

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Tommy Remengesau, President, Republic of Palau,
and co-chair of Partnership Dialogue 2 on Managing, protecting,
conserving and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems**

Ocean Conference, Plenary Meeting

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Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to be able to share with you a summary of partnership dialogue two on “Managing, protecting, conserving and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems”, which aimed to address SDG targets 14.2 and 14.5.

I had the honour to chair this partnership dialogue together with my fellow co-chair, H.E. Ms. Silvia Velo, the Under Secretary of State for the Italian Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea.

The dialogue was moderated by Ms. Martha Rojas-Urrego, the Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. The panelists were Mr. Lin Shanqing, the Deputy Administrator for the Chinese State Oceanic Administration; Ms. Christiana Pasca Palmer, the Executive Secretary for the Convention on Biological Diversity; Ms. Cyrie Sendashonga, the Global Director for the Program and Policy Group for the International Union for Conservation of Nature; and Mr. Jake Rice, Chief Scientist Emeritus for Fisheries and Oceans, Canada.

The dialogue started off with panelist presentations, which covered the guiding questions included in the concept note for this dialogue and

included recommendations on how to successfully manage, protect, conserve and restore marine and coastal ecosystems; on how to ensure local community involvement, alternative livelihood development and the equitable sharing of benefits derived from area-based measures; and on how to measure the impacts and effectiveness of area-based measures and their socio-economic costs and benefits.

In a comprehensive interactive dialogue, representatives from Member States and other stakeholders touched upon a broad range of measures for managing, protecting, conserving and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems, including the application of an ecosystem approach, marine spatial planning and marine protected areas. It was emphasized that these measures are critical as marine and coastal ecosystems, despite their important role for humans and sustainable development, were being destroyed or damaged at an unprecedented rate.

Participants also stressed that it was essential to include all stakeholders, especially local communities in the process of devising policies and measures to sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystem. The overriding need for adequate, timely, and accessible means of implementation was stressed as well as the need to find synergies between different frameworks to help implement SDG 14 and the whole 2030 Agenda. Many speakers stressed the importance of developing and strengthening multi-country and multi-stakeholder partnerships – ranging from the local to the global level – highlighting the fact that the ocean could only be protected if all stakeholders were working together.

Among the voluntary commitments presented, many countries announced that they would either increase their marine protected areas or establish new ones. Other voluntary commitments, presented by either Member

States or other stakeholders, were related to the blue economy, improving regional and coastal monitoring, effective waste management, banning of plastic shopping bags and other plastic items, exploring indigenous practices and their contribution to maritime protection, capacity-building activities, and a range of projects and initiatives that ensured the protection and restoration of marine and coastal ecosystems.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I indicated in my opening statement, the Ocean now has a primary and respected home within the UN family. We now need to institutionalize this home and provide it with the mandate and the institutional foundation that will shepherd our work forward in this 21st Century. Like Climate Change and Biodiversity, we need special treatment and special representation for the Ocean that will guarantee a primary voice in our global discussions. We need a bridge builder and a champion of oceans within the larger scope of sustainable development. We also need a new and vibrant financing mechanism, let us call it a Blue Fund, that will sufficiently, efficiently and effectively respond to the needs of all of our members, including LDC's and SIDS.

My friends, it is undeniable that careless human activity has undermined the sustainable development of the ocean and that we now have an obligation to develop a truly responsible and sustainable approach to the management, protection, conservation, and restoration of our marine and coastal ecosystems.

The ocean needs to be saved, not only for our generation, but for our children and their children as well.

The time for action is now and the voluntary commitments made during this dialogue are an important step in the right direction.

I thank you.
