

U.S. National Statement

UN Ocean Conference

June 28, 2022

**. Thank you, Your
Excellency. Excellencies,
distinguished colleagues,
good morning.**

**. I want to commend
Portugal and Kenya for**

**everything your countries
are doing to mobilize
support for our ocean.**

**. This is a critical moment
for our ocean. Yet, as we
gather here today, none of
us can ignore the threat to
the rules-based
international order that
Russia's brutal war of**

aggression against Ukraine presents. We are gathering under the auspices of the UN, a rule-based structure. Everything we do here relies on the rule of law.

- . Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine was unprovoked and unjustifiable.**

. We join others' urgent plea for Russia to immediately halt its attacks, facilitate the unhindered flow of humanitarian aid to those in need, grant safe passage to fleeing civilians, and withdraw all its military forces from Ukraine.

. While Russia's actions in Ukraine are reprehensible, we cannot and should not allow this heinous situation to impede our important work this week. Lives are at stake. And our ocean touches every aspect of our lives, from the air we breathe to the food we eat.

. Just over two months ago, many of us were in Palau for the seventh Our Ocean Conference, where more than 70 nations joined together—in the middle of the Pacific—to make more than 400 commitments valued at more than \$16 billion. We look forward to Panama and Greece hosting

**the ninth and tenth Our
Ocean Conference.**

- . Let's keep this momentum going.**
- . First, we need to realize that no conversation about the ocean is about the ocean alone. It's about climate. The climate crisis**

is an ocean crisis. Harmful emissions are making our ocean warmer, more acidic, less productive, and are driving rising sea levels. We cannot solve the ocean crisis without dealing with emissions. The connection is unavoidable and critical.

. At the same time, the ocean is a source of climate solutions that can help keep the 1.5-degree goal within reach and improve global climate resilience.

. For example, we need to spur the transition to green shipping. It's increasingly known that if shipping were

a “country,” it would be the eighth largest emitter. In May, the United States and Norway announced a Green Shipping Challenge for COP27 to help put the sector on a pathway this decade toward full decarbonization no later than 2050.

- . Ten economies supported the Challenge during the Major Economies Forum this month, and we encourage others to join.**
- . We also need to scale up offshore renewable energy. The United States has a goal to deploy at least 30 gigawatts of offshore**

**wind energy by 2030, and
we encourage others to
develop similar targets.**

- . And we need to conserve
and protect the coastal and
marine ecosystems that
store carbon and protect
our coastlines—and
strengthen governance of
marine protected areas.**

**. At the Our Ocean
Conference, we announced
an Ocean Conservation
Pledge that encourages
countries to conserve at
least 30 percent of waters
under their respective
jurisdictions by 2030.**

- . We call on countries to join. Because we cannot reach the goal to conserve or protect 30 percent of the *global* ocean without action at home.**
- . Second, we must finalize an ambitious and effective agreement for the conservation**

**and sustainable use of
Biodiversity Beyond
National Jurisdiction –
which would create, for the
first time, a coordinated
and cross-sectoral approach
to establishing high seas
marine protected areas.**

- . Third, we must stop the
reckless practice**

**of Illegal, Unreported,
and Unregulated fishing.**

- . We have no prayer of
achieving SDG 14 as long
as entire fleets of vessels
continue to operate with
impunity. One country
alone has thousands of
vessels fishing illegally.**

. SDG 14 compels us, and I quote, to “Conserve and Sustainably Use Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources for Sustainable Development.” We are not conserving. We are not sustainably using.

. More than 3 billion people depend on fish as a key

**source of animal
protein, and growth of cons
umption of fish outpaces
that of all terrestrial
meat *combined*.**

- . But IUU fishing is
damaging our ocean,
undermining maritime
security, and endangering**

the law-abiding fishers and communities.

- . Over one-third of fish stocks are overfished, and the FAO estimates *one in every five fish* caught originates from IUU fishing.**

. We are allowing vessels, knowingly sanctioned by their governments, to follow a *policy* of IUU fishing. This violates the laws of nature and common sense.

. We need to promote transparency and data sharing to understand the full complexity of IUU

fishing globally, both in the high seas and in exclusive economic zones.

. That is why President Biden signed a new National Security Memorandum setting out how the U.S. government will tackle IUU fishing and its associated criminal

activities, such as the use of forced labor in the seafood supply chain.

- . If we are going to succeed, we must work together internationally. Together with the UK and Canada, we are launching the IUU Fishing Action Alliance to increase ambition,**

momentum, and, most importantly, *action*, in the fight against IUU fishing.

- . This is a unique opportunity to bring together those who are leading the fight against IUU fishing – countries, organizations, and stakeholders alike – to**

pledge to take urgent action to improve the monitoring, control, and surveillance of fisheries, increase transparency in fishing fleets and in the seafood market, and build new partnerships to close the net on bad actors.

. We call on all nations to become members of this Alliance and to join us in upholding the law.

. Is it any wonder when our citizens lose faith in governance when we fail to back our words with action. We cannot come to conferences and discuss

**sustainable fishing—and
then turn around and
knowingly and grotesquely
exploit living resources.**

- . Fourth, this must be the
moment that we
advance agreement
on plastic pollution at every
level. All of us have seen
the pictures of**

conglomerated garbage in the Pacific Ocean. And the problem is only increasing.

- . Human beings ingest on average one credit card worth of plastic per week.**
- . The U.N. mandate that was just decided at UNEA 5.2--**

to launch multilateral negotiations on a global and legally binding agreement—is *more* than welcome. And it has to be translated into major plastic reductions. This must be one of the highest priorities of the U.N. system.

. What this conference has proven is that we can make progress, but we're not doing it fast enough. We all have to redouble our efforts to connect people to how solutions to all of these issues creates a safer, healthier world for future generations. That's the only

**way we live up to our
responsibilities.**

**. You are the leaders and
pioneers. Every one of these
problems is human-
created—and solving them
is a matter of will power.
We can win this battle.**

. By the next ocean conference, we must be in a position to say that we made considerable progress.