

**AOSIS Interventions for the  
Preparatory Meeting for the 2020 UN Ocean Conference**

4-5 February 2020  
Conference Room 4

Themes of Interactive Dialogues

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), and we align with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

AOSIS also wishes to emphasize the importance of the 2020 UN Ocean Conference in advancing the implementation of SDG 14, and we thank the Governments of Portugal and Kenya for assuming the responsibility to host the Conference. We assure you that AOSIS is fully committed to delivering a successful and meaningful outcome from the Conference.

Similarly, we also wish to express our full support to both of the co-facilitators who have been tasked with leading the preparatory process. We are very pleased to see Ambassador Uludong, one of our fellow SIDS at the helm of this process, with Ambassador Hermann. We have full confidence and trust in their able leadership to guide us through this process in line with the mode of work proposed.

AOSIS also endorses the eight themes which have been proposed in the Secretary-General's background note. We believe that the interactive dialogues should build on the discussions at the 2017 Ocean Conference, taking stock of the commitments and partnerships which materialized, while also exploring the potential for new actions, in light of science and innovation. We also welcome the new dialogue on interlinkages with the other SDGs, which provides us with the opportunity to leverage actions in SDG 14 to enhance implementation of the 2030 Agenda as a whole.

We look forward to the opportunity to provide input to the concept notes for the dialogues, and take this opportunity to stress the importance of having SIDS represented in these dialogues during the conference.

Thank you.

## Elements for the Declaration

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States, and we align with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

AOSIS cannot over-emphasize the pressing urgency for action on ocean given the far reaching deleterious impacts that the decades of inaction to mitigate greenhouse gases, the failed effectiveness of fisheries regimes, and the fragmented nature of ocean governance as a whole have unleashed upon this vast and essential resource for planetary sustainability.

From where we stand, the urgency is all the more acute as the ocean is the very lifeline of our people. The living marine resources are a source of our food security. The physical features on the seabed as coral reefs and sea grass are a natural defense against the destructive powers of waves and storm surge. The waters that surround us are also what connects us; it is what facilitates our trade and our cultural exchange with the world.

There are no greater advocates for the ocean than the small island states.

We are committed to achieving SDG14 because it is integral to our achievement of almost all the other SDGs of the 2030 Agenda. AOSIS welcomes the emphasis drawn to these interlinkages and considers that the Conference could be used to reinforce the integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda. Turning now to the outcome of the June Conference, AOSIS reiterates its full support for the Call for Action adopted at the last Ocean Conference. It is comprehensive and still relevant for our efforts in accelerating action to support implementation of SDG14 and the wider 2030 Agenda.

We agree with the co-facilitators that the focus of the outcome will be narrow given the theme of the Conference on science and innovation. But being narrow should not lessen its ambition. The theme should be seen as a lever of action to support the obligations we have undertaken in the 2030 Agenda. Science and innovation are two critical drivers of the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources. Greater scientific understanding of the marine environment, coupled with innovative applications thereof can provide policy makers with a sound basis for responsible ocean stewardship and ultimately for pursuing our sustainable development goals.

According to the Secretary-General's report, one of the root causes of persistent unsustainable activities is inadequate data sharing, and insufficient capacity to assess and address ocean issues.

This is not an insurmountable challenge. Our Members can bring to the table examples of how data sharing including through innovative means of citizen science can inform sustainable fisheries practice and coastal zone management.

The outcome can elevate good practices of data sharing to the global level with a view to improve *access* to as well as understanding and utilization of scientific knowledge and research. It can also address elimination of institutional and capacity barriers where they exist.

SIDS are keen to tap into the growing scientific data and information of the oceans and marine resources as we are to contribute our own traditional knowledge to complement conservation and sustainability measures for the ocean. Capacity constraints continue to hinder progress in this regard. Here again, the outcome can give special focus to cooperation to improve the capacity of small island developing states to access science and research as well as to enable the appropriate avenues for the sharing of traditional knowledge by its holders, in line with how existing major multilateral agreements and processes address the incorporation of the relevant traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local communities as a complement to Ocean science, including the CBD and its EBSA process, the reports of the IPCC, and the recent IPBES Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

In addition to the issue of access, AOSIS also wishes to see the outcome address capacity development to use the available scientific data to implement actions in light of the best available science. While SIDS have been implementing adaptive measures to the best of their ability, responding to new challenges in ocean and coastal management remains beyond our capacity. Enabling this would not only promote more sustainable use and enhance livelihoods, but will also open up the potential particularly for SIDS nationals to contribute to marine science, research and innovation. Accordingly, the outcome can address targeted capacity building; through training, transfer of technology and the necessary hardware and equipment could address this issue.

Supplementary to improving access, there also needs to be a more integrated and holistic approach to the use of data in ocean management and governance. The ocean is a complex resource with many interrelated dimensions. At the moment the

platforms for sharing knowledge and information are fragmented, and there is limited cooperation. This is another aspect which could be addressed by the declaration.

AOSIS also believes it is imperative for the declaration to recognize the linkages between climate change and other adverse effects of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions on the one hand and the ocean on the other hand. The Special Report of the IPCC on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate highlights the far-reaching impacts of rampant greenhouse gas emissions on the ocean, including rise in temperatures, ocean acidification, reduced fish stocks, coral bleaching events and rise in sea levels. It also recognizes that Small Island Developing States are disproportionately impacted, and there are severe limits to adaptation. Given that science is the overarching theme for the conference, we think it is important to recognize the relevant findings of this report in the declaration, and also highlight the linkages between climate mitigation and the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean.

Also linked to this, and target 14.4 is the implementation of sustainable fisheries practices, in light of the best available science that factors in the impacts of climate change. To ensure a sustainable future for many SIDS who are heavily reliant on fisheries, it is vital to enhance the resilience of marine ecosystems through good fisheries management and international cooperation. There is a need for promoting adaptive measures across the board.

Taking into account that the proposed interactive dialogues recognize the important interlinkages between SDG 14 and the other Goals, we think that this would be an opportunity to recognize in the declaration how science and innovation can help SDG 14 trigger or enhance action on other Goals and vice versa.

For instance, harnessing blue economies has the potential to enable economic growth, improve livelihoods and create jobs while preserving the health of the ocean ecosystem. This is particularly relevant for SIDS in the context of the link between target 14.7, and SDG 8. Advancements in science and technology has greatly expanded the scope of blue economies across many industries, and we hope to see further actions in the declaration to enable this innovative avenue to continue to flourish.

Similarly, there is also a strong link between target 14.1 and SDG 12. While over 8 million tons of mismanaged plastic waste are being dumped into the ocean, we still lack a global approach to addressing this issue. In addition to recognizing the need

to address this from a sustainable consumption point of view, AOSIS is also of the view that the declaration should give further impetus to the work that is being undertaken by the ad hoc open-ended working group on marine litter and microplastics established by UNEA.

We hope that these preliminary reflections will assist you in preparing the zero draft of the declaration, and we look forward to engaging in further discussions with all stakeholders as we move ahead.

I thank you.