



General Assembly

Seventy-second session

63rd plenary meeting
 Tuesday, 5 December 2017, 10 a.m.
 New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Lajčák (Slovakia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Sauer, Vice-President (Finland), took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 77

Oceans and the law of the sea

Draft resolution (A/72/L.7)

(a) Oceans and the law of the sea

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/72/70 and A/72/70/Add.1)

Reports on the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects (A/72/89 and A/72/494)

Report on the work of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea at its eighteenth meeting (A/72/95)

Draft resolution (A/72/L.18)

(b) Sustainable fisheries, including through the 1995 Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of

Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, and related instruments

Draft resolution (A/72/L.12)

The Acting President: I should like to inform members that action on draft resolution A/72/L.7, entitled “International legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction”, is postponed to a later date to allow time for the review of its programme budget implications by the Fifth Committee.

I now give the floor to the representative of New Zealand to introduce draft resolution A/72/L.7.

Ms. Neilson (New Zealand): New Zealand and Mexico had the honour to coordinate the informal consultations on draft resolution A/72/L.7, entitled “International legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction”. New Zealand is pleased to introduce the draft resolution on behalf of all of its sponsors.

This draft resolution takes the important step of deciding to convene an intergovernmental conference under the auspices of the United Nations to develop the text of an international legally binding instrument, under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national

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jurisdiction. It successfully meets the objectives of determining the timing and start date of the conference, as well as providing the necessary details to ensure its smooth running.

My delegation is also pleased to join others in sponsoring the draft resolutions A/72/L.18, on oceans and the law of the sea, and A/72/L.12, on sustainable fisheries. We thank Thembile Joyini and Andreas Kravik for their hard work in coordinating these draft resolutions.

New Zealand aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Samoa on behalf of the members of the Pacific Islands Forum.

The draft resolution on marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction builds on the work undertaken during the four meetings of the Preparatory Committee established by resolution 69/292, including its report and recommendations. It decides that the conference will commence in 2018, with an organizational meeting in April and a further meeting in September. There will also be meetings in 2019 and the first half of 2020.

The draft resolution sets out the modalities for the conference, including its rules of procedure. It requests the President of the General Assembly to undertake consultations in an open and transparent manner for the nomination of a president or co-presidents of the conference. The draft resolution also requests the Secretary-General to provide the conference with the necessary assistance for the performance of its work and to appoint a secretary-general of the conference.

As of today, the draft resolution has 133 sponsors. We hope that more will consider joining before its adoption.

On behalf of New Zealand and Mexico, I would like to thank Director Gabriele Goettsche-Wanli and the staff of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea and the Office of Legal Counsel for their expertise and support on this draft resolution. I would also like to thank all delegations for their hard work and constructive engagement during the informal consultations. I look forward to working with all members next year in the conference itself.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa to introduce draft resolution A/72/L.18.

Mr. Joyini (South Africa): As the General Assembly is aware, South Africa had the honour to coordinate the informal consultations on draft resolution A/72/L.18, entitled “Oceans and the law of the sea”. My delegation is now pleased to introduce it under agenda item 77 on behalf of all its sponsors and delegations in general. This important exercise on the agenda of the General Assembly would not have been possible without the support of all delegations, which demonstrated tremendous cooperation and flexibility as they pursued and defended their national interests during the two five-day rounds of negotiations, which ended on 21 November.

As Coordinator, I would be remiss if I did not also acknowledge the support provided to me during the negotiations and in the intersessional period by the Director and staff of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, which provided secretariat services and advice to the Coordinator throughout the process. South Africa is also pleased to be one of the countries complimenting Mr. Andreas Kravik of Norway on his careful stewardship of the informal consultations on draft resolution A/72/L.12, on sustainable fisheries. I should like to congratulate him and encourage him to keep up the good work.

The draft resolution before us recalls the Assembly’s annual resolutions on oceans and the law of the sea, including draft resolution A/72/L.7, which has just been introduced by the representative of New Zealand, on the development of an international legally binding instrument, under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. In this regard, South Africa is also pleased to be one of the countries commending the two Facilitators of the draft resolution, Ms. Kate Neilson of New Zealand and Mr. Pablo Arrocha Olabuenaga of Mexico, for their excellent work. I should like to congratulate them and encourage them to keep up the good work.

This draft resolution would take us to the next stage in the form of negotiations in the context of the intergovernmental conference in 2018. The process towards the negotiation and adoption of an international legally binding instrument under UNCLOS is potentially one of the most significant in international environmental lawmaking in the twenty-first century. It promises to address legal, governance, regulatory and implementation gaps in the Convention.

In addition, the application of the principle of the common heritage of humankind in the international legally binding instrument would serve both to promote a sustainable-access regime and ensure a benefit-sharing regime.

The sharing of benefits is one of the key elements in the concept of the common heritage of humankind. As Mr. John Noyes, the prominent expert in the field, has observed, benefit-sharing reflects the idea of the need to promote the development of developing countries — an idea that is reflected in a multitude of international law instruments.

The draft resolution before us welcomes the progress of the work of the International Seabed Authority on draft regulations for the exploitation of mineral resources in the Area. It encourages the Authority to continue its work on the draft regulations as a matter of priority and to provide sufficient opportunities and time for the substantive consideration and discussion of successive drafts.

The Area and its resources are the common heritage of humankind. Under the Convention, the Authority is the organization established to organize, control and regulate activities in the Area for the benefit of humankind as a whole, which means that the Authority has a fundamental role to play in ensuring the establishment of an appropriate regulatory regime that provides adequate security of tenure for future exploitation of the mineral resources of the Area, while ensuring effective protection for the marine environment, in accordance with the Convention and the 1994 Agreement relating to the implementation of Part XI of the Convention.

As my delegation has stated in many other contexts, the clear and literal meaning of article 145 of the Convention makes it clear that the Authority also has a role in the preservation and conservation of the marine environment, which is a solemn responsibility that must be carried out faithfully and guarded jealously. As my delegation has stated in the past, the objectives of Part XI of the Convention will be realized only when we move to the mining phase, which would clearly be accompanied by the sharing of benefits. The rationale for a benefit-sharing element of the common heritage of humankind is captured in the famous statement of the then-Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations, Ambassador Arvid Pardo, who warned against

the failure to implement the common-heritage-of-humankind principle, saying that

“[t]here would be intolerable injustice that would reserve the plurality of the world’s resources for the exclusive benefit of less than a handful of nations. The strong would get stronger, the rich would get richer and, among the rich themselves, there would arise an increasing and insuperable differentiation between two or three and the remainder.” (*First Committee, 1515th meeting, para. 91*)

Ambassador Pardo’s argument, and, indeed, the foundation of the benefit-sharing component of the common-heritage-of-humankind principle, is based on the pursuit of a fairer and more equitable benefit-sharing framework.

In conclusion, following 10 days of intensive negotiations, including a series of small-group and bilateral meetings, delegations were able to achieve consensus on each paragraph of the draft resolution, which seeks to assist Member States and other entities in implementing obligations geared towards the sustainable use of our oceans and seas, among other things. I am therefore pleased to submit the draft resolution to the Assembly for its consideration. It is my hope that the same spirit of cooperation and understanding that characterized the negotiations will be demonstrated by delegations and that the draft resolution contained in document A/72/L.12 will be adopted by consensus.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Norway to introduce draft resolution A/72/L.12.

Mr. Kravik (Norway): Norway had the honour of coordinating the informal consultations on draft resolution A/72/L.12, on sustainable fisheries, and is pleased to introduce that text on behalf of all its sponsors.

This year’s draft resolution is a further step forward in the conservation and management of fisheries, which are an essential resource for sustainable development in much of the world. Fisheries provide a vital source of food, employment, trade and economic well-being for people throughout the world, for both present and future generations, and must therefore be run in a responsible manner.

The fisheries draft resolution addresses critical issues such as achieving sustainable fisheries, combating

illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, addressing fishing overcapacity and improving subregional and regional cooperation in order to achieve sustainable fisheries management. It also addresses the relevant issues undertaken in other United Nations forums, not least on environmental issues such as marine pollution and the emerging challenges posed by plastics and microplastics, in addition to considering key outcomes from other processes outside the United Nations.

The draft resolution highlights the importance of responsible practices for the conservation of fisheries resources and the sustainable management and development of fisheries. The text sets out urgent actions that States and regional fisheries management organizations should take in this regard.

Furthermore, this year's draft resolution recalls the entry into force of the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing and acknowledges the convening of the first meeting of States parties to the Agreement in Oslo earlier this year. It underlines the importance of minimizing the by-catch of non-targeted species and juveniles through the effective management of fishing methods in order to mitigate the adverse effects on fish stocks and ecosystems.

As Coordinator, I would like to personally thank Director Gabriele Goettsche-Wanli and the staff of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for their expertise, professionalism and invaluable support during the consultations.

My delegation is pleased to join many others in sponsoring draft resolution A/72/L.7, entitled "International legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction", which has just been introduced by Mr. Thembile Joyini of South Africa. The draft resolution addresses important issues related to the implementation of the law of the sea, and we fully support it and the parameters that it sets for activities on the oceans. We would like to express our sincerest thanks to Mr. Joyini for his careful stewardship and effective leadership during the consultations.

I would also like to offer Norway's sincere appreciation to Ms. Kate Neilson of New Zealand and Mr. Pablo Arrocha Olabuenaga of Mexico for their skilful and diligent facilitation of draft resolution

A/72/L.18, on the development of an international legally binding instrument, under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. Norway is a steadfast supporter of the process to develop a new instrument related to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. We are delighted to be a sponsor of the draft resolution, and we look forward to participating in the forthcoming intergovernmental conference, which will commence in 2018.

We are fully cognizant of the challenges that lie ahead, as the conference will have to resolve highly complex and sensitive issues. Through effective and adaptable leadership and constructive and accommodating engagement between States, we remain hopeful that we can agree on an outcome amenable to all.

Norway firmly believes that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea provides a universal and unified framework for the peaceful, responsible and predictable management of the oceans and seas, and that all activities in the oceans and seas should be conducted within this framework. In ever-changing conditions, the Convention provides clarity with regard to both the obligations and the rights of States.

Finally, I would like to conclude by conveying Norway's appreciation for the hard work and cooperation of delegations in the crafting of all three draft resolutions. It is our hope that this constructive and collaborative engagement will be maintained as we continue to address the numerous and complex issues surrounding our oceans and fisheries.

Mr. García Paz y Miño (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 77 and draft resolution A/72/L.7, entitled "International legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction".

I would like to start by thanking the Facilitators, Ms. Kate Neilson and Mr. Pablo Arrocha Olabuenaga, of the Permanent Missions of New Zealand and Mexico, for their outstanding work and tireless efforts in facilitating the consultations on the draft resolution that we have before us today, which involved discussions

in which we participated constructively. The work was conducted in an open and transparent way by the Facilitators, who consulted us broadly in order to reach an agreement. We also thank Ms. Gabriele Goettsche-Wanli and her team from the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, who worked tirelessly throughout the process to get us to this point.

The Group of 77 and China is fully committed to this process and believes that a balanced result was achieved, since the draft resolution represents a compromise aimed at enabling us to move forward in our efforts to develop an international legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. In this regard, the Group of 77 and China welcomes the decision to be taken by the General Assembly to convene an intergovernmental conference starting in 2018, under the auspices of the United Nations, to consider the recommendations of the Preparatory Committee on the elements necessary for an international legally binding instrument in the context of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and to draft a text for it.

