



General Assembly

Seventy-seventh session

50th plenary meeting
Friday, 9 December 2022, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Körösi (Hungary)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Araba (Benin),
Vice-President, took the Chair.*

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 72 (continued)

Oceans and the law of the sea

(a) Oceans and the law of the sea

**Reports of the Secretary-General (A/77/68 and
A/77/331)**

**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/77/327 and A/77/596)**

**Report on the work of the United Nations Open-
ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans
and the Law of the Sea at its twenty-second
meeting (A/77/119)**

Draft resolution (A/77/L.36)

(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

Report of the Secretary-General (A/77/155)

Draft resolution (A/77/L.33)

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I would
like to inform members that the decision on draft

resolution A/77/L.36, entitled “Oceans and the law of
the sea”, is postponed to a later date in order to give
the Fifth Committee time to consider its budgetary
implications.

I now give the floor to the representative of Norway
to introduce draft resolution A/77/L.33.

Ms. Bierling (Norway): Norway had the honour
of coordinating the informal consultations on draft
resolution A/77/L.33, on sustainable fisheries. I am
pleased to introduce the text of the draft resolution on
behalf of its sponsors.

After two years of virtual meetings, we were happy
to finally convene the informal consultations in person
here at the United Nations in New York. This year’s draft
resolution represents significant progress, including
highlighting the work of the Food and Agriculture
Organization of the United Nations, both in recognizing
the interlinkage between food security and nutrition
and in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals,
as well as its work on developing and disseminating
practical guidance on other effective area-based
conservation measures for the fisheries sector.

We were also pleased to see several important
updates to the chapter addressing the impact of bottom
fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems. Fisheries
provide a vital source of food, employment, trade and
economic well-being for people throughout the world.
Achieving sustainable fisheries, combating illegal,
unreported, and unregulated fishing, addressing
fishing overcapacity, ensuring safety at sea and
decent working conditions in the fisheries sector and

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improving subregional and regional cooperation are all means necessary for meet the Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 14.

I would like to conclude by thanking all delegations for engaging constructively during the consultation process and for ensuring that draft resolution A/77/L.33 is a consensus product based on amicable and substantive discussions between all delegates.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Singapore to introduce draft resolution A/77/L.36.

Mr. Khng (Singapore): I thank you very much, Sir, for presiding over today's meeting. It is fitting that after commemorating the fortieth anniversary of the adoption and opening for signature of the constitution for the oceans, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the General Assembly is now considering draft resolution A/77/L.36, entitled "Oceans and the law of the sea". It is one of the most important draft resolutions that the Assembly negotiates and adopts each year, reaffirming the status of UNCLOS as setting out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. As an omnibus draft resolution, it covers a broad spectrum of issues, developments and activities pertaining to ocean affairs and the law of the sea.

Singapore had the great honour to coordinate and facilitate the informal consultations on draft resolution A/77/L.36, and I am pleased to be introducing it on behalf of the coordinator, Ms. Natalie Morris-Sharma. On her behalf, I would like to express our deep gratitude for the support and constructive engagement of all delegations, acknowledge the valuable contributions of the small-group facilitators and express special appreciation for the support rendered by the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea in the run-up to and throughout this year's informal consultations. Last but not least, I thank all the sponsors for their valuable support.

This year, in-person informal consultations were convened for the first time since the pandemic was declared, with negotiations held in September and November. The two intervening years after the adoption in 2019 of resolution 74/19, during the seventy-fourth session, saw only updates that were technical in nature or reflected changes related to preparations for meetings, budgets and mandates, as well as purely factual updates to the text. This time, around one third of the draft

resolution — which has more than 400 preambular and operative paragraphs — has been updated and adjusted. That demonstrates Member States' great interest, and I thank all delegations for their active participation. The following are some of the key matters addressed in this year's draft resolution, in the order that they appear.

First, in addition to welcoming various capacity-building activities that have been undertaken, and speaking at various points to the impact of climate change on the oceans and seas, draft resolution A/77/L.36 issues a call to support capacity-building activities in the area of mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change on the ocean.

Secondly, the draft resolution notes with appreciation the meetings and activities held to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the adoption and opening for signature of UNCLOS.

Thirdly, the draft resolution takes stock of the work of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, the International Seabed Authority and the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. It emphasizes the ongoing need for the Authority's draft regulations to ensure that any exploitation activities should take place with the effective protection of the marine environment, in accordance with UNCLOS. The draft resolution also notes the challenges faced by the Commission during the continued pandemic in carrying out its work.

