Dear Friends of the Ocean,

On behalf of the United Nations, I'm writing to express deep appreciation for your being one of the parties who registered voluntary commitments in support of the aims of The Ocean Conference, held at the United Nations in New York on 5 to 9 June 2017. As I am sure you are aware, close to 1,400 such commitments were made before and during the conference. As well as thanking you for your support, this letter serves to assure you that follow-up work on the register of voluntary commitments is well underway and that the results of that work will be shared with you in due course.

As a first step in that follow-up work, an analysis of all the voluntary commitments is being undertaken by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). This analysis will result in a paper, which will be made publicly available and will be distributed to you all as soon as it is ready.

Amongst other things, the analysis has grouped the voluntary commitments in the context of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets. We expect to thereby identify clusters of common interest, with a view to facilitating relevant information-sharing and collaborative action going forward.

Be assured that the energy you communally put into The Ocean Conference has been captured and is being used to power the next phase of action to support the implementation of SDG14. The Call for Action declaration adopted at the conference has now been endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly. Thus, the international community is committed to action, and we must now move to doing what must be done next to reverse the cycle of decline in which the Ocean has been caught. In full compliance with the Call for Action declaration, effective partnerships and the full participation of all relevant stakeholders will be a key element of this collective action.

While this is practical, step-by-step work, based on the best science available to us, and agreed elements of action, we are also engaged in existential, one could say sacred work, dedicated to bringing humanity's relationship with the Ocean back to one of balance and respect.

Through the oxygen it sends us to breathe and the bounty of its resources, the Ocean sustains us. Through the clouds it sends us with life-giving rain, the rivers and the watered land give us our daily bread. On this one blue planet, the Ocean unites us all, thus when it comes to caring for Ocean's well-being, we are all in this together.

I have no doubt that through our determined collective action, we will achieve the intent of SDG14 by its 2030 maturation date, and look forward to working with you all to that end.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Thomson
United Nations Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for the Ocean