

Distinguished Vice-President of ECOSOC,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

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It is my great pleasure to provide some selected key findings on SDG 14 from *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022*, which was launched earlier today. This annual official UN progress report is prepared by UN DESA, in collaboration with the entire UN Statistical System.

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Human activity is endangering our oceans and seas-- the planet's largest ecosystem-- and affecting the livelihoods of billions of people. Mounting impacts such as marine pollution, ocean warming and acidification as well as eutrophication are threatening marine species and negatively affecting marine ecosystem services. Combating the decline in ocean health requires intensified protection efforts and the adoption of solutions for a sustainable blue economy and "source-to-sea" approaches.

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The main sources of marine pollution are land-based, leading to a seemingly unstoppable flow of litter, waste and run-off into the ocean. In 2021, a study estimated that more than 17 million metric tons of plastic entered the world's ocean, making up the bulk or 85 per cent of marine litter. The volume of plastic pollution entering the ocean each year is expected to double or triple by 2040, threatening all marine life.

For coastal areas, eutrophication caused by nutrient pollution shows an increasing trend from 2016 to the present. This has resulted in a growing number of "dead zones" worldwide – from 400 in 2008 to around 700 in 2019.

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Apart from the direct benefits given to us by the ocean, this vast ecosystem also acts as a climate regulator, absorbing around one-quarter of the world's annual carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions and thereby mitigating climate change and alleviating its impacts. This service, however, comes at a price and leads to

increasing acidity of the ocean, threatening organisms and ecosystem services. Further increases in acidification are expected to accelerate over the coming decades. As acidification worsens, the ocean's capacity to absorb CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere will diminish, limiting its role in moderating climate change.

Our understanding of ocean acidification continues to improve as observation stations have almost doubled, from 178 in 2021 to 308 in 2022.

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Global fish stocks are under increasing threat from overfishing and from illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. While the rate of decline has recently slowed, more than a third or 35.4 per cent of global stocks were overfished in 2019, up from 34.2 per cent in 2017 and 10 per cent in 1974. The Southeast Pacific now has the highest percentage of fish stocks at biologically unsustainable levels at 66.7 per cent, followed by the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea at 63.3 per cent each. Improved regulations, together with effective monitoring and surveillance, have been successful in reverting overfished stocks to biologically sustainable levels. However, the adoption of such measures has generally been slow, particularly in many developing countries.

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For more information, please visit our website for the full report.

Thank you very much.