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**Oceans and Seas, Forests, Biodiversity**  
MNE–SI speaking points for 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of OWG SDGs

- Sustainable use and management of natural resources is essential for our and future sustainable development. In recent decades humankind has put enormous pressure on the planet's natural resources. We must do more and better, act more sustainably and build resilience to develop further within planetary boundaries.
- Oceans and seas remain essential in sustaining life on Earth. According to UN Atlas of Oceans approximately one third of world population lives in coastal areas, within 100 kilometres from the coastline. Millions of people depend on benefits of oceans and seas for their livelihoods. As such oceans and seas have great social and economic value to humankind.
- State of world oceans and seas should remain on international agenda and further action is needed to ensure the implementation of our decision at Rio + 20. In Rio we agreed on ensuring that oceans and seas are clean, healthy, productive and resilient to external impacts including climate change and acidification, by applying ecosystem and precautionary approaches to the management of human activities.
- Both, Slovenia and Montenegro are coastal states and we base our economy in great part on tourism which puts a great pressure on protection of this area. We actively contribute to protection of Adriatic Sea and Mediterranean through different programs on national level as well as through regional cooperation. In general, regional cooperation on different water-related issues and on management of oceans and seas has brought many positive effects, including better ecological condition.
- As modern challenges related to oceans and seas are multidimensional and complex, such as overfishing, municipal wastewater discharges, alien invasive species in ship ballast, there are no simple solutions. We need integrated approach, taking into consideration different aspects of challenges and their connections with other challenges. An important positive step in this direction is integrated coastal management with a goal of sustainable development of coasts and seas.
- Forests cover around 30% of total land area. In our countries percentage is considerably higher. Forests cover 58,4 % of Slovenia and Montenegro is covered with 69,4% of forests and forest land. According to FAO data, close to 1.6 billion people that represent more than 25% of the world's population rely on forest resources for their livelihoods.

- Forests provide us with many economic, social, cultural, health and environmental benefits. The ecological functions of the forests serve to protect fertile soil from erosion, to protect biodiversity, to purify water and to maintain the balanced drainage of precipitation into watercourses. The forests exert a softening influence on the climate by balancing temperatures; they are also an absorber of carbon dioxide.
- The social functions of the forests, such as protection of natural and cultural heritage, recreation, tourism, research and health have not been evaluated in material terms, but without doubt they represent for humans a major, universal, and indirectly material value.
- Despite great positive contributions of forests to our lives and better state of the planet, we face many forest-related challenges that have severe consequences for the environment and societies. Forests continue to be under threat from deforestation and degradation. They also exacerbate other challenges such as biodiversity loss, climate change and land degradation. And in that regard we think that inventory and restoring of forests are basic preconditions for sustainable management of forests.
- Sustainable management of forests and sustainable use of forest resources is essential for sustainable development and eradication of poverty in many parts of the world. In this manner it is crucial to ensure that forests and sustainable forest management, use and governance will be included in SDGs and post-2015 agenda.
- Oceans, seas and forests share a common characteristic – they are rich in biodiversity. We know that rate of biodiversity loss has already exceeded planetary boundary and that urgent action is needed to revert the trend and manage biodiversity more sustainably.
- Biodiversity underpins ecosystems' functioning and provide crucial ecosystem services, including clean air and water. Biodiversity and its functions in natural environment underpin our future development and are often critically important for most vulnerable and to the poorest people around the globe.
- However, sustainable management of biodiversity remains a universal challenge. In this regard we support strong inclusion of biodiversity in future SDGs. Emphasis should be given to restoration and safeguarding the ecosystems that provide essential services, decreasing rate of biodiversity loss and to reducing trafficking and illegal trade of wildlife.
- We also support realization of Rio + 20 outcome regarding marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. We fully support development of an UNCLOS implementation agreement for conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.
- Ecosystems and natural resources, including forests, biodiversity and oceans and seas, are crucial for sustaining life on Earth. Their sustainable use and management is prerequisite for any environment-friendly development and eradication of poverty. In past 15 years social and economic consequences of inaction on environmental issues have become more and more evident and business as usual can no longer be sustained.

- We call for visible, strong and cross-cutting integration of sustainable use and management of natural resources in SDGs and in post-2015 agenda. Sustainable management and use of natural resources is not a burden but it also provide win-win solutions and economic opportunities, e.g. through promotion of sustainable tourism or using biomass for energy.
- Allow me to point out our position that SDGs should be formulated through human rights based approach. As we have stressed already at previous sessions, that respect for human rights is an important prerequisite for achieving sustainable development.
- Before I conclude, I would like to recall our general position towards the elaboration of SDGs that should be evidence-based and have measurable qualitative and quantitative indicators that will help to ensure full implementation of the visions we are certain we will create together in this process.