

**ADDRESS BY THE SHIPPING DEPUTY MINISTER TO THE PRESIDENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS VASSILIOS DEMETRIADES
AT THE 2022 UNITED NATIONS OCEAN CONFERENCE
to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14:
Conserve and Sustainably Use the Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources for
Sustainable Development.
Lisbon, 27 June - 01 July 2022**

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to convey my deep appreciation and sincere congratulations to Portugal and Kenya for co-hosting - as well as to the UN Secretariat for organising - this extremely important Conference to address the global emerging challenges associated with the sustainability of our oceans.

Ocean, is the home of the richest biodiversity on earth, it contributes to our food security and supports our survival and prosperity through fishing, aquaculture, transport, tourism and recreation. Cyprus acknowledges that our marine ecosystem is a valuable resource and an integral part of our economy, not to mention our identity. It is also a bonding heritage that is shared with all the nations. It is therefore of crucial importance to intensify our efforts for conserving the marine ecosystems and preserving marine life. It's time to commit and act to reverse the biodiversity loss, and prevent ecosystems degradation from pollution, climate change and other human activities.

Cyprus is an island with stunning natural beauty with rocky shores, capes, coves and beautiful beaches. This mosaic with different types of habitats, enables our island to host many marine species of fauna and flora, several of which are priority species that need protection. To this end, Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) have already been established reaching the 19% of Cyprus' marine waters under various protection regimes including Natura 2000 sites, Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMI) as well as other Fisheries Restricted Areas under strict conservation status with no-take zones.

Furthermore, Cyprus has initiated studies to acquire further scientific knowledge on our Sea's ecosystems and biological richness, on awareness and assessment of its ecological status, and on identification of the most important areas that we need to protect. To this end, marine surveys have been undertaken in Cyprus focusing on the mapping of sensitive marine habitats in all coastal waters and the deep ecosystems of the Eratosthenes Seamount.

Addressing the issue of marine litter and plastic pollution is of particular importance because of the significant environmental impacts of waste on the environment and the effects of marine litter on economic activities. Cyprus addresses the problem of marine litter from land-based sources through the implementation of its waste management policies. Measures are currently taken for the establishment of a nation-wide separate collection system for recyclables and organic waste, coupled with some other measures,

such as the charges on plastic bags and the recent restrictions on single use plastic products, that are expected to contribute significantly to the prevention of marine littering. Furthermore, Cyprus is actively involved in the Beyond Plastic Med – BeMed project *“Cruise Ships Against Plastic Pollution in the Mediterranean”* which aims to develop solutions that will minimize the use of disposable plastics and improve their management methods, so that the cruise ship sector can grow in alignment with the EU Green Deal, the Circular Economy and the Blue Economy, contributing to a Mediterranean with less plastic waste.

As a leading maritime nation, my country feels responsible to accelerate the transition of shipping to a low carbon and climate resilient industry. Maritime transport has, of course, an international character, while climate change knows no borders. Therefore, it is obvious that we need to act together to agree on targeted international measures. Such a course of action will allow us to achieve our emissions reduction targets, while ensuring a sustainable future for maritime transport.

The use of cleaner fuels, the deployment of relevant fuel infrastructure, the electrification of ships, and the use of energy efficiency technologies is the way forward.

At a national level, the Cyprus Government has already devised a long-term strategy for shipping under the title “SEA Change 2030” and is already implementing a national integrated Blue Growth strategy. The main objectives thereof have to do with the responsible management of our waters, as well as of the protection of the marine

environment through the promotion of cross cutting tools such as the Maritime Spatial Planning and the ICZM. Our national shipping strategy incentivizes and rewards investments through protective and proactive actions, whose goal is to accelerate the use of environmentally friendly technologies and the development of non-fossil fuels.

Cyprus and the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East belong to the same "climate hot spot" with a particularly high sensitivity to the effects of climate change. Thus, at a regional level, there is an ongoing Cypriot initiative to coordinate climate change actions in the region. It aims to develop a regional action plan consisting of appropriate policies and measures in order to address the specific challenges of the region relating to climate change. With this initiative, Cyprus brings together our region's preeminent scientists and policy-makers to develop solutions to our shared problems; solutions that are practical, achievable and will have enduring benefits for our citizens.

We are also extremely pleased that through the Barcelona Convention System, a proposal has been recently submitted to IMO for the designation of the Mediterranean Sea as Sulphate Oxides Emission Control Area (SECA). Cyprus is determined to work towards ensuring that this proposal will be approved and enter into force, by 01 January 2025.

In this same direction, we also urge the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention to commence, the soonest possible, work for designating a Nitrogen Oxides Emission Control Area in the Mediterranean Sea. Such a proposal is expected to minimize further

the emissions from maritime transport, achieving significant health benefits and protecting the marine environment.

On the wider international stage, and as an active member of the IMO Council, Cyprus will work towards ensuring that shipping will make a meaningful contribution to climate change. To this end, we will continue to focus on bridge-building initiatives through the promotion of regional cooperation.

It is Cyprus Government's conviction that the international community must demonstrate a genuine understanding of different states and regions' priorities fostering diversity and inclusion. Reaching a unified sustainable path should be our first and foremost priority towards achieving the objectives of the United Nations 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development with respect to our seas and oceans.

It should be also emphasized that international cooperation must be always in line with international Laws, and especially with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Not much can be done, unless we see ambitious and concrete commitments by all. It is up to each and every one of us to prove, particularly to the younger generation, that our

ambition to deliver “healthy and productive oceans” is matched by tangible and timely actions based in science, technology and innovation.

Thank you for your attention.