

Statement by H.E. Mr. Agostinho Mondlane, Minister of the Sea, Inland Waters and Fisheries, Mozambique, and co-Chair of Partnership Dialogue 3 on Minimizing Ocean Acidification

Ocean Conference, Plenary Meeting

General Assembly Hall, UN Headquarters, 9 June 2017, 4:30pm

Number of words: 632

Approximate time: 5 min

Your Excellency, Mr. Peter Thomson, President of the General Assembly,

Your Excellency [other members of the rostrum]

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to address this Plenary Meeting of the Oceans Conference and share a summary of the partnership dialogue three on “Minimizing and addressing ocean acidification.”

I had the honour to co-chair this partnership dialogue together with my fellow co-chair, His Serene Highness Albert II, Sovereign Prince of Monaco.

The dialogue was moderated by Mr. Petteri Taalas, Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization.

It featured presentations by Cardinal Peter Turkson, Head of the Dicastery for Integral Human Development of the Holy See; Ms. Rahanna Juman, Deputy Director of the Institute of Marine Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago; Mr. David Osborn, Director of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Environment Laboratories; and Ms. Carol Turley, Senior Scientist of the Plymouth Marine Laboratory in the United Kingdom.

The dialogue noted that ocean acidification is a global problem with severe impact on marine species and ecosystems, as well as on livelihoods and industries that rely on the services of healthy oceans.

Ocean acidification is caused by ocean uptake of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Therefore, ocean acidification is caused by the same emissions that cause climate change, and it will intensify as the level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere increases.

Ocean acidification is happening at the same time as sea warming, oxygen loss and sea level rise. Their combined effects are expected to have substantial impact on marine ecosystems and habitats.

The most at risk are the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and coastal communities relying on marine ecosystems for food, livelihoods and coastal protection. Many of these are highly vulnerable and less able to adapt.

The most important action society can take is to reduce carbon dioxide emissions to the atmosphere along the 1.5°C target of the UN Paris Agreement.

Even if we implement the Paris Agreement we will still need to adapt, restore and protect our marine systems.

Ocean acidification need to be observed, researched and addressed in an integrated manner and include cooperation between all relevant organizations.

International scientific collaboration should help SIDS and vulnerable societies to plan ahead for change and to do this they need to be able to measure that change locally and regionally.

Capacity building and science training will help inform risk, the management tools required for local and regional planning and sustainable development.

Finance is required to facilitate adaptation and sustainable development in vulnerable islands and coastal communities.

Ocean Acidification needs to be addressed in international law and global multilateral initiatives. Today, ocean acidification falls between the gaps of the international legal frameworks.

Education and capacity development is fundamental for global understanding and to motivate local empowerment for action.

To address ocean acidification, we also must integrate ethical considerations in our scientific approaches to environmental issues.

The partnership dialogue highlighted several voluntary commitments by Governments, scientific community, private sector, international finance institutions, and other stakeholders.

These commitments aim to strengthen existing partnerships and also address gaps in areas in which action is most needed.

These include enhancing our knowledge of the science of ocean acidification; of its impacts on marine species and ecosystems, and its combined effect with sea warming, oxygen loss, pollution and other stressors; our knowledge of the socio-economic impacts of ocean acidification; and actions in the areas of mitigation, adaptation, protection and restoration.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As emphasized by my fellow co-chair, ocean acidification is fundamentally linked to climate change.

Limiting carbon emissions should be a priority for all of us.

Ocean acidification and climate change must be combatted in a comprehensive and holistic way.

This partnership dialogue and the voluntary commitments made are important stepping stones in the path for healthy oceans and sustainable development.

I thank you.
