

***UN Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable
Development Goal 14: Conserve and Sustainably Use the
Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources for Sustainable
Development***

(New York, 5-9 June 2017)

General Plenary

*Thursday, 8 June 2017
3-6 pm (6th plenary meeting)*

Greece

**Statement by the Charge d' Affaires
at the Permanent Mission of Greece to the UN
Dionyssios Kalamvrezos**

Madam President,

At the outset, we would like to congratulate you for the **excellent organization of the Oceans Conference**, which has raised public awareness of the challenges and threats facing our oceans, as well as the **Co-facilitators** for their endless efforts to adopt the **Call for Action**.

Along with **our EU partners**, we share the fundamental obligation and responsibility to protect, conserve and **sustainably use the oceans** and their resources in order to enable **sustainable development** for current and future generations.

We believe that **SDG 14** can be a strong driver for strengthening ocean governance and enhancing policy coherence. Most importantly, it provides an impetus for **collective global accountability for oceans under the 2030 Agenda**.

Oceans and seas constitute a vital ecosystem, and millions of people depend on them for their livelihood and nutrition. They underpin eradication of poverty, food security, employment and tourism. Furthermore, they provide oxygen and are the primary regulator of the global climate.

At the same time, however, **marine and land-based activities continue to be a threat to oceans** and seas and their resources. Overfishing, ocean acidification, marine pollution and many other unsustainable and harmful practices are threatening marine habitats and coastal areas.

Goal 14 includes a number of time-bound targets on key issues, such as preventing and significantly reducing marine pollution of all kinds; deterring and eliminating overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and destructive fishing practices; prohibiting certain forms of fisheries subsidies; managing, protecting, conserving and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems; minimizing ocean acidification; increasing scientific knowledge and developing research capacity and implementing international law, as reflected in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Urgent action is needed at all levels to enable the meeting of the agreed targets as well as to combat climate change by fully implementing the Paris Agreement.

Greece, as a maritime nation and a coastal State with 18,400 km coastline and 9,800 islands, has important resource, environmental and economic interests in the oceans: shipping,

fishing, development of offshore energy sources, port and transportation facilities, recreation and tourism are vital economic activities.

The **health and well-being of coastal populations**, especially island communities which are sometimes wholly dependent upon fishing and tourism are ultimately linked to the quality of the marine environment. As New Zealand said *“If the land is well, if the sea is well the people will thrive”*

We recognize the importance of a well-managed sustainable **blue economy** and the need for resilient oceans and ecosystems. To this end, **Greece has committed to expand the coverage of marine protected areas within its territorial waters from 6%, as it currently stands, to 17% by 2020, well beyond target 14.5 which provides for the conservation of at least 10% of coastal and marine areas by 2020.**

Healthy and productive oceans are prerequisites to ensure long-term sustainable development. In this respect, we would like to underline the significant work undertaken by the **International Maritime Organization (IMO)** in the field of vessel-source pollution through a wide range of international conventions and regulations including the issue of climate change and the reduction of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions from shipping.

Respect for the rule of law and more specifically **the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)**, which sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out, including the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and their resources, is of vital importance in this context.

In concluding, Greece firmly believes that **the achievement of SDG 14 and ocean-related targets of the 2030 Agenda will be critical to restoring the sustainability of the oceans.**

For this reason, we have recently signed a **trilateral declaration with two neighbouring countries, Cyprus and Egypt, on the implementation of SDG 14**, where we agreed to cooperate in the following five areas, namely: a) preparedness and response to major marine pollution incidents in the Mediterranean Sea; b) combatting coastal erosion and coastal zone management; c) biological biodiversity and nature protection; d) waste management and e) climate change adaptation.

Kiribati said the day before yesterday that, *“Ocean is associated with love and respect and values”*. Seychelles added that *“Ocean is part of our identity”*.

For us, Greeks, Ocean- Oceanus-Ωκεανός, mythical and real at the same time, associated with sustenance and transportation, with news, commercial and political exchange, and scientific development, but also beauty, and divinity, is the father of all things.