



## High Level Thematic Debate in Support of SDG 14: Life Below Water

- His Excellency, Mr. Volkan Bozkir, President of the General Assembly;
- Her Excellency, Ms. Raychelle Omamo, Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Kenya;
- His Excellency, Mr. Peter Thomson, Special Envoy of the Secretary General for the Ocean;
- Ms. Maggie Q, SDG14 Advocate and Founder of QEEP UM,

Dear ocean fellows and SDG14 supporters,

Today we come together in Support of SDG 14: Life Below Water and I would like to start by congratulating the President of the General Assembly for such initiative.

As we all know, the UN Ocean Conference has been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and, in a sense, the world globally stood still for the past one and a half years.

But the urgency surrounding the Sustainable Development Goals didn't change.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development continues to call for the need to end poverty and hunger, reduce inequality, and tackle climate change, among other objectives

In the 2030 Agenda, for the first time, a stand-alone objective concerns "life below water", the SDG14.

When the UN Ocean Conference was planned, it proposed an ambitious agenda: turning into action SDG 14, framed by the idea of a call for action, set out in the 2017 Ocean Conference. This new way to engage with the ocean, more inclusive and more connected, is now our ambition for 2022.



We are gathered here today to rekindle the tone for the Conference. I recall the words of the Secretary-General's Background Note that we drafted in 2020: *"existing actions for the implementation of SDG14 are insufficient"*, so we need to scale up *"ocean action, including through science and innovation, increasing and improving cooperation and coordination at all levels, capacity-building and financing and continued monitoring and review of the implementation of Goal 14"*.

This is the process that we must pick up now again: to strive for tangible, ambitious, transformative action that can help us deliver a meaningful, Conference next year and the fulfilment of SDG targets in 2030.

Portugal was closely engaged in promoting an autonomous Sustainable Development Goal dedicated to the oceans. From the beginning, we were a strong supporter of the process of elaboration of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, following the RIO+20 document "The Future We Want".

Likewise, we are very much involved in the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects, now starting its third edition.

Additionally, we launched June as the "Month of the Sea" of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union. This "Month of the Sea" will include a High Level Ministerial Conference on sustainable blue economy in the 8<sup>th</sup> of June, World Ocean Day.

And we strongly support the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, as we are aware that the role of science and innovation is critical and cross-cutting to every ocean aspect.

After the first UN Ocean Conference, that we co-facilitated alongside Singapore, we remain proudly engaged in co-hosting with Kenya the second UN Ocean Conference.

We are aware of the fact that the UN Ocean Conference is part of a bigger process, that includes also the CBD Conference of the Parties, the UN Framework Convention on Climate



the ocean. Or the above mentioned UN Decade for Ocean Science and the World Ocean Assessment processes, realigning science with the challenges of humanity, and reorient current knowledge toward global responsibility.

But after the transformative year that we had, and now that we seem to move out at the other side of the pandemic, we have more than ever an opportunity to effectively address the issue of conservation and sustainable use of the ocean.

So let's put our hands to work to ensure that we pick up this process – not where we left it, but improved by all the experiences that we had during this year, good and bad, and by the transformations that we have envisioned for our societies.

Portugal remains proud and grateful to be working alongside Kenya in this endeavour and we feel honoured and prepared to host the UN Ocean Conference in 2022.

In the recent conference on the Future of Europe, the Prime Minister of Portugal, António Costa, stated: *"Others have given priority to the Moon or to Mars. Europe must embrace the Oceans as a cause and a mission."*

I invite you all to come to Lisbon, in person, hopefully next year, to full steam ahead our goal of achieving SDG14.