

Statement by H.E. Feridun H. Sinirlioğlu Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations at the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, 9.6.2017

Mr. President,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

- I would like to thank the Governments of Fiji and Sweden as well as the UN for making this high-level event possible.
- I would also like to thank the President of the General Assembly for overseeing such an important gathering.
- Turkey welcomes the UN Ocean Conference to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG14).
- We believe that the Conference will reach a successful outcome in the way of recovering our oceans for humanity and our planet.
- While getting one-step closer to conserve and sustainably use the oceans for sustainable development, we are here to **“Call the world for Action”**.
- As the great explorer Jacques Cousteau, who inspired many generations to learn more about the oceans, once said:

“The sea, the great unifier, is man's only hope. Now, as never before, the old phrase has a literal meaning: we are all in the same boat.”

Mr. President,

- Oceans and seas cover two-thirds of our home. As the Secretary General put it at his opening remarks, it would be more pertinent to call it “Planet Water” rather than “Planet Earth”.
- Our future and livelihood rely on oceans and seas.

- However, they are under threat, more than ever. Overfishing, pollution, ocean acidification, plastic waste and invasive species are only some of the man-made pressures.

- We believe that the SDG 14 is an essential framework for addressing issues relating to the oceans.

Mr. President,

- Turkey has been actively contributing to the global and regional efforts to achieve SDG 14.

- Without going into details, I would like to touch upon some regional cooperation initiative and some important projects.

- Turkey is the only country that is party to both the **Bucharest Convention** (*Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution*) and the **Barcelona Convention** (*Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean*).

- On the margins of the Ocean Conference, we have made a **voluntary commitment** regarding marine litter. **Marine Litter Strategic Action Plans** will be completed for all our coastal cities by the end of 2018 and will be put into effect.

- We aim to reach a recycling rate of 65 % for packaging waste and 35 % for all recyclable waste by 2023.

- **“Blue Card” system**, which is an environmental program to protect the sea against pollution, has been initiated for tracking sea vessel waste in our coastal regions. 29.000 vessels have been provided Blue Card.

- In 2016, Turkey ranked second in the **Blue Flag Reward**, which is widely considered the gold standard for beaches, with our 444 beaches and 21 marinas.

- We have also made the necessary amendments to our legislation for the conservation of endangered fish species. Turkey signed last April the “MedFish4Ever Declaration” together with other coastal states of the Mediterranean.

- We have taken the necessary measures to prevent the construction of fish farms in fragile ecosystems like enclosed bay and gulf areas.

Mr. President,

- Before concluding my remarks, I would also like to wish Fiji success for its incoming presidency of the 23rd session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, which will be held in Bonn, Germany on November 2017.

- Efforts to combat adverse effects of climate change are also crucial to restore the health, productivity and resilience of oceans and marine ecosystems.

- Turkey remains committed to implement the concrete actions needed to protect our oceans.

- *“People protect what they love.”* And we must protect the oceans, our future.

Thank you.