



**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF LEGAL AFFAIRS**

2022 United Nations Ocean Conference

Closing remarks

by

Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares

Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and
United Nations Legal Counsel,

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Lisbon, Portugal

Your Excellency Mr. Marcelo Nuno Duarte Rebelo De Sousa, President of
Portugal,

Your Excellency Mr. Tobiko Keriako, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Environment
and Forestry of Kenya,

Your Excellency Ms. Maria de Jesus dos Reis Ferreira, Permanent Representative
of Angola to the United Nations,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,



I thank the Governments of Portugal and Kenya for hosting the 2022 United Nations Ocean Conference, and all the participants for their steadfast commitment and leadership to revitalize our ocean.

We also thank the Governments of France and Costa Rica for their offer to co-host another UN Ocean Conference in 2025.

Despite the overwhelming challenges of the past two and a half years, this Conference has been an enormous success. It has given us the opportunity to unpack critical issues and generate new ideas and commitments. It also shed light on the work that remains, and the need to scale up that work and raise the ambition for the recovery of the ocean.

It is essential to turn the tide on Sustainable Development Goal 14. I am grateful to the co-chairs, moderators, panelists and participants who have shared their wisdom for how we can achieve this together.

Your input and experiences can help us leave a legacy of a thriving and healthy ocean for the coming generations.

Excellencies,

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused enormous suffering and loss worldwide. Ocean-based economies have been deeply affected by the closing of borders. International shipping has been disrupted. As a result of the pandemic, we have also seen setbacks in ocean management, monitoring and science.





The multidimensional food, energy and finance crisis is further aggravating the fallout. It is also weakening people's ability to cope.

A resilient and healthy ocean is the foundation of climate regulation and sustainable development. It has the potential to produce food and energy for billions.

We are all heartened to hear that, despite setbacks, there are also so many success stories.

Many initiatives showcased here have demonstrated how stakeholders can come together to transition towards a sustainable ocean-based economy and, as a result, protect biodiversity, community livelihoods and climate resilience.

[For instance, the shipping industry came up with a comprehensive plan to achieve net zero CO2 emissions by 2050.

There are examples of successful international cooperation in Africa and in the 54 Commonwealth countries to grasp the opportunities that ocean-based economies offer.

And the Seychelles launched the world's first sovereign blue bond to mobilize private sector investment for marine protection and fishery management.]

These success stories should rightly be replicated and scaled up.

And we are all impressed by the new commitments made by so many countries and other stakeholders during the Conference.





Some examples include:

- Protecting 30% or more of national maritime zones by 2030;
- achieving carbon neutrality by 2040;
- reducing plastic pollution, including through bans on plastics and the development of circular economies;
- increasing renewable energy use;
- ensuring that 100% of fish stocks are kept within biologically sustainable limits; and
- allocating billions of dollars to research on ocean acidification, climate resilience projects, marine protected areas and to monitoring, control and surveillance.

These commitments must be implemented at pace and monitored. Their progress must be showcased.

The United Nations Ocean Conference gives us great hope that the necessary political exists to safeguard the future of the ocean. It is not too late to break the cycle of biodiversity decline, ocean warming, acidification and marine pollution. But we must make haste [there is no time to lose].

Inspired by the leadership and action we have witnessed over the past week, allow me to highlight a few priorities for continued attention and action.





First, more investment in coastal ecosystem restoration and conservation, including mangroves, wetlands and coral reefs, is needed to enhance ocean resilience.

Women, who make up a significant proportion of the workforce in coastal and maritime sectors, must be central to these efforts. Regrettably, women are often in the lowest-paid and least-protected jobs. This must change.

Special attention is also needed for marginalized groups - to ensure that no one is left behind.

The follow-up to the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit should be utilized to recognize the essential role of sustainable aquatic foods in our food systems.

As we have entered the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, ocean science must receive the support and financing needed. Ocean science and innovation are at the very heart of action for a sustainable blue planet.

Through capacity development and technology transfer, we must also ensure that all countries can undertake scientific research and participate in scientific collaborations to sustainably use the ocean for economic, social and cultural life.





We must leverage science and traditional knowledge in our actions to restore ocean health.

Negotiations on chemicals provide us with an opportunity to agree on concrete frameworks to halt pollution through Source-to-Sea approaches.

Marine protected areas need to be better managed to benefit the local communities that depend on them and to increase ocean resilience and marine biodiversity for the global good.

Sustainably managing 100 per cent of the ocean is a must. Protecting at least 30 per cent of the ocean by 2030 would significantly advance this goal.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships must be ambitious, transparent and accountable. As called for by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in “Our Common Agenda”, we need international cooperation towards new financing instruments and innovative investment models, including private finance, debt swaps and hybrid models, to work towards the health of the ocean.

Support to developing countries must be scaled-up, as Sustainable Development Goal 14 remains the least funded of all Sustainable Development Goals by Official Development Assistance.





Dear friends,

The multiple pressures on the ocean continue to accelerate. We need all hands on deck to stop the decline of ocean health.

The political declaration “Our ocean, our future, our responsibility” just adopted by this Conference sends a strong signal on the need to act decisively and urgently to improve the health, sustainable use and resilience of the ocean.

Our actions need to be collaborative and include all countries, stakeholders and ocean sectors.

The United Nations System is committed to supporting all actors in this regard, including through UN-Oceans, our inter-agency coordination mechanism.

This year, the historic agreements on developing an international legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution at the UN Environment Assembly, and on cutting harmful fishery subsidies at the World Trade Organization, are testaments to how multilateralism is now working for the ocean’s well-being.

In the next few months, the Intergovernmental Conference on a treaty on marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, known to many as “The High-





Seas Treaty”; the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework negotiations; and the negotiations for increased climate finance and adaptation actions at the next Conference of Parties in Egypt, hold great opportunities to demonstrate our commitment and ambition to turn the tide.

Thank you all for participating in the second United Nations Ocean Conference, held here in Lisbon. We are greatly encouraged by the renewed sense of hope and urgency emerging from the Conference for the future of the ocean. As we leave the Conference, we must all commit to following up on the promises we have made here.

As the famous Tongan and Fijian writer Epeli Hau‘ofa said, “We are the ocean”. The ocean is in all of us, it is what sustains us, and it is the basis for our future survival on planet Earth.

Thank you.

