



IRELAND

Statement by

Mr. Pat Breen, T.D.
Minister for Employment and Small Business

High Level UN Conference to support the Implementation
of SDG 14 Life below Water:
conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine
resources for sustainable development

5-9 JUNE 2017

Check against delivery

PERMANENT MISSION OF IRELAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS
885 SECOND AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10017 TELEPHONE 212 421-6934 FAX 212 752-4726
newyorkpmun@dfa.ie

Mr / Madame President

I would like to first of all fully align Ireland with the statement delivered by Commissioner Vella on behalf of the EU.

This week's meeting is important in mobilizing international support for the implementation of SDG 14 and reinforcing the integrated and inter-dependent nature of the 2030 Agenda. After all, the World's oceans drive the global systems that make the Earth habitable for mankind.

Leaving no one behind is an emotive rallying call for the 2030 Agenda, but today marks an opportunity for the international community to show that this is not mere rhetoric.

And make no mistake, in our world today there are entire countries and regions being left behind. Left behind because of their size, their remoteness, their poverty. Increases in global temperature, sea level rise, ocean acidification and other climate change impacts are seriously affecting coastal areas and low-lying coastal countries, including many least developed countries and Small Island developing States.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development rightly recognises this special vulnerability, not least under our commitments to Goal 14 and its corresponding targets. I note with pride the role that my country played in securing consensus as co-facilitator of the 2030 Agenda negotiations in 2015, and we are determined to see its potential realised for all.

Over 3 billion people today depend on marine and coastal biodiversity for their livelihoods – failure to achieve SDG 14 will undermine our ability to achieve many of the other Goals such as climate action, ending poverty and hunger.

The global challenge of achieving SDG 14 requires us to act both nationally as well as internationally through a concerted global response.

We strongly encourage the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to support the implementation of Goal 14. This will require enhancing inter-agency coordination and coherence throughout the UN system on ocean issues. In order to succeed, this coordination must involve greater substantive collaboration by the main actors across the UN system and could require additional resources and more focussed leadership.

At the national level, Ireland has put in place a National Integrated Maritime Plan to enable us to protect and develop our greatest natural resources. This integrated approach means the management of our marine resources is done in a holistic way that integrates our economic, environmental and social concerns, mirroring the ambition of the SDGs.

To support awareness about ocean issues, we have developed innovative educational tools for our school children. We have devised a national marine research and innovation strategy, as well as a national marine environmental monitoring programme. We have also put in place a national programme of measures which underline our strong commitment to the implementation of the OSPAR Northeast Atlantic Environmental Strategy and our shared EU objective of maintaining or achieving good environmental status of our seas.

Increasing scientific knowledge should not only be for one nation's benefit. Ireland is a firm believer and practitioner of open access and endeavours to make our marine data and research available, as easily and as freely as possible. For example, our recent transatlantic research voyage to test ocean acidification from Canada to Ireland was undertaken in partnership with scientists from Germany, UK, USA and Canada - and that research data is now open to all. International collaboration of this nature is an essential tool in the development of solutions to our maritime challenges. In this context Ireland will work hard to ensure the success of the Atlantic Ocean Research Alliance, who are exhibiting here this week, to improve the international cooperation framework of marine research.

Plastic marine litter, including microplastics, represent a serious and growing threat to the health of our marine ecosystems and to human health. Ireland will legislate domestically to prohibit the sale or manufacture of certain products containing microbeads including not just cosmetics, but also body care and cleansing products as well as detergents and abrasive surface cleaning products. This ban by the Irish government, and our collaboration with other nations, will mean a reduction in the amount of microplastic particles entering our marine environments. Furthermore and I am pleased therefore to confirm that Ireland will support Sweden's initiative calling for ban on microbeads in cosmetics.

Ireland will continue to participate actively with other EU colleagues in the process to develop an international legally-binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction,

known as BBNJ for short. The BBNJ process presents a valuable opportunity for the international community to improve international ocean governance and create a framework under UNCLOS that could assist significantly in the realisation of various SDG 14 targets.

These include the use of marine protected areas and other relevant tools, and through enhanced capacity building measures to assist developing countries, in particular Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries. In order to progress and maintain the momentum of this important process, Ireland would support a decision by General Assembly, before the end of its 72nd session, to convene an intergovernmental conference for the negotiation of a legally binding instrument.

Finally, we are well aware from our own national SDG implementation framework of the critical importance of accurate and relevant data for the monitoring and measurement of progress. We are also aware that statistical capacity remains a major challenge for many developing countries. In this context I am very happy to announce today that over the next three years Ireland will provide \$1 million of funding, including to the World Bank's Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building and to the G.E.F. Trust Fund for the Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency. We are doing this in order to develop the statistical capacity of countries most in need, with a particular focus on Small Island Developing States, to facilitate their effective implementation and monitoring of the SDGs and Paris Agreement commitments.

Ireland's sustainable development policy has for many years embraced the concept of "leave no one behind". In practical terms, this means that we have focussed over 50% of our overseas development assistance budget on Least Developed Countries, and we call on others to follow our lead in this regard. We are committed to providing comprehensive support to Governments, Parliaments and civil society to facilitate their implementation of the 2030 agenda. This initiative on Goal 14 offers us another opportunity to show our determination to do that.

As a small island nation, Ireland's relationship to the oceans is, and always has been, a critical part of who we are. Our marine territory is more than 10 times our land mass and extends far beyond our coastline. The seas that surround us are not so much a boundary as a bond - the Atlantic Ocean binds us to over 50 other nations.

We are well aware that the actions of one nation can reverberate on the shores of another and that the collective duty to protect and sustainably manage our seas and oceans is in all of our interests. We value the oceans, we depend on them and we want to protect them. Through our presence

here today and our commitments, we want to join with everyone else here in achieving the 2030 Agenda, and SDG14 collectively.

Thank you.