

# **SPEAKING NOTES FOR THE UN OCEAN CONFERENCE GENERAL SESSION**

**29 JUNE, 2022 / 10.00-18.00 / PORTUGAL**

**Honourable President, Distinguished Heads of States and Governments,**

**Distinguished Secretary-General, Distinguished Delegates,**

I would like to greet you with respect. It is my great pleasure to be here with you to protect our oceans and ensure their sustainability.

Our Honorable Minister Murat Kurum was scheduled to deliver this address today, but they were unable to attend the conference due to the severe flooding in Turkey.

I hope that the meetings we are holding as part of the UN Ocean Conference will bring scientific innovative solutions to the structural problems deepened by Covid-19. At the outset, I would like to touch upon a project carried out by our Climate Ambassador youth in the Gulf of İskenderun in the Mediterranean.

Under this project, our youth conducted studies on the reasons for the formation of the garbage vortex caused by the reverse flow in the Gulf of İskenderun, the damages it causes and what should be done to prevent this formation. They identified that the main reason of the garbage vortex was the wastes that entered the sea from the beaches.

Our youth, who cleaned the garbage vortex in order to eliminate this situation that caused great destruction in the sub-ecosystem of the Mediterranean, came across packaging wastes originating from Romania, France, Italy and Czechia once they examined the waste they had found.

This study, indeed, demonstrates this: A garbage entered in any water resources at one end of the world threatens the lives of living things on the other end of the world. The problem is global; so is the solution. It is about 8 billion people and all living things.

**Distinguished Participants,**

We know that climate change, which has become a crisis all over the world and is increasing its impact day by day, causes serious negative impacts on the oceans and coasts.

According to the IPCC reports, we are consequently exposed to disasters such as floods, wildfires, drought, desertification and mucilage more than ever before in our country, which is in the Mediterranean Basin, which is one of the most vulnerable regions against the negative impacts of climate change.

In order to prevent all these disasters, we are sustaining our efforts with great ambition by integrating environmental policies with development policies in line with our 2053 net zero emissions target announced by our President, H.E. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

I would like to emphasize once again our intention to lead the climate adaptation efforts for the Mediterranean on the way to this target.

We all carried out a very important work, which was an indication of our sincerity in this matter, at the COP22 meeting we held in Antalya in December 2021 under the Barcelona Convention. We unanimously adopted a ground-breaking decision with all parties to designate the Mediterranean Sea, as a whole, as an Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides.

We hope that this decision will set an example for all other marine areas that have a sensitive and vulnerable structure in terms of protecting our seas and biological diversity. Regarding “Life in Water”, the 14th of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, we have made many investments that will set an example for the region in reducing marine pollution and protecting marine and coastal ecosystems in Türkiye.

We are cleaning our seas through the Zero Waste Blue Movement, which we started under the auspices of H.E. First Lady Madame Emine Erdoğan.

We are preventing the formation of pollution with the action plans we put forward within the framework of this movement. In this context, we increased the number of blue flag beaches to 531. Türkiye’s coasts are

much cleaner now. We moved our country up to the 3rd rank in the world in this regard.

We took 1.5 million hectares of marine area under protection in order to ensure the sustainability of marine and coastal biodiversity in Türkiye.

We also completed the marine and coastal biodiversity studies of 16 Special Environmental Protection Areas. We are contributing to the sustainability of biodiversity in the seas by protecting the areas with seagrass.

We are carrying out monitoring studies at international standards with a view to detecting environmental pollution and ensuring good environmental conditions.

Within the scope of our National Marine Monitoring Program, DEN-İZ, we are monitoring the physicochemical characteristics of the sea and coastal waters, pollution levels, seagrass, biodiversity of the sea bottom and economic fishery via our monitoring network with 423 stations.

### **Distinguished Participants,**

We are demonstrating great sensitivity to ensure that even the smallest garbage from Türkiye's coasts does not enter our seas.

In this regard, we welcome the decision to start negotiations on a global agreement to end plastic pollution, taken at the 52nd meeting of the UN Environment Assembly held in March.

Before I end my speech, I would like to share one more point with you. The language used regarding the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea in the political declaration and the Sustainable Development Goal 14 reflects a delicate balance.

We believe that this Convention constitutes a strong basis for all states and stakeholders to work together in order to achieve the 14th Sustainable Development Goal.

I would like to state that the references to the international instruments in the political declaration and to which our country is not a party should not be interpreted as a change in Türkiye's legal position.

Finally, Türkiye's coastlines are located on both the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea, Türkiye is party to both the Barcelona and Bucharest conventions.

Türkiye as the Head of Bureau of the Barcelona Convention is ready to take the initiative in developing cooperation regarding oceans.

Türkiye welcomes the work on enhancing ocean governance and strengthening cooperation and collaboration with global and regional organizations.

Protecting our seas, oceans, environment and living things is to protect ourselves and our children. Therefore, I would like to state that any cooperation to be established is of great importance and greet you with respect once again.