



Intervention of His Eminence Peter Cardinal Turkson,
Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development,
Head of the Delegation of the Holy See to the
United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of SDG 14:
Conserve and Sustainably Use the Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources
for Sustainable Development

Partnership dialogue 2:
Managing, protecting, conserving and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems
New York, 6 June 2017

Mr. Chair,

Human activities in the oceans will likely increase in the future. Shipping lanes will continue to experience denser traffic. New shipping routes will open due to greater transport demands in fishing, mining, oil and natural gas exploration and drilling. More intense exploration for both scientific and commercial use of marine resources will take place. Technology will also improve, creating opportunities for greater access and healthier use for such resources.

While this presents a greater challenge to making our oceans, seas and marine resources sustainable, it also represents a great opportunity to improve marine-related knowledge and research, to develop better protection strategies and mitigation techniques in response to environmental degradation such as ocean acidification, and to ameliorate the lives of people depending on marine resources with respect to security in food, habitat and livelihood. May this challenge be utilized for improving our policies, laws, regulations and behaviour to make economic and social prosperity coincide with environmental sustainability.

A more sustainable, productive use of marine resources must be encouraged at the global and local levels, while international and national regulatory norms must be robust to minimize harmful activities. For example, providing tax incentives, re-purposing harmful or ineffective subsidies, and adjusting capital requirements to encourage financial institutions to increase their business lending for marine environmentally-friendly investments could all spur beneficial changes in the management, protection, conservation and restoration of marine and coastal ecosystems.

We cannot speak about marine and coastal ecosystems without considering the men and women who live there, because the human environment and the natural environment flourish or deteriorate together. In his Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis talks of the need for an "*integral ecology*, one which clearly respects [the] human and social dimensions"¹ of

¹ Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, 137.

nature. “[W]e cannot adequately combat environmental degradation,” he emphasized, “unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation. ... For example, the depletion of fishing reserves especially hurts small fishing communities without the means to replace those resources; water pollution particularly affects the poor who cannot buy bottled water; and rises in the sea level mainly affect impoverished coastal populations who have nowhere else to go.”²

Mr. Chair,

Existing governance structures for oceans are mostly setup in a sectoral manner based on use, and a vacuum exists with respect to governing bodies with a full or partial conservation mandate. As we consider legal gaps, the differences between conservation and sustainable use must be addressed.

In this regard, my Delegation recognizes that the United Nations plays an important role in the management, protection, conservation and restoration of marine and coastal ecosystems. Thus, a more effective and unified UN approach is necessary. For instance, an expansion of the Terms of Reference for UN OCEANS as the coordinating inter-agency mechanism at the United Nations would be most welcome.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

² Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, 48.