



Concluding Remarks

by

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HIGH LEVEL DIALOGUE: OCEANS AND SMALL ISLAND STATES

5 JUNE 2017, 1.15 TO 2.30 PM

TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL CHAMBER

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank you for your active participation in this High Level Dialogue on Oceans and Small island states.

Throughout the dialogue, speaker after speaker emphasised the fundamental reality of just how dependent small island developing states are on the ocean. In the case of SIDS, perhaps no other sustainable development goal cuts across the three pillars of economic, social and environmental in the same way as SDG 14 — which sets out to conserve and sustainably use the ocean and its marine resources for sustainable development.

In the discussion, a number of key themes, and ideas to leverage the mutually-reinforcing nature of the health of the ocean and sustainable development emerged. Many small island developing states are custodians of vast ocean spaces in comparison to their terrestrial areas – and delegations have shared their views on the unique opportunities as well as the challenges this brings.

Ensuring a sustainable future from the ocean has always been a priority of SIDS. For instance several SIDS have protected miles of their country's exclusive economic zone and some have already met the SDG target 14.5 to conserve 10 percent of coastal and marine areas by 2020. SIDS have done so often at a significant cost in terms of economic opportunities forgone but based on the notion that we cannot build economic prosperity to the detriment of future generations.

However noble these efforts maybe, SIDS alone cannot create the sea change that is needed to have the desired impact.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The main reason for the plight of the ocean is the tragedy of the commons. New transformational changes in governance are urgently required to cope with exploitation of the shared resources of the ocean and to address overfishing, pollution and other global changes and drivers of ocean degradation. This Dialogue has emphasised the challenges facing our ocean and SIDS in particular are multi-faceted and stressed the need for a global response.

In closing, let me highlight some of the key takeaways from this Dialogue in terms of creating such a response.

At this Dialogue, we have learned how revolutionary advances in satellite and geospatial technologies can enable the SIDS to "see" their coastal zones for the first time. Since you cannot manage what you cannot measure, these technologies will provide island nations with a scientific way to exercise their sovereign rights to plan, enforce, and implement projects to create jobs, empower women, fight climate change, and attain the Sustainable Development Goal on Oceans.

The Dialogue emphasised, solutions to address large scale problems such as the interception of the estimated 8 million metric tonnes of plastic entering our ocean each year require commitment and collaboration among several key stakeholders -- from public, private to local communities and NGOS. The discussion has noted how SIDS can create value from something as discardable as plastic, to benefit the economy while saving the ocean.

I am particularly pleased that the Dialogue has emphasised the important role of the ocean for combating climate change – As you very well know, the impacts of climate change including its effects on the ocean are one of the greatest threats facing SIDS today. Breaking down silos between issues of climate change, renewable energy and oceans are critical to accelerate progress towards the implementation of the SDG in small island developing states.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This dialogue has emphasised while the situation seem bleak, it is also a time of great opportunity --- we can still create an environment where we can show there is a lot to gain. New partnerships need to be forged at scale and at speed, to support SIDS in their endeavours to achieve their sustainable development aspirations.

As we look to conclude this useful and rich dialogue, we need to ensure that the ideas that have been discussed, and the commitments that have been made does not end here, but they become the wheels of change to overhaul the current cycle of ocean's decline.

As the High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, I am committed to doing all I can to support these efforts. I wish you a successful outcome from the rest of the Conference.

Thank you.