

THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**REMARKS AT THE OCEAN CONFERENCE INTERACTIVE  
DIALOGUE: LEVERAGING INTERLINKAGES BETWEEN  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 14 AND OTHER  
GOALS TOWARDS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030  
AGENDA**

1 July 2022

**Your Excellency, Mr. Borislav Sandov, *[Deputy Prime Minister for Climate Policies; Minister of Environment and Waters, Bulgaria]***

**Your Excellency, Mr. Molwyn Joseph, *[Minister of Health, Wellness and the Environment, Antigua and Barbuda]***

**Distinguished Participants,**

**It is my pleasure to be here today to address the topic of leveraging the interlinkages between SDG 14 and other SDGs. As we know, the ocean acts as a life support system for the planet, and as a provider of food, employment and economic security.**

**As a result, action taken towards restoring and maintaining ocean health has many co-benefits across the whole spectrum of SDGs. Yet, we have not been able to fully leverage these co-benefits to speed up the implementation of SDG 14.**

**There are many reasons for this. One major issue is the siloed nature of institutions at all levels, from local to global. Different ministries handle issues related to fisheries, marine protection, energy, economic development, poverty and human health. The complex effects of climate change further**

**influence the actions taken towards all other SDGs, as well as the results of those actions.**

**The holistic achievement of SDGs depends on coordination between ministries and organizations, and this is something that many countries are already doing.**

**The achievement of SDG 14 specifically also depends on mainstreaming ocean issues into the work of other ministries and into a variety of multilateral processes.**

**However, this mainstreaming is not yet fully taking place. For example, national and institutional coordination efforts may simply not consider ocean health central to, for example, poverty reduction.**

**This brings me to the second reason for the difficulties in fully leveraging SDG 14 co-benefits. The ocean, and the restoration and maintenance of ocean health, is simply not a priority in many countries' strategies for SDG implementation.**

**A recent study has found that SDG 14 is considered to be the least important of all of the SDGs by many, although not all, countries. SDG 14 also receives less funding than any other SDG.**

**At the national level, many countries have developed unique solutions to assess SDG synergies and trade-offs, and have put in place processes to enhance coherence.**

**However, SDG 14 has not commonly been at the centre of national efforts to create coherence in SDG implementation, except in a few countries that include Small Island Developing States and some coastal countries.**

**In these countries, the implementation of SDG 14 is seen as integral to the attainment of SDGs on food security, poverty, economic development, and renewable energy, among others.**

**The lack of visibility for ocean issues is something we need to change. We need to make SDG 14 central to the implementation of other SDGs to reflect the way that the ocean supports all life, including human life.**

**We need to fundamentally re-imagine the human relationship with the natural world, including the ocean. Ocean literacy is a pre-condition of sustainability, and an important tool to foster awareness and connection, and to develop societal support for ocean protection. In this way, SDGs 14 and 4 are closely connected.**

**The final obstacle I would like to mention is the sheer complexity of the SDGs and their interactions. The interactions between SDG 14, its targets, and other SDGs do not necessarily occur one by one, but rather in complex**

**ways involving multiple goals in differing ways and to different degrees.**

**Both synergies and trade-offs can be context-specific, and dependent a specific time scale. A short-term synergy may eventually turn into a long-term trade-off. The complexity of interactions is also a key obstacle for measuring progress, as current indicators are not designed to assess spill-over effects in the way the actions taken towards one SDG might influence another one.**

**Let me now turn to talking about opportunities. In particular, opportunities exist in exploring and promoting interlinkages that have not yet been fully developed. They include, for example, linkages between ocean conservation and poverty; as well as linkages between fisheries, nutrition and food security. They also include linkages between the ocean, inequality and gender issues.**

**We can do more to develop and promote these undeveloped linkages by advocating for the ocean at other international and national fora where these issues are discussed.**

**Mainstreaming ocean health into economic development can provide opportunities for ocean conservation once the economic case for ocean action versus inaction is better understood. We need to, then, better factor the cost of**

**inaction, and the resulting ocean degradation, into long-term decision-making.**

**Lessons can be learned from the early experiences of mainstreaming ocean issues into climate change debates. While more can still be done to integrate ocean action with climate action, there are early successes that can be drawn from.**

**These early lessons include the importance of strong advocacy and champions amongst nations to break the siloes and start the process of integration. The result of this can be seen, for example, in the increasing number of countries that have now included ocean issues in their NDCs under the UNFCCC.**

**In closing, to fully realize the positive interlinkages between SDG 14 and other SDGs, we need to address the needs of people in an equitable manner, as outlined in the SDGs, while ensuring that the functioning of ocean ecosystems is maintained not just for now, but into the future. Because the ocean is central to the health of the planet and human well-being, ocean solutions could be drawn from to make progress towards many other SDGs.**

**We just need the imagination and the persistence to speak up for the ocean wherever other SDGs are being discussed.**

**Thank you.**

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