to, *inter alia*, ensure that 10% of its waters are under area-based management by 2020, and highlighted a joint proposal to establish the South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary. IUCN prioritized accelerating action extending MPA networks. The High Seas Alliance underscored that target 14.5 to protect at least 10% of coastal and marine areas should only be the starting point of ocean conservation.

The Republic of Korea underlined planned expansion of its 27 MPAs. Malaysia announced its intention to protect 10% of its coastal and marine areas by 2020. Legambiente called for a target of 10% MPA coverage in the Mediterranean, and urged the adoption of international legislation on environmental crime. Oceana called for strictly enforced no-take zones, noting that the IUCN World Conservation Congress considered a 20% target by 2020 reasonable, and drew attention to a partnership with Google to launch Global Fishing Watch, an online interactive tool to track fishing activities of 35,000 commercial fishing vessels globally. The Network of Marine Protected Area Managers in the Mediterranean (MedPAN), on behalf of other regional networks, highlighted that creating spaces for park managers to share experiences and best practices is key to increased MPA performance.

BLUE ECONOMY: Cabo Verde highlighted his country's charter on blue economy and growth. Kenya reported on creating a state department for fisheries and blue economy. China proposed a blue partnership to build mutual trust in ocean governance for sustainable marine development. Finland reported on its nutrient recycling programme and, with Denmark, advocated the transition to a circular economy. President Evo Morales, Bolivia, called for a paradigm shift from unsustainable consumption and production to "buen vivir." The Commonwealth Secretariat committed to supporting its vulnerable member countries in transitioning to a blue economy. The UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) reported on developing value chains for poor fishing communities, and promoting green circular economy and renewable energy to reduce marine pollution.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) drew attention to its commitments, including on exploring financial approaches and mechanisms to support a blue economy in SIDS, and creation of a database on fisheries subsidies. The Nature Conservancy delineated its Blue Bond "debt-for-nature swaps" approach, through which debt is swapped in exchange for conservation action in SIDS.

INTERNATIONAL LEGALLY-BINDING INSTRUMENT (ILBI) ON BBNJ: President Robert Mugabe, Zimbabwe, urged concluding an international legally-binding instrument on BBNJ. Enele Sosene Sopoaga, Prime Minister of Tuvalu, with many, underscored the timely conclusion of the negotiations of an ILBI on BBNJ. Tonga and Trinidad and Tobago called for an intergovernmental conference (IGC) on an ILBI on BBNJ to

be convened by 2018. Ocean Care, on behalf of a consortium of NGOs, called for addressing underwater noise in an ILBI on BBNJ.

PLASTICS AND POLLUTION: Prime Minister Sopoaga, Tuvalu, underscored the need for a reduction of single-use plastic. President Nana Akufo-Addo, Ghana, announced his country's plan to eliminate marine plastics from its coast by 2025. Mohamed Shainee, Minister of Fisheries and Agriculture, Maldives, highlighted that his country's fisheries industry is set to phase out use of plastics, and collect marine debris throughout its EEZ. Prince Albert II of Monaco reported on banning single-use plastics. Romania and Japan emphasized the importance of the "reduce, reuse and recycle" approach. Ireland committed to prohibiting the sale and manufacturing of microbeads in cosmetics and other products. Indonesia outlined its commitment to reduce marine plastic debris by 70% within eight years, and the launch of a US\$1 billion waste management strategy. Costa Rica underlined its intention to substitute plastics. Kenya highlighted its recent ban on plastics. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines highlighted a ban on import and use of Styrofoam containers.

Sweden outlined commitments on ocean litter, including a ban on microplastics; and its role in the Arctic debris project. Italy reported on reducing use of non-biodegradable plastic bags by 50%. Austria stressed reducing plastic-bag use by 25%. Norway announced a new development programme to combat marine litter and microplastics. Timor Leste highlighted its zero-plastic policy. Democratic Republic of Congo reported on the positive impact of his country's decade-old ban on plastic wrappings. The Center for Oceanic Awareness, Research and Education advocated a shift from considering marine plastic debris a waste management problem to an issue of plastic manufacture. Seas at Risk shared their concerns about deep sea mining.

The Czech Republic delineated her country's waste recycling programme and underlined that the responsibility to maintain healthy oceans is shared by all, including landlocked countries. Turkey pointed to its aim for a 65% recycling rate for packaging waste and 35% for all recyclable waste by 2023.

The International Whaling Commission emphasized that abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear is the single biggest threat to cetaceans. The UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS) drew attention to their implementation of water treatment projects around the globe. Expressing disappointment that the Call for Action does not call for a treaty on plastics, the Children and Youth Major Group urged action on marine litter and pollution, and committed to upscale engagement in activities on global learning through local action. The 5 Gyres Institute drew attention to the "#BreakFreeFromPlastic" movement. Sustainable Coastlines Charitable Trust noted the need for better data to inform decision making on marine litter in the Pacific, and committed to marine litter clean-up initiatives in the region. Ocean Cleanup highlighted his organization's development of a system to use ocean currents to collect plastic waste, and stressed the importance of technology to address marine litter. UN Environment (UNEP) reiterated the call for radically reducing single-use plastics and phasing out microplastics.

CLIMATE CHANGE: Drawing attention to the challenges faced by SIDS, Mohamed Shainee, Maldives, for the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), reiterated the AOSIS commitment to implement SDG 14, particularly by addressing ocean acidification. President Peter Christian, Federated States of Micronesia, called upon US President Donald Trump to do "what his country can afford to do" about climate change and the ocean. Marshall Islands thanked individual countries

"standing firm" on the Paris Agreement. Prime Minister Puna, Cook Islands, urged addressing the disproportionate burden of responsible ocean stewardship and reinvigorating commitment to the fight against climate change. Prince Albert II, Monaco, outlined a partnership with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) to strengthen resilience to ocean acidification.

Sweden outlined commitments on climate mitigation, including to become net carbon neutral by 2045. Senegal underscored habitat restoration and fisheries adaptation to climate change. Australia drew attention to its commitment of US\$1 billion to support Pacific SIDS to integrate climate action into development plans. Germany stressed its International Climate Initiative financing marine biodiversity projects and the creation of the Blue Action Fund. IUCN prioritized accelerating action to lower greenhouse gas emissions. Haiti emphasized that environmental degradation and climate change impacts jeopardize development efforts.

SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES: Prime Minister Tuilaepa Aiono Sailele Malielegaoi, Samoa, highlighted commitments on community-based fisheries management. Peru prioritized attention to small-scale fishing as source of livelihoods for coastal communities. Bangladesh, for the LDCs, stressed the need for market access for small-scale artisanal fishers. Mexico prioritized improving living conditions of coastal communities through sustainable marine resource exploitation. Denmark and Friends of Marine Life highlighted the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities. Slovenia recalled the importance of small-scale fisheries for its economy. Rare emphasized secure tenure in the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF Guidelines) and committed to mobilize US\$100 million by 2021 towards implementing SDG 14 by small-scale fishing communities.

MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION: Nigeria pointed to the work of the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency on the prevention of marine pollution and the implementation of International Maritime Organization (IMO) and International Labor Organization (ILO) provisions; and called for increased technical assistance, including on data collection. Mauritius stressed the need for a concrete mechanism on technology transfer and financing for implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Sudan called for technology transfer to LDCs. Iran highlighted awareness-raising needs and environmental challenges concerning the Persian Gulf. Drawing attention to thousands of Nepalis working as seafarers, Nepal prioritized education and awareness raising. The British Virgin Islands urged increasing support for SIDS and especially microstates, which are not UN Member States in their own right. The International Telecommunication Union illustrated how it contributes to ocean data collection and pointed to its joint task force with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Organization of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO-IOC) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

FOLLOW-UP: Ecuador, for the Group of 77 and China, called for a global partnership for poor countries to implement SDG 14, including through mobilization of resources, capacity building, technology transfer and knowledge sharing. President Remengesau, Palau, proposed establishing a "blue fund" for SDG 14 implementation. Qatar suggested "post-conference steps" to determine the need for a new instrument for overall ocean conservation. Mauritius stressed the need for a follow-up mechanism to ensure commitments are implemented.

Portugal and Kenya each offered to host a follow-up ocean conference in 2020. Montenegro, Peru, Poland, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines called for appointing a Secretary-General's special representative for the ocean to promote SDG 14 implementation. The Russian Federation preferred retaining SDG 14 within the HLPF's purview.

The Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples lamented that the Call for Action does not go far enough in recognizing indigenous peoples' rights and called for appointing a rapporteur on indigenous rights under UNCLOS. The Nippon Foundation urged for the creation of an intergovernmental panel on the ocean.

OTHER MATTERS: Mongolia underlined the right to a flag for landlocked states, as recognized in the Barcelona Declaration of 1921. Egypt pointed to its upcoming presidency of the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, highlighted exploring biodiversity mainstreaming into sectors such as mining and health. Nicaragua praised the role of UNCLOS in maintaining global security, *inter alia*, through providing means of peaceful dispute settlement; and drew attention to the principle of CBDR and the right of peoples to self-determination. Malaysia highlighted the need for addressing usage conflicts, promoting cross-sectoral coordination, and identifying new ocean-based employment opportunities. Highlighting increasing disparities, Pakistan said that without CBDR, progress on the SDGs will remain elusive; and outlined steps to strengthen national marine scientific research capacity.

Namibia highlighted interlinkages with SDGs 1 (no poverty) and 2 (zero hunger). El Salvador also drew attention to SDG 10 (reduced inequalities). The Ramsar Convention highlighted the contribution of wetlands to achieving multiple SDGs and announced the 2018 release of the Global Wetlands Outlook.

Turkey highlighted regional efforts, including through the conventions for the protection of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. The Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission delineated the Baltic Sea Action Plan, which aims to restore the good ecological status of the Baltic marine environment by 2021, including through reducing eutrophication and regulating shipping activities. The Commission for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR) highlighted collaboration with other regional seas conventions.

Réseau International de Femmes said that women can serve as intermediaries between international cooperation and local activities, and integration of gender perspectives in decision-making. Comunidad y Biodiversidad recommended international sustainability standards in small- and large-scale fisheries, and incentives to encourage the replication of sustainable practices. Earth Law Center called for an approach based on the rights of nature, noting the ocean has the right to life, health and freedom from pollution. A Rocha International pointed to its establishment of eco-churches and noted the importance of citizen engagement and science in the care for the marine environment.

WORLD OCEANS DAY

On Thursday, the conference held a special event to celebrate World Oceans Day. Noting that the ocean makes Earth unique in the solar system, Co-President Lövin said World Oceans Day celebrates our dream of a healthy and productive ocean. UN General Assembly President Thomson said World Oceans Day also celebrates our awareness of the need to "right the wrongs" we have done to the ocean, adding that the conference is a turning point towards protecting the ocean for posterity. Miguel de Serpa

Soares, UN Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs, on behalf of UN Secretary-General Guterres, said that the 2030 Agenda provides a common vision and the conference has galvanized determination to keep the ocean safe and bountiful.

Via video link, UNESCO youth representatives urged decision makers to act now to ensure that "our children will remember us as the generation that avoided the catastrophe, rather than the one that created it." Lamenting the devastating effect of human activity on the ocean, Fabien Cousteau, documentary filmmaker, called on delegates to leverage innovation and think outside the box to save the ocean, and ensure its future for the children of tomorrow. Describing the status of the oceans in which 90% of large fish species have disappeared due to overexploitation, 50% of corals have died where there is ever increasing acidification, Brian Skerry, Avatar Alliance Foundation, drew attention to a new generation of scientists, ocean researchers, filmmakers, activists and conservationists working to protect the ocean, and stressed that the Call for Action "starts here and it starts now."

Underlining that humans are the crew on "Spaceship Earth," Cady Coleman, retired astronaut, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), noted that knowledge collected from space provides opportunities to monitor life on Earth. Stressing that the "ocean is everybody's business," Sir Richard Branson, Founder of Virgin Group, urged going further than SDG 14 targets on MPAs and noted that a new treaty on BBNJ, with teeth and vision, could be the "Paris Agreement for the ocean." Sylvia Earle, Mission Blue, stressed that nations with coastlines take unprecedented action, particularly those SIDS that dedicate 80% of their EEZ to MPAs.

Aulani Wilhelm, Polynesian Voyaging Society, urged the conference to "address the plight of our oceans" and take bold action to care for "island Earth." Scott Bolton, Southwest Research Institute, underlined the irony of looking for water as indicator for life on other planets while failing to protect oceans on Earth. Iain Kerr, Ocean Alliance, pointed to the "game-changing potential" of low-cost, field-friendly and scalable technologies such as drones in advancing understanding of the oceans. Artist and photographer Chris Jordan introduced a video showing the effects of plastics on seabirds on Midway, the island that is furthest away from any continent. Photographer and conservationist Ellen Cuylaerts announced the winners of the 2017 World Oceans Day photo competition.

