



**Statement by Monterey Bay Aquarium to the UN Ocean Conference Preparatory Meeting**  
United Nations Headquarters, New York  
February 5, 2020

Distinguished Co-Facilitators and Excellencies,

Thank you for your leadership in organizing the second UN Ocean Conference to be held in Lisbon in June 2020, and for the opportunity to provide comments. As a global leader in ocean research, education and conservation, the Monterey Bay Aquarium strongly supports the focus of the 2020 UN Ocean Conference: “Scaling up ocean action based on science and innovation for the implementation of Goal 14: stocktaking, partnerships and solutions”. This focus accurately reflects the urgent need to accelerate science and successful partnerships to demonstrate progress toward Goal 14 and other related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including zero hunger, decent work and climate action. Importantly, the 2020 UN Ocean Conference also aligns with the beginning of the UN Decade of Ocean Science – a global effort to harness existing science, innovate with technology and fill critical knowledge gaps that are needed to directly address SDG 14 and other development goals. Despite these important efforts, there is urgency for increased commitments, partnerships and tools to accelerate progress, particularly for those sub-goals (14.2, 14.4, 14.6, etc.) with 2020 deadlines that will be missed.

Monterey Bay Aquarium recommends that delegates work toward a declaration and interactive dialogues that will provide an accurate baseline of information on current ocean conservation challenges, including the sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture, plastic pollution, climate impacts and ocean health. In addition, the conference should highlight successful partnerships that align the private sector, governments, NGOs and stakeholders toward measurable objectives in line with the SDGs. Importantly, the declaration and interactive dialogues should galvanize governments to prioritize resources, capacity and internal coordination to ensure robust implementation of science-based management and innovative partnerships at local to national levels. These actions may also support improved international collaborations, including existing and emerging international agreements to improve sustainability and conservation of the ocean.

We urge all delegates to [RISE UP](#) for the ocean through bold, comprehensive actions to improve ocean health and promote long-term sustainability. In addition, the Aquarium provides the following specific priorities to inform the UN Ocean Conference declaration and dialogues:

- **Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture:** Fisheries and aquaculture play a critical role supporting food security, essential nutrition and livelihoods globally. There is increasing awareness of the need to significantly improve the sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture globally, as evidenced by several recent high-level events, including the Our



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Ocean Conference in Norway, the FAO International Fisheries Symposium and in the remarks of delegates during this Preparatory Meeting. For over twenty years, Monterey Bay Aquarium's [Seafood Watch](#) Program has assessed the environmental sustainability of global fisheries and aquaculture. Our [standards](#) for [fisheries](#) and [aquaculture](#) are based on the best available science and inform [sustainability recommendations](#) that are widely used by consumers and businesses in North America. We are encouraged by the many calls from delegates for an increased understanding of baseline sustainability performance as well as strong calls for improved science-based decision-making. **We stand ready to inform delegates, develop sub-goals and indicators, and support the UN Ocean Conference through our standards, datasets and tools.**

Monterey Bay Aquarium participates in the [Conservation Alliance for Seafood Solutions](#), a group of 40 organizations with a collective vision that by 2030 75% of global seafood production is environmentally sustainable or engaged in verifiable improvement projects and that human safeguards are in place. The NGO community is actively working with the private sector and governments to realize this vision, but governance continues to be a critical concern. Goal 14.4 is critical to address fundamental governance challenges to sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, notably the need to end overfishing and destructive fishing practices, address IUU fishing and ensure science-based management.

In this spirit, **we urge delegates to maintain Target 14.4, and to take decisive action to set a new deadline.** Similarly, we recommend that the UN update other SDG14 targets that will expire in 2020, notably 14.2, 14.5, and 14.6. All of these targets impact the sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture, particularly small-scale operators that must transition to sustainability in order to make progress toward SDG14. **New deadlines are needed to encourage innovative partnerships and hold all parties accountable.**

In addition, **we urge further emphasis on aquaculture** for its potential to increase seafood production, support livelihoods, address food security and advance a sustainable blue economy. We note the critical role of small-scale aquaculture and the need to highlight successful approaches that can align economic incentives, environmental sustainability and social outcomes. Given the growing importance of aquaculture to achieve progress on SDG14, **we urge delegates to include coastal and offshore aquaculture explicitly within the existing targets, or to develop a new target that calls for sustainable aquaculture development according to science-based standards and best practices.**

Finally, we recognize the important links between habitat and climate change as fundamental drivers that impact the ocean's ability to produce sustainable seafood.



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From kelp forests to coral reefs to seagrass beds and mangrove ecosystems – all essential habitats warrant appropriate protections as a climate mitigation strategy to create more resilient and sustainable fisheries and aquaculture. **We recommend that delegates highlight the important link between habitat, climate resilience and sustainable seafood as a cross-cutting theme in the declaration and dialogues.**

- **Ocean Plastic Pollution:** The challenge of ocean plastic pollution represents an increasing global threat and a momentous opportunity. Research by the Monterey Bay Aquarium and others around the world show that plastic is now everywhere in the ocean, including the food web, and that this is the same plastic found in products and packaging proliferating through society. As a signatory to the RISE UP, **we urge the adoption of a target to eliminate all non-essential single-use plastic and reduce plastic production by implementing zero-waste strategies by 2025.**
- **Climate Change:** Climate change is the biggest threat to the future of our ocean. We must drastically reduce emissions and greatly increase the ocean’s ability to withstand climate impacts. **We urge the prioritization of climate actions in SDG14 and through national and international agreements and forums.** Specific actions worth additional consideration through SDG14 include reduction of emissions from ocean-based industry, protection and restoration of carbon sequestering ocean and coastal habitats, rebuilding of fisheries to increase food security, prevention of pollutants that amplify the effects of ocean acidification and other climate impacts, and increased research to develop more robust science-based management.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments and please contact Mr. Josh Madeira ([jmadeira@mbayaq.org](mailto:jmadeira@mbayaq.org)) if you have any questions or we can be of further assistance. We look forward to working with all delegates to ensure meaningful and successful outcomes at the UN Ocean Conference in June.