

Dear Chairs

Australia wishes to take the opportunity to thank you for circulating the zero draft of the political declaration for the 2020 UN Ocean Conference. We view the overall substance and framing of this draft very positively, and we express strong support for your ongoing work. We are particularly pleased to see strong references to the sustainable ocean economy narrative of protection/production/prosperity in the declaration.

We wish to contribute the following additional comments:

- 1) Australia supports the intention for the text to reflect our determination to act decisively and urgently to improve the health and productivity of the ocean. For maximum impact and longevity, it is critical that this declaration enjoy broad based consensus by approaching contentious concepts using agreed language, for example the language used in the 2019 resolution on oceans and the law of the sea (A/Res/74/19).
- 2) In paragraph 4, we propose to add additional context to support the need for action and innovation:

Sea levels are rising, the ocean is warmer and more acidic. Plastic pollution continues to enter the ocean at a ~~concerning~~ **alarming** rate, a third of fish stocks are now overexploited, and half of all living coral has been lost. **These threats are increasing.**

- 3) Overall, we are very supportive of consideration across the draft of the significance of SDG14. We believe that we could go further, in recognising that implementation of SDG14 is critical to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda more broadly.
- 4) We are pleased that the draft includes strong references to the unmet SDG14 targets in paragraph 4, and we suggest tightening the current framing to reflect that new targets will not be set until after 2030, as follows:

We are concerned at the lack of progress towards ~~The most urgent example of this is the lack of success in achieving~~ the four targets under Goal 14 that mature this year, and we reiterate our commitment to achieving these targets and our determination to go further as we set new targets **post-2030.**

- 5) In paragraph 6, we propose the following editorial amendment:

We are ~~alarmed~~ **deeply concerned** by the findings about cumulative impacts on the ocean, including ecosystem degradation, species extinctions and **recognise** the need for transformative change, as established by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services *Global Assessment Report*.

The rationale is that otherwise it reads that we are alarmed/deeply concerned about the need for transformative change.

- 6) In 10.c, we note that the text is focussed on marine litter and doesn't currently provide information on how to address nutrient pollution; waste management and alternatives alone won't address the issue. We accordingly suggest the following addition:

Reducing marine pollution, including marine plastic litter and nutrient pollution, contributing to comprehensive life-cycle approaches that include improved waste management, **phasing out problematic and unnecessary plastics** and developing new, biodegradable materials that can reduce additional marine plastic litter,

- 7) In 10.d, we would propose amendments to emphasise an unbiased approach to ABM that recognises the importance of different tools, as follows:

Effectively planning and implementing area-based management tools, **such as including** marine protected areas, through assessing their ecological value, ~~and~~ contribution to a healthy ocean **and appropriateness to local circumstances**

- 8) We support the intent of the text of p11.e. but also suggest the significance of traditional knowledge could be given greater prominence through insertion of a standalone para (particularly given that paras 10 and 11 are explicitly about 'science-based and innovative actions'). The text of the new para could be as follows:

p 9 bis: "We note the wealth of knowledge held by indigenous peoples and local communities across ocean states, recognise the contribution it can make to improving our knowledge of the ocean and ocean governance, and call on the Decade to recognise and systemise the inclusion of relevant traditional knowledge and traditional knowledge holders into scientific work."

Once again, I wish to take the opportunity to express support to the Chairs for this important work. Australia stands ready to assist as needed.