

**PLENARY**

**GENERAL DEBATE**

**Wednesday 11 June, 15.00-18.00**

**ITALIAN NATIONAL STATEMENT**

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

Excellences,

Esteemed Delegates,

It is with great honour that I speak to you today on the occasion of the High-level Third United Nations Ocean Conference, for which I would like to express my gratitude to the Governments of France and Costa Rica.

An event that highlights the crucial importance that the international community recognises to the ocean and the increasing attention paid to the problems that threaten its health. The ocean, a source of life and an unparalleled resource, is a common heritage of humanity that urgently calls us to our collective responsibility.

It covers more than 70 per cent of the earth's surface, regulates the global climate, provides essential food resources and is home to incredible biodiversity, much of which is still unknown to us. However, today we face unprecedented challenges: climate change, acidification, illegal fishing, pollution, particularly from plastics, and loss of habitats and biodiversity are seriously threatening our marine and coastal ecosystems.

Here, we are called upon not only to recognise the problems, but to strengthen our efforts to address them.

As Italy, we firmly believe that efforts should focus, first and foremost, on strengthening each country's capacity to manage its marine environment and associated resources effectively and sustainably.

To this end, we already have powerful and effective tools at our disposal, such as maritime spatial planning and area-based management tools, particularly marine protected areas.

Cross-border and international cooperation should therefore build on national experiences and focus on large-scale adoption of approaches and best practices that have proven their effectiveness.

In this respect, the regional level can provide optimal fora for sharing ideas and implementing solutions to common sea and coastal problems, as well as for developing approaches that could be adopted on a larger scale. In turn, such cooperation must necessarily align with global policies and, at the same time, be an effective contribution to the achievement of broader goals in ocean protection.

Italy has always been committed to the regional context and has continued to strongly support the key role of regional conventions, and thus of regional cooperation, in ocean governance. This commitment will continue to be pursued as a contribution to the achievement of global objectives, conscious that multilateralism cannot be realised exclusively in coordination between countries but is necessarily linked to the exchange and convergence between mechanisms of different levels such as, for example, regional and global conventions.

In this regard, it is with pride that Italy has accepted the role of co-chair of the Thematic Panel 8 dedicated to the promotion of international cooperation, with a special focus on regional and sub-regional dimensions.

In line with these objectives, Italy just organised a side event today offering an important opportunity to share lessons learnt and case studies from the Mediterranean, demonstrating how regional solutions can contribute to the global context.

Looking to the future, our country is firmly committed to translating words into tangible actions, and I am pleased to inform you that the national ratification process of the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement has been promptly initiated and is being finalised, according to the procedures determined by national regulations.



Furthermore, measures to achieve the 30x30 targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework are being implemented, including both the restoration of degraded marine and coastal ecosystems and the expansion and management of protected areas.

Moreover, on this important occasion, Italy presented 13 voluntary commitments aimed at the protection and sustainable use of the ocean and seas for a total amount of 115 million euro. The commitments, both financial and in-kind, including technical-administrative support, will benefit both national and international stakeholders. Particular attention will be paid to the Mediterranean Sea area, as well as to the challenges faced by the youth and Small Island Developing States, which, as we know, are particularly vulnerable to climate change and its related effects. Other fundamental Italian commitments will concern research and innovation, both by strengthening the national system and through regional alliances and partnerships.

Italy is ready to play its part, working alongside international partners to ensure a sustainable future for our ocean and for generations to come.

I conclude by reaffirming that our success will depend on international cooperation at all levels and our ability to act together with determination and unity.

Thank you for your efforts and for your attention.