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PRESS RELEASE

Surge in voluntary commitments for ocean action as Conference to halt ocean degradation set to open

More than 600 commitments received; countries agree to Call for Action

New York, 2 June—A surge in the number of voluntary commitments to take action to improve the health of the ocean by countries, businesses and civil society groups has been recorded, and more are expected as the Ocean Conference gets underway Monday, 5 June at United Nations Headquarter in New York.

The commitments, now numbering over 600 and still increasing, come as heads of state and government and ministers will join ocean leaders, experts, businesses, and civil society organizations to discuss solutions that restore the health of the world's ocean. The commitments target a wide range of ocean problems, ranging from protecting coral reefs, strengthening sustainable fisheries, reducing plastic pollution, and addressing the impacts of climate change on the ocean.

“The Ocean Conference is where we truly begin the process of reversing the cycle of decline into which our accumulated activities have placed the Ocean,” said Peter Thomson, President of the UN General Assembly. “By adding to the conference’s register of voluntary commitments; of producing practical solutions to Ocean’s problems at the Partnership Dialogues; and through the affirmation of the conference’s Call for Action, we have begun that process of reversing the wrongs.”

The Conference will result in a Call for Action that has just been agreed to by countries, <http://bit.ly/2rzRT2q>, and will be formally adopted at the conclusion of the Conference on Friday. Additional outcomes include the results of seven partnership dialogues that will focus on solutions, and the voluntary commitments to action.

“The Conference will explore how to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 14, which seeks to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development,” said Wu Hongbo, Conference Secretary-General and Under-Secretary-General of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

“Among other things,” he added, “the Conference will comprise plenary meetings and seven interactive, multi-stakeholder partnership dialogues, which will focus on the targets of SDG 14. These dialogues will aim to scale up and replicate existing successful initiatives. And they will launch new partnerships that will advance the implementation of Goal 14.”

The Call for Action stresses the need for implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, and particularly Goal 14, that addresses marine issues. In the Call for Action, countries agree to



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implement long-term and robust strategies to reduce the use of plastics and microplastics, such as plastic bags and single use plastics.

Countries also agreed to develop and implement effective adaptation and mitigation measures that contribute to ocean and coastal acidification, sea-level rise, and increase in ocean temperatures, and to addressing the other harmful impacts of climate change on the ocean. The Call takes note of the Paris Agreement on climate change.

The Call for Action includes measures to protect coastal and blue carbon ecosystems such as mangroves, tidal marshes, seagrass, and coral reefs, and wider interconnected ecosystems, as well as enhancing sustainable fisheries management, including to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield. Countries are called upon to decisively prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, and eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

The Ocean Conference, the first UN conference of its kind on the issue, is hosted by the Governments of Fiji and Sweden will kick it off with a special cultural ceremony at 9 a.m. on 5 June, prior to the formal opening.

Please visit the following websites for information on the respective events:

The Ocean Conference: <https://oceanconference.un.org/>

World Ocean Festival: <https://www.worldoceanfest.org/>

World Environment Day: <http://worldenvironmentday.global/>

World Oceans Day: <http://www.un.org/en/events/oceansday/>

SDG Media Zone: <http://sdgmediazone.org/oceansconference/>

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