

LEAD DISCUSSANT: Funmi Balogun

OCEAN ACTION PANEL 8:

**PROMOTING AND SUPPORTING ALL FORMS OF COOPERATION,
ESPECIALLY AT REGIONAL AND SUB-REGIONAL LEVELS**

Thank you, madam moderator and very good evening, excellencies, distinguished co-chairs, Morocco and Italy, Panelists, excellencies, delegates and all participants. It is a privilege for me to be here, to share a few reflections on the very enriching and informative presentations made this evening by the Panelists.

1. A re-affirmation for multilateralism, Agenda 2030 through implementation of SDG 14 and for Member States to recommit to achieving Target 3 and other associated Targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF) to conserve at least 30 percent of terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas by 2030, the implementation of international law as reflected at the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources, including finalization of maritime boundaries.
2. **Multilateral Agreements on oceans, including on environmental ones must be coherent**, strengthen synergies, and support integrated approaches to marine and coastal sustainability. We must be honest about what is not working.

3. **Forums like the Third UN Ocean Conference (UNOC3), and the numerous commitments made, are important at the regional level to connect people**, scientists those earning a living off the oceans, businesses in the industry (fisheries, shipping, tourism, energy), associations of often ignored constituencies like seafarers – those who work on ships, the military to expand understanding of sustainable action through dialogue, improving opportunities for integrated action and enhanced advocacy.
4. **Regional cooperation bodies** present an opportunity that needs to continue to be strengthened. Regional and subregional cooperation bodies serves as the bridge between high-level ambitions and real-world actions. It enables countries that share ecosystems, coastlines, and cultural ties to coordinate efforts and resources — and to protect what connects them. They present an opportunity to strengthen cooperation, agree on international standards, put pressure outdated national laws to align with international laws, protect small island developing states by ensuring a stronger voice and opportunity for them to apply pressure as a bloc.. The regional cooperation bodies also have opportunities to cooperate across regions and not just limited to regional cooperation – Africa and Asia; Pacific and Southeast Asia; Caribbean and Africa; Mediterranean and Africa, and through the different groupings – African Union, ASEAN Pacific Island Forums, Gulf of Guinea and Bay of Bengal Initiatives etc.

5. **There is an opportunity for financing**/public-private partnerships that have not been adequately addressed. An example of public-private partnership was the UN Global Compact C launch of 7 Ocean Centers in 7 countries that is a public/private investment model, focused on strengthening the ability of those who work on ships to understand preservation, learn new green skills as shipping industry evolves and leads efforts at ocean conservation.
6. Providing opportunities for local communities, including women and young people, in these countries to come together, and share experiences, knowledge, while linking that knowledge to more scientific research, practices and policies. There must be Investments in people's understanding of value of oceans and use as a way to apply political pressure – curriculum in schools, artists, young people, private sector, farmers – intentional and sustained campaigns that can be regional.
7. **Starting point of any regional cooperation** must start at the national level – how is government planning and budgeting for action on oceans/existing commitments? Wide levels of understanding/skills, capacities and resources across regions. There are very many commitments that will require implementation at both regional but more importantly, at the

country level. **Preserving our oceans while sustainably benefitting from it, will require an integration/connectedness with existing policies and actions and commitments, including the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS).**

UN Resident Coordinators and UN country teams are currently championing efforts to mainstream and integrate ABAS priorities into Common Country Analysis, Cooperation Frameworks, and implementation efforts through UN joint programmes, with a view to deliver SDG acceleration in specific country contexts. These national frameworks provide launchpads for integrated and systems thinking with UN providing **integrated policy support, technical support and catalytic investments** to SIDS to respond to their unique development challenges and opportunities.

8. **Connecting local mayors in coastal towns** – read an article of where change really happens – twinning of cities/localization of actions/political pressure/understand how to get things done. South-South Cooperation – pollution, research, raising new generation of those who will continue to conserve. This is because forever maintaining the oceans is a commitment of infinity –once as human we stop caring and managing invariably move towards our extinction.
9. **There must be opportunities for funding/financing for innovative programs that can be scaled, for example Ocean Promise – 100 Ocean Innovations by 2030 by UNDP.** Innovative solutions must be accessible and expanded; Another opportunity

is capitalizing the Joint SDG Fund to identify opportunities for regional cooperation on policies, on research, blue tourism, data, plastic pollution including bringing different levels of government ministries together under the guidance of the UN RCs. Another **great example is the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security (CTI-CFF)** being implemented by 6 countries with the most at stake and within where the coral triangle lies– Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste to develop a comprehensive 10-year plan and cooperation on the coral reef management. This cooperation has been deemed the most comprehensive, with clear plans for food protection and ocean preservation, with local community and knowledge at the core. This was unprecedented for an area with the highest coral and reef fish diversity globally and provides vital spawning grounds for whales, turtles and other charismatic species with one third of the people in these countries depending on the waters of the coral reef triangle for their livelihoods. Another great example is the UNESCO 2030 Seabed program to map the entire global seabed.

10. And finally, excellencies, data governance. There must be concerted efforts to democratize data and make accessible to all and ensure science based policy decisions.

Thank you distinguished excellencies, for your kind attention.