We therefore wish to express our support for the draft resolution and to highlight the importance of ensuring its adoption by consensus. The Group of 77 and China remains committed and looks forward to fully engaging in productive discussions at the next stage of the process.

Mr. Remaoun (Algeria): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of African States.

The African Group aligns itself with the statement just delivered by the representative of Ecuador on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

We thank Mexico and New Zealand for submitting draft resolution A/62/L.7, entitled "International legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction". We would also like to express our appreciation to the Facilitators from New Zealand and Mexico for the way in which they conducted the consultations among Member States in order to reach the draft resolution before us today.

The African Group firmly believes that the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological

diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction are crucial to the future of humankind. For this reason, all States members of the African Group are sponsors of the draft resolution, and I would like to stress that few resolutions not directly initiated by the African Group enjoy such support. We hope that the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus.

The African Group fully supports the decision to convene an intergovernmental conference in 2018 to draft a new treaty on marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. However, we regret that the first session of this conference will be held in September, only a few days before the high-level week of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly. We understand that it was the earliest possible date, which is why the African Group joined the consensus. Having said that, we would like to underscore the importance of providing financial contributions to the voluntary trust fund in order to support the participation of African States. To that end, we urge States and stakeholders in a position to do so to contribute broadly to the fund.

The African Group has always been a strong supporter of the United Nations process related to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction. From the Working Group to the Preparatory Committee, with a view to completing this draft resolution on the modalities of the intergovernmental conference, the African Group has been continually, actively and constructively engaged. The African Group would like to thank everyone who made this achievement possible. There is still a long way to go in order to see a new treaty drafted, but I would assure Member States that the African Group remains committed to reaching this objective for the benefit of humankind as a whole.

Mr. Rattray (Jamaica): It is my pleasure to take the floor on behalf of the countries members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in the annual debate on sub-items (a) and (b) of agenda item 77, on oceans and the law of the sea and on sustainable fisheries.

I align this statement with that just delivered by the representative of Ecuador on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

For the members of CARICOM, both agenda issues are of central importance, given our status as small island developing States that are affected by the attendant vulnerabilities associated with this category of States. I would therefore like to extend our

sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General, as well as to the various parts of the United Nations system, for the reports that have been prepared to guide our deliberations in this regard.

Our discussions are taking place after a momentous year for the ocean. In 2017, we witnessed the successful convening of the inaugural United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development; the launch of the first global integrated marine assessment; and the first meeting of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which followed the successful entry into force of the Paris Agreement in November 2016. These milestone achievements have engendered increased awareness about the action that needs to be undertaken to protect and to sustainably use our marine resources. Furthermore, they provide confirmation of what can be realized through cooperation and collaboration.

CARICOM remains committed to the full and effective implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). As the foundational multilateral compact that regulates all activities undertaken in respect of the oceans and seas, the Convention remains a central framework for addressing the interrelated nature of the general problems of the ocean space. Furthermore, it facilitates the equitable utilization and conservation of marine resources and the protection and preservation of the marine environment.

That is why CARICOM has been active in the deliberations aimed at creating, under UNCLOS, a legally binding instrument to address the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. We are pleased that the Preparatory Commission on such an instrument completed its work within the established timeline and look forward to the start of the intergovernmental negotiations next September.

We wish to place on record our sincere appreciation to Ambassador Carlos Duarte of Brazil, who steered the process to its successful conclusion, as well as to the representatives of New Zealand and Mexico, who skilfully presided over the consultations that culminated in the finalization of the draft resolution on the modalities for the forthcoming intergovernmental conference. CARICOM is committed to working for

the continued success of this process and to ensuring that the views of all Member States are duly taken into account. We encourage other Member States to do likewise.

We remain a supporter of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects. As islands dependent on the ocean for our livelihood and socioeconomic development, we value the work undertaken in the context of this Working Group. We look forward to active engagement in its deliberations throughout the second cycle of the World Ocean Assessment and will continue to lend our support in this regard.

We also wish to express our appreciation for the invaluable work done by the institutions created by UNCLOS, in particular the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. Both the Commission and the Tribunal have made significant contributions since their establishment some 20 years ago. They continue to provide practical guidance in the implementation of the Convention. CARICOM is pleased to have contributed to the work of both entities by fielding successful candidates from Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada and Belize to serve on the Tribunal, as well as from Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago to serve on the Commission.

As the host of the International Seabed Authority, our region remains committed to supporting the work of the Authority. We therefore welcome the fact that at its twenty-third session, in August, the Authority approved the final report of the Review Committee established to carry out the first periodic review of the international regime of the Area, pursuant to article 154 of the Convention. We look forward to the future work to be undertaken in this regard.

CARICOM is indebted to the United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for the support it provides in its role as the Secretariat for the Convention. We use this occasion to encourage the provision of resources to the Division commensurate with demands from Member States. We are also grateful for the training and capacity-building provided, in particular, by the United Nations University Fisheries Training Programme, in Iceland, which benefited approximately 45 people from the region last year.

CARICOM also sees merit in ongoing efforts aimed at strengthening international cooperation and coordination among all the relevant agencies to identify areas of potential synergies and increased visibility for ocean-related issues. We concur with the Secretary-General that, within the United Nations system, inter-agency cooperation, such as through UN-Oceans, the inter-agency coordination mechanism on oceans and coastal issues, remains a crucial tool in this regard, which augurs well for addressing emerging and pressing issues. We welcome the prospects to build on the progress made to date, particularly in support of the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Like many other small island developing countries, CARICOM is highly vulnerable to the effects of marine pollution, ocean acidification and their consequential impacts on our fish stocks and marine ecosystems, such as coral reefs, as well as the effect of climate change on sea-level rise. These factors affect our fishing communities, tourism and, by extension, our people and economies at all levels.

As evidenced by the recent passage of Hurricanes Irma and Maria, our subregion remains highly susceptible to extreme weather events that threaten our very existence. However, in the face of such ravages, our resolve to better respond to these natural hazards has been heightened. To this end, CARICOM member States have taken a number of steps in several key areas to realize several major targets. Belize, for example, is one of a dozen countries to have met the Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, to conserve 17 per cent of its terrestrial and 10 per cent of its marine areas. Antigua and Barbuda is the first CARICOM country to ban single-use plastic bags and is in the process of expanding the ban to include polystyrene, or styrofoam, containers. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has also imposed a ban on the importation of plastics and styrofoam containers and will outlaw their use as of January 2018. Saint Lucia and Grenada are in the process of developing legislation along similar lines.

In the area of conservation, as part of the Caribbean Challenge Initiative, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has committed to effectively conserving and sustainably managing at least 20 per cent of its marine coastal environment by 2020, which goes beyond the 10 per cent stipulated in SDG 14.5. By 2020, it is Jamaica's goal to further strengthen the

regime governing its protected areas, including marine protected areas, through the promulgation of a cays-management policy, a new protected-areas policy and the passage of an overarching protected-areas legislation. For its part, Guyana is in the process of developing a suite of interrelated services to better manage its coastal ecosystem, including data gathering, social mobilization and capacity development, under its recently launched Green State Development Strategy.

To address the threat of invasive organisms to marine and coastal ecosystems and to minimize the shipping industry's contribution to greenhouse-gas emissions, as a lead partner country under the Global Ballast Water Management Programme, Jamaica has partnered with the International Maritime Organization, the United Nations Development Programme, the Global Environment Facility and the private sector. It is also a lead pilot country under the Global Maritime Energy Efficiency Partnership Project. As a lead partnership country, Jamaica will twin with other countries in the region to provide legal and policy-related assistance to enable those States to accede to the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments.

CARICOM shares the Secretary-General's observations that the limited knowledge of some marine ecosystems and processes and the insufficient integration of available scientific knowledge into decision-making processes remain a challenge for the sustainable management of the ocean. Consequently, we need to generate pertinent data and information to transfer technical skills, as well as to design and implement sustainable-development strategies at the national level. CARICOM stands ready to play its part and to partner with others in this regard.

To that end, we are appreciative of the training programme jointly facilitated in May by the Korea Maritime Institute, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States and the Sub-Commission for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions. The workshop, which was held in Saint Lucia, was focused on marine scientific research and was designed exclusively for Caribbean member States. Given the scope of the need for deepening scientific awareness, CARICOM fully supports the designation of the years 2021 to 2030 as International Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

With respect to sustainable fisheries, CARICOM continues to implement its common-fisheries policy aimed at conserving, managing and sustainably utilizing the region's fisheries resources. There continues to be regular engagement through regional workshops, public education campaigns and multi-stakeholder consultations coordinated by the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism, in partnership with organizations within and outside our region. We are at the forefront of regional efforts to develop and implement fisheries-management plans, establish and strengthen partnerships among key stakeholders within the ocean sector and combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and overfishing, which pose a threat to the sustainability of local and regional fisheries.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the unwavering commitment of CARICOM to playing its part in support of continued efforts to address issues related to the ocean with the urgency that they deserve. This approach remains our only viable option if we are to ensure that future generations are beneficiaries of the resources of the ocean, in keeping with principle of the common heritage of humankind.

Mrs. Chigiyal (Micronesia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 12 members of the Pacific small island developing States (PSIDS) — Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and my own country, the Federated States of Micronesia.

At the outset, we would like to thank Mr. Joyini of South Africa, Mr. Kravik of Norway, Mr. Arrocha Olabuenaga of Mexico and Ms. Neilson of New Zealand for their able leadership in bringing these negotiations to their successful conclusion.

We are pleased to support the adoption of the draft resolutions entitled "Oceans and the law of the sea" (A/72/L.18); "Sustainable fisheries, including through the 1995 Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, and related instruments" (A/72/L.12); and "International legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction" (A/72/L.7).

We attach particular importance to this agenda item. As we have often said, we consider the ocean the lifeblood of our economies and our societies. We are therefore keenly attuned to the mounting negative effects on its health caused by human activity. Overfishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing; marine pollution, including from microplastics; and the destruction of marine habitats and other threats to marine biodiversity, including climate-change-driven effects such as ocean acidification, are among a number of serious threats to the health and resilience of our shared ocean.

Those serious and mounting effects are not merely threats to our oceans, they constitute a serious challenge to our sustainable development and our ability to meet the aspirations encompassed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Healthy, productive and resilient oceans and seas are critical to poverty eradication, access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food, economic development and essential ecosystem services, among other things.

The PSIDS were at the forefront of advocates for a stand-alone goal dedicated to the conservation and sustainable use of our oceans and seas, now reflected in Sustainable Development Goal 14 of the 2030 Agenda. We look forward to the critical work of implementation to meet the targets on protecting marine ecosystems, addressing acidification, ending IUU fishing, and increasing benefits to the small island developing States (SIDS) and least developed countries (LDCs), among others. In this regard, we welcome the first United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 and its outcomes. The call for action contained in the annex to resolution 71/312 should help guide our efforts to meet the targets that we have established.

