**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**REMARKS FOR THE SUMMIT "AFRICA FOR THE OCEAN"**

**9 June 2025, Nice, France**

**[All-English]**

Your Royal Highness, Princess Lalla Hasnaa of the Kingdom of Morocco,

Mr. President of the French Republic, Dear Emmanuel Macron,

Excellencies, Dear friends,

Thank you for organizing this summit to reaffirm a clear message:

The destinies of Africa and the ocean are deeply linked.

For millions of people across the continent, the ocean is a source of life, identity and promise.

With over 30,000 kilometers of coastline and 38 coastal states, Africa is a maritime powerhouse.

Its future is also written in its waters.

But this blue wealth is too often undervalued and overexploited.

Maritime insecurity threatens peace.

Pollution poisons coasts and ecosystems.

And the climate crisis – that Africa did little to cause – is ravaging its shores.

In the face of these challenges, Africa is proposing, innovating, taking action.

It is forging solutions that inspire far beyond the continent.

We see this in ambitious regional cooperation projects – and in the African Union's 2050 Integrated Maritime Strategy for the Seas and Oceans to 2050.

And we see it in international negotiations, where Africa is making its voice heard loud and clear.

The Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity beyond Areas of National Jurisdiction - the BBNJ Agreement - is one example.

The African Group was a key player in the negotiations, securing commitments on equitable benefit sharing, capacity building and marine technology transfer.

To date, 28 African states have signed the Agreement. Three have already ratified it. These numbers have increased with the news that President Macron shared with us earlier today.

And several more are planning to do so today, at the special treaty ceremony for the BBNJ Agreement.

This is a strong signal: Africa is at the heart of ocean action.

But to fully unleash this potential, we need a political and financial surge.

This begins by strengthening maritime security in the face of transnational threats - piracy, arms and human trafficking and organized crime.

The United Nations will continue to support African efforts, notably through the Yaoundé Architecture, which has contributed to a significant decline in acts of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

This also requires ocean governance based on science and cooperation.

We must combat pollution and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, strengthen capacities for collecting and sharing oceanographic data, and protect biodiversity.

We must promote renewable marine energies, sustainable aquaculture and tourism – all of which create decent jobs, in particular for young people and women.

But these efforts will only bear fruit if Africa is connected -- within its territories and with the rest of the world.

Africa's oceans must become integration corridors – linking coastal and landlocked countries, for a shared growth.

This calls for concrete investments in maritime infrastructures – interconnected ports, resilient to climate change, capable of meeting the needs of growing trade.

Landlocked states must be connected to global value chains.

No country should be left behind.

But for this transformation to be sustainable and equitable, we must put an end to historical injustices.

These injustices are also reflected in the ocean: investments have too often bypassed Africa, even as its marine resources were exploited by others.

The Pact for the Future, adopted last September, calls for deep reforms of global financial institutions – so that they serve everyone.

It is time for developing countries to be fairly represented in these institutions.

We need a system that reflects the realities of the 21st century – a system that is more just, more supportive, and more effective. As is the the case with the United Nations Security Council.

That is why I call on financial institutions, bilateral and multilateral donors, development banks and the private sector to step up – including at the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development in Seville.

Dear friends,

From Dakar to Djibouti, from Cape Town to Casablanca, Africa is proving that prosperity and preservation can go hand in hand.

The world needs Africa to meet the ocean's challenges.

And the ocean needs an Africa that charts its own course and navigates decisively toward the future.

Thank you.