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The Permanent Mission of Iceland to the United Nations

Statement by

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**High-level 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**

General Debate

6 June 2017

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Presidents of the Conference, Secretary-General of the Conference, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

First allow me to thank the Co-presidents, Fiji and Sweden, for bringing about this High-Level Conference to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14. It is a historic event.

Mr. President,

Without a clean, healthy, productive ocean, Agenda 2030 will be almost impossible to attain. Sustainable management of natural resources is key to our aims of eradicating poverty and hunger, ensuring healthy lives and promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth. The ocean covers 70% of our Earth. Its central role is obvious.

Mr. President,

Iceland has direct experience of the power and potential of the ocean. The transition of Iceland to a modern welfare state is thanks to an efficient, profitable and sustainable fisheries sector. We have also seen innovation and regenerative creativity, a cornerstone of the vision of the blue bioeconomy of the future.

Iceland's fisheries management system has overcome the traditional inefficiencies of the past. The industry generates substantial economic profit which is subject to special resource taxation, thus benefitting the whole economy.

Mr. President,

But we shouldn't try to reinvent the wheel. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, UNCLOS, is the legal framework for all activities in the oceans and seas. The management of high seas fisheries through a regional approach, in line with the UN Fish Stocks Agreement, has proven a firm basis for sustainable management. So, we already have the legal framework for successful implementation of SDG 14 - as long as States meet their obligations and work together.

Iceland, as an Arctic Coastal State, takes part in the ongoing negotiations on a new agreement to prevent unregulated high seas fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean and has been engaged, within the Arctic Council, in consultations on increased Arctic Marine cooperation.

The FAO Port State Measures Agreement is a milestone in our fight against IUU fisheries and needs wide ratification to meet its objectives. We further believe that global elimination of harmful subsidies in the fisheries sector is fundamental for achieving responsible fisheries management.

Mr. President,

I am very honoured to be one of two co-chairs for partnership dialogue six on Thursday, on “Increasing Scientific Knowledge and Developing Research Capacity and Transfer of Marine Technology”. Iceland has registered a commitment to map the ocean bed within the Icelandic EEZ. We have also registered a commitment to implement a Harvest Control Rule, or other relevant measures, as appropriate, for management of commercially important stocks in Icelandic waters, that are not already under such management, within ten years.

Iceland has for almost two decades contributed to capacity-building in fisheries management in developing countries. We have mainly done this through the UN University Fisheries Training Programme in Iceland.

Iceland has also made voluntary commitments to reduce marine litter in its waters and to address acidification by producing an updated climate mitigation strategy by the end of 2017, in line with our Paris Agreement obligations of a 40% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. It is remarkable that the Icelandic fishing fleet, as a result of rationalization, driven by rights-based-fisheries management, has already reduced its fuel consumption by 40% percent compared to the baseline year.

Mr. President,

The global community has committed itself to end hunger. If we want the oceans to be an essential part of this commitment, which I believe is imperative, science-based sustainable harvesting of marine resources must become a universal practice. Rather than claiming that responsible management of fisheries is unattainable, we should highlight the many success stories and build on them through sharing of knowledge and technology. In other words, let's build on optimism instead of pessimism.

Goal 14 of the Sustainable Development Goals is of vital importance to my country and we will continue to contribute to its successful and effective implementation.