We were pleased that the Conference's final call for action acknowledges the special case of SIDS and the unique relationship that SIDS have with the ocean. We congratulate the Facilitators of the preparatory process, Mr. Mendonça e Moura of Portugal and Mr. Gafoor of Singapore, on their stellar work. We also welcome the appointment of Peter Thomson as the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean and assure him of our support in his work to galvanize concerted efforts to follow up on the outcomes of the United Nations Ocean Conference in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to maintain the momentum for action to conserve and

sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

The Pacific SIDS are not alone in reacting with deep concern to the findings of the World Ocean Assessment, which show that delays in implementing solutions to the problems that we have already identified as threatening to degrade the world's oceans will lead unnecessarily to greater environmental, social and economic costs. Given the critical role that oceans and oceans' health play in our societies and development, this news is stark indeed, especially when coupled with the increasing adverse effects that climate change and carbon dioxide emissions are having on our oceans and seas. Indeed, climate change will be the defining security challenge of the century. We are simply not prepared for life in a hotter climate. For this reason, we reiterate our call for the appointment of a special representative of the Secretary-General for climate and security, whose first task should be an assessment of the capacity of the United Nations to respond to climate emergencies.

In a similar vein, we note that reports such as the World Ocean Assessment lend urgency to the work of the Preparatory Committee to develop a legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. During the preparatory meetings held in 2016 and 2017, we made substantial progress, and we welcome the launching of the intergovernmental conference to elaborate a text for the international agreement.

Work on ocean issues is not confined to New York, but also connects to our region. In this regard, we welcome the recent deposit of coordinates delimiting the borders between Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Palau and Papua New Guinea, in accordance with article 74 of the Convention.

We continue to acknowledge the contribution of the International Seabed Authority (ISA) for its ongoing capacity-building initiatives targeting developing countries, and look forward to making further progress on the development of a comprehensive set of rules governing seabed mining so as to ensure the effective protection of the marine environment from the harmful effects that may arise from activities in the area. We have stated on numerous occasions just how important the work of the ISA is to the PSIDS, with our exclusive economic zones amounting to more than 30 million

square kilometres and directly adjoining the lucrative Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone.

We also acknowledge the important contributions of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. We therefore welcome the steps taken, including contributions to the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea Trust Fund, to ensure that developing States, especially LDCs and SIDS, are able to fully participate in the subcommissions' deliberations on their applications.

The importance of healthy fisheries to our economies and livelihoods cannot be overstated. For centuries, tuna, in particular, has provided an important source of food for Pacific islanders as well as employment, and has been of tangible cultural and traditional value for our peoples. In addition to its critical economic value, tuna plays an important role in the marine ecosystem. Declines in tuna population and changes in their food-web dynamics may impair the ocean's capacity to generate basic ecosystem processes that are vital to enabling the maintenance and delivery of services that benefit human health, welfare and economic activities. We are therefore pleased to see the recognition of World Tuna Day enshrined in the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries.

In addition to the important work we do here at the United Nations on fisheries, we would like to speak to an important development in our own waters. We welcome the news this past year that big-eye tuna is no longer in a downward spiral, as we have seen with other stocks. We attribute this in part to the work of the parties to the Nauru Agreement, which has put an effective cap on the purse-seine fishery. We recognize the contribution that marine protected areas in the Pacific are making in this regard and in enhancing the health, productivity and resilience of the oceans. We would also take this example as a moment to highlight again the critical importance of the precautionary approach.

We also strongly emphasize in this regard, as we did at the resumed Review Conference, the need, in the management of all fish stocks, for target reference points and strategies for rebuilding. We will enable long-term sustainable exploitation of such stocks and meet the obligations to ensure that compatible measures are applied in the high seas in order to end the tragedy of the commons and see to it that the disproportionate burden of conservation action is not transferred to

developing countries, including the PSIDS and SIDS in general.

Finally, we would like to thank the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for its ongoing hard work and support, especially in relation to capacity-building, technical support and legal advice.

Mr. Elisaia (Samoa): Samoa is pleased to deliver this statement on behalf of the 14 States members of the Pacific Islands Forum with Permanent Missions to the United Nations.

First, I want to thank the Facilitators from Mexico, New Zealand, Norway and South Africa for bringing the negotiations on the draft resolutions on the oceans and the law of the sea (A/72/L.18), sustainable fisheries (A/72/L.12) and the instrument on areas beyond national jurisdiction (A/72/L.7) to a successful conclusion. We look forward to the adoption of these draft resolutions in due course.

The members of the Pacific Islands Forum share a strong and unifying interest in the oceans and its resources. We have long recognized the increasing threats to the long-term health of our oceans and share the common objective of harnessing the value of the marine resources in our region and, as joint custodians, ensuring their conservation and sustainable use. In September 2017, Pacific Islands Forum leaders met in Samoa and endorsed “The Blue Pacific — Our Sea of Islands — Our Security through Sustainable Development, Management and Conservation” as the new thematic narrative for our region, reflecting the central importance of the intrinsic link between our shared ocean and its sustenance of our peoples and communities.

We welcome the continued emphasis on the universal and unified character of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which is the recognized and accepted constitution of the ocean and the legal framework under which all activities are to be carried out. We also appreciate the General Assembly’s continued attention to sustainable fisheries, which are an important resource for millions of people in our region and essential to the long-term health of our oceans. We are pleased that the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries reaffirms the importance of the management of sustainable fisheries, including highly migratory stocks, and calls for continued efforts in this area.

Our annual draft resolutions are connected to a number of important events that have occurred this year, and I would like to highlight them and their interlinkages. Last year’s session of the General Assembly established 2 May as World Tuna Day. Tuna is an important part of life in the Pacific, as it is a major element in our peoples’ food security, economic opportunities, culture and livelihoods. Tuna has increased in importance year after year, and increasing attention is being directed to conservation measures and the promotion of more sustainable fishing practices in tuna fisheries. We were pleased with the level of interest shown in the various side events the Pacific Island Forum organized in New York, which provided key opportunities for discussing the sustainable use of marine resources through the conservation and management of tuna stocks, with a view to ensuring increased economic returns to small islands developing States, which are major tuna providers to international markets and restaurants.

In the first half of 2017, we focused our work on the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, the Ocean Conference, held in New York in June. We thank the two Facilitators, the Ambassadors of Portugal and Singapore, for efficiently and transparently delivering a call for action of which we can all be proud (resolution 71/312, annex). We are particularly pleased with the more than 1,400 voluntary commitments that were registered for driving forward the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14.

The Pacific Islands Forum countries made more than 100 voluntary commitments, with some new partnerships launched. The commitments showed overwhelming support for the management and conservation of our ocean and its resources and, as stewards of the ocean, we are happy to see the increased recognition of the link between healthy ocean ecosystems and sustainable development.

Among other commitments, in September the Pacific Island Forum leaders pledged to fast-track the development of policies to ban the use of single-use plastics bags, plastic and styrofoam packing, and called on Pacific Rim partners to join and commit to action on addressing marine pollution and marine debris in order to maintain the environmental integrity of the Pacific Ocean for people, planet and prosperity. Special recognition goes to the former President of the General Assembly, Ambassador Peter Thomson of Fiji, whose tireless work made the Ocean Conference a success. We

wish Ambassador Thomson well in his new role as the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean and in his work towards the next Ocean Conference in 2020.

In September, the Pacific Islands Forum leaders called for the commencement of negotiations at the United Nations on a new UNCLOS implementing agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. We therefore welcomed the successful conclusion in July of the fourth meeting of the Preparatory Committee established by resolution 69/292 on the development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. During the course of the Preparatory Committee's deliberations, we had fruitful discussions in which we learned about one another's positions. We were pleased with the constructive engagement shown by many delegations and look forward to continuing in the same spirit.

Our work now shifts towards the intergovernmental conference that will be mandated by draft resolution A/72/L.7. We are pleased that the draft resolution has already garnered more than 100 sponsors, and we invite others to join in sponsoring this important draft resolution. The first and important step will be selecting a president for the conference. We pledge our support to the President of the General Assembly as he starts consultations on this important matter.

In June, the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea examined the effects of climate change on the oceans. The discussion was both timely and comprehensive, looking at the science, but also on the scale of effects that climate change has on our oceans. With the majority of Forum members being small island developing States, the effects of climate on the oceans, such as ocean warming, ocean acidification, sea-level rise and other effects of land-based pollution and unsustainable fishing practices, all contribute to profound socioeconomic consequences that highlight our vulnerabilities. More support in sustainable funding for ocean-related activities is needed for mitigation and to build resilience against the effects of climate change on oceans.

I would like to conclude by welcoming the report of the Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the

Whole on the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects, on its work and its place within this year's omnibus draft resolution.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mrs. Cujo (European Union): I am speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

We are meeting today to adopt three important draft resolutions, on oceans and the law of the sea (A/72/L.18), the international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (A/72/L.7), and sustainable fisheries (A/72/L.12). The EU and its member States actively participated in the consultations to prepare these draft resolutions, as we are committed parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and its implementing agreements, including the 1995 Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks.

We believe these draft resolutions serve to focus the attention of the General Assembly and the general public on important issues in the marine domain, including fisheries and the marine environment. We would like to express our appreciation for the excellent stewardship demonstrated by the coordinators, Mr. Thembile Joyini and Mr. Andreas Kravik, and the co-Facilitators of the draft resolution dealing with areas beyond national jurisdiction, Ms. Kate Neilson and Mr. Pablo Arrocha Olabuenaga. We also wish to thank the facilitators of the various meetings, whose able leadership guided delegations' work. We also recognize the constructive participation of other delegations in those negotiations, which ensured the inclusion of numerous important and topical issues in the draft resolutions.

In the view of the EU and its member States, the draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea is a

crucial instrument, and we are satisfied that it reflects recent developments in important processes related to oceans and the law of the sea. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, with its 168 parties, including the EU, is rightly recognized, including by the EU and its member States, as the constitution of the oceans, as well as a reflection of customary international law that establishes the overarching legal framework within which all activities in oceans and seas must be carried out. We sincerely hope that the goal of universal participation in the Convention will one day be met.

It is pertinent to recall that this year represents the fiftieth anniversary of the seminal statement by Ambassador Arvid Pardo of Malta in November 1967 (see First Committee, PV. 1515), which launched the development of the Convention. We acknowledge the necessity of ensuring that the Convention remains relevant and able to meet today's, as well as future, challenges, which in our view can be achieved through the development of new implementing instruments.

In that regard, we are glad that the draft resolution on an international legally binding instrument under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction takes an important next step towards the new implementing agreements. We also wish to note that this draft resolution has gained enormous support among delegations and so far has been sponsored by 133 States, including the EU and its 28 member States, which sponsored the draft resolution in corpore.

The EU and its member States would like to thank all participants in the negotiations on draft resolution A/72/L.7 and the participants in four sessions of the Preparatory Committee, which concluded on 21 July, for the extensive and complex discussions and exchange of views. In that connection, the EU and its member States welcome the report of the last session of the Preparatory Committee and its recommendations. The results of those discussions and negotiations enabled the General Assembly to decide to convene an intergovernmental conference to negotiate a new implementing agreement of UNCLOS.

Nevertheless, we would like to restate one outstanding concern for the EU and its 28 member States, which was also pointed out by our delegation at the end of the last Preparatory Committee on 21 July, and which is included in paragraph 41 of its report.

In the view of our delegation, the third paragraph of part II. 4 of section A of the recommendations is not one that most delegations could agree on. However, we are very happy that the Preparatory Committee has finished its work and that we are able to move on to the intergovernmental conference under the auspices of the United Nations. We look forward to the commencement of the conference in the second half of 2018.

