

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

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*]

Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations, Ms. Amina Mohammed,
Distinguished Participants,

It is a pleasure to be here today to address the important topic of leveraging interlinkages between Goal 14 and other Goals.

I have been listening with interest to the rich contributions of the speakers before me and I think we are in agreement that the ocean is central to human health and well-being, and to the functioning of our planet.

Yet, as we have heard from the many interventions at this Ocean Conference, we are not yet on track to reach Goal 14 in its entirety.

This timely dialogue if you recall, was added to the the existing partnership dialogues that were held during the 2017 UN Ocean Conference at the mandated preparatory meeting in February 2020 by Member States.

This is a crucial dialogue as it provides us with an important opportunity to take time to discuss whether one of the reasons why progress might be lagging is that we are not sufficiently leveraging the interlinkages between Goal 14 and other Goals.

As we are starting to better understand these interlinkages, we should ask ourselves whether, and how, harnessing them might help us make progress towards

ocean health. And conversely, how would progress towards SDG 14 also benefit the attainment of other Goals?

The drivers that have the greatest influence on the sustainability of the marine environment cannot be addressed through Goal 14 alone. Instead, they require collaborative action across many SDGs. According to the 2nd World Ocean Assessment, these drivers include climate change, economic activity, population growth and demographic changes, technological advances, and changing governance structures and geopolitical instability.

None of these drivers of ocean change is dependent on Goal 14. Without integrating ocean concerns into the work of other sectors, we will not be able to achieve a healthy and sustainable ocean.

And conversely, progress towards Goal 14, or lack of it, also influences our ability to reach other Goals. For example, if we do not achieve Goal 14 and its targets related to sustainable fisheries, we will also struggle to achieve Goal 2 on food security, hunger and nutrition.

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated this linkage in a very concrete way. According to the 2021 State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World report, COVID-19 has made it significantly more challenging to meet commitments to end world hunger and malnutrition.

The report predicts that around 660 million people may still face hunger in 2030, in part due to lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on global food security. This is 30 million more people than in a scenario in which the pandemic had not occurred.

Fisheries is an important component of global food systems, and essential for food security, nutrition and livelihoods globally, with fish and seafood consumption providing approximately 20 per cent of all animal protein intake for 3.2 billion people. Thus, the COVID-19 related contraction in fisheries is a likely contributor to food insecurity and hunger worldwide.

COVID-19 has also demonstrated the capacity of people to innovate, and in fact it is innovation and technology, both components of Goal 9, that have helped us make progress on certain aspects of Goal 14 during the pandemic. When marine protected area and fisheries managers were unable to go to the field to undertake monitoring and surveillance, innovative new technologies were developed and applied to fill the need.

Remote monitoring and surveillance, as well as improved remote communications, became increasingly important. These technologies have allowed fisheries and marine protected area managers to carry on their work despite pandemic-related restrictions.

It is fortunate that we have made much progress since the adoption of Agenda 2030 in understanding interlinkages between the Goals. This progress has not only been global but has also been demonstrated at the national and local levels, where the realization of interlinkages is often context-specific and works differently in different countries and localities.

The Voluntary National Reviews demonstrate that many countries have made systematic studies of interlinkages at the national level to better plan their SDG implementation. These studies have often included mapping of potential synergies and trade-offs. Many countries have convened multisectoral dialogues, inter-departmental working groups and national coordinating bodies.

They have consulted a broad range of stakeholders and different levels of government. They have followed up on the analytical and consultative work by prioritizing the most important SDG interactions nationally, and the required policy interventions. Many countries have also mapped the SDGs against existing national strategies and have in some cases created new strategies for SDG achievement.

These types of dialogues across multiple sectors and disciplines can, at their best, create new possibilities and innovative solutions. They can also help better understand situations where one sector's policies may adversely impact another sector. It is important to ask what kinds of trade-offs might be acceptable under certain circumstances.

And what are the trade-offs that must be avoided despite the costs. For example, ending harmful fisheries subsidies can help reduce overfishing and as a result lead to restoration of both fish stocks and marine ecosystems. But ending subsidies may also result in job losses for those working in the fisheries sector. These job losses could have unexpected consequences for other SDGs that may be difficult to predict in advance.

The outcomes of such scenarios depend on context and on time frames. But understanding them is going to help design strategies to mitigate them through, for example, developing alternative livelihoods.

Despite all the progress made in better understanding interlinkages, countries are faced with a difficult task in leveraging them in practice. In fact, many countries consider coordination and coherence to be the biggest challenges to making progress with the SDGs. This is particularly true of SDG 14, which is often not prioritized highly in a national setting. And many countries still struggle with measuring progress in a meaningful way, given that the existing indicators are not well set up to address interlinkages.

So how can we better leverage interlinkages to design impactful policy to achieve SDG 14 globally? There is no simple answer to this question, but the way forward will likely include public engagement, sound science to inform policy, and multidisciplinary partnerships.

Because the ocean is often not highly prioritized in policy decisions nationally and internationally, it is important to build a better understanding of its value through outreach, citizen science and education. Ocean literacy is an important societal goal for achieving ocean health, and closely interlinks SDG 4 with 14.

Ocean science partnerships are vital for building capacity globally, and for improving the science-policy interface for the development of more impactful policies. Such partnerships should involve multiple disciplines of science, including the social sciences, and be open to different types of knowledge, including traditional

knowledge. They should also aim to be inclusive and promote the training of young female scientists, so that SDGs 5 and 10 can be progressed along with SDG 14.

Finally, we must actively seek to develop multidisciplinary partnerships that have ocean health as their central aim, and that involve all ocean sectors and stakeholders.

In an ocean setting, marine spatial planning brings together multiple ocean users to make informed and coordinated decisions concerning how to use ocean spaces and resources sustainably.

In building these partnerships for ocean literacy, science and implementation, we must also consider how we best deal with increasing the available financing for ocean action. Perhaps it will be easier to raise financing for ocean solutions that harness interlinkages to help make concurrent progress towards other SDGs, including poverty, nutrition, hunger and security.

Looking ahead at the international level, I see a few opportunities lined up already. Immediately after this Conference, we will have an in-depth review of SDG 14 at the HLPF where we hope to hear from many if you on these ideas that I have proposed above. The UNFCCC COP27 will address the well established and acknowledged ocean, climate and biodiversity nexus

Only by placing the ocean in the centre of these vital global policy debates we have the possibility of harnessing co-benefits to create win-win solutions in the long term.

Thank you.

