

## Israel National Statement – UN Ocean Conference 2025

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Mr. President, Esteemed ministers and colleagues,

It is an honor to address you today on behalf of the State of Israel, here at the beautiful city of Nice on the coast of the precious Mediterranean Sea. I would like to congratulate the governments of France and Costa Rica for convening this important and timely conference. We gather here not only as representatives of our nations but as stewards of our shared ocean, united by the urgent need to protect and restore the health of our marine ecosystems.

Israel features a diverse and vibrant marine environment along its Mediterranean and Red Sea coastlines. Recognizing the critical importance of these ecosystems, we have undertaken significant efforts to safeguard them:

**(- Marine Protected Areas -)** we made progress in protecting our territorial waters during 2024, declaring two new marine coastal nature reserves and the historic Caesarea marine national park, hence increasing marine protected areas, to a current 6%. We are also moving forward in expanding MPAs in the Exclusive Economic Zone, conducting submarine ecological surveys, and intending to reach 25% of protected areas, according to the national masterplan, within the coming years.

**(- Wastewater Treatment and Reuse -)** We have invested heavily in wastewater treatment infrastructure, resulting in the treatment of 95% of our wastewater, with 75% being reused for agriculture.

**(Water Management -)** To address water scarcity, Israel became a global leader in desalination technology, supplying 70% of its drinking water from the sea, but in the meantime, successfully managing the brines discharge to the sea, applying best environmental practices, many of them unique, to safeguard the marine environment.

**(- Pollution Reduction -)** Through targeted initiatives, during the last 25 years, we have achieved a dramatic 95% average reduction of industrial and municipal pollution loads to the sea, as well as significant reduction of nutrient loads to waterways, allowing the return of diverse aquatic life.

Despite these advancements, we face persistent as well as emerging challenges:

**Climate Change:** Rising Sea temperatures and sea levels threaten our coastal strip and its biodiversity. Projections indicate a potential sea-level rise of up to 106cm by 2100 in the Israeli Mediterranean coastline, which together with increasing extreme storms and wave height, will pose significant risks to coastal communities.

**Invasive Species:** The influx of Indo-Pacific invasive species through waterways disrupts local marine ecosystems, with species like lionfish and rabbitfish outcompeting native marine life.

Finally, **marine plastic pollution** is ever threatening marine life, harming coastal communities, and entering our food chain. This crisis affects us all, from the smallest plankton to the largest whales, and, to every person on this planet. Addressing marine plastic pollution requires ambitious, coordinated global

action. We strongly support the UN global plastic initiative, for we believe this subject must be accounted for globally.

Mr. President,

Israel remains committed to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 14: Life Below Water. We recognize that the health of our oceans transcends national boundaries and requires collective action:

**(- Regional Cooperation -)** We are actively engaging with countries to address shared marine challenges, emphasizing the importance of collaborative research, monitoring, and conservation efforts. This is emphasized in our ongoing 50-year commitment to the Barcelona Convention to protect the Mediterranean Sea, and its protocols.

**(- Innovation and Technology -)** Leveraging our strengths in innovation, we are developing advanced monitoring systems and sustainable aquaculture practices to promote ocean health, while developing Blue-Tech programs.

**(- Public Engagement -)** Educating and involving our citizens, especially the younger generation, is central to fostering a culture of marine stewardship.

In closing, while we take pride in our achievements, we acknowledge that much work remains. Let us continue to work together, share knowledge, and support one another in safeguarding our oceans for generations to come. We strongly believe in "commit globally and act locally" so, we proceed accordingly.

Thank you!