

**Statement on behalf of stakeholders who have contributed to the
Second Intergovernmental Review Meeting of the Global Programme of
Action and its Preparatory Process**

By Dr. A. Behnam President, International Ocean Institute
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Honourable Secretary General, State Council of the Peoples Republic of China
Chairman,
Honourable Ministers,
Executive Director of UNEP,
Coordinator, UNEP/GPA
Excellencies,
Distinguished participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me on behalf of the stakeholders, who have contributed to the Second Intergovernmental Review Meeting (IGR-2) of the Global Programme of Action (GPA) in its preparatory and current process, thank you for providing us with the opportunity to address your high-level plenary and present a statement that reflects both our concerns and an assessment of progress in the implementation of the GPA. I also wish to take this opportunity to extend our deep appreciation and gratitude to the Coordinator of the GPA for her support that facilitated our task. We extend our appreciation to the Chair of the working group on the Beijing Declaration for accommodating our input at an early stage; and to the host country China, we express our thanks for excellent facilities and hospitality extended to all of us.

Honourable Ministers, stakeholders express their concern with the state of marine environment and the growing threat to it. There is no doubt that the state of the ocean is a distortion of humanity's purpose on this planet. The ocean—our very source of life—may be suffering from irreversible damage from human, land-based and coastal activities. While enumerating the many reasons for our concern in our submission, it is not intended that it be a litany of complaints. Stakeholders also recognise the progress that has been made and that progress itself brings new challenges, as we were reminded by Verlee earlier in the week.

The IGR-2 provides the opportunity to bring the issues threatening the marine environment to the front burner and focus the international community on measures and solutions. We believe that the necessary tools to address the scale of the evolving challenge and commitments are already available and forthcoming.

Stakeholders recognise the vital role they play in making a difference and the contribution they can make to the implementation of the GPA through a variety of actions, in particular through partnerships that are adequately resourced. For that purpose, and in pursuit of collaborative implementation of the GPA, stakeholders are determined to provide leadership by the example of their own action in support of a sustainable marine environment, whether by innovation, coherence of actions and activities, engagement in community-based approaches, and adherence to precautionary and participatory principles at all levels.

Stakeholders strongly believe that at this Intergovernmental Review, the embodiment of partnership in the theme and core of focus, allowed us all to take the high ground to a better future and meaningful dialogue. Nurturing a culture of partnership and cooperation that is inclusive of all stakeholders can provide many of the solutions we all seek in the governance architecture.

Chairman, 75 million years ago a volcanic eruption created a five year volcanic winter. Only one thousand of our species managed to survive in Africa because they learned to cooperate with each other. They are our only ancestors. Today, through the same method we may be able to save our ocean if we fulfil our partnerships in implementing the GPA.

The stakeholder submission also appeals directly to you, your Excellencies, the policy and decision makers. You hold the power to determine what earth our children and grandchildren shall eventually inherit, as a result of our actions or inactions. While stakeholders share in that awesome responsibility, we strongly believe that your political will its application can determine that future.

We realise that achieving the goals and objectives of the GPA does not come cheap or without pain. It demands sacrifices from all. However, the result will be a win-win for all. That is why the stakeholders call on the generosity of donors and the financial institutions to ensure the continuation of financial support to the work of GEF on International Waters and the work of the programme of the UNEP/GPA Coordination Office.

Stakeholders look to you, the policy makers, for leadership in implementing and enforcing commitments embodied in multilateral environmental agreements, facilitating capacity and institution building, intensifying related training and education, ensuring inclusiveness and participatory approaches, promoting the ecosystem principle, and protecting traditional knowledge. For this purpose, our submission includes a variety of proposals of activities and initiatives at various levels.

Chairman, while presenting to you the full written text of the stakeholders submission and requesting it be annexed to the final report, allow me to quote from a great and remarkable civil society leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, on time is running out:

“Justice delayed is justice denied . . . We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history there is such a thing as being too late. Procrastination is still the thief of time. Life often leaves us standing bare, naked and dejected with a lost opportunity . . . Over the bleached bones and jumbled residues of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words: ‘Too late.’ . . . This may well be humankind’s last chance to choose between chaos and community.”

Mr. Chairman, today we have chosen community over chaos. We are encouraged; we are determined; we have the will; we have the tools, and we have the means. Together we can succeed, and save the ocean, the source of life. Let time not run out.

Thank you.