



**Monterey Bay
Aquarium**

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**Statement of the Monterey Bay Aquarium
UN SDG 14 Preparatory Conference, New York
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**Margaret Spring
Vice President of Conservation and Science and Chief Conservation Officer**

Good afternoon, Co-Facilitators and Delegates to this important meeting on the first Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) for the ocean, SDG 14.

The Monterey Bay Aquarium's mission is to inspire conservation of the ocean and since our founding over 30 years ago by scientists and technology leaders, we have served as a window to the ocean's beauty, mystery and essential role in human well-being.

We also share information on the growing threats to ocean health, actions that can be taken, as well as success stories where action has made a difference.

Education alone cannot reverse ocean declines – action is needed at all levels – so we use science-based information and numerous partnerships to engage the public, business and governments in practical and achievable actions to advance both ocean health – and societal well being.

In that spirit, we support achievement of all SDG 14 targets, and engage in a number of relevant efforts, which support protecting ocean wildlife and the health of ocean ecosystems, including:

- Science-based, understandable and transparent sustainability criteria and ratings by our [Seafood Watch Program](#) for seafood in the North American market – roughly 90% of which is imported – which provides a useful metric for fishery and aquaculture performance around the world. As a result – we are part of a broad-based network of technical advisors and performance based partnerships to advance legal, traceable and sustainable fisheries and aquaculture with major seafood buyers, chefs and restaurants, governments, aid organizations, as well as fishing and aquaculture operations across the globe. Exciting partnerships are driving sustainability improvements on the water and opening new market opportunities. This results in a win-win that aligns with the specific commitments for 2020, and the broader SDG goals. Projects range from shrimp aquaculture to



tuna traceability in key seafood-producing regions, including the [Asian Seafood Improvement Collaborative](#) in Southeast Asia and in developing states.

- An emerging [partnership](#) of major U.S. aquariums to advance consumer awareness and policy and business action to reduce sources of [ocean and freshwater plastic pollution](#) – a topic of concern for communities, families and the next generation – in fact, with strong public support, California became the first US state to [ban single use plastic bags](#) and joined other states in banning plastic microbeads in consumer products.
- Working with governments and scientists to bring the existential threat of climate change and impacts of greenhouse gas emissions to the ocean to public attention. For example, we are an affiliate member of the 13 government¹ member [International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification](#), of which the state of California is a founding member (supported by the California Ocean Protection Council and the California Ocean Science Trust, an affiliate member). These members have committed to global action on ocean acidification by working collaboratively and taking individual actions that address the environmental and economic threat posed by ocean acidification within their region. This Alliance was announced at the Our Ocean Conference hosted by the U.S. Department of State on September 16, 2016.

SDG 14 can make a difference by bringing this solutions-based approach to a global scale.

We are encouraged by the desire of many member states and organizations to focus on actions, not words, at the June meeting, and beyond.

Success will depend on: (1) member states committing to leading action at the country, regional and global scale; and (2) being transparent and accountable to the outcomes – in other words, setting and keeping SMART objectives.

¹) The 13 governments members of the Global Alliance are: The Province of British Columbia, The Republic of Chile, The State of California, Cross River State, Nigeria, The French Republic, City of Imperial Beach, California, The State of New York, The State of Oregon, The Province of Quebec, Quileute Nation, Quinalt Indian Nation, The Suquamish Tribe, The State of Washington.



Recommendations:

- (1) We recommend the SDG process and dialogues engage government and external experts in science-based evaluations of the ability of longstanding institutions and rules – including Regional Fishery Management Organizations – to achieve the specific SDG 14 targets – especially the ambitious timeline of 14.4. This can help identify best practices and areas for improvement by state members and leaders of those organizations.

- (2) With respect to the important Target 14.4, we urge this body:
 - a. To support effective government, private sector and NGO partnerships to advance progress by a strong call to action for transparent data submission and strong science-based management. That includes meeting existing requirements of the RFMOs.
 - b. To renew efforts to eliminate IUU fishing, particularly through basic data collection systems needed to build transparency and traceability – two critical elements to establish long term economic and environmental sustainability.

- (3) We recommend including sustainable aquaculture in the dialogues and calls to action, given the relevance of aquaculture to a number of the targets and other SDGs, including food security.

- (4) We recommend ensuring actions and strategies consider the impacts of greenhouse gas emissions on ocean and coastal ecosystems and resources – including impacts of sea level rise, seawater warming, intensifying weather events and acidification.

- (5) Finally, we recommend that the work of this body – and actions and outcomes – be understandable and relatable to the public. This is an area where we and other public facing organizations have significant experience and research to offer.

We look forward to future discussions about these important topics for the future of our ocean.

Thank you for your attention and your commitment to the health of our ocean.