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Keynote Address

**Meeting of the Communities of Ocean Action
“From Commitments to Action: Implementing SDG14”
Grand Hyatt Incheon, Incheon, Republic of Korea**

Opening Session, 9:00-10:00 a.m., 30 May 2019

Your Excellency, Vice Minister Kim
Your Excellency, Vice Mayor Heo
Honourable Ministers and Ambassadors,
Distinguished participants and colleagues,
Good morning!

Welcome to this meeting of the Communities of Ocean Action

I would like to start by thanking the Government of the Republic of Korea for their continued support for the work of United Nations Department and of Economic and Social Affairs hosting us in Korea. I would like to thank Vice Minister Kim for his support to ocean action and for addressing this meeting. I also thank Mr. Heo, Vice Mayor of Incheon Metropolitan City for his hospitality in this vibrant city.

I am happy to see so many of you here today.

Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, governments have led the way in responding to the common challenges we face. They have united behind a transformative plan to end poverty and create shared prosperity on a healthy and peaceful planet.

This year, as we conclude the first four-year cycle of the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, we begin working towards the next cycle with a sense of urgency. The next few years must be one of action and accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The SDG Summit will be held in conjunction with other key events that will also stress implementation, including the Climate Action Summit, which is meant to accelerate actions to implement the Paris Agreement on climate Change. There will also be a high-level Dialogue on Financing for Development, and the High-Level Midterm Review of the SAMOA Pathway, which will seek to address the priorities of the Small Island Developing States.

Excellencies,

The ocean and its resources are essential to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs as a whole. Indeed, SDG14 and its 10 targets address the major challenges faced by our ocean, including those produced by human activities such as overfishing and pollution of all kinds which are then exacerbated climate change and ocean acidification.

For example, the fraction of world marine fish stocks that are within biologically sustainable levels has declined from 90% in 1974 to 66.9% in 2015.

Long-term observations of ocean acidification over the past 30 years have shown an average increase of acidity of 26% since pre-industrial times. There is clearly an urgent need to take action. This includes going beyond the positive developments of increasing the proportion of areas under national jurisdiction that have been brought under protection.

The forthcoming Global Sustainable Development Report, currently under preparation by an Independent Group of Scientists appointed by the Secretary-General, is focusing on interlinkages across SDGs; including the following four points:

1. It considers the ocean as part of the global environmental commons and examines how it is impacted by current practices in other systems such as those related to energy, food, and the production of material goods.

2. Its recommendations constitute a call to action by all stakeholders – governments, businesses, academia, technologists, innovators and individuals. Many of these communities are represented here today.

3. And in its approach to the ocean and to all facets of sustainable development, the report emphasizes the critical importance of rooting policies in evidence and science.

4. It calls for expanded investment in science and research that will provide the information that is needed for all actors to accelerate progress on the 2030 Agenda.

Distinguished participants;

The 2017 Ocean Conference addressed these concerns.

Under the able stewardship of Fiji and Sweden, the Conference succeeded in raising the global awareness of ocean issues and resulted in ambitious outcomes.

Among them were the 1400 voluntary commitments to advance the implementation of SDG 14 on oceans and related targets.

To follow up on these voluntary commitments, which has now exceeded 1500, the United Nations launched the nine thematic Communities of Ocean Action (COAs).

The COAs, in cooperation with the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean, Ambassador Peter Thomson, and UNDESA, have undertaken important work toward conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources.

Dear friends,

There is now collective push towards accelerating implementation of the 2030 Agenda by the international community. Which is why I feel that this meeting of the Communities of Ocean Action entitled “From Commitments to Action” that my department, UNDESA has organized is so important.

I am pleased to note that today we have as participants among us, members of those communities who have made commitments towards implementing SDG 14 and are eager to share their experiences with us. We hope to engage and learn more from you so that together we can enhance implementation. More importantly, I would like to point out that this Meeting could not have happened at a more opportune moment.

While the first four-year cycle of the HLPF comes to a close, we are already looking ahead. The General Assembly recently adopted resolution 73/292 entitled “2020 United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”.

The forthcoming Ocean Conference will take place in Lisbon, from 2 to 6 June 2020, and co-hosted by Portugal and Kenya. Its overarching theme of the Conference will be “Scaling up Ocean Action based on science and innovation for the implementation of Goal 14: stocktaking, partnerships and solutions”.

Preparations are underway for the Conference within the United Nations Secretariat and will intensify in the coming months. For this very reason, your deliberations during these two days will be vital to the preparatory process in the lead-up to Lisbon in 2020.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate Kenya and Portugal for deciding to host the 2020 Ocean Conference and I thank Fiji and Sweden for setting a firm foundation in 2017. I also like to thank the Special Envoy for the Ocean, Ambassador Peter Thomson for his unwavering support to our work on conserving our ocean and its many resources.

As Conference Secretary-General for the United Nations Oceans Conference in 2020, I and my department UNDESA along with Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares, Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs as the Special Adviser to the Presidents of the Conference stand ready to spare no effort towards making this Conference a success with the support of the UN system.

I thank all of you and I look forward to working together with you towards our Conference.
