

SANTOS

**Preparatory Meeting of the United Nations Ocean
Conference**

4 February 2020, 10.00 – Opening remarks

President of the General Assembly

Co-facilitators of the UN Ocean Conference's preparatory
process

Principal Secretary Ntiba

Special Envoy for the Ocean

Distinguished representatives of the UN Secretariat

Dear ocean fellows,

The meeting we are starting today is a crucial step on the road towards the 2nd UN Ocean Conference. A step for the engagement in a collective push for strong, ambitious, transformative action to support the implementation of Goal 14.

We are gathered here today not only to consider the proposed themes for the Interactive Dialogues, and start debating the **elements of the declaration** to be adopted, but also - and ultimately – to set the tone for the Conference.

I recall the words of Secretary-General António Guterres, prior to September's SDG Summit: "The people of the world do not want half measures and empty promises. They are demanding transformative change that is fair and sustainable".

The SDG S BACKGROUND NOTE itself states that "existing actions for the implementation of SDG14 are insufficient". And it points to the need of "scaling up ocean action, including through science and innovation, increasing and improving cooperation and coordination at all levels, capacity-building and financing and continued monitoring and review of the implementation of Goal 14".

This is what we should really strive for: only tangible, ambitious, transformative action can help us deliver a meaningful, consequential conference. The *momentum*, the international stage, appears to be prepared.

Portugal supports the proposed themes for the **8 Interactive Dialogues**. We deem particularly important the proposed theme for the 8th Dialogue, "Leveraging interlinkages between Goal 14 and other Goals towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda", close-knitting the SDGs.

The role of science and innovation is critical and cross-cutting to all Dialogues. As is the need for enhanced cooperation, particularly in connection with information and data sharing, including socio-economic data.

Global databases and information networks are among the most important topics to address. Knowledge and science are essential and need to be fostered, but we must realize that vast amounts of knowledge already exist. They need to be gathered, analysed, compiled, organized and shared.

The effective development of research capacity and the transfer of marine technology are essential for the equity and development goals stated in the SDGs.

We further trust that the **declaration** of the Conference will constitute an affirmative and strong statement.

We acknowledge that the declaration should focus on, and highlight, the science-based and innovative areas of action to support the implementation of Goal 14. The priority given by the co-facilitators to science-based policies and their strong emphasis on action are promising signs. We consider this approach to be the best way to ensure that we build on the “Call for Action” of the first UN Ocean Conference (that we proudly co-facilitated alongside Singapore). We should also guarantee that this negotiation produces a document that both adds value to other multilateral processes and sheds light into what should be our priorities in terms of ocean science and innovation.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for the need to end poverty and hunger, reduce inequality, tackle climate change and preserve the oceans and forests, among other objectives.

In this connection, two of the main drivers behind the SDGs are:

- the importance of the conservation and sustainable use of the planet (including the ocean); and
- equity and justice.

The means to get there include:

- the role of science, including technology transfer and capacity building;
- the sense of urgency / commitment to act; and
- international cooperation.

These should be, in our opinion, the main elements of the declaration along with the need for all stakeholders to be involved: Governments, NGOs, communities, scientists, big and small companies, industry, etc.

Finally, SDGs are a reminder that environmental justice cannot be solved separately from social justice. They are both targets that go hand in hand.

Different countries need to be connected through cooperation, transfer of technology, capacity building, sharing information, but also through the promotion of a wide and equal participation in international processes.

The UN Ocean Conference is not an end in itself: it is a global platform that hopefully can support and feed into other processes, such as the OSPAR Ministerial Meeting, also in Lisbon, in July; the "Our Ocean Conference", in August, in Palau; the CBD COP, in Kunming, in October, and the COP

26 of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, in Glasgow, in November, as well as other international events related with the Ocean. The Conference and its outcomes need to be strong enough to guarantee that the ocean remains a focus in the international agenda beyond 2020.

And we must not forget the UN Decade for Ocean Science and the World Ocean Assessment processes, realigning science with the challenges of humanity, and reorient current knowledge toward global responsibility.

Collectively, all these efforts, including the future agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ), aim to strengthen the international legal framework. And Portugal, as a strong voice for ocean law and governance, and for science-based policy, will stay at the forefront of the advocacy for the recognition that the *status quo* has to change, that we need *transformative action*.

We have an historical opportunity to effectively address the issue of *conservation and sustainable use of the ocean*. *Let's not waste it*.

Allow me to also underline the importance of ensuring an inclusive Conference, and in that regard let me strongly encourage States and other stakeholders in a position to do so to contribute to the Trust Fund to support the participation of representatives of developing countries.

Portugal is proud and grateful to be working alongside Kenya in this endeavor and we feel honored and prepared to host the UN Ocean Conference, following on the footsteps of Fiji and Sweden.

As one of the host countries, I invite you all to come to Lisbon, in June, and to be sure that, *together, we will deliver.*