Terry Tamminen, CEO, Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation, announced teaming up with Mexico to try to save the vaquita, the world's most endangered mammal, through a permanent ban on gill-nets in the region, enhanced enforcement of illegal fishing legislation, and an *ex situ* repopulation programme. In a video message, UN Messenger of Peace Leonardo DiCaprio, argued that "if given a chance, nature can rebound," calling for the conclusion of a "Paris Agreement for the ocean" with ambitious, measurable goals to protect it from unlimited exploitation, to the benefit of all.

Highlighting that 80 million tons of plastic are dumped into the ocean every year, actor Diego Luna referred to the generosity of the ocean in providing oxygen, inspiration and tranquility, and urged finding inspiration from local community voices. Fatou Janha Mboob, TRY Oyster Women Association, the Gambia, described how her organization empowered oyster-harvesting women to improve their livelihoods and restore mangrove ecosystems, noting that when people at the grassroots level are empowered "everything will be possible." Providing a personal account of ecosystem decline on his home island, Budi Setiawan, Kelompok Peduli Lingkungan Belitung Coastal

Community Group, Indonesia, presented work to restore natural resources through a network of local businesses, and education and awareness raising among youth. Yohei Sasakawa, Chairman, Nippon Foundation, announced that the Foundation, working with the UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, will launch three new capacity-building projects aimed at enhancing SIDS' ocean governance capabilities and training ocean experts to drive SDG 14 implementation.

Announcing the "Run for the Oceans" global event, Eric Liedtke, Executive Board Member, Adidas, announced that the company would make one million pairs of ocean plastic shoes, equivalent to 11 million plastic bottles in 2017, and five million pairs in 2018; and called for private-sector leadership, as well as other partnerships, to completely eliminate virgin polyester from the supply chain and replace it with ocean plastic.

Karan Jerath, young leader for the SDGs, showcased his invention of a device separating oil, water and gas as homogeneous mixtures at the source to clean up oil spills. He stressed that youth, as the next generation of problem solvers, have the power to start a movement to make the world a better place. Melati and Isabel Wijsen, co-founders, Bye Bye Plastic Bags Bali, reported on mobilizing over 12,000 people collecting 40 tonnes of garbage along the coastline in one day, resulting in a Bali government's commitment to ban plastic bags by 2018.

Co-President Bainimarama closed the celebration by calling on all men, women and children to make the fight against further ocean degradation personal. After a musical performance by the Dawul Wuru Aboriginal Corporation from the Great Barrier Reef, Australia, a group of youth from coastal UNESCO World Heritage Sites highlighted that the conference participants had "the power to shape the world that youth will inherit," and called for taking part in the "#MyOceanPledge" promoted by UNESCO.

PARTNERSHIP DIALOGUES

ADDRESSING MARINE POLLUTION: On Monday, participants convened in this partnership dialogue, co-chaired by Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan, Indonesia, and Vidar Helgesen, Norway, and moderated by Elliott Harris, UN Environment. Pandjaitan delineated Indonesia's action plan on plastic and microplastic debris, aiming to: foster behavioral change; reduce land- and sea-based leakage; reduce plastic production and consumption; and enhance funding mechanisms and law enforcement. Helgesen highlighted that marine litter threatens both the ecology and the economy of the ocean, and requires political attention; and pointed to Norway's recently-launched development programme to combat marine litter. Harris referred to action taken in countries such as Canada, France, Kenya and Rwanda to reduce land-based sources of marine pollution, including by banning single-use plastic items and microplastics in cosmetics. A summary of the discussions is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/vol32/enb3229e.html>.

On Friday in plenary, Dian Triansyah Djani, Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the UN, reported on the dialogue, highlighting, *inter alia*, the sense of urgency to address all forms of marine pollution, the importance of implementing existing legislation and conventions related to marine pollution, and the need for stronger international commitment to address marine plastic.

MANAGING, PROTECTING, CONSERVING AND RESTORING MARINE AND COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS: On Tuesday, delegates engaged in a partnership dialogue on marine and coastal ecosystems, which was co-chaired by President Remengesau, Palau, and Silvia Velo, Under-Secretary of State,

Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea, Italy, and was moderated by Martha Rojas-Urrego, Secretary General, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. Co-Chair Remengesau highlighted his country's decision to designate 80% of its waters as a no-take zone; and underscored the need for funding mechanisms accessible to SIDS and LDCs. Co-Chair Velo highlighted the contribution of the 10x20 Initiative to improve the geographical coverage of MPAs; and announced willingness to increase Italian support to a sustainable ocean-based economy. Moderator Rojas-Urrego highlighted the critical role played by coastal ecosystems in achieving progress on various SDGs. A summary of the discussions is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/vol32/enb3230e.html>.

On Friday, in plenary, Co-Chair Remengesau reported on the dialogue, highlighting, *inter alia*: unprecedented destruction of marine ecosystems; a broad range of measures for managing, protecting and restoring ecosystem services; the importance of means of implementation and of engaging local communities; the need for synergies across the 2030 Agenda and enhanced regional management; and the need to institutionalize a "home for the ocean" within the UN.

MINIMIZING AND ADDRESSING OCEAN

ACIDIFICATION: On Tuesday, participants convened in this partnership dialogue, co-chaired by Prince Albert II of Monaco, and Agostinho Mondlane, Minister of the Sea, Inland Waters and Fisheries, Mozambique, who both stressed the importance of the Paris Agreement to mitigate ocean acidification. The session was moderated by Petteri Taalas, Secretary-General, WMO. Prince Albert outlined threats of ocean acidification to marine species, emphasizing regeneration of affected waters and increasing species' resilience for survival. Mondlane explained how ocean acidification hinders Mozambique's efforts to build alternative livelihoods for coastal communities based on mariculture. Taalas explained the link between atmospheric CO₂ and ocean acidification. A summary of the discussions is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/vol32/enb3230e.html>.

On Friday in plenary, Co-Chair Mondlane reported on the dialogue, highlighting discussions on, *inter alia*, the need to address acidification and climate change in a comprehensive and holistic way, the call for a more comprehensive understanding of acidification in order to motivate local action, and the importance of reducing CO₂ emissions in line with the Paris Agreement.

MAKING FISHERIES SUSTAINABLE: On Wednesday, delegates engaged in a partnership dialogue on sustainable fisheries, which was co-chaired by Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, and Oumar Guèye, Minister of Fisheries and Maritime Economy, Senegal, and moderated by Tony Long, Pew Charitable Trust. Co-Chair LeBlanc emphasized: MPAs as part of sustainable fisheries and WTO as the venue to achieve enforceable fisheries subsidies rules. Co-Chair Guèye, reported on reserving marine areas to small-scale fisheries, strengthening the ecosystem approach to fisheries to benefit future generations, and stronger sanctions against IUU fishing. A summary of the discussions is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/vol32/enb3231e.html>.

