

Mr. Wu Hongbo Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs

Remarks Preparatory Meeting United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14

15 February 2017, New York

Your Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson, President of the General Assembly,
Your Excellency Ms. Isabella Lovin, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for
International Development Cooperation and Climate of Sweden,
Honourable Semi Koroilavesau, Minister for Fisheries of Fiji,
Distinguished co-Facilitators, Ambassador Álvaro Mendonçae Moura and
Ambassador Burhan Gafoor,
Assistant Secretary-General Mr. Stephen Mathias,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Today we have reached an important milestone in our preparation of the Ocean Conference.

Many months of work are behind us and we have accomplished a lot.

In my capacity as Secretary-General of the Conference, I would like to take this opportunity to express our deep gratitude to the President of the General Assembly for his leadership, vision and advocacy of the Ocean Conference.

We are equally grateful to the Co-Presidents of the Conference, Fiji and Sweden, for their guidance, engagement and support.

We are thankful to the co-Facilitators, Ambassador Moura and Ambassador Gafoor. You have taken on an enormous task. And you have already shown to us your commitment and able leadership in advancing the preparatory work.

Let me also take this opportunity to thank the delegates who worked on the modalities resolution, which is serving as a roadmap for our ongoing preparations.

I am pleased to say that we are on track.

The Secretary-General's background note outlines the status and trends, the challenges and opportunities for the implementation of the SDG 14, looking at each target and cross-cutting issues of financing and capacity building.

The background note also proposes seven themes for partnership dialogues.

UN system organizations and the Secretariat departments, including DESA and DOALOS of Office of Legal Affairs, have rallied around this effort.

I want to reiterate my appreciation for their cooperation.

The past few months have also witnessed the involvement of all relevant stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, academic institutions, the scientific community, the private sector, and philanthropic organizations.

We thank all of them for their contributions.

Excellencies,

A lot of technical work has also been done in preparing the outcomes of the Ocean Conference, not least in the Voluntary Commitments.

The Secretariat, working under the guidance of the Co-Presidents and in close collaboration with UNDP and other colleagues, has laid the groundwork for an online platform on the conference website where all stakeholders can register voluntary commitments, either as a single entity or in partnership.

I hope you will come to the side event at lunch time in conference room 3 to learn how to register, and hear about the first voluntary commitments.

The voluntary commitments underscore the urgency for action and for solutions.

And solutions can be found only if all of us are mobilized for action, wherever we are.

Oceans belong to all, whether you are a coastal nation or a landlocked country.

As stressed by previous speakers, we are dependent on the oceans, seas and marine resources for life, for livelihoods, for trade, for growth and for prosperity.

This is why it is so important to reach out to all with this message.

My colleagues in the Department of Public Information, working closely with the co-Presidents of the Conference, the office of the President of the General Assembly, DOALOS of the Office of Legal Affairs, as well as my own department, have embarked on an unprecedented outreach campaign.

We have a website, a logo, constant social media activities as well as media outputs and a number of other different outreach initiatives.

Excellencies,

Much remains to be done in the run-up to the Conference. Member States have a responsibility to negotiate a political document – a “Call for Action”.

The elements for this outcome document will be considered at this Preparatory meeting.

It is in your hands to make this document action-oriented, grounded in science and empowered through finance, technology and other means of implementation.

Your work here will also be an important input to the high-level political forum on sustainable development, which will give it further political impetus.

After this preparatory meeting and with your guidance, I, as the Secretary-General of the Conference, will have the responsibility to produce seven concept papers for the partnership dialogues and select moderators and panellists for the dialogues.

We welcome inputs from all delegations and we will be working closely with the President of the General Assembly, the Co-Presidents, and the Co-Facilitators, in advancing the preparatory process, according to the timeline laid out in the modalities resolution.

Distinguished delegates,

With your active engagement and contributions, I am confident this Conference will be a success.

It will be a Conference of commitments, solutions and partnerships.

We cannot afford to achieve less. The health of our Oceans and Seas and the future well-being of our planet and our society demand no less.

I wish you all excellent discussions with concrete and action-oriented proposals in considering the themes for partnership dialogues and the “Call for Action”.

Thank you.