The EU and its member States consider that 2017 has been an important year for the oceans at the United Nations and in general. That is evidenced by the two important conferences held this year garnering broad participation by States and civil society — the Ocean Conference, held in June at United Nations Headquarters, and the Our Ocean Conference, organized by the EU in October in Malta. We hope those two events will serve to spur further action to protect and preserve the oceans and restore their health and productivity, so that they can continue to support life on Earth.

The EU and its member States also welcome the proclamation, in this year's draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea, of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development for the ten-year period beginning on 1 January 2021. We are confident that the Decade will help to fill gaps in knowledge related to oceans and seas, support efforts to reverse the cycle of decline in ocean health and create improved conditions for the sustainable development of the ocean, seas and coasts. We also encourage States to promote ocean literacy so that future generations can learn to appreciate the life-supporting properties of the ocean and the consequent importance of protecting, preserving and sustainably using it and its resources.

Turning now to the sustainable fisheries resolution, the EU is satisfied that a number of important issues have once more been reflected in this year's draft. In particular, we are pleased to see the importance accorded to the need to manage fishing methods effectively so that environmental effects are minimized, including by reducing by-catch, thereby ensuring an effective application of the ecosystem approach. That was a major priority in the last reform of the EU's Common Fisheries Policy.

In line with commitments undertaken in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and elsewhere, the EU remains committed to achieving sustainable fisheries, which we consider to be a multifaceted issue. We believe that one of the main impediments

to achieving that remains illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing. We encourage all States to undertake the necessary legal framework reforms, as well as ensure adequate means of control. In that connection, we are pleased to witness the increasing numbers of parties to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing, as well as to note that the FAO is commencing work on trans-shipments, which still represent a possible loophole through which illegally caught fish can enter legal trade flows. We reiterate the call to those States that have not yet signed up to the Port State Measures Agreement to consider doing so and, more generally, for the international community to show increased efforts in terms of its implementation.

We also believe that one of the drivers of IUU fishing is the general overcapacity of fishing fleets. More must therefore be done to bring capacity to levels that are commensurate with fishing opportunities, including through the elimination of harmful subsidies that contribute to overfishing and overcapacity. We hope that agreement will be reached on the conclusion of multilateral disciplines on fisheries subsidies at the forthcoming World Trade Organization ministerial meeting in Buenos Aires. We consider that essential if the international community is to meet relevant targets under Goal 14 of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

The EU remains strongly committed to the social dimension of fisheries and to ensuring decent working conditions on board fishing vessels. We are therefore happy to see that the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188) of the International Labour Organization has entered into force, and we encourage other States to also become party.

We look forward to the new format of the informal consultations of States parties to the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement. We consider the two topics chosen for the next two meetings — the science policy interface, and performance reviews of regional fisheries organizations — to be highly relevant. They should help to improve fisheries management in line with the recommendations from last year's review conference.

Lastly, the EU and its member States would like to express their gratitude to the Secretariat and to the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for their work and constant support throughout the year.

Mr. Islam (Bangladesh): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the group of Least Developed Countries (LDCs). We align ourselves with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Ecuador on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

This has indeed been a fruitful year in the context of developing an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction (BBNJ). After years of discussion, we have finally arrived at a moment when we can expect to embark on intergovernmental, text-based negotiations on the proposed legally binding instrument. We thank Ambassadors Eden Charles of Trinidad and Tobago and Carlos Duarte of Brazil for their valuable efforts in steering the work of the Preparatory Committee towards compiling a set of recommendations that will be important building blocks for the proposed legally binding instrument.

We attach high importance to the recommendations pertaining to the interest of LDCs and look forward to building on them during negotiations at the intergovernmental conference. We stress that the interests of LDCs must be considered as cross-cutting in nature with regard to the topics identified in the package agreed in 2011 on the proposed legally binding instrument.

We thank the co-Facilitators from New Zealand and Mexico for their hard work in facilitating the modalities resolution to be adopted later this month. The LDC group is pleased with the agreement reached on convening the first session of the intergovernmental conference in 2018 and thanks all delegations for their constructive approach to that matter. We also appreciate the scope created for meaningful and effective participation in the intergovernmental conference by all concerned stakeholders. Their contributions have further widened and deepened our understanding of the issues involved, including on the seminal issue of capacity-building and technical assistance.

The LDC group stresses the important role of the voluntary trust fund in supporting our eligible delegates and experts in participating in the BBNJ process. The trust fund allows the LDC group as a whole to benefit from the expertise available among our member States, which would be even more critical in terms of following through on the rigorous technical work envisaged

during the intergovernmental conference. With a view to promoting inclusiveness and transparency at the intergovernmental conference, we invite developed countries, and developing countries that are in a position to do so, as well as relevant agencies and organizations, to contribute generously to the trust fund.

The LDC group reaffirms its abiding interest in and commitment to the biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction process in the collective interest of promoting the conservation and sustainable use of a common heritage of mankind.

I now wish to make the following statement in my national capacity.

Bangladesh remains committed to UNCLOS, as demonstrated by our successful and peaceful settling of our maritime boundary issues with our neighbours. We have recently deposited the newly declared baseline with the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, as per UNCLOS provisions. We emphasize the importance of expediting the work of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf in order to enable it to dispose of its pending submissions. We recall the outcome of the United Nations Ocean Conference in terms of identifying ways and means for implementing Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14.

We emphasize capacity-building, new and predictable financing, the transfer of technology and know-how, effective partnership at all levels and cross-sectoral and coherent approaches, which are of particular importance to LDCs like Bangladesh. We encourage ways to explore how the recently formed Technology Bank for LDCs could be better utilized for the meaningful transfer of technology and capacity-building for implementing SDG 14.

Bangladesh calls for prohibiting certain forms of fishery subsidies that contribute to overcapacity, overfishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and for refraining from introducing new such subsidies. We emphasize the critical importance of concluding the ongoing negotiations in the World Trade Organization on that issue without further delay, while recognizing that special and differential treatment for developing and least developed countries should be an integral part of those negotiations.

There was a very timely discussion on the effects of climate change on oceans at the eighteenth informal consultative process earlier this year. It is evident that

sea-level rise will change the baseline coordinates of Member States and will have legal implications for their maritime boundaries. In recognition of the complex climate-ocean interface, we must mobilize our collective action for combating ocean warming and ocean acidification with new urgency.

We welcome the endorsement, at the twenty-ninth session of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, of the proposal for an International Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development for the period from 2021 to 2030. The International Decade will help increase public awareness about the urgent need for new science and the use of existing science to increase our understanding of the cumulative impacts affecting our oceans. We acknowledge the publication of the First Global Integrated Marine Assessment report in that regard.

In conclusion, we appreciate the appointment of Mr. Peter Thomson as the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Oceans, and I assure him of my delegation's continued support.

Mr. Gafoor (Singapore): My delegation is very pleased to be addressing the General Assembly on agenda item 77, on oceans and the law of the sea. We thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on this agenda item (A/72/70). We also want to thank Mr. Thembile Joyini of South Africa and Mr. Andreas Kravik of Norway for their excellent work in coordinating the informal consultations on draft resolutions A/72/L.7, A/72/L.12 and A/72/L.18. We would like to put on record our appreciation of the Director and staff of the Division for Ocean Affairs and Law of the Sea for their assistance and support throughout these consultations.

My delegation has been a strong advocate for the oceans and seas for many years. The oceans provide a livelihood for millions of people, sustain food security and maritime trade and regulate the climate, and are an important source of renewable energy. For Singapore, as a small island State, the oceans and seas are inextricably linked to our survival and our well-being. We are therefore heartened to see that there has been increased attention to ocean issues here at the United Nations over the past year.

In particular, we welcome the landmark United Nations Ocean Conference to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14. We are also pleased with the substantive and

useful discussions at the third and fourth sessions of the Preparatory Committee concerning the development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). Today I would like to focus on three aspects: first, the work of the International Seabed Authority (ISA); secondly, the ongoing BBNJ process; and thirdly, the implementation of SDG 14.

On the ISA, Singapore has continued to participate actively in its work, including as a member of the Council. We have submitted our candidature for re-election to Group E of the Council at the elections to be held during the twenty-fourth session of the ISA, in July 2018. We will continue contributing to deliberations within the Council in order to advance the work of the Authority in safeguarding the common heritage of humankind.

We also wish to take this opportunity to commend Secretary-General Michael Lodge for building on the strong foundation laid by his predecessors. In particular, we welcome the increased outreach by the secretariat and efforts towards its restructuring in order to improve efficiency.

Singapore expresses its appreciation to the secretariat and the Legal and Technical Commission for maintaining the momentum in the development of the regulations for the exploitation of mineral resources in the Area, including the road map for their development and adoption by 2020. We are pleased that stakeholders are being consulted on the draft regulations. We submitted our inputs in earlier rounds of consultations, and we intend to submit further inputs in writing for the latest round of consultations.

Singapore also welcomes the revised schedule of meetings for 2018 and 2019 that the Assembly adopted during the ISA's twenty-third session. We note that there has been a substantial increase in the volume and complexity of the Authority's work, and we believe the revised schedule will grant sufficient time for proper deliberations and will enhance coordination among its organs. Moving forward, our view is that the Assembly should carefully assess the number of its meetings in order to decide whether the revised schedule should be adjusted further beyond 2019. We look forward to participating constructively in the upcoming meetings in March 2018.

With regard to the BBNJ process, we are pleased to note that the Preparatory Committee completed its work in July. The Committee's report captured the rich discussions and exchange of views that took place during all four of its sessions, and it will be useful in informing the process going forward. We therefore join others in supporting the draft resolution in document A/72/L.7 concerning the convening of an intergovernmental conference to draft the text of an international legally binding instrument under UNCLOS.

We are well aware that the intergovernmental negotiations on that new instrument will not be straightforward. It concerns complex issues of law, science and policy. There will naturally be different points of view and perspectives, but that should not prevent us from having an open and frank discussion on the issues. We should attempt to narrow our differences in a transparent and inclusive process of negotiations and try to reach a substantive and consensual outcome that will take into account the views and concerns of every party.

We therefore believe that a consensus approach is appropriate and indeed essential if we are to ensure that no one is left behind or left out. We learned during the history of negotiating UNCLOS that such an approach, as embodied in the gentlemen's agreement (see A/9278, para. 16), was integral to enabling UNCLOS to garner overwhelming support, as reflected by the signatures of 117 States on the day UNCLOS opened for signature on 10 December 1982. We therefore fully support adopting, for the upcoming conference, the modality of exhausting every effort in good faith to reach agreement on substantive matters by consensus.

My delegation has been an active participant in the BBNJ process. In particular, a member of our delegation, Mrs. Rena Lee, had the privilege of contributing as the facilitator for the informal working group on capacity-building and the transfer of marine technology, which is an important issue for many developing countries. We remain committed to working constructively with all other delegations in the upcoming conference in order to arrive at a successful outcome.

I now turn to the issue of SDG 14. We welcomed the successful convening of the United Nations Ocean Conference, which was a significant milestone in the implementation of SDG 14. The Ocean Conference adopted a forward-looking declaration in the form of a call for action (resolution 71/312, annex), which reflects

our collective will to take action to conserve and sustainably use our oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. It also garnered more than 1,400 voluntary commitments from Governments, international organizations and other stakeholders, and there was a rich exchange of views and ideas through the partnership dialogues held during the Conference.

