

**2<sup>nd</sup> Global Conference on Land-Ocean Connections (GLOC-2)  
Montego Bay, 2-4 October 2013**

**Opening Statement**

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Honourable Robert Pickersgills, Minister of Water, Land, Environment & Climate Change, Government of Jamaica; His Worship, Councillor Glendon Harris, the Mayor of Montego Bay; Reverend Clement Clarke (New Testament Church of God, Montego Bay)

**Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen**

- On behalf of the United Nations Environment Programme, I am delighted to be here in person and welcome you all to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Global Conference on Land-Ocean Connections.
- We would like to take this opportunity first of all to extend our appreciation and thanks to the Government of Jamaica for generously agreeing to host this event and for its contribution to preparation for this global event which has brought of us here from different corners of the globe.
- Under your leadership Honourable Pickersgills and through you to the Ministry, accept our special thanks for the logistical and financial support. Our thanks are also sincerely extended to the Governments of Norway, the Netherlands and the United States, amongst other for recognizing the importance of land-ocean interface and thus providing us with resources for this meeting.

- Permit me to already thank in advance, those who will make statements and share their technical expertise through presentations at this meeting which will be extremely valuable for our deliberations in the coming days as we prepare the way forward for the better implementation of the GPA on Land Based Sources of Marine Pollution program.
  
- We also express appreciation to our colleagues, both here, and in Nairobi, who have been working tirelessly in preparing for this event, and have been able to remain focused during the final stretch, notwithstanding the crisis we experienced in Nairobi just a few days ago.
  
- I am sure you will agree with me that all these efforts pave the way for success in our discussions over the coming days.
  
- I see this meeting as re-energizing the GPA. My wish is that the momentum created by this meeting will not only increase the awareness of the GPA program but will also enable us to mobilize political will necessary for its operations and implementation.

The First Global Conference on Land-Ocean Connections (GLOC) was held in Manila, Philippines over a year and a half ago and provided the impetus and recommendations for the Third Session of the Intergovernmental Review (IGR-3) on the Implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (GPA) that immediately followed. As does this meeting, that event brought together scientists, experts, policy makers and NGOs to discuss current and emerging issues in the marine and coastal sector with a focus on GPA related topics. The conference, was structured around the proposed priority themes for the GPA, namely, water quality (to include nutrients and wastewater); marine litter, and integrated coastal zone management at regional, national and sub-national levels. It provided

sound science-based and objective recommendations for the GPA. The meeting was so successful that together with partners and stakeholders, we decided to make the GLOC a regular event on the calendar of the GPA.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Let us all remind ourselves of the context in which we find ourselves convened today. In terms of economic goods and services, coastal ecosystems contribute at least 38% of the world's total GDP - as much as all terrestrial ecosystems. Open ocean areas alone provide another 25%. This is a substantial contribution not to be underestimated.

- It is a common knowledge that the oceans of the world are interlinked and as such, an action on one side of the ocean can have far-reaching repercussions on the other side. Therefore, the way we see marine litter scattered along many beaches across the globe clearly demonstrates the nature of the impacts we have to deal with under the GPA program for which we need the concerted efforts of all of us if we are to succeed.
- In recent years, for instance, we've realized how coastal habitats such as mangrove forests, salt marshes, and seagrass meadows have additional value due to their important carbon sink capacities. According to *UNEP's Blue Carbon Report*, the improved management and restoration of the ocean's blue carbon sinks would contribute significantly to offsetting global emissions and mitigating climate change.
- Let us move closer to where we are in Jamaica and its neighborhood islands which are part of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), where the value of the marine environment is far more apparent. As we look out our bedroom

windows here in Montego Bay, we can all see how the marine environment is the life-blood of the economies of these countries, and thus the reason why many of us save money for years to experience a piece of this “paradise”. Let us hope we too will have such a privilege this time while in this city and near its coast.

### **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

With all the economic values attained as a result of land based activities, we also know unfortunately that a number of those activities are equally a source of great harm to the world’s oceans and seas. The major causes of damage or harm to the environment come from excessive nutrients, habitat destruction and wastewater.

*Excessive Nutrients* flowing into the sea from land-based activities cause harm to human health, loss of biodiversity and reduced fishing. Imagine, some 20 million tons of phosphorous is mined every year and nearly half of it enters the world’s oceans - 8 times the natural rate of input.

*Alteration and destruction of habitats and ecosystems* threatens 70% of coral reefs, of which 27% are at a high risk of degradation.

*In the case of sewage*, 90% of wastewater in developing countries is estimated to be discharged untreated, much of it reaching the marine environment.

These are alarming statistics despite the fact that we know the root cause of the problem.

