



PERMANENT MISSION
OF ESTONIA TO THE UN

**Opening Statement by H.E. Mr. Marko Pomerants
Minister of Environment of the Republic of Estonia
Oceans Conference at the United Nations in New York on 6 June 2017**

Honourable Secretary General,
Co-Presidents, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am deeply honoured to address the first United Nations conference to promote ocean sustainability. Let me start by thanking Co-Presidents Fiji and Sweden for their efforts in organizing this vitally important event. I would also like to extend my deepest gratitude to Secretary-General of the Conference Wu Hongbo, President of the United Nations General Assembly Peter Thompson, and the hardworking staff of the United Nations Secretariat. On behalf of the Republic of Estonia I hereby confirm our full support the objectives of this conference.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Estonia is a small maritime nation in Northeastern Europe, located on the shores of the Baltic Sea.

The sea forms an essential part of our national identity, and we feel great responsibility towards safeguarding the health of marine environments. 30% of our coastal and marine areas are already under protection, and we are planning to establish marine protection areas in our exclusive economic zone as well. Allow me to take this opportunity to encourage everyone to follow our lead because

designating protected areas is one of the easiest measures for safeguarding marine species and habitats.

Our Baltic Sea is one of the world's largest brackish water bodies with an extremely fragile ecosystem. Together with other surrounding countries we have set up a successful holistic marine governance framework.

We conduct extensive research to ensure that our policies are based on the best available scientific data. Estonia is extremely proud that as a small country we are able to contribute to international research as well, particularly in the areas of marine protection, monitoring and technology development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As essential regulators of the global climate, the health of our oceans is largely dependent on the measures we undertake to mitigate climate change. Estonia remains fully committed to the implementation of the Paris Agreement, and pledges to uphold continued multilateral cooperation.

Our commitment to safeguarding marine environments extends beyond our home region. In recent years we have supported several climate change projects for mitigation and adaptation in Small Island Developing States in the Pacific region, and will continue to do so in the future through partnerships, cooperation, technology transfer and capacity building.

With regard to SDG14 – marine pollution has developed into one of the most pressing concerns. We have exceeded planetary boundaries in terms of nitrogen flows, and we need to use more efficient measures, such as the integrated management system proposed by the OECD. However, we should expand our scope beyond agricultural nutrients, and focus more attention on industrial hazardous substances and pharmaceutical residues. In terms of marine litter, we should start looking into effective measures to remove or reduce the debris that is already in the oceans. Considering that the world's oceans comprise one large interconnected body of water, then the best way to solve marine litter problems is through global collaboration.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To conclude, we all depend on the ocean for food and livelihoods, but we often seem to forget that we should consider its needs as well. We must take collective action to ensure the sustainable use of the

marine environment and its preservation for future generations. For the health of our oceans. For the sake of our planet.

Thank you, and I wish you all a successful conference!