

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Olof Skoog, Permanent Representative of Sweden  
to the United Nations  
Session 12: Review of Implementation – SDG 14  
Thursday, 13 July 2017, 11.00-13.00  
Conference Room 4**

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

Excellencies, Colleagues and Friends,

President of ECOSOC, Mr. Makamure Shava, I'd like to thank you for this opportunity to report back on the outcomes of The Ocean Conference held in New York from 5 to 9 June.

Before I go into depth in sharing Sweden's perspective on The Ocean Conference, I wanted to highlight the **incredibly forceful engagement, enthusiasm and action we all were able to mobilize in such short period of time**. I don't believe I am the only one today who was moved to the core by the burst of activities and commitments by a diverse set of stakeholders from all over the world. The Ocean Conference has sparked a movement, and I am sure you have noticed this as well.

The Ocean Conference is unique in that it is the first time that ocean affairs have been addressed in a holistic, integrated manner by the international community. The political will and momentum created at the Conference, together with increased global awareness at all levels- not least at the highest political level- are some of its most significant results.

The Conference also accentuated the **consensus on the threats we face** and the determination about the need to act urgently. The resounding response expressed by thousands of people participating in the conference was truly overwhelming and empowering. In that sense, The Ocean Conference signifies a **major step forward for protecting our ocean and marine resources**. The ocean as a whole is now on the global agenda.

Other aspects also merit extra attention. The Conference provided a **voice to the most vulnerable countries**, including SIDS and LDCs, and the communities most adversely affected, in highlighting their critical situation; offered opportunities for a broad range of stakeholders to actively engage in all aspects of the Conference; affirmed the close linkages between SDG 14 and the other SDGs; and finally reconfirmed the global commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement.

The **North-South partnership** championed by Sweden and Fiji to initiate and prepare for The Ocean Conference is a rarity. It has been a success story, as we have benefitted from each other's strengths and together been able to engage with broad sets of constituencies. It is with great humble we hope that this partnership could serve as model for other similar processes.

President of ECOSOC, Mr. Makamure Shava, I'd like to thank you for this possibility to report back on the results of The Ocean Conference.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my **deepest gratitude to PGA Thomson**; your strong leadership and diligent work in raising awareness of the ocean's critical state and in mobilizing action to address the challenges we face. Without your dedication, the engagement that we have witnessed around goal 14 would not have been this powerful and energizing.

I would like to express my heartfelt thank you to Mr. Wu, DESA, Mr. Serpa de Soares, DOALOS and Ms. Pollard, DGACM for the great leadership, dedication and support you have provided.

Ambassadors Gafoor of Singapore and Mendonca de Moura of Portugal, we all know that the transparent and incredibly inclusive manner in which you and your teams conducted the consultations on the Call for Action, resulted in a declaration expressing strong political will, providing stellar guidance in our continued work.

Ambassador Daunivalu, my colleagues and I have over and over concluded how extremely grateful we are to have worked with you and your team. We could not have asked for a more impressive and inspiring partner.

Turning to the **outcomes of the Conference**, after three intense and constructive rounds of negotiations, under the able stewardship of Singapore and Portugal as co-facilitators, the **Call for Action** declaration was agreed by consensus. The adopted Call for Action sends a strong message about the unity behind the acceleration of the implementation of SDG 14 and the 2030 Agenda. It is also a firm call for appropriate follow-up on the commitments made before and during the Conference.

The seven **partnership dialogues**, that were skillfully framed by the co-chairs, moderators and panelists, provided fruitful discussions which shed light on some of the concrete solutions required to address the gaps in implementation of the SDG 14 targets. The indivisibility of the SDGs and the need for securing additional funding to ensure an integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda, were issues underscored in most dialogues.

With a rather overwhelming sprint to the finishing line, the number of registered **voluntary commitments** amounted to close to 1400 by the time the Conference ended. The registry of voluntary commitments serves as a grand work plan for achieving the targets under SDG 14. The Conference has thus laid a solid foundation for accelerating the implementation of SDG 14. The commitments are indeed voluntary, but once registered and out in the public domain, all of us can hold governments and other actors accountable for effecting their commitments.

Based on the results and take-aways that I have outlined, the Conference could **serve as a model** for how involvement and action can be mobilized for other

SDGs, how extensive outreach can result in broad engagement, and how the engagement can be turned into concrete action.

Our partnership with UNDP, as a key actor in the implementation of SDG 14 at the national level, **has ensured efficient outreach worldwide**. The diligent work that they have pursued to engage governments and stakeholders in national ocean consultations, and in developing the Ocean Action Hub - the knowledge platform to inspire action, share experiences and resources, and showcase existing initiatives - have generated local, regional and global awareness and resulted in hundreds of voluntary commitments from countries around the globe.

Excellencies, Colleagues and Friends,

The Ocean Conference marks the conclusion of a long journey that started nearly two years ago, with Sweden and Fiji's vision, together with the SIDS, of a conference that would serve as the **defining moment required to save our oceans and seas for future generations**. The Ocean Conference also marks the starting point for the hard work that lies ahead to reverse the negative trends related to the health of our ocean. We need to ensure that the current momentum is not lost. We must show political leadership and courage, and continue the path that all of us together staked out during The Ocean Conference.

By providing the tools and methods for supporting the continued implementation of the commitments stemming from the Conference, **we can create a new, transformative way of championing the outcomes of a UN conference**. Building on the legacy of The Ocean Conference, it is suggested that UNDP's Ocean Action Hub continues serving as a knowledge platform for learning, engagement and sharing best practices. At the national level, the platform would support the development and fostering of ocean communities

linked to the voluntary commitments, and, in turn, further support the implementation of these commitments.

With SIDS having pledged close to a third of the total amount of voluntary commitments registered by governments, tailored collaboration and partnerships ought to be explored to reinforce and support their implementation efforts.

We should also ensure that the outcomes of The Ocean Conference are anchored in and feed into other relevant processes and events, such as Our Ocean conference in Malta in October, COP-23 in Bonn in November, UNEA in Nairobi in December. **Sweden welcomes the offers from Kenya and Portugal to host a follow-up conference** to further spur the implementation, monitoring and tracking progress of SDG 14, including the voluntary commitments made at The Ocean Conference. Once more details on the next conference are clarified, Sweden would happily share lessons learned from our collaborative and enriching journey with our dear colleagues from Fiji.

A key takeaway from The Ocean Conference is the **need to further strengthen global ocean governance and leadership**, and mobilize necessary resources for the implementation of SDG 14. The Call for Action calls upon the UN Secretary-General to enhance interagency coordination and coherence throughout the UN system on ocean issues, and we stand ready to support such efforts. Improving the ocean governance structure will be critical to delivering on SDG 14, as well as on the entire 2030 Agenda.

**To conclude**, we are well-aware of the state of ocean health and threats, as well as many of the solutions to address these challenges. **There is no longer any excuse not to act.** I look forward to advancing this work with all of you to make sure that in 2020 we have a successful story to tell about the tangible results and progress of SDG 14.