

Statement of Timor-Leste to be delivered by HE MNEC during the **Interactive Dialogues 2** of the 2022 UN Ocean Conference themed: “**Managing, protecting, conserving, and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems**” to be held on 28 June 2022 from 03-06PM

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

As a small island developing state, Timor-Leste recognizes the fundamental importance of management, protection, conservation, and restoration of marine and coastal ecosystems in the context of sustainable use of the oceans and seas and of their resources for poverty eradication, sustained economic growth, food security and creation of sustainable livelihoods, and addressing the impacts of climate change.

Around two-thirds of our people living along the coastline are primarily making their living through fishing and farming. Offshore, ocean has become a home to some of the most biodiverse reefs and marine wildlife on the planet.

We are fully engaged to implement actions related to protection and conservation of marine and coastal ecosystems for addressing the SDG goal 14. This commitment can be seen through several efforts implemented nationally, including: campaign to raise awareness of marine pollution and its impacts to our oceans; incentivizing community engagement in ocean conservation through volunteer ecotourism; improving guidelines for nature-based tourism; mapping of vulnerable coastal areas and identifying priority sites for establishment of future marine protected areas; updating and improving fishing licensing and regulations to ensure sustainable harvesting; and increasing the better understanding of the offshore fish stocks.

In 2022, the country produced a Decree Law on minimization of plastics including disposal, import and production of bags, packaging and other plastic forms. We do believe that this Decree Law can be used as basis for avoiding marine plastic pollution by using land-based plastic waste management approach. We also produced our National climate change Adaptation Plan in 2021 which captures marine and coastal adaptation priorities in order to increase resilience.

In addition, rehabilitating mangroves has been a key focus of the Coastal Resilience Program in Timor-Leste. Since it was first launched in 2016, more than 2,000 hectares of mangroves and wetlands have been conserved and restored on Timor's north and south coasts. To protect those mangroves, local customary regulations were established, and local schools were mobilized in planting, and making them stewards of the forests and educate them on the ecosystem's importance to their communities.

With respect to the most recent programme, through the Global Environment Facility's LDC fund, our government has been working in partnership with the UNDP to enact nature-based approaches for coastal protection and develop supportive policies and institutional capacity for coastal ecosystems conservation to protect our people's livelihoods and forge more resilient communities in the face of climate change.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen

Timor-Leste is positioned in the strategic triangle between the Indian and the Pacific Ocean, which are also considered as the busiest international maritime routes for shipping. This position increases our vulnerability to negative impacts of shipping on our marine environment such as: air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, releases of ballast water containing aquatic invasive species, oil and chemical spills, dry bulk cargo releases, garbage, underwater noise pollution, ship-strikes on marine megafauna, and widespread sediment contamination of ports during transshipment or ship breaking activities.

Taking into account this reality, as a coastal state who relies on a healthy ocean and abundant marine resources to sustain the livelihoods of our coastal communities, we wish to use this opportunity to call for continued and enhanced actions and international cooperation on oceans protection to address pollution, fisheries depletion, climate change impacts and the deterioration of the marine environment, to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of marine ecosystems for the well-being of the present and future generations.

I thank you.