

## **EU Statement UNOC Informal meeting - 1 February 2022**

The EU and its Member States congratulate the co-facilitators for accepting to steward our work to prepare the UN Ocean Conference Declaration.

We consider that the current draft reflects well many of the challenges facing the ocean, as well as required actions, identified in the science.

However, we continue to be gravely concerned with the poor health and status of oceans and seas. This exacerbates biodiversity loss, and results in decreased productivity and socio-economic impacts. Oceans and seas need to be clean, healthy, productive and resilient to provide the ecosystem services so vital to the planet, to support the blue economy and sustainable development.

We are also seriously concerned that the SDG14 targets due in 2020 have not been met. This needs to be clearly recognised in the Declaration. It should transmit an even greater sense of urgency for necessary action. Being mid-way through the 2030 Agenda cycle, only a short time remains to achieve the agreed targets. In view of the lack of improvement since the 2017 conference, the Declaration should be even stronger than what was agreed in the “Call for Action”.

Consequently, the Declaration should include our unequivocal commitment to achieve these targets as soon as possible without undue delay. It should identify obstacles hampering achievement and the necessary actions to overcome them. Such actions should be in line with the ecosystem approach, based on the best available science and in line with the precautionary principle when information is uncertain, unreliable or inadequate. We stress that the absence of adequate scientific information should not be used as a reason for postponing or failing to take conservation or management measures.

Science and innovative actions should support informed decision and policy-making through a strong two-way science-policy interface so that actions can be implemented and scaled-up. Appropriate capacity building should be provided for developing countries, in particular small-island developing States and least developed countries, as well as outermost regions and overseas countries and territories.

In our opinion, the Declaration should make clear that science alone would not solve these huge challenges. Greater political will and determination are required for the necessary transformative and decisive action, to meet our stewardship responsibilities for the benefit of current and future generations. This includes addressing unsustainable consumption and production patterns underlying the climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution crises.

This is even more indispensable in the current period in which many States are developing and implementing recovery strategies to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. We consider that the Declaration should demonstrate what we have learnt from our experiences dealing with the Pandemic and stress that such strategies should support and not undermine the achievement of SDG14.

While the draft already includes numerous actions, which we continue to support, we would like to suggest inclusion or strengthening of the references to the following issues and solutions:

- The ocean-climate-biodiversity nexus should be highlighted, as well as the need for adaptation and mitigation;
- The role of greenhouse gas emissions on climate change and ocean acidification, biodiversity and human health should be stressed as well as the need to reduce such emissions, utilising different forms of renewable energy, not only ocean-based ones, as well as nature-based solutions with safeguards. The specific case of the Polar Regions should be highlighted;
- All forms of marine pollution, from land-based and sea-based sources should be addressed;
- The linkages with SDG6 should be stressed as well as improving coordination from source to sea;
- With regard to plastics and microplastics, measures should include adopting life-cycle approaches, promoting reduced usage, sustainable consumption and production patterns and improved environmentally-sound waste management and recognising that the problem is global requiring global solutions, including a global agreement.;
- Other pollutants and stressors such as nutrients, chemical contaminants including pharmaceuticals, anthropogenic underwater noise, and invasive alien species should be covered;
- Improving our knowledge and understanding of basic processes, functions and interlinkages, as well as understanding impacts on human health and food safety to avoid and minimize negative impacts of human activities, including cumulative impacts;
- This requires enhancing data collection and management, including of environmental and socio-economic data, at global, regional/subregional and national levels, while respecting confidentiality requirements. The application of the FAIR principles (findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable) can support the dissemination of data and knowledge;
- Linkage should be made with relevant scientific processes such as those in IPBES and IPCC;
- Restoration and sustainable use of fish stocks including by tackling illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, overfishing, destructive fishing practices, waste, by-catch and discards and banning harmful subsidies;
- Specific reference should be made to small-scale fisheries and to the UN International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture;
- The role of area-based management tools, including networks of effective and well-managed marine protected areas, integrated coastal zone management and maritime spatial planning, should be highlighted;
- Greater importance should be given to regional cooperation, in particular through Regional Seas Conventions and Programmes and Regional Fisheries Bodies;
- The role of sustainable financing instruments in the transition towards an effective and sustainable blue economy should be highlighted.

The EU and its Member States believe that the Declaration should refer to, be supportive of and consistent with the agreed outcomes of relevant ocean-related Conferences and negotiations. These include the One Ocean Summit, the UN Food System Summit, the World Ocean Assessment, the Post 2020 Biodiversity Global Framework, the United Nations

Environmental Assembly, the UN decades on Ecosystem Restoration and of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, as well as the BBNJ negotiations, which we wish to be concluded in 2022.

The EU and its Member States remain fully committed to this process and to working with you and other delegations to ensure that the Declaration can be the transformational catalyst required to achieve Goal14 and the rest of the 2030 Agenda.