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The National Oceanography Centre (NOC) is the UK's leading ocean research institute, and one of the world's leading centres of expertise on the ocean's interaction with climate change. An independent charity, NOC scientists lead ground-breaking research into climate change, sea level rise, carbon uptake and storage, and monitoring how the ocean is changing, including through two Royal Research Ships we manage on behalf of the marine science community. NOC is also a leader in ocean technology, with a twenty year history of working on autonomous underwater vehicles and related technologies and housing the most marine unmanned autonomous systems in Europe.

The aim of the Conference is to propel much needed science-based innovative solutions to deliver truly global ocean action, including ways in which we manage threats to our ocean environment. The United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development sets out the drive for 'the science we need for the ocean we want' – a clean, healthy, safe, productive, predictable, data-accessible, inspiring ocean. With 60% of the ocean's area outside national jurisdictions, its governance depends on coordinated global action. The role of the Conference is crucial in delivering this.

In order to promote tangible, achievable and long-lasting results, we call for action in four areas – to promote, to observe, to research and to protect. Firstly, it is important to promote the role and importance of the ocean in climate change. We know that the ocean absorbs around a quarter of human-caused CO₂, and 93% of excess heat caused by global warming. There is no climate solution without the ocean. Its power cannot be underestimated, and we need the protection, restoration and enhancement of marine carbon sinks.

Secondly, we must observe. This is not a passive endeavour, divorced from action. Rather, the beginning of our understanding of where and how to act. It is crucial to deliver ongoing systematic, continuous ocean sensing of ocean and climate variables, detecting unexpected changes in a complex, interconnected system of the Earth and the ocean.

Thirdly, to research. We need to understand the size, stability and variability of ocean carbon sinks to inform their restoration. In a world striving for solutions, we need to ensure that blue carbon and nature-based solutions have the impact we want, in the way we want. Altering delicate ecosystems may have unintended consequences – we must understand and address these in our quest to tackle the climate emergency. And research plays a fundamental role – if the ocean's absorption of carbon slows or even stops, all climate change predictions we have are wrong. There is no climate solution without the ocean, and research will help us to continue to understand and harness the ocean's unique contribution.

And finally, to protect. The health of the ocean affects us all, but by 2050 it is also estimated that over 1 billion people will live in low-lying coastal areas. We need to see investment in the

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upgrading of the global network of coastal and island tide gauges for monitoring long-term sea-level trends, improving multi-hazard warning systems. Climate change impacts us all, and rising seas have the power to destroy whole communities across the globe.

By working globally, united in a common endeavour, informed by the best science and focused on short, medium and long terms goals, we can deliver real, positive change. The UN plays a crucial role in fostering action, and the Ocean Conference provides the next opportunity to help deliver the ocean we want.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ed Hill', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Prof Ed Hill CBE
NOC CEO