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Plenary meeting 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

New York, 7 June 2017

Statement

by Ms. Tamar Ioseliani, Deputy Director of Maritime Agency of Georgia, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development to the United Nations

Mr. President/Madam President

Let me start by extending our sincere gratitude to the Governments of Fiji and Sweden for co-hosting this very important event. I would like also to acknowledge the tireless efforts of the co-facilitators of the preparatory process of the conference, the Permanent Representatives of Portugal and Singapore to the United Nations in leading the intergovernmental negotiations on the outcome document.

Mr. President/ Madam President,

We strongly believe that our ocean has critical importance for “our shared future and common humanity in all its diversity”. Oceans play a vital role in our lives, not only by supplying nearly half the oxygen we breathe, but also by providing water, food and nutrition, contributing immensely to economic development, maritime trade and transportation and acting as the primary regulator of the global climate and an important sink for greenhouse gases.

Mindful of all of these, we are alarmed by the problems our oceans face – maritime pollution, deterioration of coastal and marine ecosystems, rise in temperature, ocean and coastal acidification, deoxygenation, sea-level rise and coastal erosion, to name a few. Georgia as a coastal country, has itself been experiencing the impacts of these challenges.

We strongly believe that the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14) represents the pressing need for halting and reversing the devastating results of marine- and land-based human activities that continue to threaten oceans and seas and marine resources. In this regard, let me underline the particular importance of the Paris Agreement. **I am pleased that Georgia has recently deposited the instrument of Approval of the Paris Agreement.**

Mr. President/ Madam President

SDG 14 is among those goals that the Government of Georgia has prioritized at the national level, with the target 14.4 being the particular focus of its efforts. Specific actions are carried out aimed at improving monitoring of fishing vessels and introducing internationally recognized standards of Vessel Monitoring System.

To minimize illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing and to better control fishing in real time, the new electronic monitoring system is being introduced, that will increase the efficiency of the state control and help the responsible Ministry to obtain relevant detailed information.

To elevate the burden from marine natural ecosystems, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resource Protection of Georgia is also planning to intensify aquaculture production, given the huge potential the country has in this regard.

In all our efforts, partnerships, as well as assistance in capacity building and sharing of experience and best practices are enablers of success.

Mr. President/Madam President

Sustainable and environmentally friendly maritime transportation is fundamental to ensuring healthy oceans. To raise awareness on this critical issue within the region and beyond, the Government has launched the Georgia International Maritime Forum (GIMF), which was inaugurated in September 2016.

The Forum, that was attended by over 300 participants from 46 countries, resulted in the adoption of the Batumi Declaration, that reminded us that [and I quote]: “About seventy per cent of the Earth’s surface is covered by water and the oceans hold over ninety six per cent of all Earth’s water. Water is life. People all over the world rely on ships to transport the commodities, fuel, foodstuffs, goods and products on which they depend. Maritime transport is the backbone of international trade and global market. Safe, secure, efficient and environmentally friendly maritime transportation is fundamental to the development of global trade and the world economy and the attainment of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.”

The Declaration strongly recommended that GIMF2018 focuses on the linkage between the safe, secure, efficient and environmentally friendly maritime transportation and the realisation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We look forward to these discussions in 2018 and avail ourselves of this opportunity to invite you to the event.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, let me assure you of our continuous commitment to contribute to the successful implementation of the SDG 14 and the 2030 Agenda as a whole.

Thank you.

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