



**MINISTER FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE PACIFIC
SENATOR THE HON CONCETTA FIERRAVANTI – WELLS**

**Plenary Session - Australia's National Statement
Wednesday, 7 June 2017 (5 minutes)**

Excellencies; distinguished delegates.

It is an honour to speak on how Australia is implementing Sustainable Development Goal 14: to conserve and sustainably use our oceans.

Australia is acutely aware that the health of our oceans underpins the economic growth and sustainable development of our region.

Australia is an ocean nation, surrounded by the Indian, Pacific and Southern oceans.

As any Australian can tell you, the beaches and oceans are a significant part of our way of life.

Australia's marine jurisdiction is the 3rd largest in the world, encompassing around 14 million square kilometres.

3.3 million square kilometres of our marine jurisdiction are marine protected areas: the largest in the world.

Protecting the oceans from marine pollution, particularly the emerging issue of microplastic pollution, is a global challenge.

In the Pacific, the Australian Government provides funding to the Secretariat of the Pacific Environment Programme.

The goal is for all members of this programme to minimise land-based sources of pollution.

In that regard, I am pleased to highlight 2 of Australia's voluntary commitments to this conference.

Our government research body, CSIRO, is working on an ambitious project to model the input of plastic into the oceans from land.

This work has the potential to expand to a global scale and will address the impact that marine debris and plastic waste has on marine life.

Climate change is a global challenge and is already affecting the health of the world's oceans.

The global coral bleaching event that has been impacting coral reefs around the world is an early warning signal of the threat of climate change to our oceans.

Australia's own Great Barrier Reef – one of the world's greatest natural treasures – has been impacted.

To build the resilience of the Great Barrier Reef, Australia launched the Reef 2050 Plan – a 35 year strategy backed by a commitment of over \$2 billion in funding over the next decade.

We are supporting innovative solutions that will boost farm productivity while reducing nutrient runoff to the Reef and have established the largest monitoring project of ocean chemistry in the southern hemisphere.

We have also developed the first and largest water monitoring system of its kind in the world, 'e-Reefs'.

But these efforts must be accompanied by global action to address climate change. Australia is doing its part.

Australia is pleased to have ratified both the Paris Agreement and Doha Amendment, reaffirming our commitment to effective global action on climate change. We are on time and on track to meet our targets.

Regionally, we are also supporting countries to meet their Paris targets, in particular through our support to the Pacific announced by the Australian Prime Minister in Pohnpei last September.

We are integrating climate action across our aid program and have committed \$1 billion over 5 years to climate action.

Globally, we are working to unlock the trillions in climate finance needed drive the global transition to a low carbon economy.

Through our co-chairing of the Green Climate Fund, we have helped facilitate over USD 1 billion in climate finance covering 37 countries.

We are also sharing our expertise on coral reefs. Last year, Australia and France launched a new Plan of Action for the International Coral Reef Initiative focused building reef resilience.

Co-founded by Australia more than two decades ago, the Initiative's membership has grown to encompass the majority of the world's coral reefs.

Regionally, Australia is also proud to work with our partners in the Pacific and Southern oceans to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

Illegal fishing costs the global community an estimated \$23 billion a year.

Australia is party to the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing. We encourage others to join this agreement.

We recognise the threat that illegal fishing poses, so have agreed a \$4.4 million package of support over 4 years to build capacity in the Forum Fisheries Agency and Pacific Island countries to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal fishing.

Our commitment for collective action and ambition must find expression in our enforcement of international law.

What we have – the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea – provides the legal framework to address many of these challenges.

That is why I am proud to co-chair with Kenya later this week Partnership Dialogue 7 on implementing international law as reflected in the Convention.

In closing, Australia is committed to implementing Sustainable Development Goal 14.

If we are to preserve the health of our oceans, we must reaffirm our commitment to take action at all levels: domestically, regionally and internationally.

We owe this to ourselves, to our children and our grandchildren, and to the future we want together.

Thank you.