

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**  
--  
**OPENING REMARKS TO UNITED  
NATIONS OCEAN CONFERENCE**  
**Lisbon, 27 June 2022**

Excelências,  
Distintos delegados,  
Caros amigos,

É com especial gosto e indisfarçável satisfação que regresso ao “Parque das Nações”, em Lisboa, para um evento da maior relevância sobre os Oceanos.

A todos os presentes dirijo uma especial saudação de boas-vindas à Conferência dos Oceanos das Nações Unidas de 2022.

Agradeço aos Governos de Portugal e do Quênia – dois países com longa tradição marítima, unidos pelo mar e pela história - a organização desta Conferência e toda a dedicação, empenho e recursos colocados na sua preparação.

Partilho com os meus concidadãos portugueses uma especial afinidade com o mar.

O poeta Fernando Pessoa deixou-nos a mensagem de que:

"Deus quis que a terra fosse  
toda uma,  
Que o mar unisse, já não separasse."

Faço, pois, votos para que esta  
Conferência represente um  
momento de unidade e aproximação  
entre todos os Estados-membros,  
gerado em torno dos assuntos do  
mar e da proteção e preservação dos  
Oceanos.

Excellencies,

When we see the Earth from space,  
we truly appreciate that we live on a  
blue planet.

The ocean connects us all.

Sadly, we have taken the ocean for granted, and today we face what I would call an “Ocean Emergency”.

We must turn the tide.

Global heating is pushing ocean temperatures to record levels, creating fiercer and more frequent storms.

Sea levels are rising.

Low-lying island nations face inundation, as do many major coastal cities.

The climate crisis is also making the ocean more acidic, which is disrupting the marine food chain.

Ever more coral reefs are bleaching and dying.

Coastal ecosystems, such as mangroves, seagrasses and wetlands, are being degraded.

Pollution from land is creating vast coastal dead zones.

Nearly 80 per cent of wastewater is discharged into the sea without treatment.

And some 8 million tons of plastic waste enter the oceans each year.

Without drastic action, it could outweigh all the fish in the oceans by 2050.

Plastic waste is now found in the most remote areas and deepest ocean trenches.

It kills marine life and is doing major harm to communities that depend on fishing and tourism.

One mass of plastic in the Pacific is bigger than France.

Unsustainable fishing practices are also rampant.

Overfishing is crippling fish stocks.

Excellencies,

We cannot have a healthy planet without a healthy ocean.

Our failure to care for the ocean will have ripple effects across the entire 2030 Agenda.

The ocean produces more than half the oxygen we breathe.

It is the main source of sustenance for more than a billion people.

And industries relating to the ocean employ some 40 million people.

A healthy and productive ocean is vital to our shared future.

Five years ago, at the last United Nations Ocean Conference, we issued a Call for Action to reverse the decline in ocean health and to restore its productivity, resilience and ecological integrity.

Since then, many communities have come together to protect the marine resources they depend on.

International partnerships have been working to create marine protected areas for the recovery of fisheries and biodiversity.

Where sound management has been undertaken, fisheries have rebounded.

The legal framework for ocean issues is well-established in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which celebrates the 40th anniversary of its adoption this year.

I am pleased to say that there has been significant progress on a legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.

A new treaty is being negotiated to address the global plastics crisis that is choking our oceans.

And just a week ago we saw multilateralism in action with a World Trade Organization agreement on ending harmful fishery subsidies.

It is also now well understood that by protecting and restoring the ocean, we are acting to address the climate crisis.

Following COP26, the ocean's role in addressing climate change is now integrated into the work of the UNFCCC.

We have also seen advances in ocean science and its ability to inform policy.

And we have seen science and traditional knowledge combine for improved ocean management.

All these efforts stand to be improved and scaled up during the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, launched last year.

Excellencies,  
Dear friends,

But let's have no illusions. Much more needs to be done by all of us, together.

Today, I have four recommendations.

First, I urge all stakeholders to invest in sustainable ocean economies for food, renewable energy and livelihoods.

That entails new levels of long-term funding.

Sustainable Development Goal 14 receives the least of any of the SDGs.

Sustainable ocean management could help the ocean produce as much as six times more food and generate 40 times more renewable energy than it currently does.

We need sustainable business models for ocean economies to operate in harmony with the marine environment, for instance with a sustainable seafood industry.

Second, the ocean must become a model on how we can manage the global commons for our greater good.

This means preventing and reducing marine pollution of all kinds, both from land and sea-based sources.

And it means scaling-up effective area-based conservation measures and integrated coastal zone management.

Third, we must protect the oceans, and the people whose lives and livelihoods depend on them, from the impacts of climate change.

All new coastal infrastructure investments from cities and villages to port installations, should be climate-resilient.

The shipping sector should commit to net zero emissions by 2050, and present credible plans to implement these commitments.

And we should invest more in restoring and conserving coastal ecosystems, such as mangroves, wetlands and coral reefs.

These are instrumental in capturing carbon and enhancing people's resilience and livelihoods.

Finally, I invite all to join the initiative I recently launched to achieve the goal of full early warning system coverage in the next five years.

We will target efforts to reach coastal communities and those whose livelihoods depend on early warning at sea.

Fourth, we need more science and innovation to propel us into a new chapter of global ocean action.

I invite all to join the goal of mapping 80 per cent of the seabed by 2030.

I encourage the private sector to join partnerships that support ocean research and sustainable management.

And I urge governments to raise their level of ambition for the recovery of ocean health.

I commend those who have registered voluntary commitments.

Each one matters.

I hope to see more pledges on ocean action this week and beyond.

Excellencies,

I began with a Portuguese quote.

In honour of our other co-host let me conclude with the wisdom of a Swahili proverb, which teaches us:

*“Bahari itatufikisha popote.”*

“The ocean leads us anywhere.”

It can help open up new horizons  
and lead us to a more just and  
sustainable future for all.

Together, let us do our part to make  
a difference for the ocean.

Thank you.

[END]