

SG Remarks - UN Oceans Conference Plenary
30 June 2022

Excellencies

Distinguished Guests

Commonwealth Friends and Colleagues

And indeed all friends of the Ocean

It is my pleasure to be with you here today,
representing our Ocean Commonwealth

Five years ago, thanks to the persistence of
Ambassador Peter Thomson, the United Nations hosted
its first Ocean Conference.

At that conference, I presented the germ of an idea:
the Commonwealth Blue Charter.

Ten months later, the Charter which you all recognise
today was adopted by Heads of Government.

Last week, Commonwealth Heads of Government met again in Kigali, so the Commonwealth today stands with renewed unity and shared resolve.

But we meet at a critical moment for the ocean: the most precious, life-giving - *yet undervalued, under-researched and recklessly exploited* - natural wonder of our planet.

The Blue Charter is the flagship among a fleet of Commonwealth policies and programmes designed to help our member countries protect the ocean.

Our commitment is a reflection of the ocean's unique place in our family of nations:

- We are 2.5 billion people, spread across five continents and six basins of our one shared ocean.
- 49 of our (now) 56 Commonwealth countries border the ocean.
- More than a third of the ocean under national jurisdiction is in Commonwealth.
- Two-thirds of all big ocean developing states are in the Commonwealth.

- Around 45% of all coral reefs are in the Commonwealth.
- And more than a third of all mangroves are in the Commonwealth.

Our Blue Charter interweaves with two other key initiatives - the **Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub**, which has unlocked \$50m for climate-vulnerable countries with another \$800m in the pipeline - and the new **Living Lands Charter**, endorsed by Heads of Government last week.

Taken together, these three Commonwealth initiatives tackle the crises of our times: climate change, terrestrial biodiversity loss, and the fragile health of the ocean.

But all of us here know that the ocean needs particular attention.

It is home to more than 95% of life on Earth, yet SDG14 remain the least funded of all the SDGs.

The ocean accounts for only 2% of the Green Climate Fund; 1.6% of official development assistance, 0.56% of

all SDG funding from philanthropy from 2016 onwards;
and 0.01% of all SDG funding from development finance
until 2019

Let the message ring out from this room today: ***we must right this wrong.***

Last week, at CHOGM, the Secretariat's brilliant oceans team launched our new **Blue Charter Project Incubator**.

This incubator is different: it is the first designed to assist Governments.

And we have set ourselves the ambitious target of incubating at least 30 country-led ocean projects.

What we need now is partnership.

The Commonwealth has a superb track record of forging quality, impactful partnerships.

And we are clear: partnership on the ocean will be mutually beneficial.

Our member countries' jurisdiction over the ocean means that the wider world needs the Commonwealth.

But the fate of the ocean as a whole lies beyond our jurisdiction, so the Commonwealth needs the wider world.

We must all work together.

We must all listen to, and learn from, one another.

Above all, we must secure the resources we need for the ocean.

So I call on everyone here, and everyone watching - from governments and international organisations to NGOs, businesses and philanthropists - to dig deeper.

It is only by joining hands and moving forward together that we can build a healthier, happier, more resilient, more prosperous and more beautiful blue future - for the Commonwealth, and for everyone.

Thank you.

