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High Level Segment: 4th World Oceans Forum - UNCTAD & Commonwealth Secretariat in partnership with the Governments of Portugal of Kenya

Towards a Blue Deal for post-COVID-19 recovery and resilience

Welcome Message for the High Level Segment by The Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth

Madam Chair

Secretaries- and Directors-General

Excellencies and Ministers

Colleagues and friends from across the Commonwealth and beyond

It is a pleasure to join you all today in our shared collaboration for the Ocean

and a privilege to address you as Secretary-General of the Commonwealth.

I wish I was with you in person but, much to my frustration, I am currently in isolation and have been unable to travel to Geneva. I hope you understand.

Everyone taking part in this 4th Oceans Forum understands the fundamental importance of the Ocean.

But let me give you some context for the Commonwealth:

Our family of 54 nations, home to 2.5 billion people, stretches across six continents and five ocean basins of our one great shared ocean.

47 of our member states have a coastline.

32 of our members are small states and 25 are small island developing states - most of which have jurisdiction over ocean areas that far exceed their land area.

In fact, on average 96% of their territory is ocean, and only 4% is land, which is why we prefer to call them Big Ocean States.

The ocean sustains life on earth, but remains the most undervalued, under-researched and recklessly exploited natural wonder of our planet.

More than 90% of the world's fish stocks are used up - either fully exploited, over exploited or depleted, while up to 200 million tonnes of plastic waste plague the marine environment.

This is real and lasting damage which requires focus and funding to address.

But regrettably, the ocean is woefully underfunded.

SDG-14 is the least funded of all the SDGs, representing 0.01% of all SDG funding from official development assistance (up to 2019), and 0.56% of all SDG funding from philanthropy (2016 to 2020). It is also the least reported of all SDGs.

That is pitiful.

And the Ocean is almost non-existent in climate funding, accounting for less than 2% of the Green Climate Fund and only 0.7% of Global Environmental Facility funding.

It is a tragic fact that the gap between the financing required for ocean conservation, and the funding currently available, is equivalent to just 3% of the \$5 trillion dollars spent globally on fossil fuel subsidies each year.

Is this really the best we can do for this awesome natural wonder, the source of life and livelihoods for billions of people?

Is it really all we offer the vehicle for 80% of global trade?

Is it sufficient for the source of tourism and economic activity in almost 200 countries and territories?

Self-evidently, it is not.

But we can take hope from recent progress.

The number of marine funders almost tripled between 2010 and 2020, to 1600.

Philanthropic funding for marine conservation has doubled over the past decade.

The Commonwealth's online database directs our member states to US\$170 million of international funding available for ocean-related projects.

And this is just one small component of our historic Blue Charter, adopted by leaders in 2018 with an unprecedented commitment to collaborative, coordinated and urgent action for the Ocean.

Comprehensive shared action across a range of themes is driven by member states, from Vanuatu, Sri Lanka and Belize to the UK, New Zealand and Kenya.

Through the Blue Charter, the Commonwealth speaks with authority and acts with credibility on the Ocean.

And in this *Super Year* for the Ocean, it is more important than ever that we come together to deliver for the ocean.

From WTO's 12 Ministerial Conference looking at harmful fishing subsidies, to the COP for the Convention on Biological Diversity ---

From the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting to COP27 ---

We must combine our commitment to economic and environmental recovery to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic with more equitable, resilient ocean economies

We can achieve this through shared action:

Developing ocean economy and trade strategies

Reviving the tourism and travel sector, especially for small states and SIDS, and promoting sustainable tourism.

Promoting sustainable supply chains, especially for fisheries.

Levering technology to support the growth and development of ocean economies

Mapping the trends, dynamics and drivers of maritime trade to build resilience through better seaport infrastructure, more sustainable shipping operations, and greater trade openness

These are just some of the steps the Commonwealth Secretariat is taking to support our member states at this critical time.

I invite all our distinguished partners in this Forum, and everybody engaged in work for the Ocean, to join with us and make 2022 the year we seize the agenda, and come together to manage the Ocean sustainably for the good of all people

I wish you well for the forum today, and look forward to seeing you all again soon.

Thank you.