



## **Ministerial Statement**

**By**

**The Hon. Walter H. Roban, JP, MP**

**Minister of Home Affairs**

**15<sup>th</sup> July 2022**

### **United Nations Ocean Conference 2022**

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**Mr. Speaker,** I rise today to inform this Honourable House of my attendance at the United Nations Oceans Conference in Lisbon, Portugal which was held the 27<sup>th</sup> June to the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022.

**Mr. Speaker,** more than 6,000 participants from more than 150 countries attended the conference, according to organizers, including 24 heads of state and government.

**Mr. Speaker,** I made my decision to attend for a number of reasons. Firstly, I was afforded the honour to attend the conference as the member of the Waitt Foundation Delegation and actively participate in presenting the great work we have accomplished in partnership with Waitt. Honourable Members would be aware that Bermuda has a successful partnership with the Waitt Foundation and the BIOS which has achieved much in our own effort to protect our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and developed a strategy to pursue Bermuda's opportunity in the Blue Economy. The EEZ is the area of the ocean that extends 200 nautical

miles (370 kilometers) from each nation's coasts. Secondly, The Waitt Foundation as a Non-Government Organisation (NGO) had a substantial presence at the conference creating the perfect opportunity to showcase Bermuda. We also demonstrated, outside of the work with Waitt and Bermuda Ocean Prosperity Programme (BOPP), Bermuda's mature and very advanced regulatory framework for marine protection, conservation and management of our oceans around us.

Thirdly, Bermuda also made representations as the lead-country of the Sargasso Sea Commission, which is one of the pioneer initiatives led by Bermuda to protect and manage the Open Ocean. The Sargasso Sea Commission was established through the signing of the Hamilton Declaration in 2014. It is a voluntary organization of 10 countries in the Atlantic area who have agreed to high seas protection and conservation of the area known as the Sargasso Sea. Bermuda is the only land mass that exists within this area. Protection of the open high seas is considered one of the last frontiers and is described as the "unfinished agenda" of international marine conservation and protection of these important ecosystems. Bermuda proudly has led the Sargasso Sea Commission for nearly a decade. We endeavor to work with our global and Atlantic partners to further expand its reach. It is currently under the Acting Chairmanship of Dr Tammy Warren, Bermuda's Chief Marine Conservation Officer. Dr Warren accompanied me as part of the Bermuda Delegation providing excellent guidance and advice on all marine matters.

**Mr. Speaker**, on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> July, on our first full day in Lisbon we attended, at the invitation of the French Government, a luncheon to promote the SARGADOM Project, a project which will contribute to the protection of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the high seas on the Thermal Dome in the Pacific and the Sargasso Sea in the Atlantic.

**Mr. Speaker,** on Monday, 27<sup>th</sup> June, the Bermuda delegation attended the Blue Prosperity Leadership Forum Luncheon in the Oceanario de Lisboa Panoramic Room. This event was led by Waitt Institute Founder and Chair Mr. Ted Waitt. This luncheon brought together heads of delegations and core Blue Prosperity Coalition partners. It provided the opportunity for informal dialogue among ocean leaders working towards achieving lasting marine protection and sustainable blue economies. In addition to Bermuda, Fiji, Samoa, FSM, Maldives, Tonga, Azores, Cabo Verde and Waitt Institute's founding partners – Ocean 5 and Oceano Azul, were invited to attend the event. Bermuda, as one of the Coalition partners, is most advanced in the development of our work with the Foundation. I shared with the other countries details of Bermuda's journey in developing our own Blue Economy and Marine Spatial Plan.

**Mr. Speaker,** on Tuesday 28 June, we met with Mr. Ted Waitt, founder of the Waitt Institute and Foundation, to discuss the organization's ongoing partnership with Bermuda to support our marine spatial planning, protected areas and blue economy. We particularly discussed with Mr. Waitt how the foundation could support our plans to develop capacity on island to build, install, and maintain our renewable energy infrastructure of the future. There will, in the future, be more renewable energy installed commercially and in homes that must be maintained and operated. Energy security for Bermuda will only come if we are independent in harnessing the power of the sun, wind and ocean but also in the management, operation and maintenance of the infrastructure. The Waitt team expressed enthusiastic support for supporting the training and development required.

