



GOVERNMENT OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

STATEMENT BY
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AMBASSADOR, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

DURING

THE

**UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE TO SUPPORT THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 14**

JUNE 8, 2017

Check against delivery

“Our ocean, our future: partnering for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14”

Presidents of the Conference,
President of the General Assembly
Secretary General,
Excellences,

Mr President,

On behalf of the Government and people of Antigua and Barbuda, allow me this opportunity to thank the co-chairs of this historic Ocean Conference, Sweden and Fiji. We welcome the unique opportunity presented by this conference to explore how to achieve SDG 14; the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

We align our statement with the statement delivered by Ecuador on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by Maldives on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States.

As citizens of a Small Island developing State, Antiguan and Barbudans are conscious that our islands, our economy, our culture and our way of life is shaped, and directly affected by the ocean which surrounds it. The ocean brings us sustenance through the bounty of its marine resources, fresh ocean breezes and warm tropical rains. It keeps us healthy: through its healing waters and the cycling of our air. A healthy ocean is positively correlated to a healthy nation.

We are cognizant that the ocean affects every country and more importantly every person on this planet. Although many of us may have staked out administrative maritime boundaries, our ocean remains the ultimate manifestation of the global commons.

The challenges ahead of us are great, throughout our generations, both past and present; we have contributed to, and watched, with little action, the degeneration of our oceans and seas. Selfishly, we have been taking more resources from the marine environment than it can sustainably provide us; by dumping marine pollution and debris we weaken the ocean's ecosystem; the transshipment of nuclear and hazardous waste through the ocean is a common practise with harmful effects; we engage in and sometimes state sponsor illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing practices; we are severely testing the ability of the oceans and seas to maintain significant life for the sustenance of generations to come by our role in the man-made effects of climate change.

Mr. President,

Let our collection of words be actionable, let our commitments be bold and let our determination to safe guard our ocean spread from national boundaries to international accords, let our shared responsibilities be reflective of our collective common approach in reversing the cycle of decline of our oceans and seas. SDG14 must succeed, lest we hold ourselves accountable for its failure.

For our part, Antigua and Barbuda has taken a number of actions to protect and preserve the ocean and its resources as well as promote knowledge of its importance and its sustainable use. We have enacted and strengthened legislative frameworks in order to achieve better control and management of our ocean and marine resources. This includes updating of the Fisheries Act and the passage of corresponding regulations as well as the enacting of the Environmental Protection and Management Act. Also included in these legislative protections is the establishment of a National Ocean Governance Committee. The Government has also sought to have our maritime boundaries clearly established and agreed with our neighbors. Our latest maritime boundary delimitation agreement was negotiated and signed with the republic of France in March of this year.

On the issue of partnership, and at the community level, the Barbuda Local Government has with the assistance of the WAITT Institute, voluntarily adopted sustainable and Comprehensive Ocean and coastal management, and no fish zones around that island. This project entitled 'Blue Halo Barbuda' involved developing and implementing sustainable ocean policies focused on marine spatial planning, sanctuary zones, and fisheries regulations.

Further on the point of marine protected areas, experience has shown us that simply declaring an area as protected or managed is not enough. Antigua and Barbuda has established the Marine Ecosystem Protected Area Trust as a means of financing the work required in meeting these commitments and we are also seeking more international partners like the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund who can help to undertake scientific research and sustainable development initiatives in these areas.

Marine biodiversity as well as the access and benefit sharing of genetic resources from our marine biodiversity is at the forefront of our Government's agenda. This is illustrated by us being the first country within the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, and the second within CARICOM to ratify the Nagoya Protocol to the Convention on Biological Diversity. Moreover, its implementation involves our adaptation of a comprehensive legal regime that addressing this issue within our Environmental Protection and Management Act.

As many of us are aware, plastics and other non-biodegradable compounds are cluttering our oceans and endangering much of its fauna. In 2016, the Government of Antigua and Barbuda successfully implemented a ban on single-use plastic bags commonly used for grocery and other small item shopping. We are pleased to report that Antigua and Barbuda was the first State within the Caribbean Community to successfully undertake such an initiative. Fuelled by this accomplishment, the Government is now embarking on a six-month process to expand the ban to include polystyrene or 'Styrofoam' containers.

Antigua and Barbuda recognizes that this is a unique opportunity for the world to collaborate in order to establish strong ocean governance. Global and regional partnerships are vital for the successful implementation of SDG 14. Most notably, the countries of the Caribbean have come together seeking to establish a fisheries management system and at the OECS sub-regional level a coastal zone management strategy is also being developed.

We stand as a strong proponent of global efforts and are firmly committed to strengthening multilateral cooperation to preserve and restore the health of our ocean; this is why we welcome the negotiation of a new, legally binding international agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. Through BBNJ States can close the dangerous gaps in oceans governance and my delegation is looking forward to furthering these goals at the final Prepcom in July.

M. Chair, the Government of Antigua and Barbuda is committed not only to Goal 14 but all of the SD Goals and as such is pursuing a 'Pathway to 2020' Project which will among other things identify the gaps and barriers which will foreseeably impede our ability to achieve the SDG. This project will also help to identify the various aspects of capacity building needed to meet these goals and maintain appropriate local action.

In conclusion, my delegation urges all to reaffirm our political support and provide appropriate policy guidance for the full the implementation of SDG 14, including financial and technical support for the preservation of our oceans, while at the same time outlining oceans action in context of the 2030 agenda, all sustainable development goals and the Paris Agreement. Now is not the time to retreat, now is not the time to surrender, now is the time to act and act responsibly.