



PERMANENT MISSION OF SAINT LUCIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

**Preparatory Meeting - 2020 United Nations Conference to Support
the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14**

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Statement by

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On behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)**

CARICOM echoes the appreciation expressed by other member States to the co-facilitators, Ambassador Uludong of Palau and Ambassador Hermann of Denmark for leading this preparatory process in advance of the convening of the United Nations Conference on the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14. We welcome the Secretary-General's comprehensive background note which will assist us in our deliberations.

The primary *raison d'être* of SDG 14 is the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. For the small island developing states (SIDS) comprising CARICOM, the implementation of appropriate measures to give effect to SDG 14 is critical for Member States in meeting the targets set by the full range of SDG's, and in sustaining the advancement of our societies which are increasingly affected by the all-too-often tragic environmental impacts of climate change.

Accordingly, global implementation of initiatives to meet the goals of Goal 13 on combating climate change is directly related to the capacity of small island states to achieve the goals set out in SDG 14. Indeed, these two goals are interwoven, and must be seen in an interrelated context. To this end, international cooperation will be critical as SIDS like ours seek to grapple with the challenges linked to the conservation and sustainable use of the Ocean.

One tangible example of this interconnectiveness is the significant growth in sargassum seaweed in the Caribbean Sea, fueled in large measure by the warming of the waters which, in turn, is a direct consequence of climate change. While providing an important habitat for some species, the burden of removal of this invasive grass from our shores can be quite significant, and can place undue pressure on many tourism economies of CARICOM states. Such deleterious impacts on CARICOM and other SIDS economies can, in turn, affect on the capacity to meet the goals of SDG 1 on ending poverty, along with other pertinent SDGs. This interrelatedness of the respective SDGs is the glue which binds them together into a blueprint for the sustainability of our people and the future of our planet.

In this connection, CARICOM regards the importance of the marine environment with particular urgency through consistent support for the regional and global commitments made to ensure a sustainable future. We refer to the 1983 Cartagena Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region, the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), and the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem projects co-financed by UNDP and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) as examples of such regional and global commitments . Additional initiatives designed to address specific elements of the marine environment include the Caribbean Large Marine ecosystem Project, and the Eastern Caribbean Ocean Policy which seek to enhance ocean management. CARICOM is optimistic that the development of a balanced and inclusive ocean governance framework, in conjunction with our wider Latin American region, can be achieved.

In further elaboration of the holistic approach taken by CARICOM states, CARICOM has embarked on a project on "Integrating Water, Land and Ecosystems Management in Caribbean SIDS" designed to advance regional measures to improve ridge-to-reef approaches to management with a large component of national projects planned and executed by Member States. At the same time, CARICOM is seeking to take up the daunting challenge to the marine environment caused by marine pollution including plastic wastes with the resultant potential impacts on the health of the Caribbean Sea.

Such marine pollution can affect the fish stocks and impact those whose livelihood is dependent on a healthy sea. These issues resonate with yet another international commitment, in particular the Agreement for the implementation of the provisions of the Convention on the Law of the Sea relating to the conservation and management of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks, with particular provisions for conservation and management measures to be enacted to maintain or restore fish populations, to minimize pollution and waste, and to protect the biodiversity in the marine environment.

The CARICOM Development Unit has identified priority regional focus areas to address this broad range of concerns relative to SDG 14, to include habitat degradation, overfishing and marine pollution, and land sources of plastic pollution, sparking policy and legislative changes in many CARICOM member States.

CARICOM particularly applauds the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) comprised of countries whose shores are washed by the Caribbean Sea, for its designation of the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development. We especially endorse the ACS creation of the Caribbean Sea Commission, including the work of its scientific, technical, governance and outreach components. In this connection, we are strongly of the view that financial and technical support, and capacity building, are critical elements in the successful implementation of the requisite scientific and technical work necessary for states to achieve SDG 14.

CARICOM is of the view that the challenge to SDG 14 can be met, in large measure, through the implementation of the relevant global commitments, including those contained in General Assembly resolutions. On this point, Resolution 73/229 "Towards the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea for present and future generations" makes particular reference to initiatives which would enhance the capacity of SIDS of our region to successfully achieve the aspirations of SDG 14. Relevant initiatives envisaged in the resolution include the debt swap proposal by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to enable Caribbean economies to mitigate and adapt to the consequences of climate change while reducing the debt burden. The implementation of such measures intended to relieve the pressure on the vulnerable economies of small island states would go a long way in freeing up resources to give effect to SDG 14.

CARICOM also takes note of Resolution 74/21 on cooperative measures to assess and increase awareness of environmental effects related to waste originating from chemical substances dumped at sea. The resolution points out the potential long-term environmental effects related to waste originating from this source including their potential impact on human health and safety and on the marine environment and resources. We join with the international community in "encouraging Member States to share experiences, good practices and information on the technologies available to treat, conserve or safely destroy the waste originating from this source. CARICOM also endorses the proactive mandates of Resolution 74/19 on Oceans and the Law of the Sea which reinforce the holistic approach to addressing the challenges of the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development faced by CARICOM and other small island states.

To conclude, we join with the international community in reiterating that the pledges made in the declaration "Our ocean, our future: call for action" be taken on an urgent basis to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. CARICOM looks forward to contributing to the development of strategies on the implementation of the mandates contained in resolution 72/73 on the United Nations Decade Of Ocean Science For Sustainable Development.