- More than 50% of the world's population is estimated to live within 100 kilometres of the coast, a figure that could rise to 75 per cent by the end of the current decade.
- Two thirds of the world's cities with more than 2.5 million inhabitants are coastal cities
- The pressures are particularly acute along the coasts of many developing countries - where rapid population growth combined with persistent poverty, is a deadly cocktail. For example, 40% of Africa's coastline and 70% of its marine protected areas are under threat from development
- A number of activities are poorly planned as they take little account of the cost implication of the development of such coastal environments. For instance, explosive growth of coastal cities, increases in industrialization, tourism, development of ports and the expansion of aquaculture all bring about different impacts.
- The link between economic growth and protection of rich marine ecosystems is often ignored - Development sacrifices the environment in an attempt to create wealth quickly to achieve immediate needs, while forgetting the long term implications of such development.

### **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

What should be our way forward?

- The marine and coastal environment continues to degrade, particularly in terms of water quality, physical alteration and destruction of habitats. There is therefore, a need for countries and all of us individually and together to accelerate the implementation of the Global Programme of Action and other

commitments, such as what came out of the Rio+20 Conference in 2012. Growing pressures on marine and coastal ecosystems require more effective management approaches, bearing in mind the new challenges of the 21st century.

- The future work programme for GPA, as outlined in the Manila Declaration of 2012, will focus on the effective management of nutrients, wastewater and marine litter and, by so doing, hopefully contribute to improvements in coastal water quality. These substances should be viewed, not only as pollutants but also as important resources, vital for our economies and for sustainable development.
- To take these issues forward effectively, global multi-stakeholder partnership approaches are necessary for nutrients, wastewater and marine litter, bringing Governments together with key industrial sectors, major groups, scientists and other stakeholders around a shared agenda.
- We in UNEP, within our meager resources, will be ready to leverage complementary mechanisms, such as, ecosystem services valuation, to help quantify trade-offs like improvements in water quality versus health and economic growth. The Global Programme of Action, as an inter-governmental platform, should therefore be used to promote and accelerate marine and coastal management approaches.

### **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

What have we therefore done to bring about the desired changes?

We begun way back in 1995 with the adoption of the GPA. Years later in 2012, the adoption of the Manila Declaration reinforced the need for a GPA and refocused its work.

- Although more needs to be done, a lot of progress has been made. For instance:
  - National Programmes of Action (NPAs) in over 70 countries have been developed and helped identify problems and remedial action.
  - Over seven Land Based Pollution Protocols have been adopted under the regional seas conventions in the Caribbean, Mediterranean, Eastern and Western Africa regions, to mention but some.
  - A number of countries have mainstreamed marine and coastal issues into wider development planning, including implementing legal and institutional reforms.
  - Some countries have significantly increased their funds and spending to address GPA-related issues.
  - Many countries have developed integrated coastal zone management policies and plans which help to better value the contribution of marine and coastal ecosystems to livelihoods and development.

We can therefore give a pat on our backs and congratulate ourselves for all these efforts put in place.

- Nonetheless, they are not enough. Hence let us all build on the achievements and successes and do more and better.
- I therefore urge all participants to fully engage in the coming days to take stock, discuss obstacles and agree on a way forward. We must use this conference to formulate recommendations upon which we will act to put in

place solutions to the problems, which continue to flow into and around the world's oceans.

For this meeting, I hope that we can agree on the mechanisms which need to be established to bring Governments, industrial sectors, scientists and other stakeholders together around shared agendas. One way to do this is by the operationalization of multi-stakeholder partnerships with a view to producing tangible results, nationally and globally, in reducing the impacts of land based pollution.

**Excellencies,Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Our successes will depend on:

- **Taking responsibility** - All stakeholders must recognize that they have roles to play and that they have to shoulder their responsibilities.
- **Funding** – which is required to solve existing problems and avoid problems in the future. Investment should be made by a variety of stakeholders, not only by governments, but by the private sector and development agencies.
- **Partnerships** between all stakeholders are extremely valuable. This can be seen in the establishment of the Global Partnership for Nutrient Management. Similar progress must be seen in future development of partnerships addressing marine litter, wastewater and coral reefs.
- **Cooperation and Coherent Action** – governments' efforts and those of the other sectors should not and cannot function in isolation – they must be linked to other on-going processes, such as international initiatives, including

those of the GPA and processes such as the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

- **The results of our deliberations here should feed into other processes** on related matters, in particular the GEF International Waters Conference and the Caribbean Water & Wastewater Association Conference, both being held in the Caribbean later this month. Other related conferences, such as the Budapest Water meeting, the International Oceans Conference and the World Marine Protected Area Congress, provide opportunities to keep the momentum going from this GLOC. Let us use them effectively.
- For us in UNEP, our Executive Director is fully committed to the implementation of the Global Programme of Action over the coming years. The COST of delaying implementation is too high.
- I commend us all to the task ahead; simply put, we cannot afford to fail. We must have a positive and action-oriented outcome from this meeting.
- Your support is vital to the success of this conference. I urge you to give of your best and I look forward to a successful conference and future collaboration with you all.

Thank you for your attention and listening on the important matters which brought us here to deliberate upon.