

## High Level Conference on SDG 14: OECD plenary statement

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Let me start by thanking the United Nations for convening this Conference, as well as the co-hosts, the governments of Fiji and Sweden. I would also like to commend the admirable leadership of the President of the General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Peter Thomson.

Our oceans are facing unprecedented pressures from human activity, and these are only projected to rise in the future. Five years ago, the OECD launched a foresight exercise that projected this acceleration will double the size of the ocean economy by 2030 – reaching \$3 trillion and employing 40 million people – both figures are about the equivalent of Germany's economy and work force today. At the same time, there is a growing recognition that today's trends are not sustainable.

That business as usual no longer works. The conservation and sustainable use of our oceans, our seas and marine resources is an imperative.

The existential issues driving our effort to save the ocean are echoed in the other 16 goals that comprise the 2030 Agenda. They have urgency in common. And we must make greater efforts to achieve them, from achieving food security to eradicating extreme poverty, to fostering biodiversity and ecosystem services conservation.

All countries have a responsibility to work to achieve the SDGs – including OECD Members – and they have a long way to go in achieving them. Last year, the OECD committed to support all countries with its *Action Plan on the SDGs*. We are putting the Organisation's existing policy tools and evidence at the disposal of countries as they work on implementation.

The OECD recognizes the integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda, and is responding with a multi-disciplinary approach. This is also required if we are to realise a sustainable ocean economy – in our publication *The Ocean Economy in 2030*, the OECD concluded that the connections between climate, ecosystems, energy and water are of such primordial importance that threats in each individual area cannot be resolved without action in the others.

We need a better alignment of policies across multiple sectors, integrating the value provided by ecosystems into our economic decision-making frameworks, scaling up finance in innovative ways and investing these resources more efficiently and strategically. This is also a key conclusion of our publication on *Marine Protected Areas: Economics, Management and Effective Policy Mixes*.

OECD expertise, in close coordination with the United Nations, is contributing concretely to helping countries implement SDG 14. This includes our work on the marine environment and biodiversity, the ocean economy, on fisheries, and on development finance, with a particular focus on most vulnerable countries including Small Island Developing States.

In this light, I am pleased to announce that the OECD has made five voluntary commitments to support this Conference and the implementation of SDG14:

1. *Explore financing approaches and mechanisms to promote sustainable development and the Blue Economy in SIDS.*
2. *Expand our work on biodiversity, land use and ecosystems, which provides policy analysis to promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.*
3. *Grow and share our database to measure progress toward the goal of eliminating subsidies in the fishing industry that contribute to overfishing and illegal fishing.*
4. *Provide data and information via our Policy Instruments for the Environment database (PINE), to improve policies on issues like fishing fees, entrance fees to MPAs, and subsidies to promote biodiversity.*
5. *Review innovation mechanisms to support a sustainable ocean economy and develop tool kits to help decision makers use the latest technology to harness the ocean economy's potential.*

But none of us do this alone. Our job – and that's all of us – is to search out the solutions (and find ways to finance them) through the most innovative and creative and comprehensive means at our disposal.

The OECD will continue to use its convening power to raise awareness, promote an exchange of views and foster partnerships in these policy areas. And I'd like to extend an invitation to all of you to Ocean Week at the OECD in November.

Achieving SDG 14 requires partnerships between national and international actors, the private sector and civil society. It will also require approaches and instruments through which the international community can support the most vulnerable countries, so that no one is left behind in the pursuit of this agenda.

For the billions of people who depend on our ocean and for the generations to come, we have a solemn responsibility to restore the lifeblood of our planet to health.

That means recognizing the interlinkages and following one simple rule as we nurse the patient back to full strength: First, do no harm.