2022 United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

Interactive dialogue 2 on the theme of "Managing, protecting, conserving and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems"

'Lead Discussant' intervention (8 minutes)

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3:00 PM to 6:00 PM on Tuesday, 28 June 2022

It is a pleasure to take part in this dialogue on behalf of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. I thank the Co-Chairs and the Panelists for their insightful intervention.

We live in the world of unprecedented risks: The last twenty years have seen a sustained rise in the frequency and intensity of disasters, with the majority being water-related disasters.

These disasters are being driven by unplanned development, climate change, environmental degradation, and unsustainable uses of natural resources.

If the current trends continue, the number of disasters globally may reach 560 per year by 2030, that is 1.5 medium- to large-scale disasters a day[1].

[2] Idem

These disasters will disproportionally impact coastal areas and small island developing states.

At the heart of these risks are our unsustainable production and consumption patterns. We are living outside the boundaries of what our planet can sustain, to the detriment of future generations. Radical shifts are needed to change course towards a more sustainable, risk-informed pathway.

This is why the 2022 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction calls for a transformation in how counties manage interconnected risks. This was reaffirmed at the **Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction**, which concluded last month with the **Bali Agenda for Resilience**. It lays out seven points to stop the spiral of increasing disaster impact and risk.

To achieve the 2030 Agenda, disaster risk reduction needs to be integrated at the core of development and finance policies, legislation and plans[2]. Systemic risk governance is essential for the resilience of coastal and marine areas. In particular, tackling environmental degradation and enhancing ecosystem services for disaster risk reduction directly contributes to achieving Goal 14[3].

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction provides a blueprint on how this can be done. It promotes the development of multi-sectoral national and local strategies that help build coherence between risk

[2] Idem
[3] UNDRR-UNEP Words into Action guide for Nature-based solutions

reduction, climate change and marine planning. To this end, it is essential to increase the collection and analysis of multi-hazard risk data to support risk-informed decision-making.

Supporting vulnerable and low-lying small island states through integrated disaster and climate risk management programmes, especially during the ongoing National Adaptation Plan processes, is of particular importance.

With less than eight years remaining to fulfil the Sendai Framework and achieve the SDGs, there is a need for solutions that can leapfrog implementation.

Key among them are Nature-based Solutions. Ecosystem-based risk reduction can simultaneously contribute to climate change, biodiversity, and sustainable development objectives.

To advance this, UNDRR, UN Environment and the Partnership for Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction released last year a Words into Action guide to scale up nature-based solutions. It offers practical recommendations for practitioners and policy makers.

Ecosystem-based approaches are most effective when implemented in transboundary cooperation, especially among shared coastlines.

A good regional example is the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean[4].

[4] Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean 1976, as amended in 1995. Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management, 2008

Its protocol on integrated coastal zone management embraces the use of the ecosystems approach with obligatory vulnerability and hazard assessments.

Let me mention some two other entry points that may support addressing the challenges and gaps in the attainment of Goal 14:

First, the upcoming **Mid-term Review of the Sendai Framework** poses an opportunity to assess how a risk lens can strengthen and inform governance of the global commons – including key ecosystems such as oceans.

The fact that the Sendai midterm review also coincides with the **midterm review of the Water Action Decade** offers a unique opportunity to identify adjustments that promote risk-informed development and the sustainable management of water resources and associated ecosystems, including for marine and coastal areas.

I encourage you to participate in both midterm reviews to highlight synergies and to advocate for integrating risk considerations in the UN 2023 Water Conference, and to promote risk-informed development looking forward to the 2023 SDG Summit.

Second, the resilience of ocean communities against hazards such as tsunamis can be enhanced through expanding multi-hazard early warning systems. Any work in this area not only supports Goal 14 and Target G of the Sendai Framework, but also answers the call by the UN

Secretary-General that every person on Earth be protected by early warning systems within five years.

The resilience of coastal communities is closely linked to the health of our marine and coastal ecosystems. We need to rewire our systems to address linked risks for a climate and disaster resilient future. Let us use the momentum offered by this Conference and our joint commitment to accelerate action on Goal 14 and the Sendai Framework.