

SPEECH TO BE DELIVERED BY
Malcolm Noonan, T.D.,
MINISTER OF STATE FOR HERITAGE AND ELECTORAL REFORM

AT

**UN OCEAN CONFERENCE INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE -
MANAGING, PROTECTING, CONSERVING AND RESTORING MARINE
AND COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS**

on

28TH JUNE 2022 AT 15:00-18:00

Madame Chair, Esteemed colleagues, distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my great pleasure to represent Ireland today at this important event. I would like to thank our chairs, Vice-President Ribera Rodríguez and Vice-Minister Fuentes, and to thank our moderator, panellists and contributors for their insights.

As an Atlantic island nation, Ireland has a maritime area measuring almost half a million square kilometres – around seven times its landmass.

The dynamic saltwater environment, surrounding our island, hosts an extraordinary array of biodiversity, including commercially

important stocks of fish and shellfish, protected species and habitats, and species not yet described by science.

Our seas are home to over 20 species of whales and dolphins, they also contain diverse habitats including deep-water coral gardens and carbonate mounds, and an array of coastal habitats, from exposed rocky shores to sheltered sandy bays and undersea meadows.

These coastal and marine ecosystems provide us with many benefits, as they have done for millennia – supporting fisheries, regulating climate, and providing cultural ecosystem services.

For our island nation, these benefits are a common good; they are also globally significant and of incalculable shared value.

For these reasons, protecting marine ecosystems; meeting the targets of SDG 14; the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework are vitally important to Ireland.

As Ireland moves towards our goal of 30% Marine Protected Area coverage by 2030, we recognise that there are challenges and opportunities. The triple ocean challenges of biodiversity loss,

climate change and pollution require a transition towards enhanced ocean protection. At the same time, we seek to harness marine renewable energy, and there is increasing competition for marine space.

The transition I'm describing will result in profound changes to the way we use the seas. There will be costs as well as benefits. There are many competing voices to be heard and listened to, the needs of all sectors of society must be balanced effectively.

To address such challenges we will need to work together to adapt and change across many scales. Ireland sees this as an opportunity.

Working together at a regional scale through the OSPAR Convention, Ireland has benefited hugely from the interaction with international partners. Cooperating and pooling resources, has enabled us to collaborate in a spirit of real multilateralism towards common objectives and practical actions.

From local resource management to protection in areas beyond national jurisdiction, the management of common goods needs shared objectives and commonly-agreed solutions. Ecosystem-based management offers the tools to develop these solutions, and to

ensure that environmental pressures remain within planetary boundaries.

For example, by adopting Nature-Based Solutions to restore marine biodiversity or to sequester carbon in our ocean, we can put the environment at the centre of decision making, enabling society to conserve biodiversity, to benefit from nature, and to build resilience.

Working together to foster Ecosystem-based Management across scales is vital to achieving the aim of SDG 14. In this spirit, Ireland's Government this week announced "Our Shared Ocean" -a programme addressing ocean challenges for Small Island Developing States.

As a small island nation we are committed to protecting the ocean that we all share, we believe that by working together we can overcome the triple ocean challenges, and build a better ocean future for people and for nature.

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