STATEMENT BY

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CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

at the opening of

EXPERT WORKSHOP ON UNDERWATER NOISE AND ITS IMPACTS ON MARINE AND COASTAL BIODIVERSITY

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to extend my warmest welcome and utmost thanks to all the experts from countries and organizations for participating in the CBD Expert Workshop on Underwater Noise and Its Impacts on Marine and Coastal Biodiversity.

My sincere thanks go to the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for hosting this important workshop. We greatly appreciate their warm welcome and kind hospitality in this historic city of London.

My special thanks also go to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) for collaborating on the organization of this workshop. I wish to emphasize the importance of our close collaboration with relevant international and regional partners in successfully implementing the Convention's work on marine and coastal biodiversity.

I acknowledge with great appreciation the kind financial support of the European Commission which allowed the convening of this workshop.

In my recent statement at the eighth meeting of the United Nations Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, I stressed the importance of oceans to sustainable development and healthy global ecosystems. It is no exaggeration to say all of humanity depends on marine biodiversity. Marine ecosystems are essential for the bio-geo-chemical cycles that sustain all life on earth. Moreover, hundreds of millions of people rely directly on marine biodiversity for their livelihoods.

The ocean also presents a wealth of opportunities for sustainable economic growth and development, including through trade via commercial shipping, renewable energy exploitation, fishing and other activities. As the human presence in the oceans grows, anthropogenic activities have become a major sources for oceanic background noise, with significant implications for marine biodiversity.

Sound is extremely important to many marine animals and plays a key role in communication, navigation, orientation, feeding and the detection of predators**.** Marine mammals, in particular, use sound as a primary means for underwater communication and sensing. Many other marine species, including various types of fish and invertebrates, also rely on sound for essential life functions such as navigation, selection of habitat, mating, prey detection and communication. The dynamics of sound in the ocean, therefore, are intimately linked to the well-being of many marine species and the healthy functioning of marine ecosystems.

It has been shown that underwater noise from human activities can cause notable effects on a wide range of marine biodiversity. These effects can range from mild behavioural responses to serious physical injury or death. In marine mammals, underwater noise has been shown to cause permanent or temporary loss of hearing, habitat displacement, and population declines. New research is also pointing to impacts on the health and behavior of certain types of fish species and turtles.

There are also increasing concerns about the long-term, cumulative effects of underwater noise on marine biodiversity, which are largely unknown. Some research has indicated that excessive noise levels can have the long-term impacts of reduced fitness and increased stress leading to health issues. There is also growing concern about the cumulative effects of noise on populations and communities. Clearly, excessive underwater noise is an important threat to the health of the marine environment with far-reaching ecological and socioeconomic implications.

As more and more evidence emerges on the significant impacts of underwater noise on marine biodiversity, the need for adequate policy action to address these impacts has become evident. There exists some knowledge and experience upon which to build in developing policy approaches to mitigate the impacts of underwater noise. The CBD Scientific Synthesis on the Impacts of Underwater Noise on Marine

and Coastal Biodiversity and Habitats, produced in 2012, provides a review of the relevant knowledge on this area. Additionally, the background document produced in support of this workshop's deliberation builds on the 2012 study and reviews various approaches used to minimize and mitigate the significant adverse impacts of anthropogenic underwater noise on marine and coastal biodiversity. This document describes experience in different sectors in mitigating the impacts of underwater noise on marine biodiversity, including best practices and the need for standardized guidance on tools.

In recognition of the importance of underwater noise and its impacts on marine biodiversity, the Conference of the Parties to the CBD, at its eleventh meeting, encouraged Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations, according to their priorities, to promote research and awareness of the issue, take measures to minimize the significant adverse impacts of anthropogenic underwater noise on marine biodiversity, and develop indicators and explore frameworks for monitoring underwater noise for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity.

Pursuant to the call by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, in the same decision, this expert workshop is being convened, in collaboration with Parties, other Governments, and competent organizations, with a view to improving and sharing knowledge on underwater noise and its impacts on marine and coastal biodiversity, and the development of practical guidance and toolkits to minimize and mitigate the significant adverse impacts of anthropogenic underwater noise on marine and coastal biodiversity, including marine mammals, in order to assist Parties and other Governments in applying management measures.

Sustainable oceans can be achieved only through the building of a shared vision and strong commitments toward responsible use of the marine environment. Combined with innovative approaches for linking science with policy development and implementation through multi-stakeholder partnerships, these efforts should ensure a sustainable future for the oceans of the world.

With this, I wish you a successful and fruitful workshop.

Thank you for your attention.