Fourthly, the draft resolution, which dedicates a number of paragraphs to work and activities carried out in relation to the issues of marine debris and marine pollution, welcomes the decision of the United Nations Environment Assembly to convene an intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution.

Fifthly, the draft resolution welcomes the holding of the fourth and fifth sessions of the intergovernmental conference on a legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) and requests the Secretary-General to convene the resumed fifth session of the conference from 20 February to 3 March 2023.

Sixthly, the draft resolution endorses the recommendations adopted by 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 the four brief documents of the *Second World Ocean Assessment* and the preliminary timetable and implementation plan for the third cycle of the Regular Process.

That concludes the introduction of the draft resolution. On behalf of the coordinator, I commend the draft resolution to the General Assembly for adoption.

I now wish to deliver some remarks in my national capacity. My delegation would like to align itself with the statement that will be delivered shortly by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States.

We thank the Secretary-General for his reports (A/77/68 and A/77/331). From the latest report, we note that the ocean remains under constant threat from human activities and that the global pandemic continues to have a negative impact on ocean-related issues and activities. For small island nations like Singapore, whose survival and prosperity depend on the ocean, that is of great concern. As evident from the report, however, efforts to address ocean issues have continued, which is encouraging. In that connection, I wish to make three points.

First, there is an urgent need for the international community to step up efforts to address the impact of climate change on the ocean. It is particularly alarming that global mean sea-levels, according to the Secretary-General's latest report, reached their highest recorded levels in 2021. Sea-level rise caused by climate change poses an existential threat to small island developing States, including Singapore. We therefore welcome developments that may serve to facilitate progress on dealing with the impact of climate change on the ocean, while emphasizing that all efforts in that regard should be undertaken within the legal framework provided by UNCLOS. One recent positive development is a decision of the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which the draft resolution notes, to hold an annual dialogue to strengthen ocean-based action under the UNFCCC. We also welcome the attention given to capacity-building in that area, which is reflected in a new paragraph in the draft resolution that calls for support and strengthening of capacity-building activities in developing countries in relation to mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate-change impacts on the ocean, including protection of coasts against sea-level rise.

Secondly, Singapore welcomes the convening of the fourth and fifth sessions of the BBNJ intergovernmental conference in March and August this year. As reflected in the Secretary-General's latest report, there was, at the fifth session, substantial progress towards the finalization of the text of the BBNJ treaty. My delegation looks forward to the resumption of the fifth session in February next year, and we call on all delegations to work towards the conclusion of an ambitious and future-proof BBNJ treaty at the resumed session. The conclusion of the BBNJ treaty will be a success for UNCLOS and a major step forward in the international community's efforts to conserve and sustainably use our global commons and will strengthen multilateral cooperation on ocean governance.

Thirdly, Singapore welcomes the convening of the second United Nations Ocean Conference in June 2022, co-hosted by Kenya and Portugal. The declaration adopted at the second Ocean Conference, together with the declaration adopted at the first Ocean Conference, will play an important role in international efforts to conserve and sustainably use the ocean and its resources. Such efforts, as affirmed in both declarations and reflected in target 14.c of the Sustainable Development Goals, must be based on international law, as reflected in UNCLOS. Singapore was honoured to co-chair, with Iceland, an interactive dialogue on that topic at the second Conference.

I conclude by welcoming the paragraphs included in the draft resolution on the commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of the adoption and opening for signature of UNCLOS, which will always be the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. We fully agree with the Secretary-General's report that its status, as such, is well-established. We call on all Member States that have yet to become a party to UNCLOS to do so as soon as possible.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer.

Mr. Ramopoulos (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries Montenegro, Serbia and the Republic of Moldova; the potential candidate countries Bosnia and Herzegovina and Georgia; as well as Monaco, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union and its member States are pleased to intervene in this debate at the adoption of these two important draft resolutions (A/77/L.33 and A/77/L.36). We would like to start by joining other delegations in expressing our gratitude to the coordinators of the draft resolutions, Ms. Natalie Morris-Sharma and Mr. Andreas Kravik, for the excellent stewardship demonstrated once again this year. We also want to express our appreciation to the Secretariat, and in particular to the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for their professionalism and constant support to delegations during the consultations. We are also pleased that, following two years of virtual consultations, this year's consultations took place in person once again.

