

Presentation of the Secretary-General's background note for the preparatory process of the United Nations Conference to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14

New York, 01 February 2017

To be delivered by Mr. Juwang Zhu, Director, Division for Sustainable Development, DESA

Thank you, Co-Facilitators,
USG and Legal Counsel Mr. Soares,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured – on behalf of Under-Secretary-General Wu Hongbo – to make additional remarks on the Secretary-General's background note for the preparatory process of the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14.

Allow me to thank the USG and Legal Counsel Mr. Soares for providing insight into the background note. His office, through DOALOS, and DESA, have been working in close collaboration in support of the preparatory process.

We would also like to thank the co-facilitators for the opportunity to participate in this informal briefing.

The Secretary-General's background note was prepared in response to paragraph 19 of General Assembly resolution 70/303, which requests the Secretary-General to prepare a background note, including a proposal for themes of partnership dialogues for the Conference, to be considered by the preparatory meeting, which will be held on 15-16 February 2017 at UN Headquarters in New York.

United Nations organizations and a number of Secretariat entities contributed to this Note. The list of contributing entities is annexed to the background note.

The inputs from the informal preparatory process under the Advisory Group to the Co-Presidents of the Conference were also taken into account.

Distinguished Delegates,

The Note highlights how oceans and seas and their resources support human well-being and livelihoods by demonstrating their role in underpinning poverty eradication, food security, employment, tourism and protection from natural disasters.

The note stresses that oceans and seas provide water and oxygen, while also being the primary regulator of the global climate and an important sink for greenhouse gases.

However, marine- and land-based human activities and their impacts continue to be a threat to oceans and seas and marine resources, for example, in the form of marine pollution, ocean acidification and unsustainable extraction from marine resources, including illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing.

Vulnerable groups and countries with a high dependency on the oceans and their marine resources, such as small island developing States, are particularly affected.

It is against this sombre background that the Note lays out status and trends, challenges, opportunities, as well as recent actions taken by governments, international organizations and stakeholder groups in the implementation of SDG14.

The Note examines each of the ten targets of SDG14 as well as at the cross-cutting issues of financing and capacity-building.

The Note further emphasizes that the ten targets under SDG 14 exhibit close interrelationships and interlinkages with one another. A good performance on any of them could thus accelerate progress on the others.

Conversely, failure to achieve some of the targets would negatively impact others.

In addition, achieving SDG 14 will depend on a broad array of actions under other SDGs, including in relation to food security, economic growth, infrastructure, and sustainable consumption and production. These interactions should be kept in mind when discussing implementation of SDG 14.

In order to address the implementation of SDG 14 in a comprehensive manner, the Note proposes seven partnership dialogues which address all ten targets under SDG 14, by addressing targets in conjunction – not in silo. The titles of the themes are in line with the language used for the ten SDG14 targets.

Distinguished delegates,

The Note concludes that sustaining the integrity of the marine ecosystems will require a transformative change in our mind-set and in how we view, manage and use oceans, seas and marine resources.

The Ocean Conference is envisaged to provide momentum to galvanize concerted and cooperative action, through voluntary commitments and partnerships among all stakeholders, to address the multi-faceted dimensions of SDG 14. In doing so, it is expected that the Conference will make critical contributions to the implementation of SDGs and provide solid inputs to the HLPF at its session in 2017.

The Secretariat looks forward to continuing our collaborative and coordinated support to the Ocean Conference. Thank you.