On Friday, Co-Chair Guèye reported on the dialogue, highlighting, *inter alia*, that: 300 million people rely on fisheries for their livelihoods; a third of fish stocks are overexploited; small-scale fisheries constitute up to 90% of fishing activity in SIDS and LDCs; overfishing in EEZs and the high seas threatens biodiversity and food security; harmful fishing subsidies are

drivers of over-fishing; resilience measures, including the protection of mangroves, are needed; and co-management between state and fishing communities should be promoted.

INCREASING ECONOMIC BENEFITS TO SIDS AND LDCS AND PROVIDING ACCESS FOR SMALL-SCALE ARTISANAL FISHERS TO MARINE RESOURCES AND MARKETS: On Wednesday, participants convened in this partnership dialogue, co-chaired by Keith Mitchell, Prime Minister of Grenada, and Marko Pomerants, Minister of Environment, Estonia, and moderated by Dame Meg Taylor, Pacific Ocean Commissioner.

Co-Chair Mitchell stressed that SIDS can be “petri dishes for investment” in the blue and green economy, and noted technological advances in Africa that enable fishers to check fish prices while at sea. Co-Chair Pomerants stressed the role of regional cooperation to enhance access to markets for small-scale fishers, and underscored the importance of cooperatives that enhance fishers’ purchasing power. Moderator Taylor noted that addressing SDG 14 will also address SDGs on poverty, hunger, gender equality, sustainable consumption and production, climate change and partnerships. A summary of the discussions is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/vol32/enb3231e.html>.

On Friday in plenary Sven Jürgenson, Permanent Representative of Estonia to the UN, on behalf of Co-Chair Pomerants, reported on the dialogue, highlighting, *inter alia*, the need to ensure alternative livelihood pathways for coastal communities and to include fishing communities in decision-making processes; and drawing attention to the Nauru Agreement concerning the Cooperation in the Management of Fisheries of Common Interest as positive example of regional cooperation maximizing benefits for SIDS.

INCREASING SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE, AND DEVELOPING RESEARCH CAPACITY AND TRANSFER OF MARINE TECHNOLOGY: On Thursday, participants convened in this partnership dialogue, co-chaired by Thorgerður Katrín Gunnarsdóttir, Minister of Fisheries and Agriculture, Iceland, and Héctor Soldi, Vice Minister for Fisheries and Aquaculture, Peru, and moderated by Johan Kuylensstierna, Stockholm Environment Institute, Sweden.

Co-Chair Gunnarsdóttir highlighted the need for: well-funded, independent research, and better use and transfer of existing technologies; and science to defend long-term societal interests. Co-Chair Soldi highlighted the need to leverage opportunities provided by big data. A summary of the discussions is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/vol32/enb3232e.html>.

On Friday in plenary, Co-Chair Gunnarsdóttir reported on the dialogue, highlighting the need for, *inter alia*: effective science communication; data sharing and developing methods applicable in data-poor areas; and engaging stakeholders, including through citizen science. She concluded by emphasizing the need for policymakers to “listen to science even if it makes them uncomfortable.”

ENHANCING THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF OCEANS AND THEIR RESOURCES BY IMPLEMENTING INTERNATIONAL LAW AS REFLECTED IN UNCLOS: On Friday, Co-Chair Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, Minister for International Development and the Pacific, Australia, highlighted her country’s US\$4.4 million commitment for implementing the Niue Treaty on Cooperation in Fisheries Surveillance and Law Enforcement of the South Pacific Region. Co-Chair Judy Wakhungu, Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Natural Resources, Kenya, underscored the need to implement UNCLOS provisions on

marine scientific research (MSR) and illustrated infrastructural developments, including Eastern Africa’s Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia-Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor project, taking into account economic development and environmental protection considerations. Calling on developing countries to take the lead in marine biodiversity protection, Moderator Heraldo Muñoz, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chile, highlighted the establishment of the world’s largest no-take marine park of 300,000 square kilometers, as well as plans for an MPA combined with a 450,000 square kilometers marine park on Robinson Crusoe island, and the potential for another 700,000 square kilometers MPA around Easter Island.

UN Legal Counsel Miguel de Serpa Soares emphasized the role of: full and effective implementation of UNCLOS for all SDG 14 targets and other SDGs; awareness raising about UNCLOS at the local level; and international assessment of partnerships’ effectiveness. Noting “acceptance of deep-seabed mining as an integral part of sustainable development” with due provisions for precautionary environmental protection, Michael Lodge, Secretary-General, International Seabed Authority pointed to the need for: universal participation in relevant international instruments, including for landlocked countries so that they participate in benefit-sharing; and more efforts to share knowledge and benefits from deep-seabed MSR with developing countries. Biliiana Cicin-Sain, President, Global Ocean Forum, called for: further refining SDG indicators; global guidance and funding for regional bodies to contribute to SDG 14 implementation; enhancing coordination among sectoral ocean regimes and the Rio Conventions, with an authoritative, open procedure to assess the success of, and identify synergies among, voluntary commitments; funding and involvement of external groups for UN-Ocean to deliver joint activities; holding annual multi-stakeholder coordination on the ocean, climate change and biodiversity; and specifying capacity-building modalities through the BBNJ process. Florence Galletti, French National Research Institute for Development, reported on developing knowledge and innovative capacity, highlighted the fragmented nature of UNCLOS implementation, and drew attention to the need for a regulatory framework to limit fishing in the vulnerable marine ecosystem in South West Africa.

In the ensuing discussion, Prime Minister Sopoaga, Tuvalu, called for legal clarity on migrating EEZ baselines due to sea-level rise, and urged global coordination of all efforts to improve ocean health. Greece stressed addressing UNCLOS implementation gaps, calling for new partnerships on issues such as sustainable tourism and marine litter including plastics.

Togo drew attention to the 2015-2025 Decade of African Seas and Oceans. Timor Leste emphasized that UNCLOS implementation is a matter of political will, not capacity. The EU called for: an ILBI on BBNJ and an international agreement on IUU fishing in the Arctic, and more cooperation between regional fisheries management organizations and regional seas conventions. Barbados emphasized the need for support to SIDS’ marine monitoring efforts. Indonesia committed to enlarge MPAs from 16 to 20 million hectares, and to convert marine plastic debris into profitable products. Iceland emphasized the regional fisheries management approach and the role of an ILBI on BBNJ to make the international legal framework more comprehensive, cautioning against “reinventing the wheel.” Honduras and Mexico expressed hope that the fourth meeting of the BBNJ Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) will make progress in establishing an IGC.

