

2020 UNITED NATIONS OCEAN CONFERENCE: 2ND CO-FACILITATORS ONLINE BRIEFING WITH STAKEHOLDERS: ZERO DRAFT OF THE CONFERENCE DECLARATION

17 March, 10:00 – 11:30AM (DST, New York)

Moderator, Ms. Lotta Tahtinen, Chief, Outreach and Partnerships Branch (OPB), Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG), Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)

Excellencies, Martin Bille Hermann, Permanent Representatives of Denmark and Ngedikes Olai Uludong, Permanent Representative of Palau – co-facilitators of the preparatory process

Distinguished Colleagues,

I am Patrick Paul Walsh, a Professor of International Development Studies in University College Dublin in Ireland. I would like to deliver this intervention on behalf of University College Dublin, Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) and the International Science Council (ISC).

I would like to thank the Permanent Representatives of Denmark and Palau for their work as co-facilitators on the preparatory process and inter-governmental consultations for the 2020 UN Ocean Conference Declaration. The zero draft is indeed brief, concise and action-oriented. We very much welcome the science-based and innovative areas of action (paragraph 11, *a to h*) in the zero draft, to support the implementation of Goal 14.

The COVID-19 crisis is teaching the world two important lessons; First is the need for a coordinated whole of global society action, led by governments; Secondly, the need for governments to work closely with academic and scientific communities in planning and action. Indeed, Ocean and Climate health are “two sides of the same coin” and pose an existential threat to humanity. The zero draft while recognising the need for a whole of global society participation and the importance of science in addressing challenges and actions, it could go further.

Whole of Global Society and Scientific Partnerships

The 2017 Ocean Conference, organised by the Governments of Sweden and Fiji, was a huge success for two important reasons. Non-governmental stakeholders, in particular the academic and scientific communities, were given equal opportunity to speak at the plenary session, dialogues and side events. Science-based and innovative areas of action took centre stage across these elements of the program.

The UN Ocean Conference 2017 concluded with a 14-point ‘Call for Action’ to conserve and sustainably use oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. It gathered thousands of voluntary commitments and stakeholder partnerships towards ocean conservation and raised awareness at the highest political level about the importance of the

ocean to human survival. It is excellent that these are reaffirmed in Paragraph 2 and 12 of the zero draft.

The 2020 UN Ocean Conference should empower stakeholders and science in the same way as in 2017 and be reflected in the conference declaration. To this end, could paragraph 1 in the zero draft not refer to the need to induce whole of global society and scientific partnerships, led by our Governments *to act decisively and urgently to improve the health and productivity of the ocean.*

Paragraph1. “We, the Heads of State and Government and high-level representatives meeting in Lisbon from 2 to 6 June 2020 at the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, “Scaling up ocean action based on science and innovation of Goal 14: stocktaking, partnerships and solutions”, with the participation of civil society and other relevant stakeholders, reaffirm our strong commitment to conserve and sustainably use our oceans, seas and marine resources. Greater ambition is required at all levels to address the dire state of the ocean. As leaders and representatives of our Governments, we are determined to act decisively and urgently to improve the health and productivity of the ocean. [Based on A/RES/71/312, OPI]”

The crucial role of the science-technology-policy-practice interface,

The international scientific and technological community address all the challenges outlined in the zero draft (paragraph 10, *a* to *e*). Here, we call for further links to the UN system to major international initiatives such as the International Network for Government Science Advice (INGSA) of the International Science Council (ISC) and the research, policy and education initiatives of SDSN. Universities should be a key partner in delivering SDG14 science, education, finance, data and partnerships. Universities are working hard to re-orientate their education, research and policy outreach towards the SDG agenda. The UN system needs the absorptive capacity to capture this.

To this end, should paragraph 9 not “cast the net” further and “harvest” as much science as it can?

Paragraph 9. “We also recognize the importance of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) and its vision aimed at achieving the science we need for the ocean we want. We support the Decade’s mission to generate and use knowledge for the transformational action needed to achieve a healthy, safe and resilient ocean for sustainable development by 2030 and beyond. We fully support the work of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO in preparing and implementing the Decade and commit to supporting these efforts”.

Moreover, shouldn’t the entry points for science-technology-policy-practice interfaces on SDG 14 be made explicit with respect to inter-agency coordination and coherence throughout the United Nations system? This is not part or mentioned in Paragraph 13 of the zero draft.

Paragraph 13. *“We request the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to support the implementation of Goal 14 in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in particular by enhancing inter-agency coordination and coherence throughout the United Nations system on ocean issues, taking into consideration the work of UN-Oceans.”*

In summary, the zero draft is excellent and does incorporate civil society and other stakeholders, including international scientific and technological community. It has the right science policy interface in terms of the challenges and actions.

However the zero draft has an opportunity to call for more systematic ways to induce whole of society partnerships and the science-technology-policy-practice interface (including traditional knowledge) as an outcome of conference recommendations made to the HLPF and beyond.

Happy St Patrick’s Day

Reference

Joachim Claude et al “A Roadmap for Using the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development in Support of Science, Policy, and Action” *One Earth, Volume 2, Issue 1, 24 January 2020, Pages 34-42*

SDG Education Resources

UN SDSN - SDG Academy free online course (MOOC) – **“One Planet , One Ocean”**
<https://sdgacademy.org/course/one-planet-one-ocean/>

UN SDSN – Global Association of Master in Development Practice Programs -Professor Martin Visbeck on SDG 14

<https://wordpress.lehigh.edu/globalclassroom/week-5-professor-martin-visbeck/>