

Third UN Ocean Conference Preparatory Meeting, 2 July 2024, UN, New York - video message from Ambassador Peter Thomson, UNSG's Special Envoy for the Ocean.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen

All courtesies observed. Warm greetings and many thanks for this opportunity of addressing you. My thanks in particular to the President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Dennis Francis, for his leadership in the drive to implement the Sustainable Development Goals. For him as an island man, fidelity to SDG14 and the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean's resources is understandable, but his dedication to the cause has been inspirational throughout.

Many thanks also to the conference co-hosts, Costa Rica and France, for the diligence with which they have been carrying out their

preparations. The co-hosts' regional briefings and their open interaction with Civil Society have been a boon for all concerned. Those of you who went to San José last month for the High-Level Event on Ocean Action: Immersed in Change, witnessed Costa Rica's rousing commitment, with the spirit of San José now propelling us forward to shores of Nice next year.

As you undertake your preparations for the third UN Ocean Conference, please bear in mind the mantra, "No healthy planet without a healthy ocean, and the ocean's health is currently measurably in decline." You are all broadly aware of those measurements, so the gravity of your discussions today will not have escaped you. It's no secret that we're not meeting our agreed targets, so the call to all is to try harder. We *must* try much harder, as if in fact the lives of our loved ones depended on such efforts, because for many that will be the case before this century is out.

We can take heart from the fact that much has happened in the ocean action space since the 2015 advent of the SDGs and the inception of SDG14's drive to conserve and only sustainably

use the resources of the ocean. Multilateral environmental agreements have been advancing through 2022's adoption of the Global Biodiversity Framework; with UNFCCC's annual Ocean-Climate Dialogue embedding ocean issues into the world's climate change deliberations; through the BBNJ agreement offering comprehensive international governance to the High Seas; with WTO very close to ending harmful fisheries subsidies; and with an internationally-binding Plastics Treaty under negotiation on a quest to bring plastic pollution to heel.

All of these environmental processes are grounded in ocean science, hence the great importance of the UN Decade of Ocean Science being led by IOC-UNESCO. As evidenced in the resounding success of the recent Ocean Decade Conference in Barcelona, ocean science is receiving more attention now than at stage of human history; which is as it should be, for we ever more urgently need the results of science to create and achieve our policy aspirations.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let us remind ourselves that the UN Ocean Conferences were created to support the implementation of SDG14, or as I like to put it, to keep SDG14 honest. In your decisions today, please keep SDG14 as your lodestar and stay true to your chosen theme of accelerating action.

May you give particular attention to your own country's preparations for the third UN Ocean Conference, that you might arrive in Nice next year with your heads held high, knowing that agreed international obligations have been met. I urge you all to use the year ahead to ratify and implement, and to conclude the robust agreements needed to protect the ocean's well-being.

Thank you for your attention.