Nepal called for knowledge-sharing and technology transfer to landlocked developing countries to ensure implementation of both

SDG 14 and UNCLOS. India called for effective partnerships to implement UNCLOS. Trinidad and Tobago underscored the importance of MSR to improve UNCLOS implementation. Germany underlined the role of regional oceans governance for achieving SDG 14. Cyprus stressed that neither SDG 14 nor UNCLOS can be effective if implementation is fragmented.

The Ocean Policy Research Institute discussed an island management strategy that seeks to respond to sea-level rise, climate change and capacity building. Observatorio Pro Arrecifes urged considering alternatives to mega-projects that lead to coral reef destruction. The Wildlife Conservation Society recommended implementing: the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, IMO recommendations to protect marine mammals from ship strikes, and international cooperation to protect marine mammals from ocean noise. The OSPAR Convention stressed cross-sectoral cooperation to deliver an ecosystems approach to MPA establishment, as well as to ensure MPA effectiveness. The Children and Youth Major Group committed to offering innovative communication solutions, particularly through distilling UNCLOS into youth-friendly language to enhance awareness and participation.

In closing, Soares invited delegates to consider the suggestions made at the conference during the upcoming review of UN-Oceans' terms of reference. Lodge emphasized the need to make progress in the BBNJ negotiations and the relationship between regional and global governance. Galletti underscored the link between the law of the sea, sustainable development and MSR.

CLOSING PLENARY

On Friday afternoon, plenary heard reports from the partnership dialogues; and adopted the report of the credentials committee (A/CONF.230/13), and the Call for Action as agreed during intergovernmental consultations (A/CONF.230/L.1 and A/CONF.230/11), by acclamation.

The US: noted it did not support reference to technology transfer, reaffirming that strong protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights provides the incentives needed to foster innovation; disassociated itself from the call to accelerate work to complete WTO negotiations on fisheries subsidies with special and differential treatment for developing countries and LDCs, explaining that such language would have no standing in future WTO negotiations, and that WTO independence must be respected; and recalled the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on climate change. France welcomed the support for the Paris Agreement expressed by numerous Member States during the conference. The Russian Federation distanced itself from language on WTO negotiations on fisheries subsidies, highlighting the complex and sensitive nature of the topic and the need to address it under the WTO. Egypt expressed reservations on language implying that the spread of invasive alien species is solely due to human activities, noting that this is factually incorrect as there are other causes, including climate change. The EU emphasized the universal and unified character of UNCLOS as the legal framework for all ocean-related activities, noting that quoting SDG 14.c language stating UNCLOS provides such legal framework "as recalled in paragraph 158 of 'The Future We Want'" was accepted as a compromise but "will not be accepted in future negotiations."

Plenary then adopted the conference report, which was introduced by Rapporteur Andambi, without amendment. Conference Secretary-General Wu called for follow-up action on marine litter, marine ecosystem restoration, ocean acidification,

sustainable fisheries, and scientific knowledge; and encouraged registering further commitments after the conference. UN General Assembly President Thomson affirmed that the conference: generated broad momentum for implementing all the SDGs; showed that ocean and climate health are "two sides of the same coin"; spurred WTO negotiators to address harmful subsidies; and emphasized small-scale fisheries' role in a sustainable blue economy.

Co-President Bainimarama considered the conference a unique event in the history of Fiji and of the UN and listed voluntary commitments registered during the week, with the highest number of commitments in the North Atlantic and South Pacific, and relating to marine ecosystems, pollution and science. Co-President Lövin congratulated delegates, especially Fiji, for having placed the ocean at the center of the political agenda as a matter of human survival, in light of the combined pressures of marine litter, ocean acidification and overfishing. She welcomed Kenya and Portugal's offers to host the next conference in 2020, and called for a "strong home for the ocean at the UN" and leadership by the UN Secretary-General to drive SDG 14 implementation forward. She drew the conference to a close at 5:44 pm, following which, delegates participated in a cultural closing ceremony.

CALL FOR ACTION

In resolution A/CONF.230/L.1, the Ocean Conference adopted the declaration entitled "Our Ocean, Our Future: Call for Action" as the outcome document, and recommends that the General Assembly endorse it, at its 71st session.

In the Call for Action (A/CONF.230/11), the conference calls on all stakeholders to, *inter alia*:

- strengthen cooperation, policy coherence and coordination among institutions at all levels, and promote effective and transparent multi-stakeholder partnerships, including public-private partnerships;
- support plans to foster ocean-related education to promote ocean literacy and a culture of conservation, restoration and sustainable use of our ocean;
- dedicate greater resources to MSR, as well as the collection and sharing of data and knowledge, including traditional knowledge;
- accelerate actions to prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, particularly from land-based activities, including marine debris, plastics and microplastics, nutrient pollution, untreated wastewater, solid waste discharges, hazardous substances, pollution from ships, and abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear;
- promote waste prevention and minimization, develop sustainable consumption and production patterns, and develop alternatives such as reusable or recyclable products;
- implement long-term and robust strategies to reduce the use of plastics and microplastics, particularly plastic bags and single-use plastics;
- support the use of effective and appropriate area-based management tools, including MPAs and other approaches, such as marine spatial planning and integrated coastal zone management;
- develop and implement effective adaptation and mitigation measures that contribute to increasing and supporting resilience to ocean and coastal acidification, sea-level rise, and increase in ocean temperatures, and to addressing the other harmful impacts of climate change on the ocean;
- end destructive fishing practices and IUU fishing, addressing their root causes and holding actors and beneficiaries

accountable by taking appropriate actions, and effectively implementing flag and port state obligations;

- strengthen capacity building and technical assistance to small-scale artisanal fishers in developing countries to enhance access to marine resources and markets, and improve the socio-economic situation of fishers and fish workers;
- act decisively to prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, eliminate subsidies that contribute to IUU fishing and refrain from introducing new such subsidies, including through accelerating work to complete negotiations at the WTO on this issue, with special and differential treatment for developing countries and LDCs;
- actively engage in discussions and the exchange of views in the Preparatory Committee on BBNJ, so that the General Assembly can, before the end of its seventy-second session, decide on convening, and on a starting date of, an IGC; and
- call upon the UN Secretary-General to continue his efforts to support the implementation of SDG 14, in particular by enhancing inter-agency coordination and coherence throughout the UN system on ocean issues, taking into consideration the work of UN-Oceans.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE OCEAN CONFERENCE

“Take a deep breath, take another.

Every second breath comes from the ocean.”

