



**Statement on behalf of the EU and its Member States
2020 Ocean Conference preparatory meeting
New York, 4-5 February 2020**

Elements for the interactive dialogues

Co-Chairs,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

We believe the UN Ocean Conference and a focus on science and innovation can serve to spur the implementation of SDG14 and meet its targets. We also consider that the UN Conference can provide useful input into the preparation of the UN Decade for Ocean Science for sustainable development whose implementation will start next year. Similarly, this UN Conference can raise the public awareness of oceans and promote ocean literacy.

I would like to assure you of my delegation's constructive participation in these negotiations.

We thank the UN Secretary General for the informative background note which summarizes the state of play and proposes the themes of the interactive dialogues which we fully support. These reflect many of the concerns and priorities of the European Union and its Member States, as evidenced in its International Ocean Governance Agenda and the related Council of the European Union Conclusions on Oceans and Seas adopted in 2019. We consider that clustering of related issues will highlight the interlinkages and synergies between the different targets and related actions.

The EU and its Member States support a holistic approach to the oceans and the implementation of Goal 14, based on the best available science, applying an ecosystem-based approach and the precautionary principle, and acknowledge the strong interlinkages between the SDG 14 targets as well as with other Goals and targets. We also consider that the involvement of local communities and youth in these dialogues can help to better understand and take into consideration the socio-economic aspects.

With regard to the first dialogue, we believe the discussion should cover different types of pollution from land- and sea-based sources as well as their impacts on human health and food safety. These include plastics, excessive nutrients, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, invasive alien species and anthropogenic underwater noise. This is one of the crucial elements of EU's Zero pollution ambition. As the majority of pollution stems from land, such as from agriculture and industrial activities, particular attention should be given to land-sea interactions from a source to sea perspective.

On plastic marine litter, the need for a new plastics governance framework should be discussed to address current regulatory gaps at the global level. This could focus on the prevention of pollution by addressing the whole life-cycle of plastics-sustainable production and consumption patterns like plastic product design, the ban on single-use plastics, life-cycle assessment of products. This could facilitate the transition to a circular economy, which is a priority for the EU. For this purpose, this dialogue can also serve to identify issues which could be taken up in preparation of the next UNEA meeting. Harmonising standards and practices could contribute to adequate monitoring of different types of plastic pollution. The work being done by the IMO on marine litter and sustainable shipping can provide useful sources of inspiration.

Both Dialogues 1 and 2 fit well into one of the priorities of the European Green Deal to protect our natural capital. We consider that the second dialogue should tackle ways in which marine and coastal ecosystems are managed, protected and restored, including to enhance their resilience and also identify actions to address other challenges particularly climate change which hamper the achievement of healthy and productive oceans. For this reason, we suggest focussing on how science can support the application of the ecosystem-based approach and holistic management. Other important concepts include cumulative impacts and adaptive management approaches. With regard to tools to support the conservation and restoration of ecosystems, these include Marine Protected Areas as well as Other Effective Conservation Measures and area-based conservation tools. A focus on new technologies to improve their management and monitoring can be useful.

We acknowledge the crucial importance of addressing acidification, a result of greenhouse gas emissions. It is heavily affecting coastal and marine ecosystems as pointed out by the IPCC Special Report. We stress that tackling all the impacts of climate change and greenhouse gases, including acidification, necessitates further decarbonisation of the economy, also in line with commitments under the Paris Agreement as reflected in SDGs 8 and 13. This requires the full mobilisation of the research community and industry. The EU and its Member States believe the oceans can be part of the solution by scaling up nature-based solutions including to enhance ocean resilience to the impacts of climate change. In this context, research and innovation can provide solutions to minimize the impacts of extreme weather events, to address the causes of acidification and its impacts on habitats and species, to develop strategies for more sustainable shipping or to assist regional seas conventions' work such as that relating to ship source pollution. This dialogue should cover different ways to reduce emissions and their impacts such as through sustainable forest management and renewable energy, including from oceans.

Turning to Dialogue 4, the EU and its Member States believe stress that sustainable fisheries are important to achieve the 2030 Agenda particularly with respect to food security, poverty alleviation and biodiversity protection. This dialogue can tackle how science and innovation can provide new solutions to reduce the carbon footprint of fisheries and improve sustainability by reducing overexploitation and by-catch of non-target species in line with the ecosystem approach to fisheries management. Global data exchange standards can also help improve fisheries management including adaptation to climate change and lowering fishing vessel emissions, assist fisheries controls and the fight against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing. Attention should also be given to the human and social aspects of fisheries activities.

We consider that the topic of Dialogue 5, sustainable ocean-based economies, is important for many countries including for some of our overseas countries and territories and is fully in line with the objective of leaving no one behind. We suggest focusing on the sharing of best practices, and capacity-building by, for example, knowledge transfer, sharing of information or data on fisheries management measures under marine protected areas. The role of innovative and sustainable financing for the purpose of sustainable ocean-based economies is also relevant.

We agree with the objectives of Dialogue 6 to increase scientific knowledge and develop research capacity, including as an input to the UN Decade for Ocean Science for sustainable development. Monitoring and reporting capacities, data gathering and assessment, and digitalisation can be useful avenues to explore. The EU has accumulated experience such as through its work on marine data through EMODnet and its Copernicus Earth Observation Programme. This Dialogue should also highlight the interactions between regional reporting exercises and global processes like the World Ocean Assessment/UN regular Process and IPBES. In addition, the possible economic benefits resulting from innovation should also be considered.

With regard to Dialogue 7, this can examine how science and new technologies can provide solutions to tackle the identified challenges and help us meet our obligations and commitments under international law, such as UNCLOS and its implementing agreements and the Paris Agreement and processes such as the Post 2020 Global Framework for Biodiversity.

Dialogue 8 could showcase examples on how interlinkages within Goal 14 as well as with other Goals can be addressed to minimise conflict and obtain synergies including through public-private partnerships. The climate and ocean nexus could be used as an example to contextualise interactions into action-oriented discussions including sustainable finance and investment mechanisms. The Arctic can be used as a case study of the need to improve understanding of its role in local, regional and global weather, their interlinkages as well as the impacts of climate change.

We look forward to working with all partners so that the dialogues can provide useful outcomes to further progress in the implementation of Goal 14.