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Closing Remarks
Preparatory Meeting of the 2020 Ocean Conference

New York, CR4, UNHQ, 5 February 2020

*Delivered by Mr. Alexander Trepelkov, Officer-in-Charge,
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I am pleased to deliver this statement on behalf of Mr. Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and Secretary-General of the 2020 Ocean Conference.

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are now concluding the two-day Preparatory meeting of the 2020 Ocean Conference. I wish to thank the President of the General Assembly and the Co-chairs of the meeting for their able leadership, and I thank all of you for the very productive discussion.

We have heard of the importance of the impact of climate change on the ocean, and the nexus between ocean and climate; the need for partnerships to address our common concerns regarding the health of the ocean. The need for balance between conservation and the sustainable use of marine resources in supporting sustainable blue economies; the need to promote financing, technology transfer and targeted capacity building, in particular to help developing countries, were also discussed. In this regard, we also heard of the specific challenges faced by SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs and the urgent need to address them.

Member States have also underscored that while science-based action is important, the immense value of traditional knowledge and practices of indigenous people as a crucial supplement to science cannot be ignored.

In addition, the importance of science-policy interface, and the need to link with other intergovernmental processes, such as CBD, UNFCCC, BBNJ, review of SDG14 under HLPF and the Decade of Ocean Science, was also raised.

Distinguished delegates,

The ocean covers over 70 percent of the Earth's surface. It provides about 97 percent of the planet's water and the oxygen we breathe. It serves as the regulator of the global climate and is home to millions of life forms – most of which we have not yet discovered.

Oceans, seas and marine resources are critical to sustainable development. They not only underpin poverty eradication and food security, but also support employment and livelihoods.

However, despite the known values of marine and coastal ecosystems, our oceans are facing tremendous pressures from human activities including pollution, overfishing, habitat destruction and more.

Global temperatures have already increased by approximately 1⁰ C above pre-industrial levels, due to human activities. The oceans are warming up; they are more acidic and less productive as we confront the existential climate crisis.

Moreover, in spite of the progress being made and favorable trends in the implementation of some aspects of Goal 14 – “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development” – action is not advancing at the speed or scale required to meet our goals.

We are off track.

That is why the Secretary-General has launched the Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs by 2030. For us, we must have a higher sense of urgency because four targets of SDG 14 will mature in 2020!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The 2020 Ocean Conference offers us an opportunity to get things back on track and advance in the right direction.

We must make full use of the next four months to mobilize all stakeholders to contribute to the preparatory process and catalyze as many commitments as we can.

We need to ensure an ambitious and successful outcome. We need to ensure that the Conference addresses implementation of SDG 14 in a comprehensive manner, including science-based and innovative solutions as envisaged by the theme of the Conference.

We also need to see the bigger picture: the 2020 Ocean Conference can be a crucial opportunity to harness the consensus for the CBD COP15 in Kunming and UNFCCC COP26 in Glasgow, which both take place later this year, and further align our commitments with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

As the Secretary-General of the Conference, I will continue to work together with Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares, Special Advisor to the Co-Presidents of the Conference on oceans and legal matters, and with the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean, Ambassador Peter Thomson, as well as colleagues from relevant parts of the United Nations Secretariat and the United Nations system to make sure the Conference is a success.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Secretary-General has stressed that the Ocean Conference is a critical opportunity for decisive action which we cannot miss. Let us fulfil the

promise to protect the ocean from further abuse and recognize their fundamental role in the health of people and planet.

Thank you.
