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The Permanent Mission of Iceland to the United Nations

Statement by

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**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**

**Partnership Dialogue 4:
Making Fisheries Sustainable**

7 June 2017

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Distinguished co-chairs, Mr. Moderator, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

For centuries, even up to quite recently, people thought that fish stocks were inexhaustible. No one saw a need to limit fisheries. Experience, sometimes bitter, has taught us otherwise. Modern science has demonstrated that living marine resources have limited productive capacities – these are not endless resources! But with strict management systems and effective enforcement we can ensure that future generations continue to harvest food from the sea. Key to this is a strong scientific basis and the sharing of knowledge and experiences.

There is good news: fisheries can be sustainable, they can be profitable and they can benefit the whole of society. The Icelandic science-based fisheries management system has overcome some of the traditional inefficiencies of the past that still hamper many of the world's fisheries. It is built on scientific knowledge, adherence to restrictive regulations and careful taxation.

We are committed to good science. Iceland has registered a commitment to map the ocean floor in the Icelandic EEZ with the help of multibeam-echosounder techniques – this knowledge is fundamental for future conservation and sustainable use of bottom life. We have also registered a commitment to prioritize the development and adoption of formal fisheries management plans with long-term precautionary harvest control rules for commercially important fish stocks in Icelandic waters for the next few years – such plans have proven to contribute to strong and healthy fish stocks.

Co-chairs,

But in the international context we shouldn't try to reinvent the wheel. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, UNCLOS, is the legal framework for all activities in the oceans and seas. The management of high seas fisheries through a regional approach, in line with the UN Fish Stocks Agreement, has proven a firm basis for sustainable management. So, we already have the legal framework for successful implementation of SDG 14 - as long as States meet their obligations and work together.

The global community has committed itself to end hunger. If we want the oceans to be an essential part of this commitment, which I believe is imperative, science-based sustainable harvesting of marine resources must become a universal practice. Rather than claiming that responsible management of fisheries is unattainable, we should highlight the many success stories and build on them through sharing of knowledge and technology. In other words, let's build on optimism instead of pessimism.

Thank you.