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Panel Intervention (as prepared for delivery)

2022 Ocean Conference

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

Friday, 1 July 2022
10:00-13:00 hrs.
Altice Arena, Tejo Hall

**H.E. Mr. Borislav Sandov, Deputy Prime Minister for Climate Policies
and Minister of Environment and Waters of Bulgaria,**

**H.E. Mr. Molwyn Joseph, Minister of Health, Wellness and the
Environment of Antigua and Barbuda,**

Distinguished Co-panelists, Excellencies, Delegates, Colleagues

I would like to thank the Chairs and the organizers for inviting ESCAP to participate in this important dialogue. At least 200 million people in Asia and the Pacific depend on the ocean for their livelihood.

Our ocean is fundamental to harnessing economic development opportunities and bringing harmony between people and the planet. Our communities depend on fishery resources and tourism services for food and income, and all these activities rely on marine sustainability and a healthy ocean.

Nonetheless, progress on Sustainable Development Goal 14 in our region is insufficient.

In Asia and the Pacific, ESCAP leads the Follow-up and Review on all the Goals, including Goal 14. The results of this process and identification of *priority areas* for action to accelerate progress on Goal 14 underline the interlinkages between Goal 14 and other Goals, including, for example, human rights (Goal 16) and gender equality considerations (Goal 5).

Allow me to elaborate on these priority areas, which were identified in March during our 9th Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development:

First, policies to address the ocean-climate nexus are needed. They must be informed by sound science and leverage available technologies to accelerate action on both mitigation and adaptation.

Second, the engagement of local communities and authorities is crucial for the achievement of Goal 14. This is true for data collection, marine protected areas, as well as for the enforcement of measures to prevent illegal fishing practices.

Third, insufficient data and statistics hinder the capacity of governments and stakeholders alike in the protection of the ocean. Efforts and financing must be increased to address this gap.

Fourth, partnerships may catalyze action in the region. This includes public and private partnerships to address issues such as marine debris, as well as science and policy partnerships.

These concerted assessments send a clear message: governments alone will be unable to deliver Goal 14 by 2030. Accelerating our action on this Goal requires identifying interlinkages but also finding relevant stakeholders.

The connection between Goal 14 and Goal 13 is of particular importance, as the ocean is a key regulator of climate and weather by taking up over a quarter of global CO₂ emissions.

However, the ocean's sink capacity is shrinking due to temperature increases, ocean acidification and loss of marine biodiversity. Thus, protecting the ocean and maintaining its sink capacity is key to protecting the climate.

The Ocean's sink capacity is also evident in coastal habitats, which can sequester two to four times the amount of carbon per area than terrestrial forests. Such a role is also evident in Indonesia's seagrasses and mangroves acting as a major blue carbon reservoir, for example.

However, at the global level, coastal habitats are being lost at about 1.5 per cent per year. Thus, we need to strengthen our efforts for ocean-based solutions such as expanding the ocean's capacity to absorb CO₂ as well as low- or zero-carbon energy and low-carbon shipping, which could provide one-fifth of the carbon mitigation needed to meet the Paris Agreement targets by 2050. These reductions equate to the emissions of all the world's coal-fired power plants.

We must do better to leverage scientific research, development and technology to harness ocean-based solutions to climate change. Only 1.7 per cent of national research budgets are allocated to ocean science.

We also need better data to monitor progress and accelerated actions. Ocean accounts represent a new pathway for integrating statistics to better understand the complex interactions between human societies, their economies and the ocean ecosystem.

In this regard, ESCAP is leading the work to advance ocean accounting through its co-chairing of the Global Ocean Accounts Partnership and through the development of national pilot activities within the region.

Better integration of ocean data and statistics will lead to the effective implementation of ocean policies to tackle climate change. For instance, geospatial information and services can be cost- and time-efficient in the quantification of disaster risk.

To help effectively address the interlinkages between climate and ocean, ESCAP has also developed an accelerator approach. This tool can help optimize development outcomes aligned with national priorities.

The methodology helps identify challenges and issues related to the delivery of Goal 14 targets and corresponding interlinkages with other Goals to support government officials in the design and implementation of effective policies. This is especially important for a faster and bluer post-pandemic recovery.

Addressing these interlinked challenges will also require better coordination between UN agencies. ESCAP has, therefore, together with the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Development Programme, submitted a Regional Decade Programme to assist UN agencies at the regional level in aligning their work to support the objectives of the Programme.

The Programme promotes the protection and safeguarding of ecosystems health, including marine ecosystems and their interconnectedness with land ecosystems, from a one-health approach.

To ensure that our ocean-related intergovernmental processes are inclusive, we established the *Asia-Pacific Day for the Ocean*. This is our flagship multi-stakeholder platform, which supports systematic regional dialogue and enhances regional cooperation by enabling experience-sharing, technology transfer, capacity-building and inclusive engagement.

Going forward, we will continue to support intergovernmental processes and initiatives to address important interlinkages. We will pay particular attention to:

1. Responsible consumption and production (Goal 12) as it has a strong correlation with marine pollution, especially in the form of plastic debris.
2. Supporting decent work and economic growth (Goal 8), including through the promotion of ocean-based employment such as jobs in the maritime industry, seaborne and on-shore (Goal 2), for billions in our region; as well as innovative financing solutions such as blue bonds and debt for climate swaps.
3. Fostering partnerships (Goal 17) that may catalyze action in the region, including public and private partnerships, as well as science and policy partnerships, as we have done with bringing together statisticians and scientists to leverage the opportunities offered by the UN Decade of Ocean Science, including through the Global Ocean Accounts Partnership.

As we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, we must *build back better and bluer*. ESCAP works in close collaboration with its member States to achieve this.

Thank you.