



**ASG Sanda Ojiambo Remarks**  
**High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development: *SDG 14***  
***and interlinkages with other SDGs***

Thank you to the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) for inviting me to speak today.

As many of my fellow panelists have emphasized, we depend on healthy and productive oceans for food security, climate mitigation, economic livelihoods and so much more. Our oceans are key to addressing many of the challenges facing our world today.

Yet, despite the impact multipliers of investing in the oceans, SDG 14 – Life Below Water – receives the lowest level of financial investment of any of the Sustainable Development Goals. The opportunities in the ocean ecosystem are immense: green energy generation; decarbonized shipping; sustainable seaweed and aquaculture; and ocean mapping and data. And of course, we need to address pollution in our oceans. Given the interdependence of SDG 14 with other crucial SDGs, we must find ways to close this funding gap and invest in ocean-based solutions.

At the recent UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon, SDG 14 took center stage. In this regard, I'd like to share with you two of the most significant takeaways.

First, in order to fund ocean-based solutions at scale, and meet the goals set forth by SDG 14, we need to increase public, private, and blended financing in the blue economy. Finance can fuel the transition to a blue economy by developing a pipeline of bankable ocean investments.

Scaling blue finance is of particular importance for small developing island nations which are, in many cases, the most affected by ocean health degradation. Unfortunately, these island states are often out of large-scale sustainable financing.

Therefore, we must develop regional finance solutions that meet the needs of local social and economic contexts, while keeping in mind that a multiplicity of finance mechanisms can also lead to fragmentation and inefficiency.

Scaling investment in the sustainable ocean economy requires clarity and transparency in the global blue finance market. Toward that end, at the Lisbon Conference, the UN Global Compact announced that it has formed a coalition to develop a universal guidance for blue bonds. This guidance will establish the framework for how to use sustainable bonds to credibly access financing for projects and company strategies in the blue economy.

While there is a need to scale blue finance investment, there is no shortage of bankable, shovel-ready ocean investments. To increase these investment opportunities, the UN Global Compact has established a network of **150 companies** which have signaled their commitment to healthy oceans by signing our Sustainable Ocean Principles.

This network of signatories spans 30 industries and six continents, with a combined market capitalization of 1 trillion euros. These stewards of ocean sustainability are already developing a pipeline of investable ocean projects.

The second takeaway from the UN Ocean Conference is on the importance of meaningful youth involvement and participation if we are to meet the goals of SDG 14.

At our Youth and Innovation Forum, co-hosted by Portugal and Kenya, Secretary General of the United Nations António Guterres reiterated that he is counting on the strength of youth, their dynamism and action to rescue our planet.

The forum gathered more than 130 youth delegates representing nearly 60 countries, to address some of the ocean's largest challenges in a hackathon. The youth delegates developed strategies ranging from reducing plastic waste pollution in Malaysia to addressing the ecological and economic costs of invasive species in Mexico. These innovations all demonstrated systems-level thinking, emphasizing the need for co-benefits with communities and addressing the nature-climate crisis holistically.

During the forum, it also became evident that youth leaders are already driving local change. I learned about the ongoing work of youth delegates, including ocean

literacy initiatives in Trinidad and Tobago and coastal resilience projects in the United Kingdom.

In order to ensure these young voices are amplified, their participation is necessary across all processes of policy making and global goal setting. Here, youth representation could be a requirement in national delegations attending the UN fora, and youth voices should be included in panels.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development emphasizes a holistic approach to achieving sustainable development for all. Thus, youth-led solutions especially embody this approach of embracing diversity and inclusivity.

We look forward to sharing a written summary of the youth forum in collaboration with our partners Sustainable Ocean Alliance in due course. We have a lot to learn from these determined young people and their collaborative and open approach to solving global challenges.

Thank you.