

**Statement by His Excellency Mr. Durga Prasad Bhattarai, Ambassador/ Permanent Representative of Nepal to the United Nations (UN) and Head of Nepali Delegation to the UN High Level Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development (or, the Oceans Conference), at its General Debate**

New York, Friday 09 June 2017 (1500-1800hrs)

*(Please check against delivery)*

*Honourable Co-Presidents (Prime Minister of Fiji and DPM-FM of Sweden); Excellencies (Heads of State and Government, Hon. Ministers; Heads of Delegations), President of the General Assembly, HE Peter Thomson; President of the UN-ECOSOC, HE Frederick Shava  
UNSG HE Antonio Guterres; Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Wu Hongbo, USG Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:*

I bring with me warm greetings and best wishes, and a strong message of solidarity from Nepal for the successful conduct and fruitful conclusion of this first ever UN conference on Oceans.

Nepal congratulates the Republic of Fiji and the Kingdom of Sweden for their election as Co-Presidents of this historic conference, and lauds their lead roles in its preparation.

The President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Peter Thomson, deserves all our accolades for delivering on his promise of convening such a conference. Peter, as the architect and mentor of the conference throughout, you will be remembered for making oceans perhaps the boldest substantive highlight of the Asia-Pacific presidency of the 71st session of the UN General Assembly where Nepal is also honoured to serve as a Vice President.

We commend Ambassadors Burhan Gafoor of Singapore and Alvaro Mendonca e Moura of Portugal, for their excellent stewardship to the inclusive and transparent consultations leading to the timely finalization of the political declaration, “Call for Action,”- for adoption by the Conference today.

Our appreciation also goes to Mr. Wu Hongbo, USG/DESA and Secretary-General of this Conference and his team, as well as the Law of the Sea Division of the UN Office of Legal Affairs, for their support throughout the process.

I associate my statement with the statements of the Group of 77 and China, the Group of the Land Locked Developing Countries (LLDCs) *and the Group of Least Developed Countries (LDCs)*.

Oceans are where the life originated. Oceans continue to significantly help nourish and flourish humankind as a common heritage. Oceans are the primary regulator of the global climate, and the marine resources are integral to the globe's endowment for eradicating poverty, creating jobs and sustainable livelihoods, bringing about food and nutrition security and ensuring sustained socioeconomic growth through international trade, and ultimately sustaining life on earth.

However, the adverse effects of climate change and other insensitive human activities have declined the health and resilience of oceans and seas over the decades. It has not only put ocean ecosystem at risk, but also posed existential threat to the rich flora and fauna there.

When oceans are not well, mother Earth cannot be well. The effects of the Oceans' ills reach everywhere, such that we cannot remain unreached by the adverse effects of climate change anywhere; for example, be it marine or coastal ecosystems- in their physical or biogenic structure, manifest in the bleaching of coral reefs and cold water habitats, ocean acidification, de-oxygenation, salinity, or reduced polar ice, and increased avalanches and outbursts of glaciers in the Himalayas, among others.

The global warming-induced floods and landslides, erratic and extreme weather patterns, loss of biodiversity and distressed mountain ecosystem affect the lives and livelihoods of millions of people, and all these phenomena directly or indirectly contribute to, inter alia, the coastal erosion and sea-level rise which pose existential threat to many of the very small island developing states today.

Nepal has unwavering solidarity with these countries and peoples, more importantly the farmers and fishermen, who have to bear the brunt of the challenge on the front lines. While leading the LDCs at UNFCCC negotiations or other times, Nepal has always stood in full solidarity with SIDS in their continuous fight to build health and resilience of oceans. We believe all countries have a resolute duty towards conserving and making use of the oceans, seas and marine resources in a healthy and sustainable manner and to save countries and peoples from the existential threats. It is indeed the shared responsibility of all stakeholders of the world economy--- island or mainland, developed or developing, and states or non-state --- to conserve the oceans, sustainably use the marine biodiversity and other resources.

My delegation notes with satisfaction that the Oceans Conference holds the promise to turn the tide in the use of oceans and seas and marine resources, most importantly by providing an opportunity for Member States to muster the requisite political will, synergy and resources for the effective implementation of SDG 14 and its targets. It has brought together all the stakeholders to renew or

make commitments afresh, and take collective actions towards achieving SDG 14 while also seeking to ensure the wellbeing of the planet and sustainable prosperity of humanity.

We have recognized all along the integrated and indivisible nature of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and emphasized that its implementation should be advanced in the spirit of the holistic approach to the inter-connected nature of SDGs, with a focus on the most vulnerable countries and peoples. Full and sincere implementation of Goal 14 would entail implementing all relevant components of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, Rio+20 Declaration, Addis Ababa Action Agenda, SAMOA Pathway, as well as Istanbul and Vienna Programmes of Action. Nepal believes that the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) should be the legal basis for the implementation of SDG 14.

Nepal underscores the need of capacity building, transfer of technology, raising awareness, education and necessary financial resources for SDG 14 in the developing countries, in particular SIDS, LDCs, landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) as well as coastal African States so that these countries would be able to better integrate SDG 14 in their national plans and policies, adapt mitigation measures combating the climate change and participate in the global and regional processes on oceans and seas. We believe that marine-related capacity building for LLDCs will also be built into the implementation of the SDGs. We also stress the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) in this regard.

Although Nepal is a land-locked country, over **4.5 million** Nepali people (or over **15%** of its population) work outside Nepal, including in various island and coastal countries, several thousand of them serving as sea-farers. Therefore, Nepal wishes to make use of all opportunities to inform, orient, train and educate its young people, professionals, officials as well as seafarers and others likely to work in or near seas and oceans on their responsibility towards water, Himalayas, seas and oceans in general, so as to create a more aware citizenry and skilled personnel as part of capacity building as well.

Distinguished Presidents,

Nepal welcomes the Call for Action as a concise, inclusive, and action oriented outcome of this Conference, reached through a transparent process and taking into account the concerns of different vulnerable groups, while embracing wider inter-connected ecosystems impacting coastal ecosystem in its fold. We believe there is a lot that can be done building on the organic linkage existing between the oceans and mountains.

My delegation fully supports the “multi-stakeholder approach” involving governments, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, private sectors, civil society, academia,

scientists, philanthropists, technical experts, local community, women and youth to actively engage to serve the common goal of preserving and protecting the oceans and seas.

In closing, Nepal stands ready to join hands in in pursuit of the timely implementation, review and follow up of SDG 14 together with interconnected SDGs. We are confident that this Conference marks a noble beginning of a long process and provides a meaningful boost to the imminent High Level Political Forum (HLPF) next month concerning the implementation of the 2030 Agenda as a whole in an integrated and holistic manner.

I thank you for your kind attention.