Now more than ever, at the fortieth anniversary of its adoption, the European Union and its member States remain committed parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, as well as its implementing agreements, including the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement. The Convention has 168 parties and is the fundamental pillar for ocean governance. It establishes the overarching legal framework within which all activities in oceans and seas must be carried out.

The Convention is rightly recognized as the constitution of the oceans. Its provisions reflect customary international law and are therefore binding on all States, irrespective of whether they have acceded to the Convention or not. By establishing the legal order for seas and oceans, the Convention contributes to sustainable development as well as to peace, security, cooperation and friendly relations among all nations.

It is therefore imperative that the freedoms enjoyed under the Convention by all States, including landlocked States, be respected. Those include the freedom of navigation and the right of innocent passage. Similarly, it is also imperative that the sovereignty and sovereign rights of coastal States over their maritime zones, as established under the Convention, be respected, including those generated by islands. All members of the international community must abide by the fundamental principles and rules of the law of the sea and should refrain from any action that could undermine regional stability and security.

The European Union and its member States continue to be very concerned about the declining health of our ocean. The impacts of the interconnected

climate change and biodiversity crises are increasing. Our ocean also continues to be threatened by pollution, including from plastics and microplastics, excessive nutrients, anthropogenic underwater noise, overfishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

After a delay of two years, this year marked the super year for the ocean. Many important events took place in person, creating important momentum for addressing the ocean's manifold challenges. That includes the United Nations Ocean Conference, held in Lisbon, which resulted in important commitments and a political declaration. The European Union and its member States consider it essential to maintain that momentum in the coming years in order to ensure that our ocean and the blue economy, on which so many countries rely, can continue to be the basis for sustainable development.

The European Union and its member States were particularly pleased with the resumption, in March, of the intergovernmental negotiations of the international legally binding instrument under the Convention on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). We were also encouraged by the substantial progress made in the two meetings of the intergovernmental conference this year. To support those negotiations, we launched a High Ambition Coalition in February at the One Ocean Summit in Brest, France, which was another important ocean event this year. The BBNJ High Ambition Coalition now comprises 50 members, which are committed at the highest political level to achieving an ambitious, universal, effective, inclusive, fair, balanced and future-proofed agreement as soon as possible. We call on all States that have not yet done so to consider joining the Coalition.

In that regard, we would also like to express our disappointment that, in this year's omnibus draft resolution, it was not possible to reflect some of those important developments in the BBNJ process. We are nevertheless confident that an ambitious agreement is now in reach, and we are strongly committed to concluding the negotiations early next year.

The EU and its member States strongly support the target of protecting at least 30 per cent of the global ocean through marine protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures by 2030. We would therefore have preferred this year's omnibus draft resolution to contain a factual reference

to the voluntary commitments made in that regard by more than 100 States. Demonstrating ambitious action to enhance the amount of the global ocean under protection is critical for maintaining the ocean's health and increasing ecosystems' resilience to climate impacts. We will therefore continue supporting the 30 per cent target by 2030 and call upon States to adapt their strategies with a view to achieving this target.

The European Union and its member States are pleased with the inclusion of a number of important updates on the ocean-climate-change nexus in the draft omnibus resolution, including on the outcomes of the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Glasgow. At the same time, we consider it unfortunate that it was not possible this year to add the latest scientific data on the atmospheric levels of two additional greenhouse gases. The important work on the interrelationship between climate change and our ocean's health continues apace under the UNFCCC, most recently at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention in Sharm El-Sheikh. We therefore consider it essential that this relationship is also fully reflected in the draft resolution, and that starts by including facts. Similarly, while we welcome the progress made in addressing the issue of anthropogenic underwater noise in the draft resolution, the EU and its member States regret that the growing scientific evidence that anthropogenic underwater noise can have a significant negative impact on marine life is still contested, thus preventing more meaningful language.

The focus of this year's draft resolution on sustainable fisheries (A/77/L.33) concerned the review of measures to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems from bottom fishing, last adopted in 2016 (resolution 71/123). We thank the Secretariat and the Division for the two-day multi-stakeholder workshop it organized in August. Participation in this workshop was broad and included States, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), subregional and regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements, and relevant stakeholders. We are happy that, based on the outcome of this workshop, certain issues where more progress is needed have been highlighted in this year's draft resolution.

