

Statement by Secretary-General, H.E. Georges Rebelo Pinto Chikoti, of the OACPS on World Oceans Day 2020

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Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) joins the global community in marking this year's World Oceans Day, which this year has the theme *Innovation for a Sustainable Ocean*. This day is set aside by the United Nations to recognise the importance of our oceans, which are essential to sustain life on our planet, provide the oxygen we breathe, feed billions of people, and provide livelihoods for millions.

For many Members of the OACPS, the ocean and its resources are the foundation of their economies, and support critical sectors, including tourism, fisheries and international shipping. Small Island Developing States (SIDS) within the OACPS have a particularly deep relationship with the ocean as their economic wellbeing, security, heritage, and food security are inextricably linked to the ocean. The quality of life of SIDS is therefore inevitably connected to the overall health of the ocean.

Due to unsustainable practices and climate change, the oceans are changing for the worse. Members of the OACPS are witnessing more frequent extreme weather events, increased coral bleaching, rising sea levels, overfishing and marine pollution - all of which put the lives of dependent communities at risk.

In the face of these challenges, it is urgent to accelerate actions to sustainably manage the oceans and its resources so that they are healthy, productive and resilient, if they are to continue to support the social and economic wellbeing of today's societies and of future generations. Addressing the challenges facing our oceans is a uniquely cross-national challenge that requires the cooperation of partners at all levels, each playing a part in taking bold and comprehensive steps to support capacity development, invest in innovations and provide the necessary financial resources to undertake concrete actions in countries that are most affected.

Innovations are now more critical than ever to provide solutions and drive change towards a more sustainable blue economy, which adopts renewable and resource-efficient methods for sustainable development, meets consumer needs and mitigates the impacts of climate change on our oceans.

The OACPS, with its history of engagement on ocean-related issues, pledges to strengthen its partnerships and leverage projects to disseminate and upscale innovations on sustainable ocean management. It further commits to sharing the lessons learnt with other countries to ensure that no one is left behind.

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