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Mr. / Mme. President,

The ocean is the lifeblood of our planet and mankind. It covers over three-quarters of the earth and accounts for 97% of the earth's water. It provides more than half of the oxygen we breathe and absorbs over a quarter of the carbon dioxide we produce. About half of the world's population lives within coastal zones and some 300 million people find their livelihoods in marine fisheries. If the oceans are in trouble, so are we. This is why we agreed to include "conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development" as Goal 14 of Agenda 2030 and we have gathered here today to discuss how to implement it.

As a coastal state surrounded by seas on three sides, the Republic of Korea strongly supports the implementation of Goal 14 in its entirety. We have learned from our past experience of decades that conservation of marine ecosystems, fighting against illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and narrowing the capacity gaps for people in LDCs and SIDS are keys to achieving Goal 14. It is because the sustainable development of the ocean is critically dependent on success in these three areas.

First, marine ecosystems around the world are at risk of substantial deterioration as oceans face growing threats from pollution, over-fishing, and climate change. Second, IUU fishing puts incredible pressure on fish stock and significantly distorts global markets. Third, capacity gaps prevent LDCs and SIDS from fully utilizing marine resources and hinder their ability to address environmental degradation of the ocean.

Against this backdrop, the Republic of Korea has been taking new measures in these key areas in recent years and let me elaborate on them briefly.

First, to conserve marine ecosystems, the Republic of Korea has strengthened its domestic regulatory framework including, among others, designation of twenty-seven Marine Protected Areas throughout the country. We will further expand them with a view to not only promoting marine biodiversity and landscape, but also contributing to the economy and welfare of local communities in the designated areas.

The Republic of Korea also champions the international initiatives in creating global regulatory framework for conserving marine ecosystems in high seas. In this regard, we support the work of the Preparatory Committee on marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) and the G20's action plan set to be adopted at this year's Summit to combat marine litter.

Second, to fight against IUU fishing, the Republic of Korea took legislative measures to strengthen punishment for IUU fishing in 2015. We also became a party to the Port State Measures Agreement in 2016 and will introduce the Catch Documentation Scheme later this month to preemptively block IUU catches from entering into the supply chain at ports.

We hope that member states, whether flag or port states, will take necessary measures to combat IUU fishing in a more proactive manner.

Without such proactive actions on the part of both flag and port states to meet their respective obligations, IUU fishing will never disappear from the oceans.

Third, to narrow the capacity gaps for LDCs and SIDS, the Republic of Korea is providing development assistance to help build their capacities in managing the marine environment and sustainable fisheries: just to name a few, monitoring the marine environment and acidification, building marine science facilities, and managing marine biological resources.

As part of these initiatives and in an effort to host the World Fisheries University in the Republic of Korea, we also launched a pilot project to train students and practitioners from LDCs and SIDS this year. Working together with UN FAO, we look forward to bearing the fruits of this project and establishing a formal institution in the Republic of Korea sooner rather than later.

Mr. / Mme. President,

Our ocean is a prime example of a global public good which could easily be overexploited without coordinated collective actions. Only through comprehensive partnerships among multi-stakeholders can we protect our ocean against overexploitation.

It is for this reason that the Republic of Korea renders its full support for

various initiatives to promote international partnerships, including those launched by Our Ocean Conference, the Arctic Council, and the Convention on Biological Diversity. We will continue to make our own contribution to these initiatives by sharing our experiences and best practices as well as providing constructive ideas.

To achieve Goal 14 in an effective manner, it is essential to take a balanced and holistic approach, taking into consideration all dimensions; economic, social, and environmental. And, in the face of fast-growing risks and threats to our ocean, decisive actions should be taken without hesitation.

In closing, I would like to express my gratitude to the Co-Presidents, Vice-Presidents, Co-Facilitators of Call for Action, Secretariat, and other organizers of this Conference for their dedicated contributions to making this event a great success.

Thank you.