

**DRAFT**  
**29 May 2019**  
**(1379 words)**

**Keynote address**

**Mr. Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and  
Social Affairs**

**Meeting of the Communities of Ocean Action**  
**“From Commitments to Action: Implementing SDG14”**  
**Grand Hyatt Incheon, Incheon, Republic of Korea**

**Opening Session, 9:00-10:00 a.m., 30 May 2019**  
**(Maximum 15 minutes)**

**[Introduction]**

Your Excellency, Mr. Kim

Your Excellency, **Mr. Heo**

Ambassadors,

Distinguished guests,

It is an honour and pleasure to participate in this important meeting.

I would like to thank the Government of the Republic of Korea for their continued support for the work of UNDESA and for hosting us in Korea.

I would like to thank Vice Minister Kim for his interest in the work of UNDESA.

Finally, I would like to thank **Mr. Heo, Vice Mayor** of Incheon Metropolitan City for his hospitality in this vibrant city.

## [2030 Agenda]

I am happy to see so many of you here today.

Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, governments led the way in responding to the common challenges we face.

They united behind a transformative and truly forward-looking plan to end poverty and create shared prosperity on a healthy and peaceful planet.

This year, as we conclude the first cycle of the High Level Political Forum, we have to begin working towards the next cycle with a sense of urgency.

The next few years must be one of action and accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The HLPF will convene twice this year, first under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council in July and second in September under the auspices of the General Assembly when an SDG Summit will be held.

In September, Heads of State and Government will gather at the United Nations Headquarters for the SDG Summit to follow up and review progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The SDG Summit will be held in conjunction with other key events that will also stress implementation:

1. The Secretary General's Climate Action Summit is meant to boost ambition and accelerate actions to implement the Paris Agreement on climate Change;
2. The UN General Assembly will hold a high-level meeting on Universal Health Coverage and a high-level dialogue on financing for development; and
3. The High-Level Midterm Review of the SAMOA Pathway by the UN General Assembly will seek to address the priorities of the Small Island Developing States

These meetings will be informed by two objective reports on progress, challenges and suggestions for transformative action:

A Special Edition of the annual Secretary General's report on SDG Progress, will be complemented this year by the quadrennial Global Sustainable Development Report – or GSDR. The GSDR report is written once every four years by an Independent Group of Scientists appointed by the Secretary General, intended to strengthen the science-policy interface for SDG implementation and inform the HLPF when it meets under the General Assembly.

These events along with the reports provide an opportunity for the international community to build on the inherent synergies of our common objectives to accelerate implementation through collaboration and partnerships.

## **[SDG 14 and the Ocean Conference]**

SDG 14 – the ocean goal in the 2030 Agenda– and its 10 targets address the challenges faced by our ocean.

Four of those targets mature in 2020.

The ocean and its resources are essential to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs as a whole.

However, various human activities, exacerbated by the adverse impacts of climate change and ocean acidification, are putting increasing pressures on the health of the ocean.

Threats to the ocean and its resources come from various sources, including overfishing, pollution of all kinds, including plastics and nutrient pollution.

For example, the fraction of world marine fish stocks that are within biologically sustainable levels has declined from 90% in 1974 to 66.9% in 2015.

Long-term observations of ocean acidification over the past 30 years have shown an average increase of acidity of 26% since pre-industrial times.

Both SG’s progress report and the 2019 GSDR report agree on the urgent need to take action, going beyond the positive developments in terms of increasing the proportion of areas under national jurisdiction that have been brought under protection.

The GSDR, focusing on interlinkages across SDGs, considers the ocean to be part of the global environmental commons and examines in detail how it is impacted by current practices in other systems such as those related to energy, food, or the production of material goods.

Its recommendations constitute a call to action by all stakeholders – governments, businesses, academia, technologists, innovators and individuals. Many of these communities are represented here.

In its approach to the ocean and to all facets of sustainable development, the report emphasizes the critical importance of rooting policies in evidence and science, and it calls for expanded investment in science and research that will provide the information that is needed for all actors to accelerate progress on the 2030 Agenda.

## **[The 2017 Ocean Conference and its follow-up]**

The 2017 Ocean Conference addressed these concerns.

Under the able stewardship of Fiji and Sweden, the Conference succeeded in raising the global awareness of ocean issues and resulted in ambitious outcomes.

Among them were the 1400 voluntary commitments to advance the implementation of SDG 14 and related targets.

## **[Ocean Conference follow-up]**

To follow up on these voluntary commitments, which has now exceeded 1500, the United Nations launched the nine thematic Communities of Ocean Action (COAs).

The COAs, in cooperation with the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean, Ambassador Peter Thomson, and UNDESA, have undertaken important work toward conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources.

### **[Incheon Meeting]**

Dear friends,

There is now collective push towards accelerating implementation of the 2030 Agenda by the international community.

Which is why I feel that this meeting of the Communities of Ocean Action entitled "From Commitments to Action" that my department has organized is so important.

I am pleased to note that today we have as participants among us, members of those communities who have made commitments towards implementing SDG 14 and are eager to share their experiences with us.

We hope to learn more from you and engage better with you so that together we can enhance implementation.

### **[2020 Ocean Conference]**

More importantly, I would like to point out that this Meeting could not have happened at a more opportune moment.

While the first cycle of the HLPF comes to a close, we are already looking ahead.

On 9 May the General Assembly adopted resolution 73/292 on "2020 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".

In its resolution, the Assembly decided to convene the Conference in Lisbon from 2 to 6 June 2020, to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14,

This Conference will be held in Lisbon and will be co-hosted by Portugal and Kenya.

The overarching theme of the Conference will be "Scaling up Ocean Action based on science and innovation for the implementation of Goal 14: stocktaking, partnerships and solutions".

Preparations are currently underway for the Conference within the United Nations Secretariat and will intensify in the coming months.

For this very reason, your deliberations during these two days will be vital to the preparatory process in the lead-up to Lisbon in 2020.

### **[Conclusion]**

Finally, I would like to congratulate Kenya and Portugal for deciding to host the 2020 Ocean Conference and thank Fiji and Sweden for setting a firm foundation in 2017.

I would also like to thank the Special Envoy for the Ocean Ambassador Peter Thomson for his unwavering support to our work on conserving our ocean and its many resources.

**As Conference Secretary-General for the United Nations Oceans Conference in 2020, I and my department UNDESA along with Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares, Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs as the Special Adviser to the Presidents of the Conference stand ready to spare no effort towards making this Conference a success with the support of the UN system.**

I thank all participants, and distinguished guests, and I look forward to working together with you towards 2020.

I wish you all a constructive meeting.