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Panel Intervention (as prepared for delivery)

United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)

**Session on Sustainable Development Goal 14 and interlinkages with other
Sustainable Development Goals: Life below water**

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15:00 18:00 hrs.
New York

H.E. Collen V. Kelapile, President of the Economic and Social Council

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, fellow panelists,

Allow me to acknowledge the success of the 2022 Ocean Conference in Lisbon, which clearly illustrated the need for acceleration to reach the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 14.

We must seize the political momentum built, stemming from commitments this year emerging from the One Ocean Summit in Brest, the Our Ocean Conference in Palau, and the United Nations Environment Assembly Resolution (UNEA-5.2), to End Plastic Pollution.

We are all aware of overdue delivery dates for some Goal 14 targets, half of them were set for 2020 and 2025. For many targets, data and statistics to assess progress are not available or lack consistency.

This is true not only for Asia and the Pacific, the region I represent but also for other Regional Commissions that share similar challenges.

I would like to highlight some actions put in place in different regions to support the delivery of Goal 14.

- a) To contribute to evidence-based decision-making, ECLAC compiled a first regional diagnosis of SDG 14 that suggests addressing land-sea interactions, such as marine pollution, leveraging existing opportunities to reformulate potentially harmful fisheries subsidies, and for multilateral collaboration, among other conservation and sustainable use measures.
- b) ECA is building capacity to mobilize sustainable finance, including through debt-for-nature swaps and the Liquidity and Sustainability Facility, which is crucial to support the implementation of a sustainable and inclusive blue economy and to strengthen partnerships to embrace and fund the implementation of the Great Blue Wall in support of coastal and marine restoration and protection.
- c) ESCWA is focusing on building SDG 14 data collection capacities in the region and strengthening the science-policy interface, as SDG14 is the least tracked Goal in the Arab region.

As in other regions, they have experienced supply chain disruptions in the seafood trade, affecting the livelihoods of workers in the fisheries and related industries in several Arab countries, most of whom are informal workers.

- d) In the UNECE region, the five pan-European regional seas provide an opportunity for developing sustainable, resilient, and inclusive blue economies at the basin level, including through the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans as key intergovernmental frameworks.

Several initiatives in the UNECE region seek to enhance ocean literacy, including by engaging with local communities, schools, and all relevant stakeholders to bring about behavioural changes necessary for the sustainable management of ocean resources.

- e) In Asia and the Pacific, positive steps and decisive actions to protect the marine environment and capitalize on its resources in a more sustainable manner have been taken. Last year, ASEAN Leaders adopted a Declaration on the Blue Economy, acknowledging the role of the ocean and seas are key drivers of economic growth.

At ESCAP, we are promoting financing solutions such as blue bonds and debt for climate swaps, enhancing ocean data and statistics through the Global Ocean Accounts Partnership and supporting member States to address the ocean-climate nexus.

We recently developed a Regional Decade Program, jointly with UNEP and UNDP, to support the implementation of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development in Asia-Pacific and strengthen synergies between different UN programmes.

The *Asia-Pacific Day for the Ocean* is our flagship multi-stakeholder platform, supporting systematic regional dialogue and enhancing regional cooperation on the ocean by enabling experience-sharing, technology transfer, capacity-building and inclusive engagement.

Let me conclude this intervention by underscoring the interlinkage between Goals 13 and 14. The IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate clearly illustrated the role of the ocean in the climate system.

There are close to one billion people living in low-lying coastal zones, approximately 10 per cent of the global population, which are threatened by impacts of climate change, including SIDS and developing countries. Their livelihoods are being jeopardized by rising sea levels and increasingly frequent extreme weather events.

We must leverage ocean-based solutions to tackle climate change. We promote enhancing ocean science-policy interfaces and the integration of Nature-Based Solutions and ecosystem-based approaches, such as investing in blue carbon storage for climate change mitigation and increasing marine protected areas to preserve key ocean ecosystems, especially around mangroves salt marshes and coral reefs.

This must be accompanied by a transition to a greener, zero-emissions maritime connectivity, including the establishment of green shipping corridors.

I conclude by reiterating the commitment of all five Regional Commissions to continue to work together closely with member States to ensure and facilitate accelerated progress on SDG 14.

We may not forget that a healthy ocean is a prerequisite for a healthy planet.

Thank you.