In addition, we welcome the decision to conduct in 2026 a further review of the actions taken by States and regional fisheries management organizations and

arrangements. In this regard, we also look forward to next year's resumed Review Conference on the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement. Furthermore, we support the reflection in this year's draft resolution of the outcomes of the FAO's Committee on Fisheries held in September. However, we regret that only very neutral language was used to describe the most important result of this meeting, namely, the transshipment guidelines, despite an overwhelming majority of delegations supporting a stronger emphasis.

Finally, we welcome that this year's draft resolution reflects the launch of the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement project of assistance, a three-year capacity-building programme funded by the EU and to be implemented by the Division in cooperation with the FAO. We are convinced that this project will strongly contribute to strengthening the participation of developing countries in the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement as well as to enhancing the Agreement's full and effective implementation.

In conclusion, both draft resolutions that we are discussing today are important instruments in the context of enhancing ocean governance. For this reason, the EU and its member States have participated actively in the consultations preparing them. We look forward to continuing our work next year. The work we undertake in these hallowed halls must ensure that oceans and seas can continue to provide their goods and services for current and future generations, in line with the ethos of the Convention. There is only one ocean, and we all have a responsibility to conserve it and to use it sustainably. Humankind deserves no less.

Ms. Challenger (Antigua and Barbuda): I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), the group of countries that are most reliant on oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, owing to their unique characteristics, dependence and particular exposure to the ocean and its biodiversity.

As the historic custodians of the ocean, we are deeply alarmed by the recent scientific findings affirming that the health of the ocean is deteriorating at an unprecedented pace, with far-reaching and irreversible consequences to marine ecosystems and the people that rely on them. According to the Working Group II Contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the increased frequency and intensity of the adverse

impacts of climate change has resulted in widespread, even pervasive, effects on the ocean. The ocean's natural adaptive capacity is stretched beyond its limits, resulting in the deterioration of ecosystem structures and functions and mass mortality events causing the loss of hundreds of species. This has disproportionate socioeconomic consequences for countries that rely on the ocean for economic viability, such as the small island developing States (SIDS). Furthermore, at the frontlines of these climate effects, SIDS are also suffering unprecedented loss and damage, with irreversible impacts that must be urgently addressed.

In that context, we reiterate our long-standing call to urgently curb global greenhouse-gas emissions, with the objective of limiting the global rise in temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. We also call for greater financing for climate adaptation, including through ocean-based conservation measures. We also welcome the dialogue on ocean and climate change that was convened during the subsidiary session of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in June this year, which strengthens ocean climate action under the Paris Agreement. We look forward to the future annual dialogues that will explore this nexus further, in the light of the most up-to-date scientific findings.

Slow-onset events of climate change are also becoming a reality for many SIDS. Sea-level rise and its numerous implications must be addressed now, as this is no longer a future threat, but an imminent one. In this regard, we welcome the work of the International Law Commission on this issue, considering matters such as statehood and the protection of persons and potential implications for international law. In these discussions, AOSIS leaders have affirmed that there is no obligation under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to keep baselines and outer limits of maritime zones under review nor to update charts or lists of geographical coordinates once deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and that such maritime zones and the rights and entitlements that flow therefrom shall continue to apply without reduction, notwithstanding any physical changes connected to climate change-related sea-level rise.

We have also stated that there is a fundamental presumption of the continuation of States that may be inundated and that the Montevideo Convention is not relevant to the question of continuation. It is also our view that protection of persons in the face of sea-

level rise is a global challenge, and therefore the duty of cooperation is a general principle of international law. We look forward to further deliberations on this important issue and will continue to advocate for the rights of SIDS to be protected when faced with sea-level rise.

In addition to climate change, the decline in marine biodiversity can also be attributed to other unsustainable human practices. More ambitious global action to protect our planet's biodiversity is needed, taking into account the important ecosystem services it provides. In this regard, we look forward to the adoption of the ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework at the second part of fifteenth meeting of the Convention on Biodiversity. At the same time, we must also expedite our efforts to protect marine biodiversity on the high seas, as we have now reached the conclusion of the Intergovernmental Conference on Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction. We call on all Member States to work constructively to bridge divides that will enable us to cross the finish line and adopt the text for the new instrument at the resumed fifth session next year.

