

Statement by Bangladesh on behalf of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) at the 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

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Excellencies, distinguished representatives, and ladies and gentlemen,

I have the pleasure and honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries.

Let me begin by congratulating Republic of Fiji and the Kingdom of Sweden for their Co-President-ship of the Conference.

Healthy oceans are critical for sustaining life, eliminating poverty and promoting prosperity. This is more applicable for LDCs. The time is now to move from words to actions to conserve and sustainably use our oceans, seas and marine resources.

Unfortunate as it may be, the overriding understanding among the LDCs is that they are being treated rather unfairly so long as the question of an equitable world value chain is concerned. Also, global investment and trading regimes are still far from being conducive for them to embark an ecologically sustainable growth trajectory. We apprehend that the Blue Economy would not be very far from this generalization. Hence for the development of the measures associated with the SDG 14, LDCs deserve to be treated with special care.

Taking cues from Addis Ababa Action Agenda, 2015 and the concerns so rightly documented in the Paris Agreement 2016, we believe that following points are critically important for the LDCs in realizing the SDG 14 is concerned.

First: Raising awareness at all levels to change the centuries long notion that ocean is a non-exhaustible source of food and also a dumping ground. There should be a paradigm shift in the management of ocean pollutants and viable alternatives should be put into action. We should take necessary steps for combatting ocean warming and ocean acidification in light of the Paris Agreement.

Second: Formulating suitable fiscal policies for achieving all the targets of SDG 14, in coherence with other SDGs. Here we call for prohibiting certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. We should also refrain from introducing new such subsidies, particularly by completing the ongoing negotiations in the WTO on this issue without further delay while recognizing that appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing and least developed countries should be an integral part of those negotiations.

Third: Capacity building of and transfer of technology to LDCs. We should find out ways as how the recently established technology bank for LDCs could be better utilized for this purpose. More importantly, such technologies should also be able to balance the needs of the economies, as much in terms of growth and ecology, as in sustainability and adaptation to adverse changes.

Fourth: Breaking the silos, building effective partnership, and adopting a cross-sectoral and coherent approach. We also call for enhanced coordination and coherence throughout the UN system on oceans issues. We must come up with an effective follow-up mechanism to ensure implementation.

Fifth: Formulating a clear, LDC-specific strategic intent which justifies the need for exploitation of the existing resources and exploration of the emerging ones.

Sixth: Ensuring sufficient and predictable allocation of resources for a sustainable development of the ocean. As much for a careful design of the organizational interfaces to leverage the critical assets and capabilities from the LDCs including developing clear criteria to decide on unhindered access to time-bound investment schedules. In particular, there should be specific commitments and oversight from the G7 and other developed nations to nurture and fund the new initiatives in six major broad areas namely, i) Maritime trade and shipping; ii) Food and Livelihood; iii) Energy; iv) Tourism; v) Coastal protection/Artificial islands/Greening coastal belts; and vi) Human resource development, maritime surveillance and spatial planning, and their protection from the predatory nature of the markets and other forces to allow them a sustainable take off.

Lastly: Fostering visions, values and cultures that provide for a common identity across the comity of nations to help all involved see where the planet is headed for.

Mr./Madame Co-president,

The role of small-scale artisanal fisheries in food security and nutrition is often underestimated or ignored. Their production is rarely reported separately in national catch statistics although in some developing countries, they provide for more than 60 per cent of protein intake. Their access to market as well as marine resources is compromised and restricted in a number of ways. We need to ensure them a level playing field. Non-compliance can lead to a vicious cycle of restricted access to foreign markets leading to stagnation of the development of the fisheries industry and restrictions to market access. This needs to be addressed.

Besides, ocean science needs to adopt a holistic approach towards understanding and addressing cumulative impacts of various threats such as climate change, acidification, pollution, coastal erosion, sedimentation and erosion and overfishing. Ocean research or related services and acquisition of sufficient credible scientific data and information are still weak in many LDCs due to high cost. Technical education in marine related fields is often absent or inadequate. There has to be focused redress on these sectors.

Let me now turn to Voluntary Commitments. As of opening of the conference on 5 June 2017, more than 700 voluntary commitments have been registered. This is a great show of solidarity as well as perhaps realization of the stakeholders to contribute to changing the current plight of oceans and implementation of SDG 14. Among those pledgers, there are 54 member states, out of which four are from LDCs. We express our gratitude to all of them for registering their commitments. In this respect, let me thank UNDP for their initiatives in organizing national level consultation in 25 countries to prepare voluntary commitments.

I would like to thank member states or other organizations who made generous contribution to the trust fund for supporting delegations from developing countries, in particular, from LDCs and SIDS to attend this conference.

Before ending, let me endorse the group's support to the draft 'call for action' document, which we expect will be adopted in this conference by consensus. This political document tried to capture views of member states and groups for faithful implementation SDG14 and the need to sustain action over the long term to address the health of the ocean. This could have been more ambitious though.

We also align with the statement delivered by Ecuador on behalf of G77 and China.

The Oceans are our mothers. We are sustained and disciplined by them. Let us never forget where we came from – so that we may proceed with care and respect. That is better for all of us as a whole. We still do not have anywhere else but this Blue Planet to call our home.

I thank you all.