

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR BURHAN GAFOOR,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
AT THE PREPARATORY MEETING FOR THE 2020 UNITED NATIONS  
CONFERENCE TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT GOAL 14,  
NEW YORK, 4 FEBRUARY 2020**

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*[Full statement, including parts not in oral delivery]*

Co-facilitators,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished colleagues,

I would like to start by thanking the Governments of Kenya and Portugal for their generous offer to co-host the 2020 Ocean Conference, and the President of the General Assembly for convening this Preparatory Meeting. I would also like to welcome the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean, who has been working very hard to galvanise action on Sustainable Development Goal 14 all over the world. I also wish to congratulate both of you on your appointment as co-facilitators of the preparatory process and of the political declaration for the Conference. You have the full confidence and support of my delegation.

Co-facilitators,

2           2020 is a critical year for many reasons. The Secretary-General has called for this decade to be the Decade of Action, and for 2020 to be the year of urgency. This year also marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations, which presents an opportunity for all of us to reaffirm our collective commitment to multilateralism. The Ocean Conference should therefore be a conference for action and implementation, and provide a global platform for engagement and partnerships. In this regard, we welcome the theme of the conference on scaling up ocean action based on science and innovation. We fully agree that our action should be guided by the best available science, and that innovation is an

essential tool for addressing the challenges to SDG14. Equally important is the need to improve sharing of and access to scientific data and information, consistent with our commitment in the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind.

Co-facilitators,

3 As we prepare for the upcoming Ocean Conference, it is important to bear in mind that we are not starting from scratch. The basic rule is that there should be no sliding back, and we should build on what we have achieved at the last conference in 2017. We are building on the strong partnerships and voluntary commitments that came from the last conference in 2017. We are also building on the Call for Action, which was a carefully negotiated document, and which continues to play an important role in the implementation of Goal 14.

4 We should also look at all ocean conferences as part of a connected whole. Here, I want to underline the importance of the ongoing discussions in the BBNJ process.

Co-facilitators,

5 Turning to the present discussion on the themes of the interactive dialogues, I wish to align my delegation with the statements delivered by Guyana on behalf of the G77+China, and by Belize on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States. I will now make some specific comments regarding the themes of the interactive dialogues.

6 First, I wish to express Singapore's general support for the themes proposed by the Secretary-General in his Background Note. We agree that the interactive dialogues should address all the targets under Goal 14, and to cluster similar targets in the same dialogues. We also agree with including a theme on leveraging interlinkages between Goal 14 and other Goals. This appropriately reflects the integrated and indivisible nature of the Sustainable Development Goals, and recognises the strong connections between Goal 14

and other Goals.

7            Second, with regard to the theme on developing research capacity, we think that we should encourage a broader discussion on not only sharing best practices, but also encouraging countries to talk about capacity building and helping other countries to build capacity – not just research capacity, but capacity building in general.

8            Third, with regard to the theme on “Implementation of international law, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea”, we think that UNCLOS is very important because it provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and their resources. This was recognised in the 2030 Agenda. Whatever we do here, we must ensure there is no erosion or retreat from international law. That is fundamental to what we do here. In particular, we need to respect the principles, rights and duties enshrined in UNCLOS, including the freedom of navigation, which is of vital importance to all countries, in particular, small island States.

9            Finally, I wish to stress the importance of maintaining a balance between conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and their resources, which ultimately is the essence of Goal 14. We need to get the right balance between economic growth and environmental sustainability. This should be a guiding principle for not only the interactive dialogues, but also the political declaration and the Conference as a whole.

10          Thank you.

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