

Statement of the Republic of Latvia
2022 United Nations Ocean Conference

***Scaling up Ocean Action Based on Science and Innovation for the
Implementation of Goal 14: Stocktaking, Partnerships and Solutions***

**Delivered by H.E. Mr. Andrejs Pildegovičs, Ambassador and Permanent
Representative of the Republic of Latvia to the United Nations**

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Mr. President,

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset, Latvia would like to thank the governments of Portugal and Kenya for co-hosting this conference, and also to the **United Nations Secretariat** for the work undertaken to prepare this milestone event. Latvia is greatly honoured to contribute by serving as a vice-president of the conference.

We all know, that water is an irreplaceable and essential resource. We need clean water and healthy water ecosystems for the well-being of present and future generations.

Oceans, seas, rivers and other bodies of water are interlinked. Local actions can lead to butterfly effects. It is crucial that we work together towards zero pollution, zero emissions and protection and conservation of natural resources.

In this regard, **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)** provides a strong legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources at national, regional and global level.

At the same time, we recognise room for improvement. Latvia looks forward to **an agreement on the ambitious international legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.**

As a member of the New York Group of Friends to Combat Marine Plastic Pollution Latvia also strongly supports taking global action to address

marine plastic pollution. We welcome the UN Environment Assembly's decision to start work on the development of an **international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution**.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Regional cooperation and the role of the Regional Sea conventions are crucial in conservation and sustainable use of ocean and marine ecosystems.

In just a few days, Latvia will have the honour to **take over the rotating Presidency of the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM)** for the next two years. HELCOM has become an essential player for the conservation of the marine environment of the Baltic Sea.

The priority for **Latvia's presidency will be the implementation of the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan (2021)**. It is a science-based and future-oriented strategic plan until 2030, which contains around two hundred measures to achieve a good marine environmental status of the Baltic Sea. The Action Plan contains measures to prevent land-based and sea-based marine pollution from human activities that cause pressures on the marine environment. It addresses such challenges as the increasing amount of marine litter, both macroscopic and microscopic, the spread of alien species, and the impacts of climate change.

Scientific studies show an increase in cumulative effects of **climate change** on marine ecosystems, such as sea - level rise. The Baltic Sea Action Plan recognizes the cross-cutting nature of climate change, and it also reflects on how activities in different areas can have an impact on other SDG targets, particularly for SDGs 2, 6, 12, 13, 14, and 15.

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is universal and Sustainable Development Goals and targets are integrated and indivisible. **Progress on other SDGs will have an impact on oceans and SDG 14, and vice versa.**

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

On a **national level**, Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030 declares preservation, increase and sustainable use of natural capital as one of our main objectives.

As a coastal state of the Baltic Sea, Latvia is committed to taking immediate science-based action for the protection of marine environment and use of its resources.

Latvia has pioneered mapping and assessment of ecosystems and their services for its marine waters and developed a **national Maritime Spatial Plan**. In the process, benefits of marine ecosystem services have been analysed as part of an ecosystem-based approach.

National and international marine scientific research have played and indispensable role in ensuring that policy decisions are based on best available scientific knowledge. Research results are used to define conservation status of protected marine habitats, develop ecologically coherent network of marine protected areas in the Baltic Sea, and to establish comprehensive management system of these areas. Recent results of a national cost-benefit study also show that the estimated benefits of creating new marine protected areas far outweigh the potential losses from negative impacts on economic activity.

In this context, we would like to highlight the role of scientific community in Latvia, particularly women scientists, and thank for their contributions.

In conclusion, my country would like to stress that there can be **no sustainable development without peace**.

Latvia strongly condemns Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine, which is a grave violation of international law, including the United Nations Charter. Equally strongly we condemn actions by Belarus, which have enabled this aggression.

Four months on, the impacts of Russia's war against Ukraine have reached far beyond Europe, affecting those most vulnerable throughout the world. Food insecurity has been dramatically exacerbated by Russia's aggression and actions in the Black Sea, particularly the attacks on and blockade of Ukraine's ports are restricting export of Ukraine's grain and agricultural products to the global markets. We call on Russia to unblock Ukraine's ports and restore the freedom of navigation.

Finally, I would like to express **Latvia's support for the Political Declaration of the Ocean Conference**. Only by taking coordinated action

at global, regional and national levels, we will be able to achieve global goals, including SDG 14.

Thank you.