Through the Ocean Conference, we, the international community, have taken a critical step towards the implementation of SDG 14. It is now up to us to sustain the momentum that has been created. We must all take concrete action in order to achieve the targets set out in SDG 14. The oceans do not belong to any one of us but to all of us, and we should therefore take concerted and collective action, through cooperation and coordination at the regional and international levels, in order to address the issues on a global scale.

Singapore is pleased to have been able to contribute in a small and modest way by co-facilitating the outcome document for the Ocean Conference together with Portugal. We are also one of the many Governments that pledged commitments at the Ocean Conference. We will continue, as Singapore, to play our part in the global effort to conserve and sustainably use our oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

I would like to conclude by reaffirming the view that UNCLOS sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. At the time UNCLOS entered into force, it represented, in many ways, a new global order for the oceans and seas. It established the principles that would underpin the action of all users of the oceans and seas. Those principles created a framework of rights and duties that enabled a balance to be achieved between the various competing uses, while striving to ensure the protection of the marine environment. Having achieved that delicate balance, the onus is on us today to preserve the unified character and integrity of UNCLOS by adhering to the principles, rights and duties enshrined in it, such as freedom of navigation.

Today, UNCLOS remains the overarching framework for the governance of the world's oceans and seas. For that reason, it is our firm belief that the universalization and effective implementation of UNCLOS is not only pertinent, but indeed absolutely critical, to all activities in the oceans and seas, including those concerning the work of the ISA, the BBNJ process and the successful implementation of

SDG 14. I would like to end my statement by urging those who have yet to become parties to UNCLOS to do so as soon as possible.

Ms. Rosabrunetto (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): The Principality of Monaco is a sponsor of the three draft resolutions introduced today under the agenda item on oceans and the law of the sea.

First, the omnibus draft resolution (A/72/L.18) provides a comprehensive picture of the state of our oceans and our common actions. We regret that a recorded vote has been requested for this resolution again this year. We reaffirm that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) defines the legal framework within which all activities affecting the seas and oceans must be conducted.

Monaco also welcomes the introduction of draft resolution A/72/L.7, on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

After the completion of the work of the Preparatory Committee, the convening of an intergovernmental conference charged with drafting the text of a new instrument marks a significant step forward. We are therefore pleased that the General Assembly has welcomed the commitment made by our Heads of State and Government in the final document of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, "The future we want" (resolution 66/288).

Six months ago today, at the Ocean Conference, we all agreed to take the appropriate urgent measures to support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 14. The complexity of the challenges we face requires a collective and holistic response. We must halt and reverse the degradation of the health and productivity of the ocean and its ecosystems. The call for action (resolution 71/312, annex), the seven partnership dialogues and the 1,400 voluntary commitments invite all stakeholders to contribute to the implementation of urgent measures related to the targets of Goal 14. They must now lead to concrete and effective multi-stakeholder partnerships.

The delegation of the Principality of Monaco would like to take this opportunity to welcome the appointment of Mr. Peter Thomson as Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Ocean. We know that we can count on his vision and drive to help to reverse the decline we have seen in our seas and oceans. His Serene

Highness Prince Albert II attended that Conference and reaffirmed his commitment and his conviction that the protection of the environment as a whole, and that of oceans and seas in particular, is inextricably linked to the well-being of all human society.

We also welcome the increasing awareness of links between the ocean and climate change. The launch of the Ocean Pathway at the recent Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is therefore very timely. Under the leadership of His Serene Highness Prince Albert II, the Government of Monaco and its Foundation and many entities are working on this issue daily, particularly in the areas of ocean acidification, the development of marine protected areas and marine sciences.

In the firm belief that science must be at the heart of our decision-making, Monaco also supports the International Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, 2021-2030, launched at the initiative of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO. We welcome the fact that the General Assembly is preparing to endorse that soon.

The knowledge we already have indicates without a doubt that action should be taken without delay. Nevertheless, our understanding of some natural phenomena should be further developed. The same is often true for the effects of human activity on the environment and ecosystems. Hydrography, marine cartography and bathymetry also have an important place. All countries benefit from this type of data, particularly in terms of navigation, trade, coastal development, exploitation of marine resources and protection of the environment. In that connection, Monaco will continue to support the International Hydrographic Organization, which our country has hosted since its inception.

The belief that science must occupy a central place has inspired Prince Albert to reconnect with the great marine explorations. The launch of a scientific research campaign, Monaco Explorations, was announced as one of the Principality's voluntary commitments at the UNFCCC Conference in June and is fully in line with that vision.

The *Yersin*, an environmental research ship, left the port of Monaco in July on a three-year voyage. Its goal is to provide the international scientific community with a travelling ocean platform where research teams will be able to succeed one another. On its first mission

in September, the goal of building capacity took shape. Examples include dives with scientists from Funchal, on Madeira, to survey and map underwater habitats, and visits to the ship by teachers and students from Cabo Verde.

Beyond that scientific collaboration, raising awareness among a wider public is a central objective, as evidenced by children's visits aboard the *Yersin* in Martinique. Prince Albert is personally involved in that process and has already been on board the ship during several missions. While there is still considerable work to do before 2020, the experience has already been very positive. In Madeira, on an extremely rare occasion, the team was able to observe a monk seal, one of the most world's most endangered mammals; only about 500 have been recorded in the Mediterranean and the near Atlantic.

Another priority area of the Monaco Explorations is marine protected areas and marine reserves. We know that their benefits are as important as they are vast and connected, based on the best information available, and that they benefit when well protected. The Principality supports the establishment of coherent and well-managed marine protected area networks that ensure the sustainable use of marine resources. Studies also show that marine protected areas play a role in the fight against climate change. In addition, ocean acidification, a corollary of climate change, has long been one of the main focuses of action by the Government.

Since 2010, the Monaco Scientific Centre and the Environmental Laboratories of the International Atomic Energy Agency, both based in the Principality, have jointly held an international workshop. Specialists from different branches of science — biologists, climatologists, oceanographers, economists and sociologists — meet regularly to offer concrete solutions to policymakers. The fourth workshop took place in October in Monaco on the theme "From science to solutions: ocean acidification impacts on ecosystem services — case studies on coral reefs".

That commitment in the field has been clearly reflected in many international and regional forums. Prince Albert took part in the Our Ocean conference in Malta on 5 and 6 October. During a side event, he and Charles, Prince of Wales, presented a declaration on coral reefs that detailed their many environmental and economic benefits, as well as the risks they face.

I also led Monaco's delegation to the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, held in Manila in October. Monaco participated actively, as evidenced by the initiative of the Principality that led to the inclusion of the critically endangered angel shark, *Squatina squatina*, in appendices I and II of the Convention.

At the regional level, on 13 October the Principality hosted a conference on the protection of the Mediterranean Sea and the Baltic Sea, suggested by the Principality of Monaco and Sweden in response to the call for action of the Ocean Conference. We are aware of the similarity of the challenges that the two regions face, and our declaration of cooperation expresses our desire to encourage the sharing of information and experience, as well as the need to develop concrete initiatives.

Finally, a major part of the Principality's efforts with regard to protection of the oceans and seas naturally take place in our region, the Mediterranean. The reduction of waste at sea and combating pollution of all kinds are within our area of work. For example, through the RAMOGE agreement, the Principality cooperates closely with its French and Italian neighbours. The three countries regularly carry out joint training exercises to deal with potential large-scale marine pollution. At the fiftieth meeting of the RAMOGE Commission, held in Monaco on 22 November, we considered the programme of work for 2017 and 2018.

Such efforts help to change our view of our methods of development, production and consumption. We have to strive to meet the needs of humankind, respond to the imperative to protect our oceans and seas and ensure the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources. All of Monaco's efforts align with Prince Albert's desire to reconcile humankind and the sea.

Mr. Hasebe (Japan): Let me first join other representatives in thanking the coordinators of the three draft resolutions under agenda item 77, "Oceans and the law of the sea", for their tremendous work. Japan would also like to thank all the Member States that worked together in the spirit of cooperation during the informal consultations on those resolutions. Our appreciation also goes to the Secretariat for its assistance.

Open and stable seas are essential for the peace and prosperity of the entire international community. Japan takes every opportunity to emphasize that the rule of law at sea needs to be fully respected.

Japan highly appreciates the important role played by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea in the peaceful settlement of disputes, as well as in the maintenance and development of the rule of law in the oceans. As the largest contributor to the Tribunal's budget, Japan will continue to support the activities of the Tribunal, including by providing highly qualified legal professionals.

Japan also appreciates the role of the International Seabed Authority (ISA) in establishing maritime legal order concerning the Area. We need a balanced approach to the exploitation of the deep seabed that takes environmental conservation into account. Japan will continue to engage constructively in efforts to adopt a rational exploitation code that strikes a reasonable balance between economic and environmental needs. Japan will also continue to be actively engaged, by providing both human and financial resources, in the work of the ISA, whose importance continues to increase.

Bearing in mind the important role of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, Japan has consistently supported the Commission's activities. On the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of the Commission, the Government of Japan, together with the United Nations University, will hold an international symposium in Tokyo on 14 December, aimed at raising greater awareness of the Commission's achievements. Japan will continue to support the Commission, including by providing well-qualified professionals, as well as through financial contributions.

As a country that benefits from maritime trade, Japan believes that it is crucial to respond to piracy and armed robbery against ships, and we contribute actively to international efforts to combat these problems. Japan has been consistently conducting anti-piracy operations off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden since 2009. We have also contributed human and financial resources to the activities of the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia, and in October, for the first time, we held a capacity-building executive programme on combating piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia. Combining various forms of assistance, Japan will continue and strengthen its seamless support for spreading the rule of law at sea.

Japan, as one of the sponsors, welcomes the draft resolution to convene an intergovernmental conference to develop an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (A/72/L.7). Japan recognizes the importance of the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. We look forward to contributing to the discussions in the forthcoming intergovernmental conference to develop a well-balanced, effective and universal legally binding instrument.

We were pleased to see the successful outcome of the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, which reflects the growing interest of the international community in the ocean. Japan considers such issues as marine debris, ocean acidification, sustainable fisheries and assistance to small island developing States to be very important.

In that connection, Japan has been strongly promoting the 3Rs — reduce, reuse and recycle — using environmentally sound technologies to improve waste management. In particular, we assist developing countries in Asia and the Pacific in their efforts to implement the 3Rs. At Japan's proposal, the concept of the 3Rs was included in the call for action, in the outcome document of the Conference (resolution 71/312, annex). Under those policies, Japan will continue to cooperate with the international community with a view to ensuring the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans for sustainable development.

Japan values measures against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, which threatens the sustainable use of living marine resources. In that regard, in May Japan acceded to the Port State Measures Agreement, and we encourage countries that have not yet done so to accede to it soon. Japan is determined to reinforce efforts to eradicate IUU fishing in cooperation with other countries, including through regional fisheries management organizations.

In conclusion, Japan reiterates its hope that the General Assembly will duly adopt the three draft resolutions before us, which are the result of intensive work among Member States in a spirit of cooperation.

Ms. Wilson (Australia): We are pleased to associate ourselves with the statement delivered earlier

by the representative of Samoa, on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum.

