

INTERVENTION NOTES BY THE DELEGATION OF ZIMBABWE AT THE UN OCEAN CONFERENCE INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE ON ADDRESSING MARINE POLLUTION: 27 JUNE 2022

At the outset, let me express my appreciation to our Co-Chairs, Hon David Parker, Minister for the Environment of New Zealand, and Hon. Flavien Joubert, Minister for Environment Energy and Climate Change of Seychelles, as well as our Moderator, Mr. Charles Goddard.

I am pleased to add Zimbabwe's voice on such a critical topic, which is threatening the survival of marine species, food security and livelihoods of both coastal and landlocked communities.

This environmental issue transcends national boundaries, including in landlocked states like Zimbabwe. Global cooperation is critical, to establish a baseline for marine pollution and to assess, characterize and understand the fate of marine pollution, with the ultimate goal of ensuring sustainable marine ecosystem health and human wellbeing.

Excellencies,

Zimbabwe, like most countries, is seriously being affected by rising pollution that poses environmental challenges. Despite having legislative tools in place to protect our environment, our greatest challenges lie within the gap between policy and practice, both at the citizen and government levels. My Government continuously makes efforts to capacitate our environmental regulatory bodies, by ensuring that they have adequate human and financial resources to monitor and protect the environment.

With around 80% of marine litter stemming from land-based sources, the need to strengthen addressing solid waste management cannot be overemphasized. Plastic, being a major component of marine litter, has made plastic pollution one of the greatest man-made threats to the planet today. It is a blight on the environment and the world's oceans, taking a heavy toll on marine life.

Zimbabwe has taken steps to ensure waste along the plastic lifecycle is being addressed. My country now has a vibrant plastic industry which contributes to improved livelihoods and recycling of plastic waste. We have also made

significant progress in the management of single use plastic over the years by imposing a ban on thin plastic and polystyrene (kaylites).

While these efforts have gone some way to address these challenges, Zimbabwe, and most countries from the Global South, need more additional finance and technology transfer necessary to implement relevant treaties, and support initiatives to curb the challenge of marine pollution, in the spirit of leaving no one behind.

Excellencies,

In March 2022, at UNEA 5.2, we adopted a landmark decision on the development of a global treaty to “End plastic pollution”. We all recognized that urgent further international action is needed to agree on an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. Zimbabwe is fully committed to the negotiation process to develop a Treaty on plastic pollution. We urge all stakeholders to engage constructively, as now is the time we turn the promise of more aggressive policy action into reality.

Excellencies,

We note that significant progress was made at COP26 in Glasgow, where we all committed to more ambitious targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. As we go to Sharm el-Sheikh for COP27, let us all ensure that enough attention is paid to the wider environmental concerns, which means more international commitment on biodiversity and ending deforestation, as we believe that preserving natural habitats more broadly, including oceans, is key to managing the carbon in the atmosphere.

In conclusion, Zimbabwe stress that this Ocean Conference, and upcoming events on the environment, should take a more holistic approach and seek to properly address these wider environmental concerns, if we are to meet all the targets of SDG14. The question on all our minds should be, Do we want the Ocean – and its inhabitants, – to be choked with plastic waste? Ignoring these challenges will risk that we fail to keep the planet inside 1.5 degree warming, only to find out that we turned it into a garbage dump.

I thank you.