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**Written Message**  
**Twenty-first meeting of the United Nations**  
**Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea**

**14 June 2021**

It is my honor to address the twenty-first meeting of the UN Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea. I commend the important role the Consultative Process has played in assisting the General Assembly in its consideration of ocean related issues since its establishment in 1999.

This year's Informal Consultative Process is occurring within the context of the upcoming Convention on Biological Diversity COP15 in Kunming, and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change COP26 in Glasgow.

The topic of focus of the meeting, "Sea level rise and its impacts" is thus highly relevant considering the intricate linkages between ocean, biodiversity and climate change.

As the giant sink of carbon dioxide and largest reservoir of biodiversity on our planet, the ocean is getting more acidic, deoxygenated and warmer at an alarming rate due to anthropogenic stressors. This is threatening the stability of marine ecosystems and people whose livelihoods depend on them.

Global mean sea level is now at its highest and is expected to continue rising, posing existential threats to the population in SIDS and in low-lying coastal areas –many in low - and middle- income countries.

Local economies and infrastructure in those vulnerable areas are not strong enough to prepare for the hazards of sea level rise. The damages done to infrastructure and property will result in massive economic loss, plunging communities into poverty, forcing migration and threatening societal harmony.

In order to head off these dire threats, we must change course. That is why a holistic approach that integrates economic, social and environmental dimensions is so important.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs provide us with an overarching road map to a cleaner, safe and prosperous future for the people and the planet. The interconnected nature of the SDGs allows us to protect our ocean and tackle climate change,

while helping vulnerable countries to strengthen their economic and social resilience to mitigate the impacts of ocean and climate crises.

We must ensure maximum synergies among all processes of ocean, climate change and biodiversity to be able to realize carbon neutrality goals and to put a stop to ocean deterioration and sea level rise.

The COVID-19 pandemic has given humanity the opportunity to rethink our relationship with nature. We must seize it. Let us work together by building and promoting blue-green policies and investing in a sustainable future for generations to come.

I wish you a successful meeting.

Thank you.

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