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APCO WORLDWIDE STATEMENT FOR THE UNITED NATIONS 2022 OCEAN CONFERENCE

While there has been substantial progress in building trust between governments and businesses, there are still many challenges that need to be urgently addressed to truly build a symbiotic relationship like the ones established by civil society or the academic sector. Even today, it seems that we speak two different languages, and therefore we are not able to move together in the same direction. A precondition necessary to build a sustainable future beyond 2030.

It is a pleasure to address you on behalf of APCO Worldwide, a US-based company dedicated to connecting people and companies. For decades, we have monitored multilateral negotiations and helped the private and public sectors to develop mutual understanding and synergies of their common objectives. We do this with the aim of building better projects that not only generate economic growth, but also to ensure we contribute towards uplifting people and protecting the environment.

It is with a spirit of boldness, inclusivity, curiosity and empathy, our company's core values, that we address you today, as members of the business community, to speak on the connection of the 2030 agenda, more specifically SDG 14: life below water, with the efforts being carried by private sector. Efforts that, if combined, will not only provide extremely valuable and much needed data, but also substantially increase the financial and technical resources available for countries to address the targets that make up this goal.

As a first example we would like to cite marine pollution, especially plastic waste. Never has the saying "one person's trash is another person's treasure" been truer than with marine debris. As technology quickly advances, recycled plastic has the potential to become one of the leading industries in a green economy. It is mind boggling that only 10% of plastic waste is recycled, and yet we continue to place barriers to an already 42.6 billion dollars' worth industry with a 7% annual growth and that it is proven to support the poorest communities. Just a couple of months ago we spoke of building back better, and while plastic was literally a lifesaving industry during the pandemic, we are continuing without the incentives of making it a more sustainable business.

The second case we want to bring up is sustainable tourism in marine protected areas. It is a no-brainer that healthy environments attract more people willing to pay a premium price to ensure its conservation. Based on this, we need to work together to manage marine protected areas, especially in Small Island developing States and least developed countries, in a way that ensures that the resources are used sustainably through feasible and innovative business opportunities that enhance decent economic opportunities for local communities.

Finally, we believe it is important to do a brief mention on the great opportunity that collaborating between governments, business, and the UN in data collection can bring to the fulfillment of SDG 14. We need to urgently tap into the rise of ESG that is being accelerated by private finance institutions, so that it links to the SDG. In turn, this will generate very rich data that will eventually serve to also uphold all relevant stakeholders on their environmental commitments.

As you can see, the private sector is ready to partake in the opportunities a sustainable future can bring to everyone. However, for it, we need to stop working in silos and set aside politics, and rather work on common and progressive solutions.

Thank you very much for your attention. We look forward to continuing this important discussion in this magnificent conference and in the future. Likewise, we congratulate the UN for the coordination and to all members states and relevant stakeholders on their recently announced commitment and anticipate collaboration together and to deploy APCO's resources for their fulfillment.