



5 February 2020

Statement to the 2020 U.N. Ocean Conference Preparatory Meeting on suggested elements for the upcoming Declaration to support the implementation of SDG Goal 14: Life Below Water

Excellencies, esteemed colleagues, Co-Facilitators, thank you for the opportunity to offer this intervention on behalf of Environmental Defense Fund, an international NGO working to create more fish, more food and more prosperity in many countries around the world, in service of SDG 14.

We would like to recommend that in reference to sustainable fishing, the declaration contain explicit language that climate-resilient fisheries management is necessary to achieve this critical goal.

Recent science confirms the likelihood that by the end of the century, the world's wild fish production will change dramatically, even under the most favorable climate scenarios. Most fish populations will experience significant shifts in their ranges, in addition to other ecological impacts that will directly affect patterns of fisheries productivity. This will have tremendous political, economic, social and ecological ramifications that have the potential to threaten food security, jeopardize livelihoods and exacerbate equity concerns — especially for the most vulnerable human populations.

Therefore, we believe it is critical to shift to a new paradigm of nimble and collaborative climate-resilient fisheries governance. This will require strong guidance from international institutions, coupled with bold commitments to action from fishing nations large and small. Furthermore, dedicated capacity and resources to implement such guidance should be made available to those small island, coastal and developing states most dependent on wild fisheries — especially in cases where climate impacts are projected to be severe.

Finally, as Target 14.4 is expiring at the end of the year, we should take this opportunity to update our shared definition of sustainable fishing and explicitly call out the intrinsic link with climate change and the need for immediate action. Thank you.