

Preparatory meeting for the UN Ocean Conference

4-5 February 2020, New York, UN Headquarters

Statement from

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

The ocean is a fundamental element in the lives of the peoples of Asia and the Pacific. Both the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean provide food and nutrition, jobs and livelihoods. It is no overstatement to say that for the millions of individuals and the communities they live in that depend on the oceans, these mighty bodies are truly the “water of life.”

But our oceans are in crisis. Marine pollution; illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing; and the adverse effects of climate change are all major challenges for the people and economies of the region.

To support the protection of the ocean, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and we in the secretariat are focusing our efforts on strengthening regional cooperation in three critical areas:

1. **Promoting data and evidence-based ocean governance:** Understanding the ocean requires addressing missing and fragmented data, building capacities to generate such data and promoting regional dialogue to set standards for harmonized and accessible data. ESCAP’s *Ocean Accounts* project promotes a statistical framework for the standardization of ocean-related statistics and their application to the sustainable management of oceans. The *Ocean Cities* project promotes an interconnected application of marine spatial planning, nature-based solutions, and land-use practices to enhance inclusive urban resilience in coastal settlements and islands. ESCAP is also proposing a *Pacific Ocean Data Coalition* to pull these efforts together to advance scientific understanding of the Pacific Ocean and fast track solutions through multi-stakeholder partnerships.
2. **Supporting implementation, follow-up and review of Goal 14:** The annual Asia-Pacific Day for the Ocean brings together governments and stakeholders from civil society, businesses and the youth to seek solutions and agree on recommendations for follow-up. The *SDG14 accelerator* tool catalyzes the implementation of Goal 14 by identifying interventions and policies with a substantial multiplier effect on SDG delivery, including synergies between Goal 14 and the other Sustainable Development Goals.
3. **Strengthening awareness and action across sectors:** As an indication of regional leadership, the Commission decided that the theme for its session in May would be

“Promoting economic, social and environmental cooperation on ocean for sustainable development.” By raising the significance of the ocean in the region’s policy debates, the leaders of the Commission membership have a platform from which to identify action to accelerate implementation of Goal 14, whether through strengthening ocean governance or transitioning to *green, safe and efficient* shipping or promoting sustainable fishing practices. It is our hope that the deliberations at the Commission will produce an outcome that can contribute to the 2020 Ocean Conference in Lisbon.

Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific, ESCAP is also working closely with businesses and inviting stakeholders to rethink the current paradigm of resource-inefficient and pollution-intensive production and consumption.

ESCAP hopes that these initiatives and partnerships, as well as many others in the pipeline, can help countries accelerate implementation of Goal 14 in Asia and the Pacific as an integral part of sustainable development in the region.