We thank the coordinators from South Africa, Norway, Mexico and New Zealand for facilitating our consultations on the omnibus resolution on oceans and the law of the sea (A/72/L.18), the sustainable fisheries resolution (A/72/L.12) and the modalities draft resolution A/72/L.7, concerning the marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). Australia is pleased to be a sponsor of each of those resolutions, noting our particular interest, as a Pacific Islands Forum nation, in the protection and sustainable use of the ocean and its resources.

Australia welcomes the annual omnibus draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea, with a particular focus on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) as the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. UNCLOS is fundamentally important as the basis for national, regional and global action and cooperation on oceans matters, and we welcome ongoing work on its implementation.

UNCLOS compels countries to cooperate to conserve the living resources of the high seas and to protect and preserve the marine environment. It also guarantees a suite of rights, such as navigation rights, that are vital to shipping and trading nations, including Australia. We support a range of ongoing efforts to improve the implementation of UNCLOS, including those in the neighbouring regions of the Pacific Ocean, the Indian Ocean and the Southern Ocean. They include efforts to improve maritime boundary delimitation, respond to the challenges of managing migratory fish stocks and many more.

We thank States for supporting the text proposed by Australia on the illicit trafficking of protected flora and fauna in the context of the oceans omnibus draft resolution. Illicit wildlife trafficking is a serious and growing problem that provides a lucrative source of income for transnational criminal networks, which often use marine routes as part of the wildlife trafficking supply chain. Illicit trafficking in marine species such as corals, clams, seahorses and turtles threatens their survival and the sustainability of our oceans.

An effective response requires coordinated international action. We are pleased that the oceans omnibus highlights the relevance of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in

addressing the issue, including by reiterating the call made in resolution 71/326 for Member States to make illicit trafficking in protected species of wild fauna and flora a serious crime, in accordance with their national legislation and as defined by the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

Australia strongly supports efforts to develop an implementing agreement under UNCLOS to address the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction through the BBNJ process. That would serve to strengthen the UNCLOS framework.

We welcome the successful conclusion, in July, of the Preparatory Committee established by General Assembly resolution 69/292. The Preparatory Committee provided a vital platform for rich discussions and exchanges of views. We were pleased by the constructive engagement of States, which was strengthened by input from civil society and observers, and we look forward to similarly constructive engagement in the next stage of the process. We support the convening of an intergovernmental conference to draft an agreement for the further implementation of UNCLOS on this important issue.

In conclusion, we welcome the incredibly broad sponsorship and support for the modalities draft resolution.

Mr. Alajmi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the President, on behalf of the State of Kuwait, for his skilful work in presiding over the Assembly at its current session. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on oceans and the law of the sea (A/72/70), pursuant to paragraph 351 of resolution 71/257.

The State of Kuwait reaffirms the critical importance of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which has become the legal basis for other, complementary international conventions and instruments. My country welcomes the Secretary-General's report, which mentions the continued growth in the number of States parties to the Convention. In that vein, the State of Kuwait calls on States that are not party to the Convention to accede to it, as it plays a vital role in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and helps to promote international peace and security.

The maritime transport sector is considered the primary driver of economic growth for States all over the world. Ships are used to transport more than 80 per cent of global trade. The return of criminal acts, including piracy and the armed looting of ships, among other things, therefore poses a serious threat to international trade and maritime navigation. It also puts the lives of those working aboard ships at risk. The State of Kuwait therefore denounces all acts of piracy, the capturing of commercial ships and terrorism on the oceans and seas. We welcome all efforts to address such challenges, for we cannot defeat them without concerted efforts on the part of the international community aimed at countering piracy and the armed looting of ships. That can be achieved by effectively implementing the provisions of international law, the law of the sea and other relevant legal instruments.

With that in mind, the State of Kuwait reaffirms its full commitment to Security Council resolution 2077 (2012) of 21 November 2012, in accordance with Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, which calls on all States to criminalize piracy in their domestic legislation; positively consider the question of prosecuting pirates or those suspected of piracy; and arrest those facilitating or financing such acts on land, according to relevant international law and international human rights law.

The State of Kuwait calls on all Member States to cooperate and launch joint endeavours that benefit marine resources through the use of technology, while committing to all legal instruments and international treaties that ensure environmental sustainability for all, thus promoting international peace and security.

Mr. Bonser (Canada): I would first like to join other speakers in thanking our three coordinators for their skilful and tireless work. We are very grateful for their efforts on our behalf.

Canada greatly appreciates this opportunity to address the topic of oceans and the law of the sea and to review related developments, issues and events from the past year.

First, we want to underline the momentous significance of the United Nations Ocean Conference, which took place in June. Canada, led by our Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, was proud to be part of that historic event, and we reiterated Canada's commitment to continuing the sustainable management of Canada's fisheries and highlighted the

contribution that Canada has made internationally, in particular for marine conservation targets. Canada reaffirmed its resolve to meet and surpass international marine conservation targets, including by contributing to international efforts to develop criteria for other effective area-based conservation measures, and to take action with other nations and stakeholders on the many challenges facing our oceans. In that connection, we welcome the Secretary-General's appointment of Mr. Peter Thomson of Fiji as the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean. We welcome Mr. Thomson's work on following up on the outcomes of the United Nations Ocean Conference in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Secondly, we wish to highlight the ongoing work associated with the development of an agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). Canada firmly supports efforts to enhance our international action in that respect and will continue to engage actively in that important process.

After years of effort, we are entering a critical phase in the development of a BBNJ agreement through an intergovernmental negotiation process. We welcome the formal introduction of the BBNJ draft resolution (A/72/L.7), of which Canada is a sponsor, to set the modalities for the negotiations to come, and we look forward to its formal adoption. Canada is ready to proceed and contribute to the substantive work to come and is keen to join the international community in that endeavour.

Thirdly, let me turn to the eighteenth meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, which took place in May under the theme of "The effects of climate change on oceans". Canada recognizes the key relationship between climate change and the oceans, and the fundamental importance that it has for our planet. Scientific evidence points to climate change as one of the greatest threats of our time. From increased incidences of droughts to coastal flooding and rising sea-levels, to the expanding melting of sea ice in the Arctic, the widespread effects of climate change compel Canada, and the rest of the international community, to take strong action now.

Fourthly, as we work towards the formal adoption of the General Assembly's annual resolutions on

sustainable fisheries and on oceans and law of the sea, Canada would like to highlight its sponsorship of both. We believe that developing guidance for other effective area-based conservation measures and encouraging coordination and cooperation to that end are very important. Canada will be hosting an international technical expert workshop in February in Montreal. The workshop is intended to consolidate scientific and technical information on assessing the contribution and effectiveness of marine protected areas and other area-based conservation measures. It will also provide scientific and technical advice on the definition and identification of such measures for marine and coastal areas. The advice will be shared with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity in order to inform the development of voluntary guidance.

Fifthly, as a member of both the Council and the Finance Committee of the International Seabed Authority, Canada welcomes the continued progress on the draft regulations for exploitation of marine minerals in the Area. We encourage the Authority to continue that work as a matter of priority, while providing sufficient opportunities and time for the substantive consideration and discussion of successive drafts by Member States.

We also wish to highlight the Meeting of the States Parties to UNCLOS in June, when new members were elected both to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. We wish to reiterate our gratitude to all States parties to the Convention for the confidence they expressed in electing Canada a member of the Commission. We are pleased to have provided a contribution in 2017 to the trust fund to defray the participation costs for members of the Commission from developing countries.

Canada remains committed to the process set out in article 76 of the Convention to define the outer limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles. We filed a partial submission in respect of the Atlantic Ocean in December 2013, and we are making good progress in preparing our partial submission in respect of the Arctic Ocean, which will be ready for filing in the near future.

On all those matters, Canada would like to express its appreciation to the staff of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for their tireless work and dedication in supporting our efforts. Their high-

quality contributions continue to play a key role in moving our agenda forward.

(spoke in French)

Let me now say a few words on the developments that have taken place at the domestic level in Canada in connection with these important issues.

Regarding marine conservation targets, Canada is committed to conserving 10 per cent of its marine and coastal areas by 2020, as agreed at the international level. We are proud to confirm that Canada has now passed its 5 per cent target and is well on its way to achieving its 10 per cent target. Canada's approach to achieving the marine conservation targets is guided by three foundational principles: science-based decision-making, transparency and advancing reconciliation with indigenous groups.

As an Arctic coastal State, Canada takes an active role in addressing emerging issues in that region. In its 2017 budget, the Government of Canada made a financial commitment of Can\$12 million to protect the Last Ice Area — the only Arctic region expected to retain summer sea ice until 2050. That area will be essential to ice-dependent species and the Inuit communities that depend on them for food. Canada will work together with domestic and international partners in that regard. In a further indication of its commitment to the Arctic, Canada announced in February that for the first time it would study microplastics in the Arctic Ocean and their biological effects on marine life. In addition, Canada welcomes the successful conclusion of negotiations on an agreement to prevent unregulated high seas fisheries in the central Arctic Ocean.

With respect to microbeads throughout Canada, in June Canada published its Microbeads in Toiletries Regulations to prohibit the manufacture, import and sale of all toiletries that contain plastic microbeads, including cosmetics, toiletries used to exfoliate or cleanse, non-prescription drugs and natural health products. Canada has also established a coastal restoration fund to address degraded coastal areas through measures such as coastal restoration plans, the identification of restoration priorities and addressing threats to marine species living on Canada's coasts.

Canada also understands that credible and relevant scientific data about the impacts of climate change on fisheries, ecosystems and coastal infrastructure are needed to plan for a changing climate. Canadian

marine scientists are therefore conducting domestic and international research on climate change and ocean acidification under the Aquatic Climate Change Adaptation Services Programme, which is aimed at informing future policies, evidence-based resource management decisions and adaptation strategies.

Finally, Canada is implementing its Oceans Protection Plan, a Can\$1.5 billion investment, announced in the fall of 2016, to improve marine safety and responsible navigation while protecting Canada's marine environment through initiatives such as low-impact transportation corridors.

In conclusion, Canada would like to emphasize its continued commitment to championing sustainable fisheries and the promotion of healthy ocean habitats, both at home and abroad. Together we can succeed in protecting our oceans and keeping them healthy and productive for present and future generations.

Mr. Pálsson (Iceland): For centuries, Icelanders have based their existence and livelihood on the conservation and sustainable use of the resources of the sea — literally living and dying by the ocean. For that reason, healthy oceans and sustainable fisheries have been at the core of Iceland's ocean policy for decades. We therefore place great emphasis on all international cooperation in the field, both here at the United Nations and elsewhere.

Accordingly, Iceland is grateful for all the work and assistance rendered by the expert staff at the United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, who handle their increasing workload with exceptional professionalism. The same gratitude extends to the members of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS). Iceland considers the work of the CLCS extremely important and would like to underline the importance of the fact that the Commission bases its conclusions on sound arguments and thorough deliberations. We also welcome the Secretary-General's appointment of Mr. Thomson as his Special Envoy for the Ocean and look forward to working with him.