Later that day, I spoke at the first session of the Blue Economy Investment Forum, sponsored by the Portuguese Government. The event provided another great opportunity to investigate new funding opportunities and showcase Bermuda's blue

economy work. A senior journalist from CNN moderated the session, and Bermuda shared the podium with international participants World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Government of Kenya.

**Mr. Speaker**, on the final day, Wednesday 29 June, along with Dr Warren, I attended a morning meeting on behalf of the Sargasso Sea Commission, the University of Brest and key stakeholders to discuss the work of the Commission and recent developments. At the meeting, I led a call to galvanize support for the Commission's work and to increase the number of member countries. I have in fact already officially reached out to a specific country in the Atlantic to consider membership.

Later that day, we attended an event focused on Sustainable Financing co-hosted by the UK and Fiji and chaired by Lord Goldsmith, Minister of State for the Pacific and the International Environment. After the session, I briefly met with Lord Goldsmith and had the unexpected opportunity to speak with the recently re-elected Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, Baroness Scotland.

At that event, Lord Zac Goldsmith announced that more than 100 nations have now pledged to protect 30% of their oceans by 2030. Bermuda is already on path with a plan to successfully protect 20% of our own EEZ.

**Mr. Speaker**, following my own presentation to support the expansion of the size of the Sargasso Sea Commission and work of the Sargasso Sea Commission team at the conference, Dr Warren and I were able to meet with two members of the European Parliament, Pierre Karleskind, Chair of the Committee on Fisheries and Catherine Chabaud, member of the Development, Environment, and Fisheries committees, to advocate for the recognition and eventual support for EU membership of the Sargasso Sea Commission and their signing of the Hamilton Declaration 2014. To achieve support for the Commission by the European Union

would be a great achievement and we are pleased to have made a significant step to reach this goal.

**Mr. Speaker**, this conference overall proved to be an excellent opportunity to showcase what Bermuda has done to develop our Blue Economy and Marine Spatial Plan. I met and spoke with leaders and influencers in environmental protection and sustainability impressing the need to act now. As a small island nation, climate change, environmental protection, and sustainability are vital to our future.

**Mr. Speaker**, there have been those who constantly question the value of our attendance at these international conferences and Bermuda is getting value for money. I would like to address these questions. Bermuda has a tradition of punching above her weight particularly in the tourism world and the world of financial services. We are now becoming known for our record of success in conservation, environmental protection, energy transition and climate action. I would hope people are pleased to hear we are not just known for our role as an offshore financial center.

In fact, **Mr. Speaker**, Bermuda's positive reputation in the environmental space was proven to me at this conference time and time again. A number of attendees I met also came to the Ocean Risk Summit of 2018 and the recently held Climate Risk Summit. I was able to have a preliminary discussion with someone who was very much involved with organizing the Ocean Risk Summit about the possibility of having another one in Bermuda. In 2018, the ocean was not even on the global agenda. We are now in 2022 and the ocean is very much at the top of the global agenda. To some degree, Bermuda pioneered part of this global discussion. It is now the time to consider reconvening the Ocean Risk Summit to continue the conversation and devise a further plan of action.

**Mr. Speaker,** Bermuda is an ocean community. The care and protection of the Ocean must be a top priority for the Government and the people of Bermuda. An unhealthy ocean threatens everything including the food we eat and our natural environment. The pollution from human activity threatens the whole planet. Our robust planning and environmental protections have made Bermuda a place that is safe and healthy to live. If Bermuda is not attending these events to either protect our EEZ, our International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) quota, standing with other ocean and coastal communities with a voice, or participating in making rules that govern activity on the global ocean; we will be invisible while others will make the rules for us. Who will speak for us? No one questions the expense to protect Bermuda's economic future. The same effort and care must be taken for Bermuda's environmental future. The health of our oceans is Bermuda's economic future.

**Mr. Speaker,** the United Nations Conference on Oceans also produced a document called the Lisbon Declaration titled. 'Our Ocean, Our Future, and Our Responsibility' in support of the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: *Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.*

**Mr. Speaker,** this Government has already set Bermuda on a path to achieve this goal. More information will be provided to show what Bermuda will be doing to fulfill this.

**Mr. Speaker,** this government will continue to support make sure Bermuda has a voice where we can be heard making representations to protect the environmental future of Bermuda and the world.

**Thank you, Mr. Speaker**