Another issue that has dramatically escalated over the last few decades, and which is taking a severe toll on the ocean, is plastic pollution. With evidence emerging this year that microplastics have now been found in human blood, it is not only an environmental or economic issue, but one concerning human health as well. We therefore welcome the timely adoption of the draft mandate resolution to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. We believe this instrument should address past, present and future pollution, which includes remediation of plastic existing in the marine environment. The instrument must also contain robust provisions for means of implementation, considering the varied capacity for tackling this issue.

As we strive for progress across these specific areas of ocean governance, we must not forget our overarching commitments in Sustainable Development Goal 14 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As called for in the declaration "Our ocean, our future, our responsibility", adopted at the second United Nations Ocean Conference, we need urgent and enhanced action to support the implementation of the targets, with a particular focus on targets 14.2, 14.4, 14.5 and 14.6. We also call for giving further impetus to target 14.7, in order to increase scientific knowledge, develop

research capacities and transfer marine knowledge to SIDS. Owing to our limitations in capacity, the vast potential for sustainable development through harnessing the ocean remains out of our reach. SIDS highlighted the challenges and solutions behind successful partnerships through the declaration for the enhancement of marine scientific knowledge, research capacity and the transfer of marine technology to SIDS, which was also launched earlier this year at the second United Nations Ocean Conference. We encourage all stakeholders to forge more effective and meaningful partnerships in line with our call, and in that regard, we welcome the Ocean Voices Programme, which has emerged through the support of the Nippon Foundation.

When considering the widespread effects of declining ocean health, it is important to keep in mind that because of our inherent and intrinsic ties to the ocean, small island developing States are disproportionately affected. It is also important to remember the historic role that we have played in the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean, including through the use of traditional knowledge. Our Sustainable Development Goals, enshrined in the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway and the 2030 Agenda, are also closely linked to the ocean. Taking that into account, we call on the international community to continue preserving the special circumstances of small island developing States in the context of oceans and the law of the sea.

Mr. Prasad (Fiji): I have the pleasure of delivering these remarks on behalf of the members of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) with a presence at the United Nations and of Kiribati. I thank the President of the General Assembly for convening us today. The members of the PIF would like to express their gratitude to all parties responsible for concluding the negotiations on agenda item 72, entitled “Oceans and the law of the sea”, and its sub-items, which are of fundamental significance to our Blue Pacific continent.

As oceanic peoples, we depend on the ocean as our greatest source of nourishment, livelihoods, identity and economic prosperity. We are not alone. The ocean covers 70 per cent of the planet’s surface, absorbs 30 per cent of global carbon-dioxide emissions and more than 90 per cent of the heat from global warming and produces more than 70 per cent of the Earth’s oxygen. We simply must have a healthy ocean if we are to have healthy populations. Pacific Island Forum leaders over the decades have recognized its central role in our well-

being as Pacific peoples. We therefore welcome the forthcoming adoption of draft resolution A/77/L.36, on the oceans, and the progress it marks.

Earlier this year our leaders endorsed the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, setting out our collective approach to achieving sustained security, development and prosperity for all Pacific peoples. The Strategy recognizes climate change as the single greatest threat to our livelihoods, sovereignty and very existence. We have accordingly declared a climate emergency in our region.

Pacific Island Forum leaders recognize the ocean as representing our greatest hope in fulfilling and reaching our common goals and aspirations. We therefore need to work hard to ensure the protection and conservation of the oceans so that the Blue Pacific continent can continue to provide resources and environmental services for us and the rest of the world. Today that aspiration is expressed through the lens of our blue economy, as well as through conservation and management measures that ensure that our Pacific tuna stocks are among the best managed in the world. Our inclusive and considered approach to the stewardship of our blue continent is reflected in the Pacific leaders’ landmark Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the Face of Climate Change-related Sea-level Rise, which is firmly grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. We continue to welcome support for that declaration from Member States that have not yet declared it.

Our leaders reaffirm our commitment to concluding negotiations on an ambitious treaty on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction early next year, and encourage all parties to make every possible effort to secure an ambitious treaty. We herald the ambition of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to negotiate a legally binding agreement to end plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, and welcome the progress made at its first meeting in Uruguay last week. We welcome the important progress made on ocean-related issues during the Our Ocean Conference in Palau and the United Nations Ocean Conference in Lisbon and its adoption of the United Nations Ocean Conference declaration entitled “Our ocean, our future, our responsibility”. Our leaders also welcome the progress made on the ocean-climate nexus under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and note the convening of the first mandated annual ocean and climate dialogue, held in Bonn, Germany, in June.