We would also like to thank the Facilitators of the three most important draft resolutions in the field of the oceans and the law of the sea this year: Mr. Andreas Kravik of Norway, who facilitated the sustainable fisheries draft resolution (A/72/L.12); Mr. Thembile Joyini of South Africa, who facilitated the oceans and the law of the sea draft resolution (A/72/L.18); and,

finally, Ms. Kate Neilson of New Zealand and Mr. Pablo Arrocha Olabuenaga of Mexico, who co-facilitated the work on the new and important draft resolution A/72/L.7, on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the conservation and sustainable uses of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). They have all shown excellent leadership and dedication in reaching a compromise solution on their respective draft resolutions.

The issue of oceans and the law of the sea has probably never been more challenging, demanding and important than now, or more all-embracing, as it seems to touch on almost every substantive field at the United Nations. That is in large part due to climate change and other effects of human activities on the oceans and the need for the international community to react to this.

Iceland sees the consequences of climate change in the changing weather and retreating glaciers in our region, as well as in the rising ocean temperatures, which have already led to changes in the migration patterns of fish stocks around Iceland, with southern species migrating northwards and northern species shifting even further north. Iceland welcomes increased attention to the effects of climate change on the oceans. Among the core goals of the climate policy of Iceland's new Government is reducing the release of greenhouse gases by 40 per cent by 2030 in comparison to 1990, and reaching carbon neutrality by 2040. Those goals are aimed at preventing the continued negative effects of climate change on marine biodiversity.

The impacts of climate change are clearly evident in the Arctic; indeed, nowhere in the world is the increase in temperature greater than the Arctic. A warmer Arctic Ocean and rapidly decreasing sea ice may lead to the opening up of large ocean areas previously covered by ice to activities such as transport and fishing. Concerted international action is needed to protect that vulnerable part of the world. Just last week, Iceland, together with nine other parties, successfully concluded negotiations on a draft agreement to prevent unregulated high-seas fisheries in the central Arctic Ocean. The novelty of that agreement is that it applies a precautionary approach by addressing the challenges of potential commercial fishing in the central Arctic Ocean in the medium- to long-term future.

Iceland will chair the Arctic Council from 2019 to 2021, and the Government has already decided to put

implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on climate change and on ocean affairs at the top of its agenda during its chairship. Continuing the tradition of active and constructive engagement on all ocean affairs, Iceland sent two ministers to participate in the United Nations Oceans Conference earlier this year. The reduction of marine litter and plastics in the ocean was among our commitments at the Conference. Governments, businesses and individuals must cooperate to implement our complex but comprehensive 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, where work towards one Goal can be key to achieving another. SDG 13, addressing climate change, is a prerequisite for healthy and sustainable oceans — SDG 14 — which contribute to ending poverty and hunger — SDGs 1 and 2.

There is already a strong legal framework in the field of oceans and the law of the sea. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. The 1995 Agreement on Fish Stocks provides the legal framework for high-seas fisheries and for the work of regional fisheries management organizations. Within that framework, the 2030 Agenda and SDG 14 provide a complementary guide for our policies and partnerships in this field. Iceland contributes to the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources globally through the United Nations University Fisheries Training Programme in Iceland, as well as through capacity-building in our bilateral and multilateral development cooperation.

Another landmark convention in the field of oceans and the law of the sea is in the making, following the General Assembly's decision in resolution 69/292 to develop an international legally binding instrument under UNCLOS on the BBNJ. The resolution also established a preparatory committee to make substantive recommendations to the General Assembly on the elements of a draft text of the legally binding instrument. That was no small task, as the future BBNJ instrument will be an implementing agreement under UNCLOS, highly complex and extensive in substance, and will regulate the conservation and management of biological diversity in the oceans in areas beyond national jurisdiction — areas which constitute the greater part of the oceans on Earth.

The Preparatory Committee held four meetings in 2016 and 2017, two chaired by Ambassador Eden Charles of Trinidad and Tobago and two by Ambassador Carlos

Duarte of Brazil. Despite their able chairships and good efforts, for which Iceland sincerely thanks them, as well as the comprehensive work of the Committee, the outcome was disappointing. In July, the Preparatory Committee recommended that the General Assembly include draft elements for the new BBNJ instrument, but it clearly stated that there was no consensus on any of the draft elements.

Nevertheless, the Committee recommended that the Assembly take a decision on convening an intergovernmental conference, under the auspices of the United Nations, to consider the recommendations of the Preparatory Committee and draft the text of an international legally binding instrument under UNCLOS. In draft resolution A/72/L.7, which the Assembly will consider later this month, a decision would be made to adhere to the recommendations of the Preparatory Committee and convene such a conference in September 2018.

Iceland has been an active participant in the BBNJ negotiations and is supportive of further progress on this issue at an intergovernmental conference. However, there are varying views and unresolved differences on a number of core substantive issues in this regard, many of which have been discussed at the United Nations for more than a decade. Those differences will have to be resolved at the conference if there is to be a future for a BBNJ instrument. It is therefore imperative that in developing such an important instrument, every effort is made to solve the myriad of complex substantive and political issues and reach a consensus-based outcome.

The BBNJ instrument will define the future of the substantive issues that the draft resolution on the intergovernmental conference prescribes. However, it should not reopen issues that are already subject to an adequate international legal regime and should not — as prescribed in the draft resolution — undermine existing relevant legal instruments and frameworks and relevant global, regional and sectoral bodies. We cannot afford to rush an outcome on such an important instrument; we simply need to take all the time necessary in order for the substantive outcome to be of the highest quality and for all nations to become parties to it. Those are the prerequisites of a successful and long-lasting international convention on the BBNJ.

Iceland has, as always, sponsored the draft resolutions on oceans and the law of the sea and on sustainable fisheries. We look forward to a challenging

and successful year ahead in one of the most important fields of the United Nations, the field of oceans and the law of the sea.

Mr. Locsin (Philippines): The Philippines thanks Mr. Thembile Joyini of South Africa and Mr. Andreas Kravik of Norway for coordinating the annual resolutions on oceans and the law of the sea and on sustainable fisheries this year.

We are poised once again to adopt these twin resolutions on the most massive and comprehensive subject that the Assembly considers every year. We need only recall the image of our planet in space to understand why — a planet floating in space, pale blue because water covers two thirds of its surface. One half of that surface is high seas, ideally beyond the jurisdiction of any State and the grasp of commercial greed and acquisitive ambition for the heritage of humankind, and the only promise of humankind's long future. The Romans called the Mediterranean *Mare Nostrum*. Today, recalling the words of Paul — "*Civis romanus sum*" — we are all Romans, and all the world's seas are ours.

In June, through our Ocean Conference call for action (resolution 71/312, annex), we affirmed our strong commitment to conserving and sustainably using our oceans, seas and marine resources, pursuant to Sustainable Development Goal 14; raising global awareness of the threat to the oceans; reversing the seemingly unstoppable decline of the ocean's vitality; and mobilizing global partnerships for those purposes.

Sustainable ocean management is key for an archipelagic country like the Philippines. Indeed, it is key to the health of any country, advanced or developing. Oceans are not only a source of life-giving goods; everything about them is living. We may plough the fertile land, but the air above is barren. But farm the oceans, and the very medium breathed by denizens of the deep is alive. Every drop teems with life. Oceans are whence we came; and thence the Book of Common Prayer summons us all back, to eternal life, saying "when the sea shall give up its dead." Our friend Peter Thomson has said:

"When it comes to the ocean, it is the common heritage of humankind. There is no North-South, East-West when it comes to the ocean. If the ocean is dying, it is dying on all of us."

As a party to the 1995 Fish Stocks Agreement, the Philippines is committed to conserving and maintaining sustainable access to straddling and highly migratory fish stocks, within and beyond the exclusive economic zone. It is likewise committed to managing them based on a precautionary approach and the best available scientific information. We are equally committed to eliminating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and the subsidies that encourage overfishing, leading to the irreversible decline of marine life.

Our collective neglect — or, to be accurate, our greedy exhaustion of the oceans' resources for immediate gain and at the cost of irreversible damage — has resulted not only in ever smaller fisheries catch and in worsening illicit trafficking in protected species, but also in ocean acidification, coral bleaching, sea-level rise, coastal flooding and deadlier tropical cyclones, brought on by ocean warming.

Business cannot go on as usual. Among the threats to the oceans, climate change stands out. Our experience, particularly with super-typhoon Haiyan in 2013, confirms that. In the Philippines, rising sea levels are three times the global average. At this rate, we will eventually lose 167,000 hectares of our coastline, more than twice the area of New York City.

We are using the ridge-to-reef approach to the sustainable management of our natural resources, while targeting the mining industry as the main culprit. We are working to reverse the adverse effects of the alteration and destruction of marine habitats through land-based and coastal development, consistent with our obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

UNCLOS is the key to ensuring global and regional peace in the fair and sustainable use of the oceans. It represents a delicate balance of the rights and obligations of all States parties to something that none of them can claim as exclusively its own for any use it chooses. In that spirit, the Philippines upholds the primacy of international law as the only foundation of a rules-based system and, therefore, of an enduring regional and international order. Might is useful for enforcing right, but it can never, ever, substitute for right.

The Philippines supports the strengthening of capacity-building, along with the transfer of marine technology, education and the sharing of traditional knowledge on oceans issues, including in the prevention of the smuggling of migrants and human trafficking by

sea, and in fighting piracy. When God created heaven and Earth, the oceans were there already, covered in darkness, His breath hovering over the face of the waters. Then He said, "Let there be light". The oceans therefore must not be used for dark purposes. We reaffirm our support for the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf and the International Seabed Authority and recognize no authorities but them in this area.

If we cherish this pale blue pearl as befits its value to the survival of humanity, a billion years from now humankind may stand on another planet and look up at the night sky and there see the bright ball of flaming gas that was our sun, swallowing our first home. And humankind may say that because we took good care of it, that bright blue pearl took care of us long enough for us to reach a place of greater safety on another pale blue planet circling another sun.

Mr. Garcia Moritán (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina aligns itself with the statement made earlier by the representative of Ecuador on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

I would first like to thank both coordinators, Thembile Joyini of South Africa and Andreas Motzfeldt Kravik of Norway, as well as the delegations of Mexico and New Zealand, for leading the negotiations on the draft resolutions before the General Assembly today. I would also like to acknowledge the presence in this Hall of representatives of the International Seabed Authority and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

I would also like to express my country's deep appreciation for the international collaboration we received in the intensive humanitarian search operations for the *ARA San Juan* submarine and its crew.

As we do every year before the Assembly, my delegation reiterates that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea has made one of the clearest contributions to strengthening peace, security, cooperation and friendly relations among nations. As an international instrument, its economic, strategic and political repercussions are some of the greatest we have. The objective of those who negotiated the Convention was to resolve all issues relating to the law of the sea through a single instrument. Accordingly, its provisions represent a delicate balance of rights and obligations on the part of States — the culmination

of nine years of negotiations that must be respected by all States, both individually and as members of international organs dealing with marine matters and other types of organizations. That delicate balance must be maintained, including in addressing new challenges to the law of the sea within the framework of processes adopted by the General Assembly, including those involving the marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its follow-up.

The Argentine delegation will provide a brief explanation of its position on the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries (A/72/L.12). Allow me to refer to several issues addressed both in that draft and in the draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea (A/72/L.18).

The matter of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction is currently one of the most pertinent issues of the law of the sea. The General Assembly decided to begin a process to secure a legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of the marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, and will accordingly decide on convening an intergovernmental conference to formulate a multilateral agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, something we support.

