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MR. LI JUNHUA
UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
AFFAIRS

Video Message
UNOC Preparatory Meeting (4-5 minutes)

2 July 2024

Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Colleagues,

It is my pleasure to provide these remarks in my capacity as Conference Secretary-General for the Third United Nations Ocean Conference.

I would like to congratulate Costa Rica and France for their stewardship as hosts of the Conference, which will address the theme, “Accelerating action and mobilizing all actors to conserve and sustainably use the ocean”.

Excellencies,

We are witnessing a trend of declining ocean health that we cannot reverse without urgent and collective action.

The world is currently experiencing the fourth mass coral bleaching event on record and the second in a decade. All the world's ocean basins are affected.

This is a clear sign of ocean warming and is a threat compounded by other human-made impacts, such as pollution, unsustainable fisheries and ocean acidification.

Threatened reefs mean threatened lives both in the ocean and on land.

Coral reefs are the largest living structures in the world, with the highest biodiversity of any ecosystem on the planet. They provide barriers against storms and sea-level rise and support fisheries and other aspects of human well-being.

An ailing ocean is a threat to life as we know it. This is why a successful 2025 UN Ocean Conference matters.

Excellencies,

We will meet in Nice to build on the momentum generated in Lisbon in 2022.

While we yet have many challenges to address, there are also many opportunities to tap.

The adoption, in June 2023, of the United Nations Agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (The BBNJ Treaty) is a prime example.

Similarly, the agreement to develop an international treaty to address plastic pollution is a massive step towards stemming the flow of plastic into the ocean, impacting biodiversity and human health alike.

The UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development is also an opportunity for progress.

The Ocean Decade seeks to make sure that all knowledge is harnessed for ocean solutions, including the traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, who have stewarded their ocean resources since time immemorial.

With the support of the best available knowledge, we can build sustainable ocean economies that go beyond business as usual, and that are based on an understanding that only a healthy ocean and inclusive society can support a thriving and equitable ocean economy.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We need to do whatever we can to restore ocean health, both locally and globally.

This is our responsibility to future generations.

While using financial resources more efficiently by leveraging synergies across sectors, we also urgently need new finance.

It may come from public, philanthropic and private sources, including blended finance.

Almost 175 billion US dollars per year is needed to achieve SDG 14 by 2030, but less than 10 billion US dollars was allocated to this goal between 2015 and 2019.

And we need to advocate more systematically for the ocean's health and build local capacities for restoration and conservation. We need more effective integration of ocean knowledge in schools, communities and policymaking.

Excellencies,

These are among the issues identified as critical to our discussions in Nice. The Background Note prepared in consultation with the co-hosts identifies the areas that need our urgent attention. It proposes

themes for the 10 Ocean Action Panels that will form the core of the official programme of the Conference.

I look forward to your decision on the proposal and wish you constructive discussions.

My department stands ready to support you in this important endeavor.

Thank you!
