



## **Interactive Dialogue 2: Managing, protecting, conserving and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems**

***3:00PM - 6:00 PM, 28 June 2022***

### **Key points**

**by Dr. Sally Box, Assistant Secretary, Climate and Environment Policy, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade [on behalf of H.E. Hon. Tanya Plibersek, Minister for the Environment and Water, Australia]**

The interactive dialogue of the 2022 United Nations Oceans Conference on “Managing, protecting, conserving and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems” was held on 28 June 2022. The Dialogue was co-chaired by H.E. Hon. Tanya Plibersek, Minister for the Environment and Water, Australia, and H.E. Ms. Ximena Fuentes, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chile; Ms. Isabella Lövin, Co-Chair, the Friends of Ocean Action and Former Deputy Prime Minister of Sweden served as Moderator.

Presentations were made by Ms. Elizabeth Mrema, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity; Ms. Martha Rojas-Urrego, Secretary-General, RAMSAR Convention on Wetlands; Mr. Zhang Zhanhai, Special Envoy of the Government of China and Chief Engineer of Ministry of Natural Resources; Mr. Marco Lambertini, Director General, WWF International. Lead Discussants for the Dialogue included Mr. Torgny Holmgren, Chief Executive Officer of Stockholm International Water and Ms. Mami Mizutori, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Nineteen (19) participants made interventions during the Interactive Dialogue, including from States, Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) and other stakeholders. Additional written statements were received from participants following the session and will be available on the website of the Conference.

Ecosystem degradation undermines nearly all Sustainable Development Goals and, due to the interconnected nature of our planet, degradation of aquatic ecosystems is particularly worrisome.

The Dialogue highlighted the key importance of coastal and marine ecosystem as hotspots of biodiversity, agents of climate mitigation [carbon sinks], and as a source of overall human prosperity, including supporting food security and nutrition. Despite the benefits being well categorized and scientifically understood, the coastal and marine environment remains at risk, impacted by different threats from anthropogenic sources including: disjointed planning, lack of adequate finance, and more broadly, lack of awareness, capacity, and resources [e.g., technologies] for effective monitoring and management.

The ocean is experiencing increased cumulative impacts and pressures. Marine and coastal ecosystem are being lost at an alarming rate, much faster than forest ecosystems, for example, 35% of wetlands and 67% of mangroves have been lost or degraded' within the last 30 years. This exponential decline of ecosystem integrity must be corrected with the utmost urgency. with

Participants highlighted the following actions to address the triple interlinked threat of pollution, climate change, and biodiversity loss:

1. Prioritize the role of the ocean in regulating climate and sequestering greenhouse gases [i.e., blue carbon]. This important linkage should be a clear and prominent part of National Determined Contributions [NDCs] under the Paris Agreement. Additionally, countries must aim to comprehensively manage systemic risks including to ecosystems integral for human survival. Integrated climate and disaster risk programs, as well as ongoing national action plans serve as tools to address the issue in practical terms. Additionally, Nature Based Solutions (NBS) must be reflected as well in the various tools used for addressing climate change and biodiversity loss. A key entry point for streamlining NBS can be the upcoming Midterm Review of the Sendai Framework.

2. Engage a “source to sea” approach in which the inflows of plastics [including microplastics] and pollution in all its forms [i.e., wastewater, agricultural runoffs etc.] are better understood and systematically addressed.

3. Continue advancing on our commitments towards the protection of the ocean, such as the commitment undertaken by a number of participants to protect 30% of the ocean by 2030, and by strengthening spatial management efforts such as marine protected areas (MPAs) and supporting efforts related to the management of Areas Beyond National Jurisdictions (ABNJ), in particular the ongoing International Conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ).

Participants stressed that so far, the momentum for scaled action is building with 2022 as ‘the year of the ocean’ with a historical WTO agreement on fisheries subsidies; negotiations on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction; updated biodiversity targets [i.e., post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework]; and the UN Ocean Conference at present. Likewise, we are seeing a greater effort to include gender considerations as well as traditional knowledge and increased influx of [innovative] finance in the fight for the health of the ocean. We must continue these efforts relentlessly, and together, forge the prosperous and sustainable “future we want”.

In conclusion, I would like to add that the discussions also heard voluntary commitments made by participants. For instance, Monaco proposed an award 2.7 million euros to protected areas covering over 7k km by 2025; USA committed to 30 gigawatt of clean ocean energy by 2030; Greece and USA will co-host Our Ocean Conference in 2024; Australia committed 1.2 billion towards preserving the Great Barrier Reef over the next decade and Belize committed to protecting 30% of their marine area (they are currently at 20% of territorial sea) among others.