



**Statement on behalf of the European Union and its Member States
2020 UN Ocean Conference Preparatory Meeting
New York, 4-5 February 2020**

Elements for the Declaration

Co-Chairs,

The inclusion of SDG14 in Agenda 2030 recognises the importance of conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and their resources for sustainable development.

background note 'existing actions for the implementation of SDG14 are insufficient and that the four SDG14 targets due this year will not be achieved.

Despite repeated commitments, including in the Call for Action adopted in 2017, the latest scientific reports paint a bleak picture of the status of the oceans, climate and biodiversity with negative or worsening trends.

This lack of improvement is of serious concern to the EU and its Member States. As highlighted in the Council Conclusions we adopted in 2019, a clean, healthy and productive ocean is a prerequisite for sustainable ocean-based economies. The decline in the status of marine ecosystems is eroding the resource base on which blue economy depends and on which many countries increasingly depend to meet their legitimate development aspirations and to find solutions for their sustainable development.

Science and new technologies can help to provide solutions and to help us meet our obligations and commitments under different instruments, such as the Paris Agreement, and diminish our impacts on oceans to achieve sustainable development.

This is even more necessary as many countries are developing ocean-based economies which increase pressures on marine space and ecosystems. This requires better decision-making and

planning, including of infrastructure, on the basis of sound scientific advice. The role of a strong science-policy interface in this respect should be stressed.

We would like to provide a few examples of where science and innovation can assist the scaling-up of actions and contribute to the achievement of SDG14:

Addressing all sources of pollution such as by reducing the use of fertilisers in agriculture and reducing greenhouse gas emissions and noise from shipping;

Supporting the transition to a Circular Economy and addressing the full life cycle of plastics to prevent further marine plastic litter such as through new materials that are biodegradable under natural conditions;

Supporting the achievement of climate neutrality including by diminishing emissions such as through renewable ocean energies;

Halting biodiversity loss in the context of Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework by providing qualitative assessments of the areas which are or need to be restored and protected, and ensuring that ecologically representative and interconnected MPAs as well as the other effective conservation measures and tools are effective;

Ensuring more sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, including from an ecosystem perspective, including by better monitoring and tracking of catches, by-catch and products along the whole market chain.

Achieving these outcomes will provide synergistic benefits, both between objectives of different Goals, as well as among the SDG 14 targets. For example:

Tackling pollution will not only improve ocean health but will also improve its productivity, increasing economic returns, and with positive impacts on human health and seafood safety;

Climate change mitigation, adaptation and nature-based solutions such as the restoration of coastal ecosystems will benefit biodiversity conservation and fisheries objectives, will increase coastal resilience to the impacts of climate change and provide economic opportunities such as through tourism;

Well-identified, managed and enforced marine protected areas can provide benefits by

In line with the precautionary principle, we reiterate that the lack of scientific knowledge should not be used as an excuse to postpone or avoid necessary conservation or management actions. This is particularly important with regard to the main challenges where the gravity of the situation requires our collective and immediate action.

In conclusion, while science and innovation can certainly provide solutions to the challenges we face, political will is required to take on board and implement such scientific advice. The EU expresses its full commitment in this respect.

Thank you.