



Intergovernmental Consultations for the Declaration for the 2022 United Nations Conference to Support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14

1 February 2022

Intervention by the delegation of Sri Lanka

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

My delegation wishes to thank you at the outset for this initiative to resume the intergovernmental consultations on the declaration for the 2022 UN Ocean Conference to support the implementation of SDG 14 and for convening this meeting today enabling delegations to present their initial comments on the draft declaration. We are confident that under your able leadership the consultations will lead to a strong and effective outcome declaration for the Ocean Conference.

Sri Lanka echoes the views presented by the distinguished representative of Pakistan, on behalf of G77 & China.

It was said at Rio+20 that oceans are the point at which planet, people and prosperity come together. And that is what sustainable development is all about. It is about all of us as share holders of the planet, incorporated, acknowledging and acting in accordance with our responsibility to the planet, to the people, and to its life blood, the oceans. It is therefore not surprising that SDG 14 on oceans, seas, and marine resources retain a central place in the post development agenda.

As an island nation for Sri Lanka whose sustenance has for long depended on the ocean and its resources, the successful realization of Goal 14 of the SDGs forms both a viable platform and a pathway to the realization of the other SDGs as well. Therefore, a successful UN Ocean Conference and a strong outcome declaration which demonstrates our political will and collective action to protect and use sustainably the oceans, seas and marine resources is of paramount importance.

Distinguished co-chairs,

We appreciate that the draft includes several concrete science-based and innovative solutions to support the implementation of Goal 14, relating to data collection, technology, partnerships, financing, integration of traditional and local knowledge, women empowerment, children & youth empowerment and strengthening science-policy framework, which are also relevant in the current context.

Three billion people are dependent on marine and coastal biodiversity, with the entire industry estimated to be around USD 3 Trillion per year or about 5% of the global GDP. Significantly, the SDG 14 is connected to the achievement of other SDGs. Therefore, we need to identify challenges achieving Goal 14 and the means to overcome them. The increased human activities including marine pollution, especially in the context of the pandemic with oceans being polluted with

personal protective equipment; increased CO2 emissions; physical alterations and destruction of marine & coastal habitats; climate change and unsustainable extraction of marine resources continue to be a challenge.

Co-Chairs,

It is suggested that the Declaration includes references to ensuring that our marine transportation is safe & sustainable, and it is the responsibility of all stakeholders to assist countries in recovering from maritime pollution caused by vessels. An International Maritime Disaster Reduction Mechanism should be considered urgently to assist countries to deal with oil, chemical hazardous & noxious material, plastic nurdles spills and other maritime disasters. My delegation wishes to underline this concern in view of the maritime disasters which continue to plague us from time to time. In 2021, a fire onboard and the subsequent sinking of the vessel X-Press Pearl massively damaged the marine ecosystems and the waters of the Indian Ocean littoral states.

The Declaration may also include specific references to how we could recover bluer in the context of the pandemic, in relation to global initiatives and partnerships on 'blue economy.'

On the four targets under Goal 14 which matured in 2020, relating to sustainable management and protection of marine and coastal ecosystems; regulation of harvesting and ending overfishing, IUU fishing and destructive fishing practices & implementation of science based management plans; conservation of at least 10 % of coastal and marine areas in line with national and international law; and prohibition of certain forms of fisheries subsidies, the outcome declaration may call for a reasonable yet realistic extension of the time frame, in view of the onset of the pandemic.

With regard to the references on relevant conferences and negotiations, the declaration may include outcomes from the COP26, to make it up to date. Sri Lanka welcomes the current language on the BBNJ and the UN Decade of Oceans Science for Sustainable Development and believes the language on the UNCLOS could be strengthened with reference to its implementation.

Considering this declaration is being adopted at a time the world is grappling with a triple crisis, it is pivotal that the effects of the pandemic are being reflected. Reference could be made to the reduction of marine shipping, tourism industry in littoral states; impact on the livelihoods and food security and align the science-based and innovative actions proposed in the draft towards these ends as well.

Oceans are the most prominent feature on the planet covering nearly three quarters of the Earth. It has been said as just as human persons cannot live without a healthy heart and lungs, the Erath cannot survive without a healthy oceans and seas. They serve as the Erath's respiratory system producing oxygen for life and absorbing CO2 and waste. The oceans regulate the climate and temperature making the planet hospital for the diverse forms of lives.

The oceans and the seas are essential for national and global wellbeing.

- 90% of global trade move by marine transport;
- Submarine cables carry 95% of all global telecommunications;
- Fisheries and aquaculture supply 4.3 Bn people more than 15% of annual consumption of animal protein;

- Over 30% of global oil and gas produced is extracted offshore;
- Coastal tourism is the largest market segment in the world economy, comprising 5% of global domestic product and 6-7% of global employment;
- The expanding knowledge on marine biodiversity has provided breakthrough advances in sectors such as pharmaceuticals, food production and aquaculture;
- 13 of the world's 20 mega cities are coastal;
- Tides, waves, currents and offshore wind are emerging sources of energy that have significant potential to contribute to low carbon energy in many coastal countries.

In general, distinguished co-chairs, Sri Lanka believes that the declaration while signaling our strongest political will, should be oriented towards tangible action, especially in terms of technology transfer, capacity building, scientific research and sharing of data through an integrated approach, in line with relevant provisions of national and international law.

Sri Lanka looks forward to constructively engaging in the upcoming consultations on this significant outcome declaration.

Thank you!