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Lisbon, Portugal

APCO WORLDWIDE STATEMENT FOR THE UNITED NATIONS 2022 OCEAN CONFERENCE AS DELIVERED IN THE INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE LEVERAGING INTERLINKAGES BETWEEN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 14 AND OTHER GOALS TOWARDS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA

It is a pleasure to address you on behalf of APCO Worldwide, an advisory and advocacy communications consultancy dedicated to connecting people and companies to catalyst progress. We are strategically placed at the nexus of policymakers and public opinion, where we help stakeholders develop mutual understanding and synergies of their common objectives. As a result, we can contribute towards building better initiatives that generate economic growth and ensure we contribute towards uplifting people and protecting the planet.

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

In the specific issue addressed by SDG 14.1, namely plastic waste, the saying "one person's trash is another person's treasure" has never 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. Yet, we continue to place barriers to an already 42.6 billion dollars worth of industry with a 7% annual growth, which is proven to support the poorest communities. Just a couple of months ago, we spoke of building back better, and while the plastic was literally a lifesaving industry during the pandemic, we are continuing without the incentives of making it a more sustainable business.

Likewise, on SDG 14.7, it is a no-brainer that healthy environments attract more people willing to pay a premium for tourism packages to ensure their conservation. Based on this, we need to work together to manage marine protected areas, especially in Small Island developing States and least developed countries, to ensure 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 essential to briefly mention the great opportunity that collaboration between governments, businesses, 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 financial institutions so that it links to the SDG. In turn, this will generate wealthy data that will eventually serve to 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 everyone. However, for it, we need to stop working in silos and set aside politics and instead work on joint and progressive solutions.

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