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General Debate of the 2022 United Nations Ocean Conference
Scaling up Ocean Action Based on Science and Innovation for the Implementation of
Goal 14: Stocktaking, Partnerships and Solutions

Lisbon, 29 June 2022

**Statement by Ms. Nino Shekriladze, Head of the United Nations Division, Ministry of
Foreign Affairs of Georgia**

Mr./Madam President,

Excellences,

At the outset, allow me to express my sincere appreciation to the Governments of Portugal and Kenya for co-hosting this significant event. I would like also to acknowledge the vigorous efforts of the Permanent Representatives of Grenada and Denmark to the United Nations (UN) in successfully facilitating the intergovernmental consultations on the outcome document of the Conference.

Mr./Madam President,

There is no need to stress the importance of oceans for the humankind, as they play a crucial role in preserving the life on the planet, not only by supplying more than half of the oxygen we breathe, acting as the primary regulator of the global climate and an important sink for greenhouse gases, but also by contributing immensely to the global food security, poverty eradication and economic development.

The science is clear. Damaging human activities cause rise in temperature, ocean acidification, deoxygenation, sea-level rise and coastal erosion. In addition, marine litter, pollution, overfishing, loss of habitats and biodiversity seriously endanger the

environmental health of our oceans. Regrettably, Georgia as a coastal country is affected by these negative impacts.

On our joint journey towards healthy and productive seas and oceans, we undoubtedly need to take decisive actions. Implementation of the SDG 14 represents the pressing need. In this regard, let me underline the particular importance of the Paris Agreement. Herewith, I would like to note that Georgia submitted an updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the UNFCCC last year.

Mr./Madam President,

Exponential rise of plastic pollution in the last decades, with millions of tonnes of plastic entering the ocean, endangers habitats and natural processes, affecting millions of livelihoods and food production capabilities, and reducing ecosystems' ability to adapt to climate change.

Georgia, as the co-sponsor, welcomes the adoption of the landmark resolution at the resumed fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-5.2) in Nairobi this spring, to end plastic pollution and forge an international legally binding agreement by 2024 and looks forward to the forthcoming process to achieve the overall goal of eliminating the leakage of plastic into the environment.

SDG 14 is among those goals that the Government of Georgia has prioritized at the national level, with the target 14.4 being the particular focus of its efforts.

Georgia continues to carry out active and effective measures in the fight against Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. Cooperation between government agencies in this regard is very active and new standards and requirements have been put in place for the authorization of vessels flying the Georgian flag and operating in the international waters and high seas, as well as for monitoring, control and surveillance requirements for Georgian long-distance fleet.

In addition, relevant national agency annually conducts scientific research in the Black Sea coastal areas of Georgia to assess the main fish species/stocks and other biological resources for the projection of fishing.

In order to conserve marine biodiversity and coastal ecosystems, Georgia has various regimes of protection, including IUCN protected Areas, Emerald Network, wetlands of international importance (Ramsar sites). Most of the protected areas are covering the terrestrial part of coastal ecosystems, though 2 protected areas, along with terrestrial areas also include marine areas (Kolkheti protected areas and Chorokhi Emerald site). Altogether they protect 0,65% of the marine area of Georgia.

Mr./Madam President,

Maritime trade and transportation have been key for global trade since very existence of humankind. We are extremely concerned over the Russia's blockage of ports in Ukraine that has negatively affected global agricultural supply chains and prices, thus creating further challenges globally, especially for low-income food import dependent countries and vulnerable populations.

Georgia strongly condemns Russia's unjustified and unprovoked full-scale military aggression against its sovereign neighbour, which brings devastating humanitarian consequences and immense suffering to Ukrainians. We are appalled by the Russian missile attack on the Kremenchuk shopping mall two days ago that claimed further innocent lives.

Russia must comply with the provisional measures of the ICJ of 16 March, which binds Russia to immediately stop the aggression and withdraw all its forces and armaments from the whole territory of Ukraine.

We express Georgia's full solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people at this critical time and reiterate unwavering support to Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, including Crimea and Donbas and for Ukraine's navigational rights in its territorial waters.

Mr./Madam President,

In conclusion, let me reiterate Georgia's readiness to join global efforts in finding new solutions for a sustainably managed ocean so that we can "deliver on our collective promise of a healthy blue planet for future generations".

I thank you.

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