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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: EU statement - The Ocean Conference, 5-9 June 2017, New York

Delegations will find herewith the EU statement to be delivered at the General Plenary at the UN SDG 14 Conference ("The Ocean Conference", 5-9 June 2017, New York), as discussed at the Friends of the Presidency Group on Integrated Maritime Policy meeting held on 1 June 2017, and subsequently agreed by silence procedure.

The Ocean Conference, 5-9 June, New York

EU Statement (to be delivered at the General Plenary)

1. The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome the Ocean Conference, and we congratulate the organisers for the excellent work they have done. We thank the co-facilitators for their efforts and we welcome the Call for Action. This Conference will make a strong input to the High Level Political Forum and will help to further accelerate the momentum for ocean sustainability. The EU is committed to work together with international partners to maintain ambition and momentum, including in the context of the voluntary commitments made at the conference.
2. We have all agreed to the indivisible and integrated character of the 2030 Agenda and recognize that this Conference should fully respect this and should aim at supporting its implementation process.
3. The European Union and its Member States share the fundamental obligation and responsibility to protect, conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and their marine resources. Healthy and productive oceans are a pre-requisite for sustainable development.
4. The EU and its Member States are therefore strongly committed to the successful implementation of the United Nations' Agenda 2030 and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 14. In our opinion, we should use the opportunity provided by this Agenda and its specific SDG 14 to advance a holistic approach to oceans.
5. We consider that such a holistic approach should include the protection and conservation of ecosystems, addressing pressures, including human induced climate change and including those from land-based sources, implementing ecosystem-based and precautionary approaches to the management of human activities, achieving sustainable fisheries, ensuring integrated ocean and coastal management and creating conditions for sustainable development and a blue economy by focusing on action and implementation at all levels.

6. The ocean-related challenges that we face are closely inter-related and need to be considered as a whole. The cooperation between States is therefore of utmost importance, at both global and regional levels.
7. The EU and its Member States reiterate the crucial importance of UNCLOS as the legal framework within which all activities in oceans and seas must be carried out. We call for effective implementation of obligations as this is fundamental to ensure proper conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources. The EU and its Member States underline the particular importance of the Paris Agreement and the need to fully and swiftly implement it. In addition, we support a call for ratification of important instruments such as the new FAO Port State Measures Agreement as well as the UN Fish Stocks Agreement as well as a call for the rapid conclusion of the negotiations on a new agreement under UNCLOS for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. We also support the rapid conclusion of the negotiations of the international agreement to prevent unregulated fisheries in the central Arctic Ocean.
8. We reiterate our commitment towards good governance of the oceans. We recall the essential importance of the rules-based approach and reiterate our full commitment to effective implementation of relevant international treaties, including multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), to deliver on ocean-related targets of Agenda 2030.
9. We hold that collaboration and coordination within and between Regional Seas Conventions, Regional Fisheries Management Organisations and other forms of regional cooperation are important vehicles for the integrated delivery of SDG14 and ocean-related targets of the Agenda 2030.
10. Pollution of all kinds, in particular due to emissions of untreated wastewater, nutrients from diffuse sources and pollution from other land-based activities, as well as marine litter, especially plastic and micro plastics are among the priorities which should be addressed, along with the adverse impacts of other human-related activities, in particular underwater noise and invasive alien species. Urgent action, both preventative and reparative, is needed in this respect, at national, regional and global levels, to enable the meeting of agreed targets.

11. The importance of fisheries as a source of nutritious food, as well as a provider of employment thereby contributing to poverty alleviation has been recognised by the UN. Despite commitments to achieve maximum sustainable yield, it is acknowledged that in many areas fish stocks continue to be overfished and in less than optimal shape. Urgent action, at national and regional levels, should be taken to rectify this. In addition, the EU and its Member States also recognise that harmful subsidies continue to contribute to overcapacity, overfishing and to IUU fishing. Thus, we urge States to swiftly conclude a multilateral WTO agreement on the prohibition of such subsidies to ensure their commitment made under Agenda 2030 can be met.
12. This conference will provide a useful contribution to the thematic assessment that includes SDG 14 at the High-Level Political Forum in July this year. We believe that Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects, as well as relevant regional reports should complement these efforts in providing meaningful contribution to Global Sustainable Development Report and future thematic assessments of ocean-related Agenda 2030.
13. The EU and its Member States look forward to continue these discussions and engage with the international community towards ocean-related commitments in Malta, in the 2017 session of the "Our Ocean" Conference.
