Excellencies, youth delegates, ladies & gentlemen,

On behalf of all 146 youth delegates, I am happy to report that the Youth & Innovation Forum was concluded successfully and that the 118 delegates who participated in the innovathon had a challenging, but memorable experience. The youth declaration I will read summarizes our desires for tomorrow:

“To the displeasure of many of the global leaders gathered here, we are sad to remind you that there is no middle road to the climate crisis. We will either address the problem meaningfully and in accordance with science, or we will not. This is not a matter of extremism, it is a matter of fact, of policy and of science.

Every decision we make between now and in our children’s lifetimes will determine the very fate of humanity. Whether we suffer greatly or build together, it is our choice.

Deeper still, we don’t have to project one more minute into our future to see how damaging the climate crisis is.

We speak to you not just as official youth delegates, but as human beings, as sons, daughters, children, indigenous peoples, our voices cross-cutting from the West to the Global South where the poorest people are already suffering the consequences of your inaction.

We, the youth delegates of the 2022 Ocean Conference, bring to you today the voices of the 15 million suffering from prolonged drought in Eastern Africa. Daily, they are facing severe food and water shortage. We bring the voices of the 12 million forced out of their homes by floods in South Asia. We also bring the voices of those experiencing drought in central America and wild fires in Australia.

The climate crisis is impacting those who have not only contributed the least to global emissions, but have already suffered greatly in the global history of inequality and imperialism, stacking one injustice upon another.

The climate crisis is everyone’s loss, and no one is shielded from its looming reality. Profits alone will not save us. Governments are failing to act. Not a single country is on track to meet their Paris Agreement goals. Climate change is not a coincidence nor an anomaly. Climate change is a consequence of our unsustainable way of life. We must choose whether this moment will lead us to regression or evolution. Our greatest choice is to move towards a cooperative, collaborative world that aligns with science, whose economies centre and benefit the middle and lower classes and the marginalised, and who honour the inherent value of all people, not just the wealthy.

And that is what the Global Blue New Deal is all about: a youth-led public policy agenda that elevates the voices and priorities of global youth in building a healthy ocean and a just future based on four priorities: 1) creating a net-zero carbon future, 2) preserving biodiversity, 3) achieving sustainable seafood and 4) improving stakeholder engagement for better ocean governance. The Global Blue New Deal seeks to leverage the ocean as a solution in the fight against climate change, and if implemented correctly, the impacts of a changing climate, such as ocean
acidification, rising sea levels, and slowing current circulation patterns, will be mitigated. The solutions offered seek to end marine pollution, restore marine ecosystems at large, balance seafood production with sustainability, and address sociopolitical gaps in ocean resource management. And with that, I think we have our work cut out for us. To do any less is to stall or regress. We have two choices: to save our ocean or doom this ecosystem to extinction. Thank you.