



**STATEMENT OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA
AT THE INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS ON THE ZERO DRAFT
OF THE 2025 HLPF MINISTERIAL DECLARATION
MONDAY, 5 MAY 2025**

SDG 14: Life Below Water

I. General Comments

Regarding SDG 14, the Group appreciates that some of the key points raised by the Group have been included in the zero draft.

The Group believes that the zero draft provides a good starting point for our discussions. In this section overall, we believe that there is scope to strengthen the language further, especially on means of implementation.

While we note that this year, we will also have a political declaration on SDG14 coming out of UNOC3, we believe that as the mandated forum to review the SDGs the HLPF ministerial declaration must still comprehensively address SDG14.

In this regard, we would like to highlight the following elements:

First, strong language on means of implementation is necessary to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. Language from the UNOC3 outcome document, and the HLPF MD from 2022, when SDG14 was last reviewed in depth, *as well as previous iterations of these documents, as appropriate*, could provide a useful guidance in this regard.

Second, on issues where language has already been tightly negotiated in the UNOC3 process, the Group reiterates our comments from the first informal on using agreed language and formulations from the UNOC3 outcome document, *where appropriate*, to formulate language in the HLPF outcome document.

Having said that, while the latest agreed language provides a strong starting point for our discussions, the Group believes that the highest ambition must be maintained, especially on critical issues for developing countries.

Lastly, we also note that it is important to use the correct titles and most up-to-date language, when referencing ongoing processes, such as efforts to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment.

The Group is ready to engage constructively in this process and are ready to provide substantive inputs when we begin line-by-line negotiations later this month.

II. Specific Comments

First, the Group notes that its call for stronger language on means of implementation is partly reflected in the zero draft.

- In particular, the zero draft now reflects the Group's call for support for enhancing financial mechanisms to drive SDG14, including commitment to supporting capacity building, facilitating exchange of knowledge, technology and innovation, and financial mobilization to all developing countries to achieve SDG14. Reference to enhancing cooperation, including south-south and triangular cooperation in addressing SDG14, is also reflected in the zero draft.
- To further bolster this, we suggest including the promotion of 'research and strengthening the **ocean science-policy interface**'
- On South-South and triangular cooperation, we stress that this is 'a **complement to, not a substitute for North-South cooperation**, in addressing SDG14.'

We wish to further reinforce language on the means of implementation by adding **some elements from the UNOC3 Political Declaration**, including that 'accelerating ocean action globally requires significant and accessible finance and the fulfilment of existing commitments and obligations under relevant intergovernmental agreements' and that it also 'requires adequate and scaled up means of implementation for developing countries, to address the funding gap of SDG 14.'¹

¹ UNOC3 Paragraph 31 chapeau.

Second, we appreciate language in the zero draft recognizing the potential of blue economy initiatives, and highlighting the need for investing in such initiatives, and providing incentives to promote blue economy, including through promoting responsible fisheries.

- We wish to further strengthen this language by referring to the integration of transparent practices into fisheries management and promoting data exchange as well as combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in accordance with SDG 14.4 and 14.6.
- We note that in addressing critical issues, *such as illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing*, it is important to provide the necessary contexts and caveats, especially on issues that may have implications on Member States *in light of obligations and commitments under other instruments or frameworks*.
- We underline the need to achieve balance between economic growth and environmental protection and social priorities in sustainable ocean management .

Third, we reiterate our view that the Ministerial Declaration should acknowledge progress made in multilateral processes towards the achievement of SDG14, including the conclusion of the KMGBF, and the BBNJ Agreement. We would welcome stronger language on the BBNJ Agreement, consistent with the Group's contribution to and long-standing support for the Agreement.

The Group is also of the view that, where appropriate, the outcome of discussions under different processes, including UNOC3, should be reflected. At the same time, we should not prejudge ongoing discussions under different processes, such as on the Plastics Treaty. However, we could reflect the elements that Member States have already converged on with respect to the INC process at the UNOC3 political declaration.

Finally, this HLPF process is an opportunity for us focus and pay attention to the SDG 14, as the least financed SDG. The ministerial declaration should highlight our common commitment to:

- Supporting capacity building, knowledge exchange, and financial mobilization to enable all developing countries to develop and implement sustainable ocean plans, as well as programmes to address the challenges of ocean governance and the development of a sustainable ocean-based economies.

- Enhancing cooperation, including south-south and triangular cooperation, to strengthen mechanisms for collaboration, developing cross-continental networks, peer-learning, knowledge-sharing and exchange of best practices within marine scientific research, and to support developing countries to access technology and using reliable data and statistics relating to SDG14.
- Enhancing financial mechanisms to drive SDG14.
- Providing support, and facilitating the exchange of knowledge, technology, and innovation related to marine and coastal resources.
- Recognizing the vital role of small-scale and artisanal fisheries in sustainable livelihoods, food security and nutrition, and local economies.