The Pacific Islands Forum also welcomes the adoption of this year's sustainable fisheries draft resolution (A/77/L.33). The sustainable utilization of our fisheries is of fundamental importance to our economies and to the future welfare of our communities. We remain committed to managing those resources responsibly. The commitments that have been renewed and strengthened in this draft resolution, when implemented effectively, will have a major impact on the long-term sustainability of our vital ocean resources. In provisions of especial significance for our region, the draft resolution acknowledges the importance of expanding efforts to address illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and of taking into account the potential impacts of climate change on our fisheries-management decisions. The Pacific Islands Forum welcomed the conclusion of the General Assembly's bottom-fishing review, which presented an important opportunity to review global progress towards implementing the General Assembly's bottom-fishing commitments. Protecting vulnerable marine ecosystems from significant adverse effects and preserving the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks are both vital to the health of our oceans and to the Pacific people.

The ocean can be a unifier and a solution to many of our critical global problems, but Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 is also the least-funded global SDG. Resourcing and financing at scale will be critical to supporting current and emerging ocean-based actions going forward. The ocean is fundamental and crucial to keeping the 1.5°C target alive. Our Blue Pacific continent stands ready to continue that important work with all Member States.

I would like to thank the Assembly and to take this opportunity to extend our season's greetings to everyone here and their families.

Ms. Rodríguez Mancia (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by commending the delegations of Singapore and Norway for facilitating the negotiations on draft resolutions A/77/L. 33 and A/77/L.36, which are under consideration today by the General Assembly. We also thank the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for its assistance to Member States. We have taken note of the report entitled "Oceans and the law of the sea" (A/77/331). In that context, I would like to make a few remarks.

As we have said in various forums, we believe firmly that the international legal regime governing activities in the oceans, whether multilateral, regional or bilateral, is the fundamental basis that should guide States' behaviour at sea, as well as with regard to the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal ecosystems.

This year is a very special one, as it marks the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). UNCLOS is the constitution of the oceans, codifying the international legal norms that guarantee the rule of law at sea. For that reason, my delegation reiterates the importance that it attaches to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, given that its scope of application covers 70 per cent of the Earth's surface. UNCLOS is a key instrument within the world order that contributes to the maintenance of peace, cooperation and good relations between States through its definition of maritime zones, navigation rights and the protection of the environment, and through its conflict-resolution mechanism. All of those elements make it a key tool for the international community and for the development of States, which is why it must be applied in a way that benefits humankind as a whole.

The reason that the Convention is so important is because it is one of the international instruments with the broadest economic, political and strategic effects. At the same time, it establishes that all of its provisions form a balance of rights and obligations for States. For Guatemala, the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, including their resources, are essential. That is why we are working actively to achieve the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 14, in line with the relevant international obligations and our domestic legal system. We also welcome the consolidation of the work and contributions of the bodies established under UNCLOS, such as the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, the International Seabed Authority and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. Guatemala particularly acknowledges the work of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea — a jurisdictional institution specialized in resolving disputes between States parties on matters relating to the law of the sea — and especially its dispute settlement mechanism.

My delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's launch on 21 April of the *Second World Ocean Assessment*, which was the main outcome of the second

cycle of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment. It provides scientific information about the state of the marine environment in a comprehensive manner, with a view to supporting decisions and actions to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 14. We welcomed the holding in Lisbon in June of the second United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 — namely, to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development — as well as the political declaration adopted by the membership during that conference.

Marine biodiversity in areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction is currently one of the most urgent issues relating to the law of the sea. With reference to the work on a legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, we recognize that it is an ongoing process within the legal framework of UNCLOS, which has the potential to complement its provisions in a coherent manner. We also stress the need for the new instrument to be consistent with the concept of sovereign equality of States and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations without affecting the rights, jurisdiction or obligations of States in relation to UNCLOS, and without undermining the relevant legal frameworks already in place. Guatemala recognizes the efforts that have been made in the negotiations on the instrument and underscores that its content, which will determine our legacy to future generations, is vitally important. In view of all of this, we emphasize the need to strengthen scientific knowledge-sharing, capacity-building and marine technology transfers, especially for the benefit of developing countries, as those will be key elements in the instrument's effective implementation. In conclusion, we reiterate our commitment to continuing to participate in those negotiations in a spirit of cooperation in order to conclude a strong, balanced and effective treaty at the resumed fifth session of the intergovernmental conference in February.

