

Speech by Professor Patrick Paul Walsh, University College Dublin

at the UN Oceans Conference, June 8, 2017

Mr President, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies, and Gentlemen:

I would like to deliver a statement on behalf of University College Dublin, UN-Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), and the Global Association of Masters in Development Practice (MDO) Programs.

I would like to thank the Conference organizers, particularly the Governments of Sweden and Fiji, for giving non-governmental stakeholders, in particular the academic and scientific communities, the opportunity to speak at the plenary session of this Conference in the General Assembly Hall.

The main takeaway from the 1992 Agenda 21 was that action on the environment could not be done by governments alone and had to involve all stakeholders. There had to be a change in mind-set across all sectors of society – including governments, the private sector, NGOs, academia, and the scientific and technological community.

SDSN took seriously its role in providing academic and technical support to the Post-2015 Development Agenda process, and is now committed to the implementation of the fruits of that process, namely the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Universities can be a key partner in delivering SDG science, education, finance, data, and partnerships. Universities in the SDSN network are working hard to re-orientate their education, research, and policy outreach towards the SDG agenda.

The work of the SDSN notes the important interplay of the economic, social, and governance pillars with the environmental pillar, on which the sustainability of the ocean depends. There are significant two-way linkages among these pillars. Even though this Conference has highlighted a number of negative spill-overs, there is a belief in SDSN that there are technologies and policies that can turn these linkages in a positive direction. The same human agency and ingenuity that caused these problems has the capability of reversing these negative trends.

As a cautionary note, the negative externalities are becoming more global than local. Therefore, governance of the global commons is becoming an emergency for all. Once the tragedy of the commons is addressed, we believe that stakeholder partnerships can be incentivized with appropriate technologies and policies at local levels that can remedy these negative global trends.

Thank you.