



Statement

by

**H.E. Dr. Nawaf Salam
Permanent Representative of Lebanon
to the United Nations**

**at the
general debate**

**of the
“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”**

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*Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations
866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 531, New York, NY. 10017*

Mr. President,

Allow me at the outset, to commend you and the United Nations Secretariat on the impeccable organization of the Oceans Conference, and on the richness of expertise and ideas that have been on display in the last three days, in the plenary meetings, the partnership dialogues, and the numerous side events. I would also like to take this opportunity to applaud the efforts of the co-facilitators whose tireless commitment and resolve have helped us reach a consensus on the Call for Action.

Lebanon considers this Conference a milestone in the efforts to mobilize the capacity and will of the international community to address the health and sustainability of our oceans and seas, and to fully implement Goal 14 of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development within its agreed timeframes.

Lebanon's deep and intimate relationship with the Ocean goes back to times immemorial, when our forefathers from Berytus (Beirut), Byblos (Jbeil), Sidon (Saida) and Tyre (Sour) roamed the waters of the Mediterranean Sea with their vessels and ships, trading and interacting with other cultures and peoples, and building new cities and ports on its shores and islands, many of which withstood the test of time until our modern era. The Sea has become ingrained in our country's sustainable development, economy, culture, history and national character. Hence, it is our conviction that through our contribution to the conservation and preservation of our oceans and seas, we are also protecting our past, present and future.

Mr. President,

It is no secret that in Lebanon today we are facing many challenges to our marine and coastal ecosystems due to increased coastal urbanization, land and sea-based sources of pollution (sewage and oil dumping), habitat degradation, an increasing demand on marine resources, invasive species, and the global impact of climate change.

These challenges were compounded in recent years by the environmental catastrophe caused by Israel's bombing, in July 2006, of El-Jiyeh power plant, which resulted in an oil slick that covered the entirety of the Lebanese coastline, polluting Lebanon's shores with serious adverse implications on the country's economy, tourism, marine resources, biodiversity, fisheries, and human health, which prompted the General Assembly to overwhelmingly adopt, for 11 consecutive years, the "Oil Slick on Lebanese Shores" resolution.

We acknowledge that Goal 14 constitutes the adequate guiding framework to address many of these challenges, especially if it was integrated, along with its targets, into national development plans and strategies. The successful implementation of those targets would help Lebanon reduce marine pollution of all kinds, sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems, support its artisanal fishing sector and encourage the adoption of more sustainable fishing practices.

Lebanon already has in place a large set of environmental laws and regulations covering marine and coastal ecosystems, particularly the Law for Fisheries of 1929, the Environment Law of 2002 which embraces the polluter-pays-principle to help curb pollution, including seawater pollution, and two laws on marine protected areas (MPA's), which established the Palm Islands Nature Reserve in North Lebanon in 1992, and the Tyre Coast Nature Reserve in South Lebanon in 1998.

The national Marine Protected Areas Strategy, which was developed in 2012 by the Lebanese Ministry of Environment in partnership with International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), proposes the establishment of 15 additional MPA's which would include the estuaries of 5 rivers and 1 deep water site. In addition, Lebanon's Master Plan for Wastewater Treatment and Management, envisages the construction of multiple wastewater treatment plants along the Lebanese coast in the next few years, which will help reducing pollution levels in the Mediterranean.

While it is imperative that governments should lead the national implementation efforts, the effectiveness and inclusiveness of those efforts can only be ensured by the participation of all other relevant stakeholders, including the private sector, civil society, the academic community, women and youth, educational institutions, media, and UN agencies. Successful implementation will also require bolstering international cooperation to provide the necessary technical assistance, technology transfer and capacity building to developing countries, including middle income countries.

Finally Mr. President,

Lebanon welcomes the particular focus and attention that the Oceans Conference has granted for our essential common goal to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources. But we also underline our conviction in the integrated and indivisible nature of all Sustainable Development Goals, and the inter-linkages and synergies that exist between them, including those between Goal 14 and Goal 13 on combating climate change. In this regard, the Oceans Conference represents a timely and appropriate platform to reaffirm the importance of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change as an essential international tool to tackle this global challenge to our planet and our future.

I thank you for your attention.