



**Statement by the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) for the
Intergovernmental consultations on the declaration for the 2020 UN Conference to support
the implementation of SDG 14.**

(19 March 2020)

This statement is submitted by Belize on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), and is aligned with the statement submitted by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

We wish to take this opportunity to extend our solidarity and support for all people who have been impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak. Through united efforts, we hope to overcome this situation and emerge better prepared for dealing with such global challenges in the future. In the meantime, it is also important to not lose focus of the other critical issues that we are dealing with, including the future of our Ocean.

AOSIS wishes to thank the distinguished co-facilitators for the excellent zero draft that they have prepared following the first round of informal consultations. We believe that they have diligently delivered on their mandate; producing a brief, concise and action-oriented declaration, which captures the key issues which were raised in the consultations. In this regard, we wish to use the zero draft as the basis for these consultations, and take a light-touch approach to enhance the declaration, while maintaining its brevity and conciseness.

We wish to highlight the following issues which are particularly important to AOSIS:

1. As Small Island Developing States, the Ocean has always been culturally significant to our communities, and we believe this is something which requires recognition in the new declaration, as it has been in the previous Call for Action. The relevant agreed language from A/RES/71/312 (para 3 and 13(d)) can be reflected in paragraph 3 (which speaks to the significance of the ocean) and paragraph 11(g) (education and awareness of the importance of the ocean) of the zero draft.
2. We are pleased that plastic pollution has been expressly highlighted in paragraph 4 of the zero draft, signaling its significance as a major problem facing our ocean. In this regard, we wish to retain the current formulation with this focus.
3. Also, while we agree with the need to reaffirm our commitment and to take concrete action towards achieving the four targets that mature this year, we do think that the language regarding “setting new targets” in paragraph 4 could inadvertently imply reopening or renegotiating these targets. To avoid this ambiguity, we suggest including a reference to undertaking further actions, rather than setting new targets.

4. We also see the utility in stressing the need for reinforcing, and not duplicating or undermining existing legal instruments, arrangements, processes, mechanisms, or entities. The relevant language at paragraph 11 of the declaration “Our Ocean, our future: call for action” (“the Call for Action”, as endorsed in A/RES/71/312) could be utilized here as a supplementary paragraph.
5. Recognizing that the 4th IGC on BBNJ has now been postponed, we think it would be critical to emphasize the urgency of concluding the process as early as possible in paragraph 8 of the zero draft.
6. As we wish to maintain a strong focus on addressing plastic pollution, we would suggest that paragraph 10 (c) of the zero draft be split up with:
 - i. Paragraph 10 (c) addressing marine pollution generally, with an additional reference to other land-based sources of pollution; as waste water and sediments can also have a great impact on the health of coral reefs.
 - ii. A separate (c) bis, addressing the problem of marine litter and microplastics, recognizing the importance of long-term elimination of discharge of litter and microplastics into the oceans and of avoiding detriment to marine ecosystems and the human activities dependent on them from marine litter and microplastics. This draws from agreed language from UNEP/EA.4/Res.6, pp3 and OP1.
7. In implementing area-based management tools, as highlighted in paragraph 10(d) of the zero draft, we believe that broader considerations may be warranted in addition to ecological value. We would suggest inclusion of the social, cultural and economic considerations as well.
8. With regard to the role of the Ocean in addressing the impacts of climate change, we fully support having an added focus on building resilience, in addition to mitigation, as well as post disaster recovery, in addition to disaster preparedness. We are also happy with the reference in the zero draft to the use of ocean-based renewable energy technologies, and nature-based solutions, which are science-based and innovative approaches.
9. We underscore the importance of capacity-building and technical assistance for small-scale and artisanal fishers, with the caveat of appropriate measures to prevent deep seas trawling.
10. AOSIS is very pleased with the particular recognition afforded to the capacity constraints of SIDS and LDCs in paragraph 11, and would strongly wish to see this retained.
11. We also appreciate the emphasis on partnerships in paragraph 11(c) of the zero draft, but would suggest greater visibility to “genuine and durable partnerships”, or “successful partnerships”, rather than well-performing ones, which is more in line with the language of the SAMOA Pathway.
12. One element which we do think is missing from this section on science based and innovative actions, is the need to enhance marine scientific research, and this could be included as an additional subparagraph in paragraph 11, drawing from agreed language at paragraph 13(f) of the Call for Action.
13. While we welcome the references to traditional knowledge in the text, we also think that the phrase “as appropriate, traditional knowledge” could be included in paragraph 11(i) for informing policy-making, in addition to best-available science.

We look forward to considering the proposals from other delegations on the zero draft, and will continue to engage as constructively as possible, with the new mode of work that we are now undertaking in this process.

AOSIS wishes to conclude by reiterating our full trust, confidence and support for both co-facilitators, and we look forward to receiving the revised draft as promptly as possible, to ensure adequate time for coordination within our respective Groups.