



## GROUP OF 77 & CHINA

GENEVA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. DR JAMES ALEX MSEKELA, CHAIRMAN OF THE  
GENEVA CHAPTER OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA, ON THE  
“HEALTHY OCEANS – HEALTHY COAST” INTERNATIONAL LEADER-  
SHIP SEMINAR TOWARDS ACHIEVING SDG 14 “CURRENT CHAL-  
LENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN OCEAN AND COASTAL SUSTAINA-  
BLE DEVELOPMENT”**

**25<sup>TH</sup> - 26<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2017, HONG KONG, CHINA**

**Mr. Chairman,**

**Excellencies,**

**Distinguished Delegates,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

At the outset, allow me to express my sincere gratitude to the co-organizers and co-hosts of the seminar; i.e. the International Ocean Institute, UNCTAD, the Polytechnic University of Hong Kong, and Shenzhen Health Foundation; for extending an invitation to the Geneva Chapter of the **Group of 77 & China**, which I have a privilege to Chair, and for facilitating my participation at this International Leadership Seminar convened here in Hong Kong under the theme caption of: **“Healthy Oceans – Healthy Coast”**.

This international gathering will seek to discuss the economics, sustainability, health and the resilience of oceans and, more specifically, the challenges and opportunities for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14), ahead of the UN high level conference on oceans and marine resources scheduled to take place in New York June 5-9.

**Mr. Chairman,**

The Group of 77 and China continues to reiterate its firm commitment to supporting the implementation of the UN’s SDG 14, which calls for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources.

The Group has time and again underlined the importance of maintaining political momentum to keep working tirelessly for the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in its three dimensions — economic, social and environmental — in a balanced and integrated manner.

The Group reiterates the importance to protect, and restore, the health, productivity and resilience of oceans and marine ecosystems, to maintain their biodiversity, enabling their conservation and sustainable use for present and future generations.

The oceans economy is an integral part of today's development paradigm, emphasizing on an environmentally friendly and more sustainable and inclusive economic development paths. The Oceans economy, according to UNCTAD, seeks to sustainably expand the economic frontiers of coastal countries beyond their land territories in order to provide new economic, social and environmental benefits. Deriving sustainable benefits from these economic frontiers should occur within an integrated and effective legal and institutional ocean governance framework.

**Mr. Chairman,**

It is important to note that, the value of the global ocean economy is estimated to be between US\$ 3-6 trillion per year, and more than 3 billion people, i.e. almost half of the global population, rely on the oceans for their livelihoods. Certainly, oceans and the ocean economy are of immense value to the globe.

The economic dimensions of the oceans are broad indeed, including the international trade of living marine products, and other natural resources, and services. Trade is an enabling factor shifting oceans-based economic activities from niche to mainstream global markets, particularly for developing countries where domestic markets remain small. By virtue of trade, ocean-based sectors already today contribute up to 13 *percent* of GDP of developing countries, while providing employment to over 300 million and sustaining livelihoods of more than 2 billion people in developing countries.

However, rather than growing sustainably going forward, these critical economic contributions to the growth of developing economies are at risk of declining significantly unless efforts are strengthened to sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Many harvesting, processing and trade activities are based on marine resources, with fishing and aquaculture perhaps being the most relevant ones. Fish trade alone accounts for between 0.5 to 3 *percent* of GDP of many Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs), and it is an essential activity for livelihoods. Today, developing countries export about 56 *percent* of all traded fish.

Future sustainability of fish stocks is threatened today by several unsustainable activities and incentives, including fish subsidies, and Illegal unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. Fish subsidies are estimated to be at around USD 30-35 Billion a year, of which USD 20 Billion are considered as capacity enhancing subsidies. From our perspective, addressing these problems, and others related, is of critical importance for the fulfillment of SDG 14.

**Mr. Chairman,**

International trade is particularly dependent on oceans and seaways. Today 80% of world's trade by Volume, and 55% by value is seaborne. Maritime transportation is key for development and the future growth of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and LDCs, it is a certain connection to lucrative markets of their produce. Merchant ships generate more than half a trillion USD annually in freight rates. Many developing countries are among the top ship registers and ship builders.

Coastlines *Mr. Chairman* are a major factor in the world tourism sector, where about 50% of all tourists enjoy these services, which can contribute to more than 25 % of the GDP of developing countries, especially the SIDS.

**Mr. Chairman,**

We have a multitude of international, regional and national regulatory frameworks and guidelines governing oceans. We have the constitution of oceans, namely the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982, and a large set of hard and soft laws under the FAO, UN Environment, and IMO. We also have negotiations on oceans resources such as the WTO Doha Round negotiations on fisheries subsidies, as well as on market access for goods and services. All these regulatory frameworks provide the base for further global action and cooperation.

Furthermore, UNCTAD, as the UN focal point on trade and development, which enjoys unconditional trust and support by the G-77, has been given a new mandate on Oceans and blue economy under the **Nairobi Maafikiano** at the UNCTAD 14 Conference in 2016.

**Mr. Chairman,** in paragraph 100 (t) of this Declaration, we have called on UNCTAD "in cooperation with other relevant international organizations and other stakeholders, to support developing countries, in particular the SIDS, in the advancement of Sustainable Development Goal 14 in the design and implementation of national economic development strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources, seeking to promote sustainable trade in ocean-based sectors, including through analysis of fisheries subsidies that lead to overcapacity and overfishing and subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and the challenges they pose to developing countries, particularly in connection with the conservation of marine resources and food security."

It is in this spirit of the **Nairobi Maafikiano** that we now call on UNCTAD, IOI, and its partners in China to help us to develop innovative ideas on addressing some of the most pressing challenges under SDG 14.

**Mr. Chairman,**

I wish to emphasize that oceans and marine resources are under threat and, unless we act decisively and soon, we will face a tragedy of the commons in oceans and oceans resources, with detrimental knock-on effects on related

economic sectors like fisheries, shipping or tourism in all of our countries regardless of the level of development, culture and location.

I, therefore, would like to appeal to all participants of this seminar to do your utmost in contributing to an innovative approach, backed with political will, and resources, to ensure that, when we address the ocean economy and indeed the broader challenging issues relating to the oceans and development, we aim at arriving safely back to harbor.

**Mr. Chairman, I thank you.**