

PHILIPPINE STATEMENT

United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of
Sustainable Development Goal 14

Friday, 09 June 2017, at 10am
UN General Assembly Hall

Thank you, Mr President.

The Philippines subscribes to the statement /
delivered by Ecuador on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. /

For an archipelagic / developing country of more than 100 million people, /
the Philippines sees the ocean /
not only as a source of life but life itself. /
The Merchant of Venice said, /
“You do take away my life /
when you take away the means whereby I live it.” /

Yet, as stewards of the only living planet we know, /
we have time and again failed the oceans, /
whence came human life /
and the means whereby humanity sustains itself. /
And we have been reaping the effects – /
ever smaller fisheries catch, /
ocean acidification, /
coral bleaching, /
sea-level rise and coastal flooding, /
deadlier tropical cyclones, loss of bio-diversity and cultural identity— /
a whole benign way of life and making a living / stand to perish. /

Mr President, business cannot continue as usual. /
As governments, as individuals, /
we must act, now and decisively, before hope is lost, /
to pass on the irreplaceable gift of the ocean /
to our children and future generations. /
That is our duty. And our reward. /

In the past four days, /
we listened with care and attention to other delegations. /
We learned so much from them. /

We learned from their experiences /
that among the myriad challenges posed to the vitality of oceans, /
climate change stands out. /
The Philippine experience confirms this. /
Changing weather patterns / have brought stronger and more powerful
typhoons. / Rising sea levels induced by climate change /
are three times the global average. /
At this rate, we will lose 167,000 hectares of our coastline, /
more than twice the size of the five boroughs of New York. /

The Philippines has placed /
climate adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change /
at the core of our national agenda. /
The Paris Agreement entered into full force for the Philippines /
on Earth Day last April 22. /

We must push back marine pollution /
from maritime and inland commerce and industry, particularly plastics and
micro-plastics. /

In the Philippines we are working on legislation /
to strengthen our Waste Management Act /
to curb land-based waste, mainly plastics, /
that find their way into our oceans. /
We have the leadership to get this passed. /

Two years ago, /
the Philippines participated in the international coastal clean-up initiative... /
256,904 volunteers collected /
across 208 miles of shorelines /
over two million items: /
plastic bottles, food wrappers, bottle caps, and straws. /

We are conducting the clean-up every year.

Our latest medium-term national development plan /
integrates the 2030 Agenda, particularly SDG 14.

We are intensifying the sustainable management of our natural
resources /
using the ridge-to-reef approach, targeting among other villains /
the mining industry. /
This will be supported by rationalizing marine protected areas, /
deterring and eliminating IUU fishing and habitat degradation. /

We commit to implementing our Coastal and Marine Ecosystems
Management Program. /

We commit to strengthening marine protected areas /
to conserve biodiversity in partnership with UNDP. /

We commit to partnering with NGOs /
like the Trowel Development Foundation in their advocacies the local level.

This is the essence of partnership, /
a global partnership rooted in the local level. /
To underline this partnership, /
we support greater oceans policy coherence and coordination throughout
the UN system. /

The Philippines supports the strengthening of capacity-building, /
including South-South and triangular cooperation, /
along with education, and the communication of traditional knowledge on
oceans issues. /

We must protect and preserve the marine environment. /
We must obey the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, /
which includes the sovereignty and sovereign rights of countries /
over their respective maritime zones. /

I cannot end without commending Fiji and Sweden/
for their vision and leadership of this conference, /
and without thanking Portugal and Singapore /
for their hard work in facilitating our Call for Action outcome document— /
a document that speaks of our fears /
but also our brave hopes for the survival of the oceans, our common
heritage. /

I wish to thank Fiji /
for reminding us /
of the greatest achievement in naval history /
in “conquering” if you will, the world’s largest ocean— /
doing no harm and great good— /
in that ancient almost forgotten interaction /
between humankind and water. /

Mr President, excellencies, friends, /
I return to our recurring theme. /
We hold our beautiful blue planet in trust for future generations. /
Let me end then with words that should ring familiar, /

“In the final analysis, /
we all inhabit this small planet. /
We all breathe the same air. /
We all cherish our children’s future. /
And /
we are all mortal.” /
John F. Kennedy. /

Thank you.