

Interactive Dialogue 8 “Leveraging interlinkages between Sustainable Development Goal 14 and other Goals towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda”

Introductory remarks from H.E. Mr. Borislav Sandov, Deputy Prime Minister for Climate Policies and Minister of Environment and Water of Bulgaria

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The implementation of the 2030 Agenda is more important than ever. The pandemic has clearly highlighted the link between viruses and diseases such as COVID-19 and climate change, oceans acidification, and biodiversity loss, with the poor suffering the most in all cases. Moving ahead, we need to create ways that provide for equitable economic growth and sustainable use of the planet’s natural resources. This clearly emphasizes the need for a renewed focus on achieving all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the global blueprint to end poverty, protect our environment and ensure prosperity.

Policy integration is of utmost importance for achieving the SDGs, which interact with each other in an indivisible way. Analyzing the interlinkages can help identify the synergies and trade-offs between SDGs and their targets. We need a better understanding of how well we are doing with respect to reaching the goals, how progress might be hindered by the pandemic, and how we might accelerate progress through and even beyond 2030.

Biodiversity is at the heart of the functioning of ecosystems and the provision of ecosystem services that are essential to human well-being. It contributes to food security, human health, clean air and water. It supports local livelihoods as well as economic development, and is essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Bulgaria is a part of the Black Sea region and actively works with different partners to improve the marine status and conserve its unique biodiversity while tackling marine pollution from land based sources.

Maintaining or achieving good status of the marine environment and preserving marine ecosystems and biodiversity represents a significant potential for employment and sustainable economic growth and well-being.

In this context special attention should be paid to the development of blue economy and the sectors whose economic results depend on the marine ecosystem status, such as fisheries, aquaculture and tourism. For other sectors, such as transport and coastal and underwater infrastructure, the state of marine waters is important, but they themselves put pressure on the environment.

Academia and the private sector also have the resources to make SDG 14 and the other UN Sustainable Development Goals come true. For example, the academia should be actively involved in scientific discussions and research projects and introduce new educational programs at different levels. Engaging of business through the principle of corporate social responsibility could also significantly contribute to marine environment. It is essential to ensure integrated and coordinated actions of individual sectoral policies. Thus, we could establish long-term sustainable solutions and to promote synergies to achieve the SDGs.

Achieving better visibility among the general public on topics related to green transformation and nature conservation, as well as youth participation in these processes is of utmost importance. In this sense, Bulgaria has recently launched a new programme entitled "Youth Policies in the Field of Environment". The aim of the Programme is to involve more young people in the decision - making processes and implementation of specific practices related to combating climate change, reducing the carbon footprint, introduction of the principles of the circular economy, effective waste management towards "zero waste", marine environment protection and others.

To respond to the challenges we face, it is necessary to efficiently use resources, create equal opportunities and promote investment in science, quality education and high technologies, develop a circular economy and support smart, lasting, inclusive and sustainable economic growth. This is the only way to help combat poverty and inequality, protect the environment, promote peaceful and inclusive communities and ensure full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Thank you for your attention and now I handover the floor to my fellow Co-Chair, His Excellency Mr. Molwyn Joseph, Minister of Health, Wellness and the Environment of Antigua and Barbuda, for some opening remarks.