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Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations
and Executive Secretary of ESCAP

Plenary Statement (as prepared for delivery)

2022 Ocean Conference

Thursday, 30 June 2022
10:00-13:00 hrs.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

At least 200 million people in Asia and the Pacific depend on the ocean for their livelihood. Our region is biologically diverse, with 71 per cent of the world's coral reefs, 45 per cent of the world's mangroves, 66 per cent of the world's fisheries production and 89 per cent of aquaculture production.

Our communities depend on fishery resources and tourism services for food and income, and all these activities rely on marine sustainability and a healthy ocean.

Allow me to briefly highlight a couple of areas of our work, addressing some of the critical challenges that our ocean is facing today:

First of all, to address the challenge of human-induced *climate change* and its impact on the ocean and marine life, ESCAP is providing technical assistance and support to the G20 process to promote ocean-based solutions to climate change through enhanced cooperation in science, research, and innovation.

Furthermore, we have developed projects to incentivize ocean-climate financing options, including through innovative financing solutions such as blue bonds and debt for climate swaps in the region.

There are significant opportunities in the transport sector to contribute to carbon-neutrality through greener vessels and shipping practices, including port operations.

In this regard, we are promoting the development of low- and zero-emissions *green shipping* for Asia and the Pacific in close partnership with global and regional actors and the shipping industry, a fundamental component of the new Regional Action Programme on Sustainable Transport Development.

As the problem of *marine pollution* continues to intensify in our region, we are helping local governments and organizations measure and monitor plastic waste within their cities by using digital innovations like artificial intelligence, satellite imaging, drones, citizen science and waste flow modelling.

We continue to face *data* challenges on Sustainable Development Goal 14 indicators. Data are not evenly available or necessarily collected in a uniform and systematic manner. Gaps, therefore, remain in our scientific understanding of oceans.

To tackle this, our activities in data partnership have been consolidated through our work as Co-Chair of the Global Ocean Accounts Partnership (GOAP).

Furthermore, we continue to support the regional *Follow-up and Review* of Goal 14 through our Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, including roundtables and consultations at the regional and subregional levels.

In 2018 we established the annual *Asia-Pacific Day for the Ocean.* This multi-stakeholder platform supports systematic regional dialogue and enhanced regional cooperation on the ocean by enabling experience-sharing, technology transfer, capacity-building and inclusive engagement, including with youth.

Within the framework of the 2017 Ocean Conference, ESCAP submitted a voluntary commitment to strengthen data partnerships for Oceans in Asia and the Pacific. I am pleased to report that we have fully implemented that commitment.

Ahead of this Conference, ESCAP submitted a new voluntary commitment to continue to convene Governments and other stakeholders to enhance regional cooperation on the conservation and sustainable management of the oceans and marine ecosystems.

Working with the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Development Programme, ESCAP developed a *Regional Decade Programme* to support the implementation of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific. This programme will provide a platform to align the ocean work in the region throughout the decade.

Finally, I reiterate ESCAP's commitment to accelerating the delivery of Goal 14 in Asia and the Pacific, supporting and engaging all stakeholders in this process.

Thank you.