(Melati and Isabel Wijisen, Founders of Bye Bye Plastic Bali)

“Human-induced problems have human-devised solutions. We know enough about the state of the ocean to act now and save it.” UN General Assembly President Peter Thompson’s mantra summed up the two key messages of the Ocean Conference. Collectively, the global community has a substantive body of knowledge on the state of ocean health, threats and causes of ecosystem decline, as well as effective solutions to address these issues. More importantly, the evidence about the state of ocean shows that humanity can afford no further delay in acting to address these threats. The state of the ocean is dire and any further decline would seriously jeopardize the world’s chance to achieve not only SDG 14, but the entire 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Ocean Conference was a unique event that primarily aimed to create high-level momentum for the implementation of SDG 14. In contrast to some other global issues such as climate change, which have their own international institutional home, ocean governance is distributed over a plethora of international and regional instruments and mechanisms, obscuring the combination of efforts needed to address the decline of ocean health. The Ocean Conference, therefore, intended to provide the full picture, show how SDG 14 relates to all the other SDGs, and share views and experiences across different sectors, levels and actors to address challenges, accelerate existing efforts, and stimulate action to address any gaps. This analysis reviews how the conference’s main outputs support these objectives. It also shows that the conference’s main achievement might actually be less tangible: genuine awareness of the vital importance of the ocean at a very high level. To that end, the analysis will look at three concrete issues addressed at the conference—ocean acidification, plastic waste, and overfishing—and at possible next steps.

THE OCEAN IS RISING – BUT SO ARE WE

The conference featured inspiring presentations and images by researchers, astronauts, aquanauts, artists, youth, and private-sector and grassroots entrepreneurs who, as a whole, conveyed a few simple but vital messages: “The ocean is our life support system. If we act now, we can reverse its decline and restore the ocean as the basis for a prosperous and fair blue economy.” So, will the conference outcomes catalyze the needed cooperation and partnerships around the world?

The conference produced three outcomes: a Call for Action, a registry of voluntary commitments, and key messages from the partnership dialogues. The Call for Action reaffirms pre-existing commitments on sustainable development and resource mobilization in line with the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. It underlines the urgency to take action and provides examples of strategies that can advance implementation toward individual targets. The Call for Action was not expected to make any new commitments, but to inspire action under existing frameworks.

One litmus test for the effectiveness of the Call for Action is thus the registry of voluntary commitments. By the closing of the conference 1328 voluntary commitments had been registered by governments, UN bodies, NGOs, the private sector, civil society, academia, scientific institutions, philanthropic organizations and others. This number far exceeded expectations, and was celebrated as a major achievement. The fact that more than half of the commitments were submitted by entities other than governments was interpreted by the Co-Presidents as evidence of an unprecedented breadth of engagement. The skeptics, however, observed that not all commitments are new and that they are too diverse in scope and scale to infer any expected level of impact. Others remarked that rather than being stand-alone commitments, some are merely announcements of support for initiatives already submitted. The total number of genuine “actions” to implement SDG 14 could, therefore, be lower than announced. According to some experts, a deeper analysis of the commitments is necessary to evaluate the extent to which the conference has stimulated additional and/or innovative initiatives.

Nonetheless, even the critics acknowledged that the registration of such a high number of commitments is evidence of momentum generated by the conference. Like the Paris Agreement on climate change, under which parties submit nationally determined contributions in a transparent way, governments and stakeholders can use the Ocean Conference’s registry of voluntary commitments to learn about the activities of other entities and exchange information on experiences, good practices, and challenges in implementing them. In contrast to the Paris Agreement, however, there is no plan for monitoring, reporting or verifying whether the commitments turn into reality and to what extent they achieve their intended outcomes. That, of course, does not prevent any willing stakeholder from using the registry to track efforts to meet the commitments made, as was mentioned a couple of times during the conference.

The number of partnerships, however, may not be the best measure of the success of the conference either. Although the key points made during the partnership dialogues were not recorded in a formal document, many participants lauded the structured, high-level discussion during which they learned about partnerships already underway. Others said the dialogues provided a much-needed update on the latest science and innovative solutions. While some were disappointed that the dialogues did not systematically identify areas requiring additional efforts, most believed that they were useful to motivate additional action. As

Co-President Lövin stated during the closing plenary, “Hearing about the great work done at all levels makes me hopeful that we can act together. I now know where to turn to find partners with the experience I need.”

The most significant result of the conference, therefore, may not be found in its formal outputs. Instead, it may be the profound awareness raised at the highest political level about the vital importance of the ocean for our very survival and the concrete sense of hope that we can save the ocean. Heads of State, ministers and high-level decision makers received first-hand information from those directly engaged in implementation, and in the words and spirit of the late French oceanographer and explorer Jacques Cousteau, “people protect what they love; they love what they understand; and they understand what they are taught.” It remains to be seen whether the emotional and political connections established at the conference, which may well be invisible to outsiders, will make a difference when key decisions are taken on specific threats to ocean health, such as ocean acidification, plastics and overfishing.

OCEAN ACIDIFICATION – WHY WE SHOULD CALL IT “THE PARIS AGREEMENT ON CLIMATE AND OCEAN CHANGE”

Increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere have two distinct impacts: ocean acidification and climate change. Rising concentrations of CO₂ in the atmosphere increase the acidity of ocean water, which affects a wide range of species and ecosystems, most prominently large-scale coral bleaching. In addition, global warming leads to higher water temperatures, sea level rise, changes in salinity and other impacts, which in turn disrupt ocean currents and marine ecosystems, causing damage to coasts and altered weather patterns, including extreme weather events. The partnership dialogue on ocean acidification, numerous side events and multiple interventions during the general debate showed that, while there are measures to adapt to the impacts of climate change and to increase ecosystem resilience, very little can be done to adapt to ocean acidification. In other words, mitigating CO₂ emissions by implementing the Paris Agreement is the most effective approach to addressing both ocean warming and acidification.

In the eyes of many, the conference succeeded in boosting momentum for implementing the Paris Agreement “on climate and ocean change,” particularly in the face of the announcement of the US withdrawal. Many perceived the numerous calls to forge ahead with Paris Agreement implementation as a sign of optimism rather than despair. “We should celebrate the fact that we already have a mechanism in place to reduce CO₂ emissions into the atmosphere, which will mitigate both ocean acidification and climate change,” as partnership dialogue panelist David Osborn asserted.

OCEAN LITTER – PREVENTING THE OCEAN FROM DROWNING IN PLASTIC SOUP

“Eighty million tons of litter, mainly made up of long-lasting, single-use plastic, find their way to the ocean each year,” experts and celebrities kept reminding conference participants. While images of floating plastic islands have been circulated globally, and multiple initiatives are determined to clean up garbage patches, new research shared at the conference showed that these efforts may literally only be addressing the tip of the iceberg. Most types of plastic disintegrate much faster than previously thought, forming smaller and smaller pieces known as microplastics. These fragments, many of which aggregate and

release toxic chemicals, are transforming the ocean into a “global plastic soup.” Marine species ingest such fragments, which often disrupt their development and have significant impacts on fish, including those consumed by humans. As one expert pointed out, the cruel irony is the “design failure” of plastic being at the same time virtually indestructible and the material of predilection for single-use purposes, such as packaging, shopping bags, utensils and straws, making plastic an immediate and long-lasting waste issue.

