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Resolution adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly on 1 March 2024

6/15. Strengthening ocean efforts to tackle climate change, marine biodiversity loss and pollution

The United Nations Environment Assembly,

Reaffirming General Assembly resolution 76/296 of 21 July 2022, in which the General Assembly endorsed the declaration entitled “Our ocean, our future, our responsibility”, recognizing that the ocean is fundamental to life on our planet and to our future, and affirmed the need to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources,

Concerned about threats to the health of our oceans, coastal areas, wetlands and islands, as reflected by, inter alia, the second World Ocean Assessment, the *Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services* of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, and the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, including its special report *The Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*, and about the probable increase in those threats in the foreseeable future,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, by which the Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and, in this regard, reaffirming the commitment to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources, as reflected in Sustainable Development Goal 14, and its contribution to the 2030 Agenda, which is integrated and indivisible in nature,

Recalling that, in its resolution 70/1, the General Assembly called for the enhancement of conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources, as recalled in paragraph 158 of “The future we want”,

Reaffirming United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 2/10 of 27 May 2016 on oceans and seas, and the ocean-related outcomes of the Environment Assembly’s past sessions,

Noting its resolution 2/10, in which the Environment Assembly took into account the contribution that the United Nations Environment Programme could make, upon request by the concerned States, to assist them in the protection and preservation of the marine environment,

Noting also General Assembly resolution 76/300 of 28 July 2022 and Human Rights Council resolution 52/23 of 4 April 2023 on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment,

Noting further decision 15/24 of 19 December 2022 adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity on the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity,¹

Welcoming the generous offer made by the Governments of Costa Rica and France to co-host the third United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, to be held in Nice, France, in June 2025, as well as the high-level event on ocean action, entitled “Immersed in change”, to be held on 7 and 8 June 2024 in San José,

Welcoming also the adoption of decision 15/4 by which the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework,² including its goals and targets relevant to the ocean,

Reaffirming that addressing pollution is an important element for achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals through, among other measures, the prevention and significant reduction of marine pollution of all kinds,

Recalling the importance of the work to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, through the intergovernmental negotiating committee convened by the United Nations Environment Programme,³ and welcoming the progress made, with the ambition of completing that work by the end of 2024,

Encouraged by the decisions adopted at the annual United Nations Climate Change Conference, in particular the outcome of the first global stocktake and the global goal on adaptation, on the need to strengthen ocean-based climate-related action, as appropriate, and continue the work of the ocean and climate change dialogue to consider how to strengthen adaptation and mitigation action,

Welcoming the adoption by the International Maritime Organization of a revised strategy on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from ships,

Acknowledging the adoption on 19 June 2023 of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction,⁴ which aims to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, for the present and in the long term,

Welcoming the work done in the context of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030) and recognizing its importance for ecosystems in marine and coastal areas, and welcoming also the objectives and activities developed in the framework of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030) and its vision to achieve “the science we need for the ocean we want”,

Noting with appreciation the progress made in the implementation and growth of the Regional Seas Programme, since its establishment in 1974, and recognizing the key role of the Regional Seas Programme and the regional seas conventions and action plans and their importance in assisting countries and regions in applying an ecosystem approach to manage the marine and coastal environment, and noting the adoption of the new Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2022–2025,

Determined to act decisively and urgently to improve the health, productivity, sustainable use and resilience of the ocean and its ecosystems, and affirming the need to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources,

1. *Encourages* Member States to, as appropriate, adopt, ratify or implement the regional seas conventions, protocols and action plans for the protection and conservation of the marine and coastal environment, while promoting high visibility of the regional dimension in all relevant global processes and forums;

2. *Also encourages* Member States, as appropriate, to:

(a) Consider signing and ratifying the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction at the earliest possible date;

¹ See document CBD/COP/15/17.

² Ibid.

³ Environment Assembly resolution 5/14.

⁴ See General Assembly resolution 77/321.

- (b) Implement fully and effectively the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, as appropriate, including its goals and targets relevant to the ocean, and increase efforts at all levels to achieve those goals and targets;
- (c) Engage in the ongoing process to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, with the ambition of completing that work by the end of 2024, as mandated by United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 5/14 of 2 March 2022, entitled “End plastic pollution: towards an international legally binding instrument”;
- (d) Ratify, accept, approve or accede to the 1996 Protocol to the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and other Matter, 1972;⁵
- (e) Make significant efforts to tackle ocean acidification and its causes and to further study and minimize its impacts;
3. *Requests* the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, subject to the availability of resources, to:
- (a) Strengthen, without prejudice to and within the scope of the organization’s mandate, the Regional Seas Programme in order to further support the regional seas conventions and action plans;
- (b) Report to the Environment Assembly at its seventh session on the progress made by the Regional Seas Programme;
- (c) Continue to provide technical support to Member States and members of specialized agencies of the United Nations, upon request, in implementing their respective obligations and activities under the regional seas conventions and action plans and multilateral environmental agreements and other relevant environmental instruments, including through the dissemination and sharing of best practices;
- (d) Assist Member States and members of specialized agencies of the United Nations, upon request, in the assessment of marine biodiversity within areas under national jurisdiction and regional seas conventions and action plans, in collaboration with other relevant entities;
- (e) Provide technical support to Member States and members of specialized agencies of the United Nations, upon request, for the development of marine and coastal planning and management tools within national jurisdiction, in particular marine protected areas, integrated coastal zone management and marine spatial planning, based on the best available science, including, where appropriate, traditional knowledge, innovations and practices;
- (f) Contribute to the Early Warnings for All initiative at all levels;
- (g) Provide assistance, within the scope of the organization’s mandate, to the Division for Ocean Affairs and Law of the Sea, as the interim secretariat of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction, to promote better understanding of the Agreement;
4. *Invites* the secretariats of the regional seas conventions and action plans, as appropriate, upon request by their contracting parties or participating countries, to:
- (a) Support their contracting parties and participating countries in participating in the ocean and climate change dialogue to consider how to strengthen adaptation and mitigation action, first established by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change at its twenty-fifth session,⁶ and to consider, as appropriate, ocean-based action;
- (b) Support their contracting parties and participating countries, upon request, in contributing effectively to the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework;
- (c) Further develop and implement joint strategies and work on quality status assessments and monitoring programmes to address environmental challenges in a coordinated effort;

⁵ International Maritime Organization, document IMO/LC.2/Circ.380.

⁶ See document FCCC/CP/2019/13/Add.1.

(d) Develop and present joint voluntary actions for the regional seas covered by the relevant convention at the third United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, to be held in June 2025, in order to address pertinent environmental issues in the area in question;

(e) Support their contracting parties and participating countries in participating in the ongoing negotiations on an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, by, among other things, making available relevant information;

5. *Invites* Member States to scale up means of implementation to enhance capacity to deliver on the ocean-related Sustainable Development Goals and implement the relevant conventions, particularly in developing countries, taking into account the special circumstances of small island developing States;

6. *Calls on* Member States and concerned parties to strengthen the ocean science-policy interface, including through action under the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects, and by promoting research, collaboration and the communication of scientific knowledge to policymakers, private-sector actors and civil society;

7. *Calls on* all Member States, international organizations and other stakeholders to seek the highest level of participation and ambition at the third United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 and invites the Executive Director to provide the necessary input for the Conference, as appropriate;

8. *Calls for* continued cooperation and coordination on marine issues among all relevant global and regional forums and organizations in order to deliver coherently on Goal 14 and other relevant ocean-related Goals and their targets.