



REPUBLICA DE CUBA
Misión Permanente ante las Naciones Unidas
315 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016

Statement by the Cuban Deputy Minister of Science, Technology and Environment, H.E. Mr. José Fidel Santana Núñez, Head of the Cuban delegation to the United Nations 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, 7 June 2017.

Distinguished Mr. Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations,

Ministers, Heads of Delegations,

Delegates,

We attend this Conference with the satisfaction to appreciate that the concern for the health of our oceans and seas has succeeded in convening us here in order to strengthen the unity of action and support for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 14, aimed at "preserving and using, in a sustainable way, the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development".

The oceans absorb approximately 25% of the carbon dioxide produced by humans, cushioning the impacts of global warming, and constitute the world's largest source of protein, with more than 3 billion people dependent on them as a primary source of life, especially in small island developing states.

Therefore, Cuba attaches great importance to the fulfillment of this Goal; as well as the remaining 16 goals that make up the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The adoption of this Agenda is a milestone in the work of the United Nations, as it is the document that will guide the actions of the international community towards sustainable development in the next 15 years.

In order to ensure its compliance, great challenges must be overcome and work needs to be done to make sure that no one is left behind; particularly in view of the fact that its previous agenda: the Millennium Development Goals were not fully met. Despite the progress made in complying with these goals, many debts remained; great inequalities persist within and between countries as well as huge challenges to achieving sustainable development.

Over twenty years ago, the historical leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro Ruz, with his farsighted thinking expressed at the first World Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in Barbados on May 5, 1994, and I quote:

"Sustainable growth is impossible without a more just distribution among all countries. There can be no sustainable growth for one part of the world and underdevelopment for all others. Whether we want it or not, today, mankind is a single family, and we will all have the same fate..." (end of quote).

Let us consciously join forces to solve the problems that affect our oceans and seas. Pollution by waste from different land and sea sources, the acidification of the seas, illegal fishing and overfishing are part of these problems.

Additionally, 40% of the oceans are heavily affected by human activity, including pollution, depleted fishing grounds, and loss of coastal habitats.

According to estimates, about 9.1 million tons of plastic moves directly from land to sea each year; thousands of marine mammals die due to plastic; 80 percent of seabirds have at some point ingested it and estimated 99% of seabirds will have done so by 2050.

The images of the giant islands of floating plastic are just the tip of the iceberg of the billions of microfragments of this almost indestructible material, which accumulate on the bottom of the oceans. Plastic is already part of a severely threatened marine ecosystem.

The 7 goals of SDG 14 establish commitments on these problems and only with their strict compliance could the growing deterioration of marine resources be stopped and reversed.

However, in order to ensure that developing countries are able to meet these commitments, it is imperative that they have the necessary means of implementation.

Environmentally sound management of waste, clean-up activities, knowledge and identification of marine litter trajectories, recycling of waste, introduction of reusable, recyclable or biodegradable products and solutions to climate change adaptation in coastal areas require advanced technologies, scientific knowledge and financing, which we do not have and should be provided on preferential conditions to meet these goals on a timely basis. The most industrialized countries have the moral duty, the financial and technological means and the historical responsibility to accompany us in this purpose.

Likewise, the management, protection, conservation and recovery of marine ecosystems are complex and costly, even much more than that of terrestrial ecosystems, with an impact of factors such as the existence of a relatively less knowledge on these ecosystems, the highly specialized infrastructure and equipment required as well as enhanced staff training.

Cuba's modest experience in relation to goal 14.5 of conserving at least 10% of coastal and marine areas reaffirms the previous statement. Today, we have the goal accomplished, as 18.9% of our marine surface is managed as a protected area, thanks to the priority attention and political will in addressing this issue as well as the partnerships established through projects funded by the Global Environment Facility and non-governmental organizations.

Another example of our government's political will has been the recent adoption of the State Plan to Tackle Climate Change in the Republic of Cuba, in which the most current and outstanding advances in Cuban science are turned into strategic actions and tasks to be gradually implemented over time. Several of them aim at recovering major protectors of our shorelines: sandy beaches, mangroves and coral reefs; as well as minimizing pollution of the bays that are the most affected in the country by land-based polluting sources.

Mr. Chairman,

Although it is true that every State must take on more responsibility for its own development, that responsibility is not enough. It requires the will and commitment of the international community.

Let us establish an international mechanism to facilitate the transfer of environmentally friendly technologies to developing countries under favorable terms.

Let us fulfill the commitments to Official Development Aid on a stable and increasing basis.

Let us reduce world military spending, which, according to studies, ensures that a little less than half of that expenditure would be enough to reach most of the SDGs.

Let us effectively apply the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities between developed and developing countries, reaffirmed among the principles of the 2030 Agenda.

Let us ensure clean oceans and seas for future generations to use marine biodiversity for their livelihood and development.

Thank you very much.