

# **STATEMENT AT THE 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**

**Excellencies Heads of State and Government,**

**Heads of Delegations**

**Ladies and Gentlemen.**

I want to commend the governments of Portugal and Kenya, for co-hosting this important Conference, which is an opportunity to deliberate on how, collectively, we can confront the multiple challenges facing our Oceans, seas and marine resources, in order to reinvigorate global efforts to rescue our Oceans, in this Decade of Action for Sustainable Development.

The Ocean has an impact on an estimated US\$500 billion global economy and the livelihoods of at least 1 out of every 10 people in the world. Pollution, overfishing and the effects of climate change are severely damaging the health of the ocean. According to recent studies, plastic could outweigh fish in our seas by 2050, if targeted interventions are not deployed.

**Excellencies,**

Zimbabwe, though landlocked, is very much part of this discourse on the health of the Ocean, and is equally concerned as the Ocean provides all of

us with vital services and products, and must be developed sustainably, for future generations. If the ocean fails, it is because we would have failed to assume our collective responsibility.

In pursuit of the objectives of the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the mantra of leaving no one behind, Zimbabwe continues to implement policies and regulatory mechanisms, geared at accelerating the achievement of all the 17 SDGs, with equal emphasis being placed on **SDG 14**, the one we are gathered here in Lisbon to review.

### **Excellencies,**

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), clearly gives landlocked States the right to access the oceans, as well as the right to participate, on an equitable basis, in the exploitation of the surplus from the living resources.

We, however, remain saddened that the participation of landlocked countries in the ocean economy remains marginal, partly due to poorly developed transit and transport systems, limited resources, lack of awareness, as well as limited access to the sea. It is imperative that the participation of LLDCs in the ocean-based economies is enhanced as a matter of urgency.

In that regard, awareness raising, financial support, capacity building, technology and information transfer should be extended to landlocked developing countries, to ensure an inclusive approach to the implementation of SDG 14 and being true to the dictates of leaving no one behind.

**Excellencies,**

The Covid-19 pandemic has not only set us back in the implementation of SDG14, but has led to an increase in demand for single-use plastics, such as masks and gloves. This has intensified pressure on the marine environment, exacerbating the marine litter problem. To address this challenge, there is need for further promotion of sustainable production and consumption patterns, together with marine litter management and solid waste prevention at the source, through the development of new and innovative strategies.

Zimbabwe is committed to fully contribute towards global efforts to conserve our ocean and our planet earth, through instituting measures to reduce plastic pollution. We have taken steps to ensure that waste, along the plastic life cycle, is addressed. My country now has a vibrant plastic industry which contributes to recycling of plastic waste, and improved livelihoods. We have also begun phasing down the usage of single use plastics with the hope of phasing them out by end of 2023.

Zimbabwe has, also, welcomed the landmark mandate calling for the development of a global treaty on plastics, adopted at UNEA5.2, which lays the groundwork to negotiate a comprehensive treaty.

**Excellencies,**

This conference has, from the outset, recognized the link between the ocean and the climate, as it is clear from science that, we cannot solve the problem of the Ocean without dealing with the climate. In the same vein, we cannot

solve the problem of the climate without dealing with the Ocean because it is the great climate regulator through carbon sequestration.

We call on the rich nations, particularly the G20 countries, who are responsible for 80 percent of all emissions to step up in their emission cuts. As agreed in Glasgow, to keep 1.5 degrees alive, let 2022 be the year of “implementation”. At COP 27 in Egypt, we look forward to seeing those responsible for the high emissions honouring the US\$100 billion climate finance commitment, to assist us to better mitigate and adapt, as that is the only way we can win the battle.

### **Excellencies,**

It is us who created the problems for our Ocean, and, with decisive and coordinated global action, we can solve them. Sustainable Development Goal 14, the Goal of the Oceans, remains our roadmap to a safe, stable, clean planet that we can bequeath to future generations. Let us all take advantage of this unique opportunity to reverse the precipitous decline of the health of the oceans and seas with concrete solutions for the benefit of the current and future generations. History will judge us harshly if we fail to what science tells us we should do.

**I Thank you.**