



GOVERNMENT OF GUYANA

STATEMENT

BY

**THE HONOURABLE MR. RAPHAEL TROTMAN
MINISTER OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

**AT THE
OCEAN CONFERENCE
ON AGENDA ITEM No. 8**

**UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

His Excellency, Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama of Fiji and
Her Excellency Isabella Lovin, of Sweden, Co-Presidents of the Conference,
Excellency Peter Thomson, President of the General Assembly
Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,
Honourable Ministers,
Representatives of Non-governmental Organizations,

Mr. President,

Guyana, firstly, wishes to place on record its appreciation to you, Mr President, for convening this important Conference in support of the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, which is to conserve and sustainably use our oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. This Conference, bringing together all relevant stakeholders to share the experiences gained at the national, regional and international levels in the implementation of Goal 14, is both timely and necessary to reverse the harm being done to our oceans and seas.

President David Granger of the Republic of Guyana sends his greeting and good wishes for a successful conference. He has fully appreciated the effects that climate change can have on our world and his vision is to leave a 'Green State' for coming generations of Guyanese.

Mr. President,

Our oceans and seas cover nearly three quarters of the earth's surface and play an important role in sustaining both life on the planet and the livelihoods of many of its inhabitants. Oceans and seas produce half of our oxygen, regulate global climate, and provide employment, food and other valuable resources for our populations. The health of the oceans is therefore the concern of all of us.

We note with alarm the unsustainable levels of overfishing and destructive fishing practices, much of it illegal, unreported and unregulated, as well as the effects of pollution on marine life, fish stocks and on the use of the oceans for recreational purposes. We therefore welcome this focus by the international community, perhaps for the first time, on the critical role of our oceans in sustaining both life on our planet.

Mr. President,

Guyana is conscious of the linkages between SDG 14 and all of the other goals and targets set out in Agenda 2030. These have therefore all been integrated into our national development plans and strategies. As a low-lying coastal State, we are particularly concerned at the impact of rising sea levels on coastal erosion, which is exacerbated by the destruction of mangrove forests.

I am pleased to report, in this connection, that with the assistance of the European Union and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, we are engaged in a robust programme of mangrove management to protect our nearly 300 miles of Atlantic coastline from coastal erosion.

Guyana is also in the process of developing a suite of interrelated services to better manage its coastal ecosystem, including data gathering, social mobilization and capacity development under its recently launched Green State Development Strategy. We expect to fill critical information gaps by developing comprehensive visual spatial data to enable informed decision-making regarding marine protection and management.

In Guyana, the marine resources in our coastal waters and exclusive economic zone are an important component of our economy and provide

livelihoods to mainly artisanal Fishers. Artisanal fishing is important to our economy as 80 percent of the catch is exported.

In order to ensure the sustainability of these resources, regulations have been introduced to limit fishing by trawlers to only a certain number of days each year and to require the installation of by-catch reduction devices and turtle exclusion devices on all trawlers. Monitoring and surveillance of artisanal vessels are also being increased to ensure compliance and to reduce the incidence of illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing activity. Guyana looks forward to collaborating with external partners, including in the form of public-private partnerships, in capacity building and the provision of financial and technical assistance aimed at improving our capacity to conserve and manage our marine resources and gain access to markets through sustainable supply chains.

I wish to share with you at this time that oil production from recently discovered off shore deposits is imminent in Guyana. Conscious of our responsibility, an environmental impact study has been carried out to examine potential risks to marine life and coastal livelihoods, especially of local artisanal Fishers, in the event of oil spills.

Mr. President,

I have shared the steps that Guyana is taking to preserve the health of the oceans and seas and the marine environment in and around the country. We are however concerned that countries least responsible for polluting our oceans and seas and those with the least resources are being called upon to sacrifice the most in undertaking measures to reverse the harm done by indiscriminate agricultural practices, including the use of pesticides that run off into the sea, and the dumping and disposal of solid wastes, including the millions of tons of plastic that are disposed of each year in the ocean.

We must together address this injustice by supporting small island developing States and coastal States to enable them to put in place the policies that are necessary to preserve the health of the oceans and to ensure the sustainability of livelihoods. I refer here to capacity building in marine scientific technologies and to the management of marine ecosystems and marine protected areas. Benefits from seabed mining and marine genetic research should also be shared more equitably with vulnerable developing States.

Mr. President,

At this time, I would like to announce that Guyana will register as a Voluntary Commitment its plan to undertake a series of initiatives designed to achieve and maintain health waterways and the Atlantic Ocean, as our contribution to Sustainable Development Goal Fourteen (SDG 14), targets 14.1 and 14.2.

Mr. President,

In closing, Guyana wishes to acknowledge the leadership you have shown in bringing global attention to the dire situation of our oceans and seas. We also wish to reaffirm our commitment to the achievement of the targets set out under SDG14 and to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda as a whole.

I thank you.