

Remarks by the President of the Economic and Social Council, H.E. Mr. Frederick Makamure Shava, Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe to the United Nations, at the opening of the High-level 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, 5 June 2017

Co Presidents of the United Nations Conference to support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, Hon Josaia Vorege Bainimarama, Prime Minister of Fiji and Hon Isabella Lovin, Deputy-Prime Minister of Sweden.

Allow me to recognize and salute my own President His Excellency Robert Gabriel Mugabe,

President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, who is among us this morning;

President of the General Assembly, Mr. Peter Thomson;

Secretary-General Mr. Antonio Guterres;

Secretary-General of the Conference;

United Nations Legal Counsel;

Excellencies;

Ladies and gentlemen

Let me join speakers before me to thank Fiji and Sweden for their leadership and the President of the General Assembly for his tireless support to raise awareness of the state of our oceans and seas. Let me also thank the Secretary-General for his unyielding support. I also commend Portugal and Singapore for spearheading negotiations on the "Call for Action", which has produced a succinct and action-oriented

document that will advance the implementation of sustainable development goal 14. I would also like to thank the Conference Secretary-General, the Under-Secretary General of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Legal Counsel as well as all other organs of the United Nations Secretariat for their contributions to the organization this Conference. I can see that we are going to live and breathe oceans for the whole week. I hope that this enthusiasm will continue beyond this Conference.

Our collective focus this week is to scale up our efforts to halt the degradation of our oceans and reverse the cycle of decline. Marine pollution is choking marine life, over fishing and illegal, unregistered and unsustainable fishing is threatening the sustainability of fish stocks, climate change is raising sea levels, acidifying the Oceans and bleaching coral reefs. It is

therefore urgent for us to take decisive action to save the environment, prevent disasters, preserve the food chain and food security and save livelihoods. We have to stop depositing hazardous waste, plastics and other materials that choke the oceans.

We are all aware that 25 years ago, the Rio Conference on environment and development adopted Agenda 21 which set out goals and programs under which nations may conserve their oceanic resources. This notion has been carried forward in all other sustainable development agreements such as the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the Rio+20 outcome as well as all outcomes for Small Island Developing States from Barbados to the SAMOA Pathway. The Commission on Sustainable Development at its 4th session, as a follow-up to the Rio Conference, noted

interlinkages among the protection of oceans and atmosphere, climate and desertification, maritime transport and energy. It reaffirmed the common aim of promoting sustainable development, including through the conservation and management of the coastal and marine environment. It also underlined the important contribution of sustainable world fisheries, including aquaculture, to the food supply and to achieving social, economic and development goals.

I want us to be reminded of this in order to show that all these agreements as well as other agreements, notably the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) have been with us for some time. UNCLOS which was adopted in 1982 and came in force in 1994 set out the legal framework within which all

activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out.

The 2030 Agenda has given us an overarching framework. What we need now is implementation. As President of the Economic and Social Council, I have made this my priority. Resilient infrastructure, which I have made a focus of my Presidency along with sustainable industrialization, is indispensable for all aspects of sustainable development and contributes to poverty eradication and food security. It is equally important for ocean-based activities.

As you are aware, the high-level political forum is a platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. This year it will consider a number of goals including goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 14 and 17 and their interlinkages. This integrated approach underscores that the goals

are interdependent and interlinked. The issue of conserving and sustainably using our oceans is very complex as oceans have a direct impact on poverty eradication, health, sustained economic growth, food security and creation of sustainable livelihoods and decent work. At the same time, there is a need to protect biodiversity and the marine environment and address the impacts of climate change. This is why an integrative platform that the HLPF provides is of utmost importance as it gives the opportunity to look at SDG 14 in a holistic and coherent way by examining interlinkages and impacts with other SDGs and related targets. The political guidance of the high level political forum that will take place from 10 to 18 July under the auspices of the Council will be critical in ensuring that we avoid a silo approach and promote integrated consideration of the SDGs.

The Ocean Conference is a unique place to raise awareness on the state of the oceans and seas, but also to show solutions that need to be implemented if we want them to be capable of continuing to be a source of life and human well-being for our and future generations. The Call to Action has to be a cooperative effort that ensures pooling of resources, both financial and technical, technology sharing and capacity building.

I commend all those who have pledged voluntary commitments. The Economic and Social Council will do the utmost to contribute to the implementation of these commitments by providing political guidance and harnessing scientific evidence and knowledge as a basis for informed policy making.

I wish us all a successful Conference.

Thank you.