In addition to “ringing the alarm bell,” conference exchanges did show that the ocean plastic crisis must be addressed at the systems level: designing systems that allow reducing, reusing and recycling plastic, including approaches to value plastic waste and treat it as a resource. This served to place the issue squarely at the intersection of SDG 14, SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production) and SDGs 8-9 (economic growth and industry/infrastructure) by making ocean plastic a resource. As a concrete example, Adidas and Parley for the Oceans pledged to significantly increase the production of running shoes made of recycled ocean plastic, with the aim of eventually redesigning the plastic economy. In addition, rethinking food chains can reduce energy use and food waste, thus contributing to SDGs 2 (end hunger) and 7 (energy). Many of the 150+ voluntary commitments submitted to reduce plastic waste, remarked the partnership dialogue panelists, offer solutions that are “ready to be scaled up and replicated by other countries.”

OVERFISHING – FISHING LESS NOW TO FISH MORE IN THE FUTURE

Overfishing and destructive fishing practices threaten marine biodiversity and affect the ability of ocean ecosystems to provide food. This is a well-known, urgent problem that is currently addressed by a patchwork of regional and international sectoral arrangements. In addition to science-based management criteria, marine protected areas, and monitoring fish stocks and fishing efforts, the conference placed emphasis on an additional piece of that mosaic: the WTO negotiations on fisheries subsidies that contribute to overcapacity, overfishing or IUU fishing. This was probably the most contentious item on the conference agenda, and led to the US “disassociating” and the Russian Federation “distancing” themselves from agreed language in the Call for Action. The US warning against undermining intellectual property rights also shed light on the main barrier to technology transfer. The latter was widely seen as a key element in enhancing capacity for detecting and fighting IUU fishing, particularly for the BOSS – “big ocean stewardship states” like SIDS.

The relevant partnership dialogue and roughly one-third of voluntary commitments devoted to target 14.4 (ending destructive fishing practices), however, revealed willingness by many developed countries, researchers and commercial actors to invest in capacity building, joint research and innovative data sharing. In addition, the exchanges furthered understanding that IUU fishing is not just an environmental or food security issue, but also a matter of decent work (SDG 8) and organized crime (SDG 16), due to linkages with human and drug trafficking, as the International Labor Organization repeatedly stated. Another, often overlooked, piece of the mosaic also received significant attention, namely the role and vulnerability of small-scale fishing communities, with many emphasizing the need to ensure their tenure rights, learn from their sustainable practices and traditional knowledge, and exposing the link between harmful subsidies and difficult access to markets. These considerations led some

delegates to believe that sustainable fisheries could be one of the low-hanging-fruit targets for SDG 14, as a combination of solutions is within reach.

STAYING THE COURSE

As at any ocean conference, nautical metaphors abounded. It thus was no surprise that Co-President Lövin, in closing, told participants that “We have put wind in our sails, now we have to stay on course.” But navigating the route to SDG 14 implementation will require maneuvering across the fragmented and choppy ocean governance seascape.

Looking ahead, the next session of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, to be held in July 2017 in New York, is for many an obvious port of call to review progress on ocean health. Its thematic review of selected SDGs, including SDG 14, provides an opportunity for a more formal stocktaking of the activities presented during the conference and potentially an evaluation of their impact and remaining gaps. The review could also firmly “center” SDG 14 at the heart of implementation of the 2030 Agenda and further explore the linkages between the ocean and other SDGs.

In parallel, according to some observers, the final BBNJ PrepCom session (also scheduled for July 2017 in New York) could benefit from the momentum generated by the conference, including the numerous reports on MPAs and on innovative capacity-building ideas and scientific cooperation. In addition to governments’ and NGOs’ calls to convene an intergovernmental conference to finalize and adopt a legally binding instrument on BBNJ, both Leonardo DiCaprio and Sir Richard Branson called for such a new ocean treaty to have “ambitious, measurable goals,” as well as “teeth and a vision.”

Finally, while the Ocean Conference was deliberately set up as a one-off event, to avoid contributing to the already large family of permanent ocean processes, many delegates looked forward to the Our Ocean Conference to be held in October 2017, hosted by the European Union and the Government of Malta, since the series of Our Ocean Conferences maintains a registry of commitments through which participants can not only communicate their actions but also track progress in implementation. Many also seemed sympathetic to the proposal advanced by both Portugal and Kenya to hold a high-level follow-up event to the UN Conference in 2020, which will mark the deadline for several important commitments under SDG 14 that are aligned with the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. By then it will be possible to assess whether the 2017 UN Ocean Conference has truly “turned the tide,” by marking the point in history when humanity began “righting the wrongs perpetrated on our ocean.”

UPCOMING MEETINGS

27th Meeting of States Parties to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea: This meeting will elect the members of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (election of one-third of the members takes place every three years) and the members of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (election of all 21 members takes place every five years). It will consider the report of the Tribunal, its budgetary and administrative matters. It will also review information provided by the Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority and the Chairman of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf on the activities of these bodies, among other issues. **dates:** 12-16 June 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/meeting_states_parties/twentyseventhmeetingstatesparties.htm

HLPF 5: The fifth session of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, convening under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council, will be held under the theme “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world.” As decided in UN General Assembly Resolution A/70/299, HLPF 5 will conduct in-depth reviews of the implementation of five SDGs, including SDG 14. **dates:** 10-19 July 2017 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UN Division for Sustainable Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs **www:** <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf>

BBNJ PrepCom 4: The fourth meeting of the Preparatory Committee established by General Assembly resolution 69/292 (Development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations 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 cross-cutting issues. The session is expected to prepare recommendations to the UN General Assembly for the Assembly to decide at its seventy-second session whether to convene an intergovernmental conference to elaborate the text of the agreement. **dates:** 10-21 July 2017 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UNDOALOS **phone:** +1-212-963-3962 **email:** doalos@un.org **www:** <http://www.un.org/depts/los/biodiversity/prepcom.htm>

23rd Annual Meeting of the International Seabed

Authority: During the 23rd annual meeting of the International Seabed Authority (ISA), representatives from Member States of the Authority will discuss the work of the Authority and its Secretariat. **dates:** 7-18 August 2017 **location:** Kingston, Jamaica **contact:** ISA Secretariat **phone:** +1-876-922-9105 **fax:** +1-876-922-0195 **email:** <https://www.isa.org.jm/contact-us> **www:** <https://www.isa.org.jm/sessions/23rd-session-2017>

