**Statement by Nigeria on behalf of the Blue Leaders for Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework negotiations in Nairobi, Kenya, 21-26 June 2022**

Excellencies, distinguished representatives, ladies and gentlemen.

Our oceans provide and regulate the resources that sustain Life on Earth. Our oceans provide rainwater, drinking water, and food; they determine our weather, supply oxygen, and shield us from the worst effects of climate change. Our oceans are the source of livelihoods for as many as 40 million people, of sustenance for more than a billion of us around the world, and of homelands, with almost 40% of us living in coastal areas.

But our oceans are pushed to the brink. From rising sea levels and warming, to acidification, pollution, biodiversity loss, depleted fish stocks, unsustainable exploitation, IUU fishing and the disappearance of coral reefs – they risk collapse under the weight of what we have done to them. We are running out of time to preserve our oceans and marine biodiversity.

The good news is that we have solutions. Scientists have made it clear that by establishing marine protected areas and strengthening management of human activities outside protected areas, we can restore our oceans and protect our planet.

The science tells us we must “highly” and “fully” protect at least 30% of our oceans by 2030 from environmentally damaging activities to achieve the maximum benefit for biodiversity and ocean resilience in the face of climate change.

So, when we discuss Target 3 this week, let us keep in mind that to be effective, protected areas must prevent environmentally damaging activity while permitting only light extractive uses, such as local community fishing. Without this focus on the quality of protected areas, we risk ending up with 30% of our ocean in “paper parks” that do very little to conserve biodiversity or improve the resilience of the ocean.

In raising our ambition to protect 30% of the global ocean by 2030, we must ensure that protected areas are meaningfully protected from environmentally damaging activities We must also choose to protect areas that possess the greatest marine diversity, areas that are truly ecologically representative, and areas that are connected to other marine ecosystems.

Nigeria is a member of the Blue Leaders, an ambitious coalition of countries committed to establishing 30% of the world’s oceans as highly and fully protected marine areas. Nigeria and the other Blue Leader countries invite you to be bold and to join us in our ambitious commitment to protect our planet.