



A D I N

Africa Development Interchange Network

Organization in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council since 2011.

Remarks by Yvonne O’Neal on behalf of Africa Development Interchange Network at 2017 Ocean Conference, Plenary Session, General Assembly, 9 June 2017, UNHQ, New York, NY

Africa Development Interchange Network – ADIN – is pleased to have the opportunity to be here today at this first important Ocean Conference. We work to echo the voices and sentiments of grassroots people. These are the foot soldiers of the plan of action of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with the theme of people, planet, and prosperity. These goals and targets are truly transformative, as they aim to free humanity from poverty. Our main goal is to help heal and protect our Mother Earth.

We have been made custodians of this beautiful planet, Earth. About 71 percent of the Earth's surface is water-covered, and the oceans hold about 96.5 percent of all Earth's water. These oceans are the bloodline of the planet; crucial for the survival of humanity and for that matter all living organisms. Oceans are important for the earth’s biodiversity; an indispensable ingredient of ecosystems that sustain our livelihoods, and that of all living creatures both on land and in the seas. SDG14 calls us to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable communities.

From the coastlines of West Africa to the West Indies, from Seychelles to Virgin Gorda, including the countless tales from our brothers and sisters in small island states; the evidence of the damage that is being inflicted on the ocean is alarming. Its impact threatens the sustainable livelihoods of our peoples and their survival.

Noteworthy are the adverse impacts of climate change, including the rise in ocean temperatures, ocean and coastal acidification, deoxygenation, sea-level rise, the decrease in polar ice coverage, coastal erosion and extreme weather events.

SDG 14 is inextricably linked to SDG 13, that of taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. SDG14 is also linked to SDG 15, the goal for sustainable life on land – our ecosystems, forests and biodiversity.

Any serious attempt at addressing this problem without taking into consideration the important role of women as agents of change – SDG5 -- misses the boat, which will subsequently end with all of us in deep waters. This interdependency goes to buttress the fact that all the SDGs are interrelated and it is only with a holistic approach that we will find long-lasting solutions.

At this conference, we deem it our obligation to sound this alarm bell: With the focus of the Ocean Conference virtually becoming a platform for echoing the prospects of a “blue economy” which invariably puts rich and powerful nations in the driver’s seat, relegating us all to spectators and thus culprits of aiding in the whitewashing of the brown economy of extractive industries, providing them with golden parachutes into the green and blue economies.

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There is an undeniable rationale for a global concerted effort in “partnering for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14”. The next logical question is: partnering with what resources? No need to reinvent the wheel; where in the context of the United Nations Financing for Development process are the resources for this partnership?

As stewards of this fragile earth our island home, we are all called to come together as a global community to help clean up the oceans, to strive and make them as pristine waters as they once were. All it takes is our individual wills and sufficient national political will. Oh Yes, we can. We have faith in our common humanity. We shall stay hopeful.