

Mr. Wu Hongbo Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs

Remarks Briefing on the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14

13 December 2016, New York

Thank you, Mr. President of the General Assembly,
Ambassador Skoog,
Ambassador Daunivalu,
Under-Secretary-General Miguel de Serpa Soares,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The high-level 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 will be convened at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, from 5 to 9 June 2017. I would like to convey my appreciation to the Governments of Fiji and Sweden for co-hosting the Conference.

The holding of the Conference has been agreed by all Member States of the United Nations in the UN General Assembly and it is supported by all relevant stakeholders.

The Secretary-General has designated me as the Secretary-General of the Conference, for which I am very honored. The Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and United Nations Legal Counsel is acting as a special advisor to the co-hosts on oceans and legal matters.

The overarching theme of the Conference is “Our oceans, our future: partnering for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14”.

Oceans, seas and coastal areas form an integrated and essential component of the Earth’s ecosystem. They are critical to sustainable development. Oceans contribute to poverty eradication by providing opportunities for sustainable livelihoods and employment. Oceans are crucial for global food security and human health. They are also the primary regulator of the global climate.

Despite their importance, oceans, seas and marine resources are increasingly threatened, degraded or destroyed by human activities, reducing their ability to provide crucial ecosystem services.

The Conference will be a great opportunity for Member States and all stakeholders to assess challenges, identify opportunities and actions, as well as to strengthen partnerships to advance the implementation of SDG 14 on oceans and seas.

The Conference will include eight plenary meetings, seven partnership dialogues and a special event commemorating World Oceans Day. In addition to the official meetings of the Conference, there will be side events and exhibitions focusing on tangible partnerships on oceans for sustainable development.

The outcome of the Conference will have three tiers. It will consist of a concise, focused, intergovernmentally-agreed declaration in the form of a “Call for Action” to support the implementation of Goal 14, a report containing the Co-Chairs’ summaries of the partnership dialogues, as well as a list of voluntary commitments for the implementation of Goal 14, to be announced at the Conference.

The preparations for the Conference are already in full swing.

The President of the General Assembly will convene a preparatory meeting on 15 and 16 February 2017 in New York. It will be co-chaired by the two co-facilitators nominated by the President of the General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Álvaro Mendonçae Moura, Permanent Representative of Portugal to the UN, and H.E. Mr. Burhan Gafoor, Permanent Representative of Singapore to the UN. The meeting will consider the themes for the partnership dialogues and elements for a “Call for Action”.

The Secretariat is now working on a Secretary-General’s background note, based on inputs from relevant United Nations system organizations including UN-Oceans, which will include a proposal for themes of the partnership dialogues. The next Secretary-General will issue the note by the end of January, so that it can inform the preparatory meeting in February.

Based on the deliberations at the preparatory meeting and other inputs, the co-facilitators will present a concise draft “Call for Action” no later than March 2017. The intergovernmental consultations on a “Call for Action”, to be facilitated by the co-facilitators, will be concluded by May 2017.

After the preparatory meeting, the Secretariat will prepare concept papers on each of the themes of the partnership dialogues, based on inputs from stakeholders.

The Conference and its preparatory meetings will involve all relevant stakeholders, bringing together Governments, the United Nations system, other intergovernmental organizations, international financial institutions, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, academic institutions, the scientific community, the private sector, philanthropic organizations and other actors.

Information on participation and registration of Member States, UN system and other intergovernmental organizations, and associate members of the regional commissions to the Conference and the preparatory meeting will be made available on the Conference website shortly.

The President of the General Assembly will send invitation letters to Member States for the preparatory meeting. The invitation letter to Member States for the Conference itself will be sent by the next Secretary-General in January 2017, followed by the invitation letter from the Presidents of the Conference, Fiji and Sweden. I will send invitation letters to the UN system organizations and to the associate members of the regional commissions for both the Conference and the preparatory meeting.

The pre-registration and accreditation of NGOs and other stakeholders to the preparatory meeting and the Conference itself are now open, with the deadline on 22 January 2017. The deadline for side events in the margins of the preparatory meeting is 15 January 2017. More information in this regard as well as on the other organizational aspects of the Conference are available on the Conference website – <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/oceans/SDG14Conference> . As of yesterday 363 NGO participants have pre-registered for the February meeting.

As per decision by Member States, the Conference will be funded through extra-budgetary resources only. In this regard, the General Assembly encourages donors in a position to do so, to support the preparations for the Conference and the participation of the representatives of developing countries, through voluntary contributions to a trust fund.

In my capacity as the Secretary-General of the Conference, I would like to encourage contributions to the trust fund that DESA has established for such purpose. In this regard, I have sent a letter to Member States to invite them to contribute to the trust fund. The letter is also available on the Conference website.

The United Nations Secretariat stands ready to offer any kind of support required to the Conference. I am confident that under the leadership of the Governments of Fiji and Sweden, the President of the General Assembly and the two co-facilitators, the Conference will be a great success.

I am available to answer questions from the floor.

Thank you.