4th International Marine Protected Areas Congress: The IMPAC4 will convene under the theme “MPAs: Bringing the ocean and people together.” IMPAC4 will be one of the last milestones in the road of conferences on marine conservation before reaching the 2020 deadline for the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. **dates:** 4-8 September 2017 **location:** La Serena, Chile **email:** impac4@mma.gob.cl **www:** <http://www.impac4.org/>

48th Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Leaders Meeting: The gathering will include: the Smaller Islands States Leaders Meeting (4 September); the Pacific ACP Leaders Meeting (5 September); the Official Opening of the 48th Pacific Islands Forum (5 September); the Forum Leaders Dialogue with Civil Society Organizations and Private Sector (6 September); the 48th PIF Plenary Sessions with Associate Member and Forum Observers and Post Forum Dialogue Partners (7 September); and the Forum Leaders Retreat (8 September). **dates:** 4-8 September 2017 **location:** Apia, Samoa **contact:** PIF Secretariat **email:** media@forumsec.org **www:** <http://www.forumsec.org/>

Our Ocean Conference: The European Union (EU) will host the fourth “Our Ocean” Conference, which will focus on issues related to the ocean and climate change, marine pollution, sustainable fishing, and sustainable blue growth, including tidal and wave technology. The Conference will also report on and review implementation of commitments made at previous “Our Ocean” Conferences and seek new commitments. **dates:** 5-6

October 2017 **location:** Malta **contact:** Ramon van Barneveld
phone: +32-229-84602 **email:** Ramon.VAN-BARNEVELD@ec.europa.eu **www:** <https://ocean2017.org/>

CMS COP 12: The slogan for the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals Conference is “Their Future is Our Future – Sustainable Development for Wildlife & People.” It links to the SDGs to end poverty and hunger, improve health and education, combat climate change and protect oceans and forests. **dates:** 23-28 October 2017 **location:** Manila, the Philippines **contact:** UNEP/CMS Secretariat **phone:** +49- 228-815-2401 **fax:** +49-228-815-2449 **email:** cms.secretariat@cms.int **www:** <http://www.cms.int/en/cop12>

Global Science, Technology and Innovation Conference (G-STIC) 2017: This Conference is the first in a series of Global Science, Technology and Innovation Conferences. The G-STIC Conference series will bring together key stakeholders from science, technology and innovation communities (including the private sector), and provide a forum to review, discuss and identify internationally relevant technological innovations that can lead the world on a more sustainable development course. The series is hosted jointly by: VITO (a Belgian research and technology organization on cleantech and sustainable development) and its international partners the Asian Institute of Technology, the Indian Institute of Technology and The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI). **dates:** 23-25 October 2017 **location:** Brussels, Belgium **contact:** VITO NV **phone:** +32-3-2867458 **email:** info@gstic.org **www:** <https://www.gstic.org>

UNFCCC COP 23: COP 23 will be organized by Fiji and hosted at the headquarters of the UNFCCC Secretariat in Bonn, Germany. The COP and CMP will meet, as will the as will the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI), the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) and the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement (APA). **dates:** 6-17 November 2017 **location:** Bonn, Germany **contact:** UNFCCC Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-1000 **fax:** +49-228-815-1999 **email:** secretariat@unfccc.int **www:** http://unfccc.int/meetings/bonn_nov_2017/meeting/10084.php

WOC Sustainable Ocean Summit (SOS): Under the theme, “The Ocean Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 14): Business Leadership and Business Opportunities,” the summit will focus on: ocean business community leadership in achieving SDG 14; and business growth and investment opportunities of ocean sustainable development. SOS 2017 will also aim to advance the development of SDG targets and indicators being developed with and for the Ocean Business Community via the World Ocean Council (WOC); address the other SDGs and how they relate to the ocean and also create the need for business leadership and opportunities for business growth and development; and build on the results and momentum of the UN Ocean Conference and other ocean events in 2017 by bringing these to the unique SOS ocean industry conference. **dates:** 29 November – 1 December 2017 **location:** Nova Scotia, Canada **www:** <https://sustainableoceansummit.org/>

Sixth International Marine Debris Conference: The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and UN Environment will organize the Sixth International Marine Debris Conference (6IMDC). The conference will promote international coordination efforts within the marine debris community, and it will build on the partnerships and successes of the Honolulu Strategy, which was developed at the last

conference in 2011. **dates:** 12-16 March 2018 **location:** San Diego, California, US **email:** info@6IMDC.org **www:** <http://internationalmarinedebrisconference.org/>

4th World Conference on Marine Biodiversity: This meeting will bring together scientists, practitioners, and policy makers to discuss and advance our understanding of the importance and current state of biodiversity in the marine environment. Conference themes include: Climate change impacts on marine biodiversity; Cumulative impacts of human activities on marine biodiversity; Marine ecosystem safety; Role of systematics in understanding ocean change; Bioinformatics and data delivery; Analytical approaches in marine biodiversity science; Integrative frameworks for linking environmental and biological drivers of biodiversity; Linking biodiversity to ecosystem function and services; Blue biotechnology and marine genetic resources; Marine policy and law; Marine biodiversity and human health; Marine biodiversity education and outreach; and Strategies for conservation of marine biodiversity. **dates:** 13-16 May 2018 **location:** Montreal, Canada **contact:** 4th WCMB Congress Secretariat **phone:** +1-514-287-9898 ext. 334 **fax:** +1-514-287-1248 **email:** wcmb2018secretariat@jpd.com **www:** <http://www.wcmb2018.org/>

IMCC5: The Society for Conservation Biology’s 5th International Marine Conservation Congress will bring together conservation professionals and students to develop new and powerful tools to further marine conservation science and policy. **dates:** 24-29 June 2018 **location:** Sarawak, Malaysia **www:** <http://conbio.org/mini-sites/imcc5/>

For additional meetings, see <http://sdg.iisd.org/>

GLOSSARY

2030 Agenda	2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
AOSIS	Alliance of Small Island Developing States
BBNJ	Marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction
CBDR	Common but differentiated responsibilities
EEZ	Exclusive economic zone
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN
HLPF	High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
IGC	Intergovernmental Conference
ILBI	International legally binding instrument
IMO	International Maritime Organization
IUU	Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
LDC	Least developed countries
MPA	Marine protected area
MSR	Marine scientific research
OSPAR	Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small island developing states
UNCLOS	UN Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNEP	UN Environment
UNESCO	UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization