

Interactive dialogue 8: Leveraging interlinkages between Sustainable Development Goal 14 and other Goals towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Delivered by Hon. Sir Molwyn Joseph KGCN- Minister of Health, Wellness and the Environment, Antigua and Barbuda

Throughout this week, you have heard all about how the ocean and its finite marine resources are increasingly threatened and destroyed by unsustainable human activities, reducing their ability to provide crucial ecosystem services.

For Small Island Developing states, this decline in ocean health is even more acute, as our identity, culture and livelihoods are closely tied to the ocean. We are fully aware of how the deterioration of coastal and marine ecosystems and biodiversity is threatening human well-being, economic prosperity and the survival of our planet.

Accelerated actions across all 10 targets of SDG 14 are required to mitigate and reduce these negative impacts, including through strengthening ocean governance, and enhancing enabling environments. Taking into account the interconnected and indivisible nature of the SDGs, we must take a holistic approach that reaps maximum co-benefits across the 2030 Agenda.

For my country it is matter of matter of common sense to utilize comprehensive policies to tackle all of these critical issues. These policies must be designed and implemented in an integrated, cross-sectoral approach, involving all stakeholders. This is especially critical given the limited resources and time for achieving the SDGs. In this regard, Antigua and Barbuda has established the relevant linkages in integrating the SDGs into our national frameworks, including the Medium-Term Development Strategy.

For example, reducing marine pollution under SDG14.1 contributes to: food security (SDG2), improving human health (SDG3), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8) and climate resilience (SDG13). At the same time, progress made in other SDGs such as SDG 12 (sustainable consumption and production) and SDG 11 (urbanization in the context of coastal areas) can advance SDG14.1.

These mutually reinforcing relationships can be *better understood* through collection of comprehensive disaggregated data and regular monitoring of progress. These relationships can be *better leveraged* through incorporating this data into decision making in an effective, cross-cutting manner.

This is a high priority for Antigua and Barbuda and involves the coordination of a committee of senior government officials across ministries and departments. These officials meet regularly work towards collaborations that will create an enabling environment for and government policies and actions to be able to achieve SDG 14 as well as many of the other interlinked SDGS.

Antigua and Barbuda is of the view that this collaborative approach to tackling ocean related issues can only create better policies. Working together, policy makers can assess synergies and trade-offs to avert unnecessary negative consequences such as avoidable impacts on marine ecosystems stemming from economic development. In addition, efforts to increase ocean literacy across all stakeholders can help

policymakers better understand the interlinkages between ocean health, resilience, productivity and economic prosperity

As I speak of partnerships, we are all here gathered in Lisbon for the long-awaited 2nd UN Ocean Conference. This convening provides opportunities, that we have not had for the past few years due to the COVID 19 pandemic to make connections and build relationships found in cross-sectoral collaboration at the international level.

We must take full advantage of the time that we are here together to generate enhanced partnerships, to maximize ocean health, resilience and productivity and aim at moving towards a sustainable ocean-based economy.

A few days ago, The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) has launched a “Declaration for the enhancement of marine scientific knowledge, research capacity and transfer of marine technology to SIDS.”

It sets out principles of engagement, one based on SIDS determining their needs, shifting away from one-way initiatives and approaches and moving to best practices to develop, implement and sustain capacity development partnerships. These principles are not unique to just SDG 14, and can also be useful to guide more meaningful and effective partnerships across other interlinked SDGs as well. I invite all partners, countries, and organizations to sign on to this Declaration, acknowledge its principles, review existing initiatives in light of these, and use it to guide future partnerships.

Before I conclude, I want to reiterate the importance of capitalizing on the synergistic nature of SDG14. Achieving the targets under this Goal will also advance progress across others, through harmonizing numerous efforts and limited resources. Experience is the best teacher, and we must learn not only from our own experiences, but also from the experiences of others. Therefore, during today’s dialogue, I look forward to hearing about how these synergies are being harnessed, including best practices and lessons learned.

Antigua and Barbuda – Interactive Dialogue 8 Closing Remarks

- Let me begin by thanking you all for participating in this Interactive Dialogue that ties ocean action under SDG 14 with advancement of the 2030 Agenda, as well as other relevant frameworks such as the Paris Agreement.
- It is clear that if we fail to achieve SDG14, it will have a domino effect, compromising sustainable development, and our collective future. In this context, I wish to highlight that four targets under SDG 14 have already expired in 2020, and efforts need to be enhanced to realize these targets through harnessing existing synergies.
- I am pleased to see there is a national, regional and global movement away from a siloed approach to a more holistic one that harnesses interlinkages and synergies within and between instruments. While the political will exists, transformational actions for implementing these lofty objectives requires commensurate support, especially in Small Island Developing State and developing countries. Capacity building, transfer of technology and financing should therefore also be aligned and harmonized with these overarching objectives.
- To this end, we have seen numerous voluntary commitments and announcements emerging from this conference and other fora. However, effective implementation of these commitments are lagging.
- Therefore let me conclude with the strong call from small island developing States to transform ambition for conservation and sustainable use of the ocean to meaningful and affirmative action.
- I thank you.