



High Seas Alliance Statement for Online Briefing with Stakeholders on the Zero Draft March 17, 2020

On behalf of the High Seas Alliance and its over 40 environmental NGO members + IUCN, we would like to thank the Co-facilitators and your teams for the hard work and dedication evident in providing this Zero draft of the UN Ocean Conference Declaration. We want to work with you and delegates to ensure that this will be a meaningful and enduring political declaration, and a key outcome of the June conference, and thank you for the opportunity to provide these inputs.

- The current paragraph 4 notes that “a third of fish stocks are now overexploited.” However, figures from the 2018 FAO report indicate that overexploited and fully exploited stocks, taken together, are actually at 93%, and recommend that this figure be reflected. As climate change, ocean acidification, plastic pollution, and habitat destruction are putting increasing pressure on ocean life, restoring fish populations and ensuring well-managed fisheries is crucial, not only to protect marine life but also to ensure food security for the 3.1 billion people around the world.
- Further to para 4, on the list of threats, as UNCLOS includes the introduction of energy into the marine environment under the definition of pollution in Article 1 (4), this Declaration needs to ensure that ocean noise is adequately addressed and recognised as a serious form of transboundary pollution that should be mitigated and addressed under SDG14.1. Specifically, we suggest adding: *“Levels of noise in the ocean have doubled every decade, in some regions, for the past 70 years. Increasing anthropogenic underwater noise pollution is now threatening many ocean species and populations.”*
- On paras 5 and 6, we are pleased to see the references to the UN reports from the IPCC and IPBES, as they leave no doubt that the science is clear and transformative change is needed in the way we manage our biodiversity and the ocean.
- On Para 8: Deciding how best to conserve and sustainably manage high seas biodiversity has long been debated, but we are on the verge of a new chapter for the high seas. After over a decade of discussions, we were scheduled to convene next week for the final slated negotiating session of the intergovernmental conference to elaborate the text of an international legally binding instrument under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction – BBNJ. This treaty has broad ramifications for implementation of many of the SDG14 targets, including targets 14.3, 14.4, 14.5, 14.7, 14a and 14c.

So while IGC4 has now been postponed, 2020 is still young, and the delay heightens the importance for this Declaration to acknowledge the progress made thus far, and include at the end of this paragraph, *“and urge its conclusion in 2020 with robust conservation provisions.”*

- **In Para 10(a):** we recommend informing integrated ocean management, planning and decision-making, through improving our understanding of the “**cumulative effects, including transboundary and climate-change related effects**” (rather than the impact of cumulative human activities on the ocean), anticipating the impacts of planned activities and “**prevent**”, rather than simply minimize, their negative effects.
- Given the importance of area based management tools, especially fully protected marine protected areas, to halt biodiversity loss, enhance ocean resilience and ensure food security, we recommend that Para 10(d) should “**promote the use of**”, in addition to effectively planning and implementing such measures, based on best available science, stakeholder engagement and the precautionary principle and ecosystem approach- in line with A/ReS/71/312, para J.
- In para 10(e), we recommend referring to **ecologically coherent** nature-based solutions for carbon sequestration- or any similar language that safeguards ecological integrity rather than opening the door for geoengineering.
- Finally, we recommend that **Para 14** calls upon all stakeholders to take ambitious and concerted action to accelerate implementation to achieve Goal 14, **in the light of new global commitments, by 2030**", in order to reflect the post-2020 target when relevant].

We have two further important matters.

First, SDG Targets 14.2 and 14.5 are due this year – those targets are to sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems, and to protect at least 10%. Similarly, the CBD’s Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 aims to have at least 10% of coastal and marine areas protected by 2020. This target is to be the subject of CBD COP-15 in Kuming, and there is widespread support to protect at a minimum 30% of the ocean by 2030. We believe that is important that the UN Ocean Conference supports a visionary and tangible target, and we suggest a new paragraph 15 which could read, “We call on all States and stakeholders to decide that by 2030 they will fully and highly protect 30% of the ocean and sustainably manage 100 percent.” This would be consistent with the 2016 IUCN resolution (WCC-2016-Res-047-EN).

Second, we note that many governments support the importance of civil society and participation and inclusion. Towards that end, we would welcome in the next round of in-person consultations to be held, the opportunity for civil society to fully participate in that meeting, with an opportunity to speak there rather than just observe, so that governments can also hear civil society inputs.

Lastly, there are many ocean-related processes taking place at global, regional and sub-regional levels, and call on the need for collaboration amongst all stakeholders to amplify and coordinate within these fora on policies that will have ramifications on the implementation of SDG14 targets. We look forward to working with all stakeholders to reinforce language as needed, as the international community now has a unique opportunity and responsibility to agree to an ambitious Declaration that reflects the urgency of successful implementation of all the SDG14 targets without delay.

Thank you very much.