



PERMANENT MISSION OF ISRAEL  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

המשלחת הקבועה  
של ישראל לאומות המאוחדות

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Statement delivered by

H.E. Mr. Zeev Elkin, Minister of Environmental Protection, State of Israel

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

United Nations, New York

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Mr. President,

At the outset, let me congratulate the governments of Fiji and Sweden for convening this important and timely conference.

The importance of conserving our oceans, seas and marine resources cannot be overstated. They are our source of life and livelihood. They provide oxygen, food, jobs and are among the world's most valuable natural resources.

However, our water resources are under threat, now more than ever. Invasive species, overfishing, nutrient pollution, ocean acidification and plastic waste are only some of the man-made pressures that are threatening marine ecosystems. We must not reach the point of no return.

With the adoption of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, the world set out on an ambitious path to provide a sustainable planet for future generations. Sustainable Development Goal 14 of the agenda calls for investments in marine and coastal sustainability to save our oceans and seas.

Mr. President,

Israel has been working at the national level, as well as through regional and global partnerships to achieve SDG 14.

We have made significant investments in infrastructure to treat wastewater discharged from industrial and municipal sources. As a result - 95% of Israel's wastewater undergoes treatment, and over 86% of Israel's treated effluents are reused in agriculture, instead of flowing into the marine environment. Our target is to reduce marine discharges by 80%, by the end of this year, from the 2012 baseline.

Since 2005, Israel has been implementing the Clean Coast program, which provides assistance to local authorities and organizes coast clean-ups and media campaigns to raise public awareness. We have recently tripled the budget for this program.



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Israel has joined UNEP Clean Seas campaign to reduce marine litter, specifically plastics. We are also active Parties in the Barcelona Convention and its Marine Litter initiatives. Our current goal is for 70% of our beaches to be considered clean for 70% of the time.

In order to reduce the source of the problem, the Israeli government has recently passed a law that substantially reduces the number of plastic bags used by the public by charging for plastic bags in supermarkets. Within the first three months of this law coming into effect, we have seen a reduction of up to 80% of plastic bags purchased by supermarkets for distribution to the public.

Our marine protected areas along our densely populated and industrialized coast line, is lower than 10%, and we plan to raise it from 1% to 3% within the next two years. As part of Israel's commitment to expanding regional cooperation, we recently signed an MOU with Greece and Cyprus and are preparing a contingency plan with the help of UNEP MAP for mutual assistance in the event of an oil spill.

Mr. President,

It is our duty to keep improving our domestic environmental policies. At the same time, Israel's relative advantage and our most effective contribution to the achievement of SDG 14 worldwide is to provide technological assistance to developing countries, particularly to the most vulnerable.

Israel has faced many sustainable development challenges for a long time, and has developed innovative technologies and policies to address them. This allowed Israel to evolve from a resource-challenged developing country to one of the most technologically advanced members of the OECD in a few decades. Our technologies and know-how are highly relevant to many developing countries.



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Mr. President,

Israel remains firmly committed to the Paris Agreement. Immediately following the signing of the Paris agreement, Israel's government took concrete steps, including setting goals, budgets and an action plan to achieve our commitment.

Due to Israel's history and circumstances we have rich experience in what are now known as climate adaptation technologies. These include innovative water technologies: drip irrigation, wastewater reclamation, smart grids for water management, and desalination technologies of various sizes, including solar energy-powered installations. We believe that we must institutionalize the sharing of our best practices.

We would be glad to share our experience and innovative technologies regarding mitigation and adaptation specifically relating to water.

Mr. President,

Achieving the ambitious targets set by SDG 14 will only be possible with the concerted efforts of all stakeholders, working together in partnership and cooperation.

Israel remains fully committed to further expanding its partnerships with all the relevant parties across the region. In addition, we would like to enhance our partnerships with developing countries, and in particular Small Island Developing States, which continue to face extraordinary challenges posed by the detrimental effects of climate change.

Mr. President,

As the representative of the People of the Bible, I cannot conclude before mentioning an important message from the Bible. In the description of the "creation of the world" which appears in the beginning of the Bible, water has a special stance, as a primary natural source for the creation of the world. God did not create water but used it to create the



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world. Right after finishing the creation of the world, the Bible mentions that "God took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to work it and to guard it".

We all understand why we need to cultivate it, but from who must man guard it? The only possibility that emerges from reading the text, is that man has to protect it from himself. God's instruction to guard the Garden of Eden from human civilization is even more pronounced for water. As descendants of the first man, we are ordered to preserve the water – the immense resource that was used for the creation of the world, so as not to destroy it in the course of economic growth. This is the challenge God provided us all. Only a joint effort of all humanity will enable us to attain this goal.

Thank you