

I am pleased for this first opportunity to express Malta's unconditional support for the work carried out by the UN Secretary General Mr Guterres, as well as to his Special Envoy for the Ocean Ambassador Peter Thomson, and for their unstinting commitment to mobilise the international community in favour of the ocean.

I also take this opportunity to thank Portugal and Kenya for co-hosting the UN Ocean Conference 2020, and Denmark and Palau for acting as co-facilitators of the intergovernmental declaration.

Our ocean is under threat from the effects of climate change, pollution, loss of biodiversity and unsustainable use. Our future wellbeing depends on clean and healthy oceans, where protection and production go hand in hand. Safeguarding the oceans for future generations is a shared responsibility and a matter of global urgency.

The upcoming UN Ocean Conference will therefore be an important occasion to generate opportunities to support the achievement of all SDG 14 targets. The implementation of SDG14 remains the foundation of good ocean governance, one where no one is left behind.

The conference's focus on science and innovation comes at a propitious moment, as we are about to embark on the UN Decade for Ocean Science. Science and Innovation are essential elements of holistic ocean governance. Taken together, they allow us to have a more comprehensive knowledge of our ocean and to explore new solutions that will ensure the sustainable management and use of the ocean and its resources.

My country has always sought to contribute towards the continued development of international ocean governance. More recently, Malta hosted, the Our Ocean conference in 2017, a regional workshop of the UN Regular Process in 2018, and for the first time ever, an Ocean Ambassadors meeting last year.

Through the established presence of the International Maritime Law Institute and the International Ocean Institute, Malta has, over the years built a reputation of excellence in training and capacity building on ocean governance. We have also been able to provide further training in the field of ocean science in support of sustainable blue growth through the Commonwealth Small States Centre of Excellence which is also based in Malta and which provides knowledge-based tools, practical solutions, and shares best practices to leverage a collective synergy, catalysing the development of small states in the context of their individual limited resources.

I am proud that through these opportunities, my country, a small island state, has also been able to provide constant support to developing countries so that they too are equipped to meet their sustainable development goals.

In 2017 edition of the Our Ocean conference held in Malta, the outcome of the conference was unprecedented and stands to prove that together we can ensure a future for Our Ocean, which is safe, secure, clean and healthy:

- 433 tangible and measurable commitments were made
- EUR 7.2 billion in financial pledges were made, and
- 2.5 million square kilometres of additional Marine Protected Areas were pledged

The EU's 35 commitments alone exceeded EUR 550 million and implied action throughout the globe. Together with its individual

Member States and the European Investment Bank, the EU pledged more than EUR 2.8 billion.

Other countries tabled over 200 commitments, whilst NGOs, foundations, research institutes and international organisations announced 87 commitments. As a major game-changer, the 2017 conference for the first time mobilised at scale the business community in the conservation of Our Ocean. Corporate leaders responded with 100 commitments. From plastic reduction to satellite monitoring.

In this way Malta is determined to continue to build on the legacy of one of our own, Arvid Pardo, who in 1967 at his speech at the United Nations General Assembly, led to Malta's pioneering role in the creation of the United Nations Convention on the International Law of the Sea.

Malta has been one of the principle leaders in ensuring that our ocean beds are declared the common heritage of mankind. Today I want to reconfirm that Malta is at the forefront in ensuring that our oceans remain the preserve of our shared future.

We look forward to make the UN Ocean conference a success for everyone, so that together, we can secure a sustainable and peaceful future for our ocean and a better life for our citizens.

