

Please Check Against Delivery

THIRD UNITED NATIONS OCEAN CONFERENCE

(General Debate)

Statement by Ambassador of Pakistan to France, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch

**Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is my great honour to represent Pakistan at the Third UN Ocean Conference. We congratulate the Governments of France and Costa Rica for co-hosting this Conference.

Excellencies,

2. As home to nearly a million known species, oceans represent one of the largest ecosystems in the world. They are a vital resource of our planet as our climate regulators; operating as the Earth's largest carbon sink; sustaining life by producing 50 percent of oxygen produced every year; and providing sustenance to billions of people.

3. Yet today, climate change, acidification, over-exploitation, overfishing, and plastic pollution are challenging the health of the oceans. The current trajectory will lead to further deterioration of ecosystems, loss of biodiversity, heightened food insecurity and unemployment around the world.

Excellencies,

4. The Arabian Sea is critical to Pakistan's economy and food security. It provides employment to the local communities; and supports ecological diversity. However, like elsewhere, our coastal areas are also increasingly exposed to marine degradation and pollution.

5. The ecosystem of the Arabian Sea and the shared resources of the region and its people are facing a grave threat also because of the unilateral measures taken by one country in our neighborhood to disrupt and destabilise long-standing cooperative water-sharing agreements and arrangements.

6. Conserving and sustainably using the ocean, sea and marine resources is, therefore, a key priority for Pakistan. We are undertaking several measures to accelerate the realization of SDG 14. These include:

- The **Living Indus Initiative**, under which Pakistan is working to restore the ecological health of the Indus River Basin that feeds into our marine ecosystems. This initiative aims to restore mangroves and wetlands; and reduce plastic waste and chemical runoffs that end up in the Arabian Sea.
- Under **Recharge Pakistan Programme**, Pakistan is restoring its natural water systems, managing floods more sustainably, and reducing siltation and pollutant inflows into our ocean.
- In collaboration with the Global Plastic Action Partnership, Pakistan has developed a **Plastic Action Roadmap**, which aims to reduce mismanaged waste by 75 percent by the year 2040.
- In line with Kunming-Montreal Biodiversity Framework targets, Pakistan has designated **Churna and Astola Islands in the Arabian Sea** as marine protected areas for protection from unsustainable fishing, tourism and pollution, in order to conserve the rich marine resources in the area.

Excellencies,

7. Isolated national efforts alone will not suffice to conserve and sustainably use the marine and coastal resources. An ambitious and well-coordinated global action is thus essential to protect our oceans for the future generations.

8. There is no dearth of frameworks for resolving the crises faced by our Oceans.

- The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework sets ambitious global goals and targets for nature, including the protection of 30 percent of marine and coastal areas by 2030.
- Three decades after its entry into force, UNCLOS remains a vital legal framework for the sustainable use and protection of marine resources.
- The BBNJ Agreement has reinforced the "principle of the common heritage of mankind" including in the access and sharing of benefits of marine genetic resources. Pakistan intends to soon become a signatory to the agreement.

Excellencies,

9. International cooperation for ocean protection shall be based on the following key principles:

- **First**, staunch commitment to multilateral cooperation, anchored in international law to achieve SDG 14;
- **Second**, sharing scientific gains and finding global solutions based on science and innovation for protecting our oceans;
- **Third**, decisions and actions for the conservation and sustainable use of the Oceans must bear in mind the integrated and indivisible nature of all the SDGs;
- **Fourth**, ensuring that our efforts for the conservation and sustainable use of the Ocean are consistent with the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities; We welcome, therefore, the reflection of this principle in the outcome document;
- **Fifth**, protecting the Ocean ecosystem as a shared responsibility, which would require scaled up means of implementation, such as financing, technology transfer, and capacity building.

- **Lastly**, we shall strongly oppose attempts by countries to weaponize water, dominating maritime spaces, and endangering natural resources, including transboundary waters. States shall fulfill their treaty obligations; uphold international law; and refrain from taking unilateral measures, which disrupt and destabilise long-standing cooperative water-sharing agreements and arrangements.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

10. I conclude by expressing Pakistan's strong commitment to working in close partnership with all countries to conserve and preserve our oceans, for the present and future generations.

I thank you.
