



PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

DELIVERED BY

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

AT

THE OCEAN CONFERENCE

UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK

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PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Co- Presidents

Your Excellencies

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and gentlemen

At the outset, let me thank you for the excellent work you have done so far as the President of this conference, which is the first of its kind. My delegation sees this conference as a veritable opportunity to assess mankind's activities in the oceans especially, since the beginning of the industrial revolution and its impact on the oceans.

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2. Nigeria notes the commitment of a vast majority of countries towards the clarion call to save our oceans and coastal environment. As you are aware, the oceans cover more than two-thirds of the earth surface, providing resources that sustain human society. Indeed, our oceans are the planet's human capital producing an incredible array of goods and services for mankind. The marine environment provides us with a lot of resources and

services, some of which we use everyday, like oil and gas, and fish.

Co- Presidents

3. The sheer number of people who use and depend on the oceans and sometimes employ unsustainable methods to exploit the resources have created problems such as overharvest of resources, reduction in biodiversity and degradation of marine habitats and species. It has become a recurrent decimal that we, on a daily basis, degrade, over-consume and pollute this productive asset to a point of ever-diminishing returns.

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4. It is indeed, worthy of note that the coastal zone, which is a land-sea interface, is one of the most complex areas in terms of management, being the home to an increasing number of interwoven human activities. The pressures on the oceans and the adjoining coastal zones have the real potential to damage the social, economic and environmental interests of the residents within this area. Over the years, the issue of coastal zone development has been of great concern especially in the face of global climate change. This has been motivated by the polluted state of the coastal zones, unsustainable exploitation of coastal

and marine resources giving rise to high mortality of aquatic animals. Similarly, there is an impairment of human health, loss of biodiversity in breeding grounds, vegetation destruction and other ecological hazards. Populations have also lost portable and industrial water resources, reduction in fishing activities, experienced poverty and rural underdevelopment.

Co- Presidents

5. In Nigeria, the overall mandate to protect the ocean and coastal areas is entrusted on the Federal Government in accordance with section 17 of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The major thrust of this provision is enumerated in the National Policy on Environment. Agencies of the Federal, State and Local Governments have been involved in different activities. Research Institutes, Universities, Private organizations and NGOs have also contributed positively in this regard.

6. Another significant development was the establishment of the Federal Ministry of Environment which has impacted on raising the issue of environmental consciousness, as well as the ability to comply with the global environmental best practices. The Ministry has developed innovative strategies that emphasize

the use of environmental re - engineering as a veritable tool for job creation, poverty eradication, ensuring food security, encouraging sustainable economic development and general improvement in the livelihood of the Nigerian populace. At the international level, it has pursued the use of the environment in advancing the country's foreign policy thrust.

7. The Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) is the line agency charged with the administration of maritime safety, seafarers standards and security, maritime labour, shipping regulation, promotion of commercial shipping and cabotage activities, pollution prevention and control in the marine environment. It also implements domesticated International Maritime Organization (IMO) and International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions. The Agency's efforts are complemented by the Nigerian Institute for Oceanography and marine Research, which conducts research into the resources and physical characteristics of the Nigerian territorial waters and the high seas.

Co- Presidents

8. My delegation wishes to note that in spite of the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, most

developing states are yet to fully benefit from ocean activities and resources, including the much-needed technical assistance. It is also worth mentioning here that scientific data gathering has become a challenge for many of the indicators that have been developed for all targets under SDG 14.

9. In accordance with these targets and indicators, not only are we expected by 2020 to sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems, we are also expected to conserve at least, 10 percent of coastal and marine areas consistent with national and international laws and based on the best available scientific information.

10. Nigeria believes that with unsustainable exploitation of oceans and coastal resources coupled with climate change, the world could be faced with a dying ocean while the achievement of these targets could be a mirage. In the words of the President of the General Assembly (PGA), Mr. Peter Thomson, "every second breathe you take comes from ocean-produced oxygen. Without a healthy ocean, we are in deep trouble; whether it is food, whether it is our climate, we have to have the integrity for the ocean, the source of life." Nigeria will continue to support all pragmatic actions necessary to save our seas and coastal environment.

Co- Presidents, Your Excellencies

11. We must act concertedly to build bridges of cooperation in the areas of information sharing, technical assistance, transfer of marine technology, including the creation of new opportunities for developing states. Thus, our universal push to have the integrity for the oceans would be all inclusive and indeed, leave no one behind.

Thank you