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**Institute for Environmental Security
UN Ocean Conference, June 2022, Lisbon**

The Institute for Environmental Security (IES) is pleased to submit this statement on Interactive Dialogue 2 “*Managing, protecting, conserving and restoring* marine and coastal ecosystems”. We would like to specifically highlight the four verbs contained in the thematic title.

Firstly, the word “*managing*” denotes a skilled sense of **control and care** over our marine and coastal ecosystems. What is care if without the respect for and consultation with the people whose livelihoods depend on them? **IES calls on those who manage to be mindful and respectful of others’ needs.** One example is deep-sea mining (DSM). The way it is going now, marine and indigenous communities have not been effectively consulted or involved in the state and corporate decisions to race to the bottom of the ocean to mine precious minerals. This rush coupled with blatant ignorance of the complexities of deep ocean conditions will inevitably bring about the destruction of marine ecosystems and severe disruption to the livelihood of coastal communities. No plunge into the deep should be this foolish. Therefore, **IES stands with allies in calling for a global moratorium on DSM until we know for certain who will truly benefit, bearing in mind the ailing health of the ocean and the needs of present and future generations.**

Secondly, the word “*protecting*” means that one should **shield our marine and coastal ecosystem from any exposure to harm.** How does one ensure this? There is a myriad of initiatives out there to introduce new laws or bolster existing ones to prevent and ensure no harm to our environment. There is the initiative to introduce a new crime of ecocide as a safeguard for accountability and deterrent for unchecked behaviour. Global youths are also campaigning to bring the issues of human rights and climate change to the UN’s court, the International Court of Justice. Both initiatives share the same core concern for the state of our environment, which, if left unchecked will certainly push humanity past the point of no return. **IES calls on all to support both initiatives because there is power in what the law and the judiciary can provide to draw the line between bad and good.**

Thirdly, the word “*conserving*” brings about the notion of **preventing wasteful or unsustainable use** of our marine and coastal ecosystems. Where does one draw the

line? 90% of the world's fisheries is classified as fully exploited or overexploited. IUU fishing represents upwards of 15% or \$15 billion USD of the global marine capture. Fisheries provide a source of food, employment and economic well-being but it has been subjected to decades of abuse and greed. **IES would like to stress that conservation of the ocean should be everyone's priority as so many issues are interdependent on and can be resolved in its sound conservation**, such as fighting climate change, preservation of fish-stocks, retention of cultural heritage, tourism, etc.

Fourthly and lastly, the word "*restoring*" indicates an action of **returning our marine and coastal ecosystems to the state they once were**, thus taking a post hoc presumption of damage or harm. Who is in charge of this? Both top-down and bottom-up restoration may be key to preserving our ocean but the onus should not be on those who contributed least to the problem in the first place. **IES is adamant that those in the best position to restore any past damage to our marine and coastal ecosystems are the enablers of present and widespread harm we see today**. States, corporations and financial institutions must step up to the plate; it should not fall on the innocent or less-abled communities who had no part to play in bringing about today's level of damage.

If we don't already know that the health of our planet is dependent on the health of our oceans, we are fools. The constant barrage of disregard for our ocean from extractive and polluting activities should be exposed and addressed effectively. There should be simultaneous and urgent concern for and real action against all threats to our ocean. Year after year those in power call for action yet are slow to deliver – if at all. **The ambition should not be to do better – the ambition should be to act now!**

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