

**Statement by Bangladesh at the Intergovernmental Consultation on the
Declaration of 2020 Ocean Conference**

23 March 2020, New York

I thank the co-facilitators for continuing the consultation process for conclusion of 2020 Ocean Conference Declaration, despite the COVID-19 situation. We deeply appreciate the innovative approach of the co-facilitators and the resilience of the member States who are supporting the process and submitting their statements by email.

We align with the statement made by Guyana on behalf of G-77 and China.

Madam/Mr. Co-facilitators

The 2nd Ocean Conference to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 is indeed a very important initiative of the UN. It not only furthers our collective actions to promote conservation and sustainable use of oceans, and its resources, but also adds essential value to the implementation of the Agenda 2030 as a whole. This is even more timely since as many as six targets of Goal 14 (out of ten) are scheduled to be achieved by this year which we are way off unfortunately. We would, therefore, like to see this Conference as the forum to forge stronger global partnerships to support and sustain national, regional and international efforts towards achieving those targets expeditiously. The holding of the Conference is also a critical occasion to set the right policy direction for utilization of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development leveraging the overarching UN Decade for Action. These urgencies need to be reflected in any outcome of the Conference. Hence, we expect the Declaration coming out of the Conference to be comprehensive and action oriented.

Madam/ Mr. Co-Facilitators

We thank you for sharing the draft Declaration. Built primarily on the commitments made in the 2017 Call for Action, the draft has captured many new and emerging elements relevant to the health and productivity of the oceans. We appreciate the emphasis given to the interlinkages and synergies between Goal 14 and other Goals of

Agenda 2030. We also appreciate the acknowledgement of challenges caused by climate change, sea level rise, plastic pollution, as well as the cumulative human impacts on the ocean and its ecosystem in the draft Declaration.

The renewed commitments to international law – particularly to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, reference to the BBNJ Conference and other international processes and initiatives aimed at achieving SDG 14 are appreciated. We may also think of some other related processes such as developing the ‘mining code’ under the aegis of International Seabed Authority which could further contribute to the overarching aim of achieving the 2030 Agenda.

In this context my delegation would like to highlight the following points:

First: Although the impacts of climate change and sea level rise have been incorporated in the draft declaration in the context of the health and productivity of the oceans, we believe it is also important to take note of other socio-economic, political and security implications of these phenomena on the coastal states. Especially the impacts of sea level rise are manifold, as it could cause the submersion of existing land territories of many countries, or even change boundaries in the maritime zones; thereby raising complex issues of sovereignty, and access to natural resources.

Second: We take note of the importance given to the issue of ocean pollution by plastic litters and other pollutants in the draft declaration through comprehensive life-cycle approaches. However, given the urgency of the issue, we need more robust approach and perhaps a time-bound call for reduction of plastic litter pollution to zero level within the shortest possible time. In addition to that, we also call for further scientific research to identify the ‘dead zones’ in various oceanic areas including in the Bay of Bengal, and take urgent and effective measures for improvement of ocean’s health in those areas.

Third: The Blue Economy is the new frontier of opportunity for countries with limited natural resources. Exploring alternative options for resources in the high seas could partially cater their enormous demand for resources. We expect the 2020 Ocean Conference to recognize the potentials of Blue Economy and promote scientific research,

innovative financing, and partnerships to maximize the benefits of all ocean-based economic activities aiming at achieving sustainable development goals.

Fourth: While the draft declaration's attention to the issue of depletion of fish stocks deserve appreciation, we believe that ocean science has an important role to play in the achievement of goal 14.4, to regulate harvesting and end over-fishing, illegal, unreported, unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices, and to implement science-based management plans to restore fish stocks. In this regard, particular emphasis may be given to the research, innovation and transfer of technology to ensure access to sustainable and environment-friendly deep-sea and high seas fishing by the developing countries.

Fifth: Capacity building and transfer of marine technology through effective global partnerships are of utmost importance for the developing countries, particularly the LDCs and SIDs. In this regard, we would like to invite member States, as well as international organizations, foundations and the private sector, to provide voluntary contributions and technical assistance to the Technology Bank for the Least Development Countries to increase its capacity to support the least developing countries to develop sustainable ocean-based economies.

Finally: We would like to refer to the voluntary commitments made in the context of the 2017 Conference. While we expect the countries making the commitments to provide updates on their progress, we also call upon member States, international organizations and the private sector to provide support and assistance to the countries that are constrained by capacity and resource gaps.

We would like to see specific and due references of the aforesaid points in the Declaration.

I thank you all.