Pew Intervention on the UN Ocean Conference Zero Draft

Your Excellencies,

Thank you for this opportunity to input on the UN Ocean Conference zero draft.

The Pew Charitable Trusts would like to thank you for the zero draft, and we commend the urgency the text gives to the concerning state of our ocean. As the draft notes, there is a global emergency facing the ocean, and climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time.

We have a few recommendations to further reflect the appropriate level of urgency and to add actionable items to the zero draft.

Noting that the theme of this Ocean Conference is on increasing ocean science and innovation, the zero draft can go further in outlining specific areas that need increased focus. For example, more research is needed on marine pollution, including plastic litter; deep-sea ecosystems, the Southern Ocean, and the Arctic Ocean, in order to better understand how these systems are responding to climate change, fishing, and other human pressures.

Paragraph 8 notes the importance of the BBNJ treaty. We recommend strengthening this paragraph to say, “the successful conclusion of the BBNJ treaty will be critical to achieving a healthy ocean, and a treaty is needed by the end of 2020”.

We also recommend specifically noting the important work underway by the UN system and related organizations, for example the work of the ISA on ensuring effective protection of the marine environment from deep sea mining, the WTO’s discussions on ending harmful fishing subsidies, and the designation of marine protected areas by CCAMLR.

The zero draft can also go further in noting the interlinkages between the SDGs. The challenges presented by illicit activity associated with illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and the surveillance and information sharing necessary to combat it, have a disproportionate impact on developing States, particularly small island developing States.

Finally, while we support the focus on, and the call for more, ocean science and innovation, there are many proven ways to increase the health and resilience of ocean ecosystems, including the designation and management of marine protected areas; the adoption and enforcement of science-based harvest strategies for fisheries; and the elimination of harmful fisheries subsidies. In calling for more science and technology, we must not lose sight of the urgent need to take action in areas where a solid evidence base already exists.

We have further comments on the draft text and are happy to submit those in writing.

Thank you.
Thank you for the opportunity to speak, we offer these additional comments on the text itself. Thank you for your consideration.

**High Seas Treaty**

Paragraph 8 recognizes the importance of the BBNJ treaty. We recommend strengthening this paragraph to say, “the successful conclusion of the BBNJ treaty will be critical to achieving a healthy ocean, and a treaty is needed by the end of 2020”.

**IUU Fishing**

As paragraph 10(b) notes, combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (or IUU fishing) is vital to restoring fish stock levels. The challenges presented by illicit activity associated with IUU fishing, and the surveillance and information sharing necessary to combat it, have a disproportionate impact on developing States, particularly small island developing States.

**Fisheries Subsidies**

Work is progressing on fisheries subsidies. We recommend paragraph 11 make reference to improving data collection, analysis and sharing on the state of fish stocks and fisheries; and to establishing and providing tools and guidelines on fisheries subsidies reform for use at the national and regional level.

Further, paragraph 13 emphasizes the importance of interagency cooperation. We recommend amending the text so that it says “throughout the UN system on ocean issues and other related organizations”

**Seabed Mining**

Seabed Mining is a new industry poised to enter the deep sea. We recommend a few text changes to the zero draft to highlight seabed mining and its possible effects to the ocean:

- a new third sentence in paragraph 4: ‘New industries which pose unknown new threats to the oceans, such as deep-sea mining, are emerging’.

- After paragraph 8: ‘We recognize the importance of the work undertaken by the International Seabed Authority to elaborate the text of rules, regulations and procedures for the potential future exploitation of the minerals of the seafloor beyond national jurisdiction, include those aimed to ensure effective protection for the marine environment from harmful effects which may arise from such activities [Art 145 UNCLOS]’

- An addition to paragraph 10(a) that lists out the areas where improved understanding of the ocean is needed, for example “... through improving our understanding of deep-sea environments, and ...”

**Southern Oceans**

Protecting our Southern Oceans is key to protecting overall ocean health. We make the following text recommendations to protect the Southern Oceans:
• An addition to paragraph 8: “…and work with conventions and governance structures already in place, such as the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Living Marine Resources (CCAMLR), to ensure sustainable use and conservation of areas beyond national jurisdiction.”

• An addition to paragraph 10: “Recognizing that while a majority of ocean conservation initiatives have focused on coastal areas and exclusive economic zones, research on and attention to more remote and fragile systems, such as deep-sea ecosystems, the Southern Ocean, and the Arctic Ocean, needs to increase in order to better understand how these systems are responding to climate change, fishing, and other human pressures.”

• An addition to paragraph 11a: “…and strengthen international research bodies that promote developing, coordinating, and implementing collaborative international research initiatives to better understand marine ecosystems, in particular in areas beyond national jurisdiction, and research on systems that have global conservation implications (such as the Southern Ocean and Arctic ecosystems, migratory species, and climate regulation).”

Marine Pollution

In reference to paragraph 10(c), we suggest the following additions (in bold italics):

• “Reducing marine pollution, including marine plastic litter and nutrient pollution, contributing to comprehensive life-cycle approaches that include reduced plastic production and consumption, increased recycling, improved waste management and investing in innovation, including developing new, biodegradable materials that can reduce additional marine plastic litter.”

Coastal Wetlands

In reference to paragraph 10(d), we suggest the following additions (in bold italics):

• “Developing and implementing measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change, including through increasing the use of ocean-based renewable energy technologies, implementing nature-based solutions for carbon sequestration such as the protection and restoration of carbon-rich coastal wetlands preventing coastal erosion and preparing for ocean-related extreme weather events.”