The Preparatory Committee established by resolution 69/292 had the arduous task of preparing the ground through lengthy and complex negotiations. Although much progress was made in our collective understanding of the various dimensions covered by the four components of the package — marine genetic resources, including benefit-sharing, conservation measures, capacity-building and technology transfer — much remains to be done. In particular, we note that the Committee was unable to agree by consensus on the scope and parameters of a future agreement. In that regard, my delegation wishes to state that developing a binding instrument in that area is not an end in itself, but a means for effectively regulating biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction.

My delegation reiterates that due consideration must be given to what is at stake: the conservation, as much as the sustainable use, of the biological resources of areas beyond national jurisdiction. One of the goals of the Convention was to develop the principles contained in resolution 2749 (XXV), of 17 December 1970, in which

the General Assembly solemnly declared, among other things, that the area of the seabed and ocean floor and their subsoil beyond the limits of national jurisdiction, as well as their resources, are the common heritage of humankind, the exploration and exploitation of which is to be carried out for the benefit of humankind. In line with the statements made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China in their ministerial declarations, for Argentina that principle serves as the basis for consideration on the topic and must be included in any future agreement.

Argentina reiterates that illicit trade in endangered species of wild flora and fauna, including by sea, requires that States comply and cooperate with the rules of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in order to suppress such trade. At the same time, however, that cooperation must be consistent with the language of CITES so as to avoid confusion among legal institutions and the applicable remedies under international law.

Argentina welcomes the twentieth anniversary of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf this year and affirms its recognition of the Commission's arduous and continued work. However, we are still concerned about the Commission's conditions of service and, despite temporary measures, a permanent solution to the issues raised — including medical coverage — has yet to be found. The Commission's role is very important to Member States, and we must ensure that it is provided with adequate resources so that it can fulfil its function, and that the conditions of service are commensurate with the importance of its work.

Argentina reiterates its acknowledgement of the contributions made by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea to the development of international law, particularly to the law of the sea, as well as to the peaceful settlement of disputes. The Tribunal has a highly relevant job as the judicial institution established by the Convention to focus on the resolution of cases relating to various aspects of the law of the sea. Argentina has supported the work of the Tribunal since its establishment and is one of the States parties that have accepted its jurisdiction.

Turning to draft resolution A/72/L.12, on sustainable fisheries, my delegation reiterates the need to avoid breaking the rule that all negotiations on the law of the sea inherited from the negotiations on the Convention should proceed by consensus. In that

connection, we hope that this year we can adopt without a vote a text that was duly agreed on by consensus in the framework of consultations held for that purpose.

My country will host the eleventh Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization in Buenos Aires in a few days, from 10 to 13 December. We trust that the Conference will make it possible to take serious steps towards eliminating subsidies for fishing that contribute to overfishing, excess capacity and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

With regard to the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems, it must be recalled that, in accordance with article 77 of the Convention, the sedentary resources of the continental shelf are subject to the sovereign rights of coastal States over the full extent of that maritime area. The conservation and management of such resources therefore falls under the exclusive powers of coastal States, which have the responsibility to adopt the necessary measures regarding such resources and their associated ecosystems that could be affected by fishing practices that have a destructive impact, including bottom trawling on the high seas. In that regard, I am pleased to recall that Argentina has adopted measures for the conservation of the sedentary resources and vulnerable marine ecosystems along the full extent of its continental shelf.

My country reiterates its concern about the trend involving attempts to use General Assembly resolutions to legitimize efforts by regional fisheries management organizations to adopt measures that exceed their geographic, material and individual scope. Argentina objects to such interpretations of Assembly resolutions, in particular with regard to measures whereby those organizations assume whatever kind of authority applies to vessels flying flags of countries that are not members of those organizations and that have not consented to such measures, as that would be contrary to one of the basic norms of the law of treaties.

Argentina also expresses its concern about attempts to legitimize, through pronouncements of the General Assembly, actions of groups of States that involve attempts to establish regulations of a regional or other nature over the marine biological diversity of zones beyond national jurisdiction, even when there is no universally agreed legal framework allowing for that.

Lastly, Argentina expresses its appreciation to the entire staff of the Division of Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for their professionalism, seriousness

and dedication, as well as the immediate assistance they provide to Member States, and reiterates the importance of ensuring that its resources are adequate to fulfilling its mandate.

Mr. Inguanez (Malta): It is indeed a very opportune moment, during this plenary meeting, for my delegation to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the concept introduced by Malta of the seabed as the common heritage of mankind.

Fifty years ago, Malta's first Permanent Representative, Mr. Arvid Pardo, delivered a memorable three-hour address in which he proposed that the seabed, ocean floor and subsoil are the common heritage of mankind, which should be used for peaceful purposes and for the exclusive benefit of humankind (see First Committee, 1515th and 1516th meetings). The concept eventually became a doctrine that set a 15-year process in motion, culminating in the adoption of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and subsequently earning Mr. Pardo the title of "Father of the modern law of the sea". He succeeded in making clear the responsibility of all human beings to care for and protect the environment for the sake of present and future generations.

At the outset, the idea was to prevent the unsustainable exploitation of resources and minerals and the arbitrary appropriation or misappropriation of the resources of the deep seabed, but eventually it ended up shaping the entire framework of the international law of the sea as we know it today. Malta is proud to be one of the pioneering States that helped us to the conclusion of UNCLOS and its outcomes. The tireless efforts of Mr. Pardo remain very relevant today.

Malta has always supported maritime affairs initiatives. As an outward-looking island nation in the central Mediterranean that is heavily dependent on the sea, Malta has focused its foreign policy throughout the years on maritime affairs, contributing to furthering the development of international ocean governance, maritime security, "blue growth" and international marine biodiversity issues.

Today, fifty years later, ocean governance is a topic of increasing international significance and impact. The Our Ocean Conference, organized by the European Union and held in Malta in October, bears recent witness to that fact. My intervention today is part of the events being organized to commemorate this 50-year Pardo legacy. In addition to the side event

later today here at the United Nations, Malta is hosting an international symposium on 15 December, during which perspectives of global ocean governance will be discussed.

The present anniversary is indeed a propitious moment for looking back at past achievements, as well as reflecting on the future evolution of the law of the sea. We therefore look to the next steps, particularly at the global level, for a more effective governance regime for the oceans. In that regard, Malta supports efforts to establish an intergovernmental panel on ocean governance to address the fragmented state of affairs still governing the ocean, despite the very valuable and indispensable work being undertaken by the United Nations.

I would like to conclude by quoting from Mr. Pardo's original speech, in 1967.

"I had a dream about ocean space as potentially a way through which a more peaceful and more cooperative and equitable world could be achieved".

We believe that through today's efforts, we are not only chasing that dream but persisting so as to make it a reality for generations to come. We are looking ahead, and we will continue to work on ocean governance to address any gaps that might remain, so that we can actively move forward in our quest to achieve better preservation of our oceans, as the cradle of our life and our planet.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The draft resolutions that we are about to adopt on oceans and the law of the sea (A/72/L.18) and on sustainable fisheries (A/72/L.12) present a fair overview of the relevant work carried out during the past year and thus are of great importance to the development of global ocean affairs and the law of the sea. I would like to thank South Africa and Norway for their contributions as co-facilitators.

During the past year, the work of the three bodies under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) — the International Seabed Authority, the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea — has continued to produce commendably positive results. I also wish to pay tribute to the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for its hard work, as well as the secretariat of the Convention. While progress has been made in the field of oceans and the

law of the sea, new problems and challenges have also emerged. I would like to share China's positions and proposals in that connection.

First, we should build a community for a shared future for humankind and achieve sustainable marine development. As a home for all humankind, the oceans represent a valuable space for sustainable development. At the Ocean Conference in June, we adopted the declaration "Our ocean, our future: call for action" (resolution 71/312, annex), which reiterated support for the implementation of the solemn commitments embodied in Sustainable Development Goal 14 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

To tackle the problems and challenges related to oceans and seas, we must foster a strong sense of a community of a shared future for all humankind and work together closely. The One Belt, One Road initiative put forward by China, particularly the idea of building a twenty-first-century maritime Silk Road, will greatly boost international cooperation in ocean affairs. China is ready to strive for the establishment of a community of a shared future in ocean affairs, to strike a balance between the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and to promote the implementation of the 2030 Agenda to achieve sustainable marine development, in line with the principle of extensive consultations, joint contributions and benefit-sharing.

Secondly, we should promote the maritime rule of law and maintain a fair and reasonable maritime order. UNCLOS and general international law have provided a legal framework for maritime activities of States, and the rights of States within that framework should be fully respected. China supports the role of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea in the peaceful settlement of maritime disputes. It is the dispute settlement mechanism provided for in UNCLOS and is a well-designed whole that reflects the concerns of all parties in a balanced manner. Its interpretation and application must therefore be accurate and conducted in good faith, its integrity must be maintained and any misuse avoided.

China supports the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf in carrying out its work in accordance with the Convention and the Commission's current rules of procedure, adhering to the principle of not considering and qualifying submissions by any of the States involved in the dispute and thereby safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of coastal States and

the overall interests of the international community and maintaining a fair and reasonable international maritime order.

China supports assisting the International Seabed Authority in better discharging its duties under the Convention.

Thirdly, we should strengthen communication and coordination in order to steadily advance the international legislative process in the field of the law of the sea. The negotiations on an agreement on an instrument concerning the marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) are very important to global maritime governance.

With regard to the elements of the draft recommendations put forth by the BBNJ Preparatory Committee, China has noted that they neither cover all items nor represent consensus among the parties. They are therefore without prejudice to the positions of negotiating parties going forward. In this connection, China emphasizes that a future agreement must not undermine the institutional framework of UNCLOS and must be founded on solid legal and scientific bases and accommodate the interests and concerns of all parties.

The regulations on the exploitation of mineral resources in the Area will be important for regulating the exploitation of international seabed mineral resources. The Seabed Authority distributed the latest draft of the regulations in August. China stresses that the regulations must be in line with the provisions and spirit of UNCLOS and the 1994 Implementation Agreement, aligned with the regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area, and commensurate with the current level of human activities in and knowledge of the Area. The relevant work should be carried out gradually and be based on full consultations among all parties.

The Chinese Government values and actively supports the development of matters relating to ocean affairs and the law of the sea. In Beijing in May, China hosted the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, injecting new vitality into efforts to build a twenty-first-century maritime Silk Road and improve ocean-related cooperation. In its commitment to strengthening capacity-building and promoting cooperation, this year China successively hosted the China-Island Countries Ocean-related Ministerial Roundtable and the International Workshop on Marine Debris Management in the Coastal Cities of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation region.

China will continue to contribute to the voluntary trust fund for the International Seabed Authority and the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf in order to help developing countries participate in relevant activities. We will continue to work to maintain the international maritime rule of law, build a harmonious maritime order and promote sustainable marine development. China stands ready to join with other countries in responding to ocean-related challenges, protecting the oceans and seas and sharing the fruits of marine development and utilization, all in the Silk Road spirit of peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, and mutually beneficial, win-win results.

Programme of Work

The Acting President: Before adjourning the meeting, I should like to remind members that action on draft resolution A/72/L.7 is postponed to a later date to allow time for the review of its programme budget implications by the Fifth Committee. The Assembly will take action on that draft resolution as soon as the report of the Fifth Committee on its programme budget implications is available.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.