NATIONAL STATEMENT BY MINISTER (FOREIGN AFFAIRS) DR VIVIAN BALAKRISHNAN AT GENERAL DEBATE OF THE SECOND UN OCEAN CONFERENCE, 27 JUNE 2022

Mr President,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Singapore is a maritime city state. Our history, people, and economy are inseparable from the ocean. Our survival and prosperity depends on the ocean. The same can in fact be said of all peoples, even from landlocked States. The ocean provides food, jobs and livelihood, enables global trade, plays a vital role in the climate system and water cycle, and is an important reservoir of biodiversity.

The challenges facing the ocean have increased with each passing year. So the Conference's theme of "Scaling up Ocean Action Based on Science and Innovation for the implementation of Goal 14" is timely and salient. We, the Member States, need to urgently scale up actions to protect the ocean, and mitigate the impacts of climate change. I wish to make three points.

First, the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean must be conducted under the aegis of international law, in particular UNCLOS, which is the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. Thanks to its drafters' far-sightedness, the framework provided by UNCLOS is dynamic and highly adaptable in order to respond to emerging issues.

Second, our efforts should be based on data and science. This will help us take more effective measures to conserve the ocean and build consensus for global action. For example, the international community is only starting to appreciate the ocean-climate nexus, in particular, how climate change affects the ocean's health and how the ocean regulates the climate.

Third, multilateral cooperation must be the foundation of our efforts. Member States must seize the opportunity this Conference presents to reaffirm our commitment to placing a rules-based multilateral and coordinated approach at the heart of our management of the ocean.

One prominent example of these three points in action can be found in the ongoing negotiations on the BBNJ treaty. The BBNJ treaty will be grounded in UNCLOS and will strengthen multilateral cooperation, conservation and sustainability in the use of our global commons. Singapore is honoured to serve as President of the BBNJ Intergovernmental Conference, and we call on all delegations to work towards the conclusion of an ambitious and future-proof BBNJ treaty as soon as possible.

While Singapore is small, we are doing our part. I am pleased to announce that Singapore is renewing ten of the voluntary commitments that we had previously submitted at the first UNOC, and are undertaking nine new ones. Allow me to outline some of these.

We are launching three environmental research projects to enhance our understanding of the ocean: a research project relating to the sustainable management of marine fish populations, a project to study the use of solar energy to facilitate coral growth, and a Marine Climate Change Science programme.

On the shipping front, we are spearheading a transition towards the supply of environmentally-friendly ship fuel, and are actively involved in promoting green financing and building capacity in carbon accounting within the maritime industry. We are also incentivising shipowners to switch to energy efficient technologies and low or zero carbon fuels through the award of the Singapore Registry of Ships Green Notation.

The Singapore Cooperation Programme or SCP, which was launched in 1992 to share our development experience and extend technical assistance to fellow developing countries, will be conducting three courses this year on International Law of the Sea, Managing Coastal Biodiversity under Urbanisation Pressures and Environmental Conservation and Sustainability. Over the past 30 years, the SCP has conducted over 50 ocean-related courses for more than 1,000 participants from over 100 countries.

I look forward to a week of fruitful discussions on how the international community can come together to protect our ocean for current and future generations.

Thank you.

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