Mr. Mead (Canada): As Secretary-General António Guterres reminded us this year in the context of World Oceans Day, on 8 June, we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity and responsibility to correct our relationship with the natural world, including the world's seas and oceans. With that message in mind, Canada is pleased to note that ocean-related efforts

have regained momentum in the past year, and we are confident that 2023 will offer many more opportunities for the international community to achieve much-needed ocean-related outcomes. Whether it is within the Group of Seven, the Group of 20, the High-level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy or various United Nations processes, Canada is eager to work with partners to protect and conserve at least 30 per cent of the world's oceans by 2030; ensure the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity within and beyond national jurisdiction; promote environmental stewardship in the exploitation of marine resources, including minerals; and continue tackling global issues such as illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and plastic pollution.

(spoke in French)

Last week, Canada participated in the first intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop a legally binding instrument on plastics pollution in Punta del Este, Uruguay. Canada will continue to work with partners to implement its commitments, advance solutions and strengthen science, while advocating for ambitious action on plastic pollution in a number of international forums and initiatives. As an inaugural member of the High Ambition Coalition to End Plastic Pollution, Canada is committed to maintaining a leadership role during the development of that agreement.

Canada is also committed to finalizing an agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). We look forward to working constructively with all delegations at the resumed fifth intergovernmental conference and finding a way forward, as we consider that a BBNJ treaty will play a vital role in ensuring the long-term health and viability of our oceans.

(spoke in English)

Under the International Seabed Authority, Canada is actively engaged in the timely formulation of regulations for the exploitation of deep-seabed minerals. Canada believes that such exploitation should take place only under a rigorous regulatory regime that applies a precautionary and ecosystem-based approach, uses science-based and transparent management and ensures effective compliance with a robust inspection mechanism. We will continue to work with partners to ensure the effective protection of the marine

environment from harmful effects of activities in this area, as required under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

In addition to those processes, Canada believes that marine and coastal biodiversity issues are integral to the new post-2020 global biodiversity framework, which is currently being negotiated in Montreal, Canada, and should be adequately reflected across its goals, targets and indicators. We will continue to be firmly engaged in finding an agreement for an ambitious framework that can provide a coordinated global response to ocean issues based on science, the effective participation of indigenous peoples and recognition of the ocean-climate nexus.

This year Canada is proud to have made important high-level commitments, as well as developing and launching key strategies related to the oceans. Along with the United States, the United Kingdom and Iceland, Canada became a member of the Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing Action Alliance Pledge. That initiative, which was introduced at the United Nations Ocean Conference in Lisbon, is aimed at tackling the issue of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU) by improving data collection on harmful fishing practices such as labour abuses in the seafood supply chain, promoting transparency and traceability and ensuring the effective regulation and sustainable management of fisheries, including in the regional fisheries management organizations in which Pledge members participate.

Canada also recently launched its Indo-Pacific strategy, which will include the establishment of a new shared ocean fund to support Indo-Pacific countries in the implementation of domestic fisheries and oceans legislation, international treaties and associated regulatory frameworks. It will also expand Canada's capabilities under the Dark Vessel Detection programme to bolster the detection and interception of IUU fishing activities. In addition, Canada will harness its expertise in fisheries monitoring and enforcement to support regional capacity-building initiatives with like-minded partners, including developing States, to ensure that Indo-Pacific countries have the tools, knowledge and capacity they need to uphold their sustainable management regimes.

At the domestic level, Canada is developing a blue-economy strategy that will support the transformation of Canada's ocean sectors to a

sustainable blue economy in which restored ocean health will support indigenous peoples, as well as coastal communities, with long-term livelihoods in technologically advanced and resilient marine sectors. The strategy will serve as a primary tool to meet our commitment within the High-level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy to sustainably managing 100 per cent of our ocean space by 2025, guided by a sustainable ocean plan.

Canada is also continuing to push for ambitious marine conservation efforts. We are committed to increasing the conservation of Canada's oceans to 25 per cent by 2025 and 30 per cent by 2030. We continue to encourage all States parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to set a similar goal. Our commitment was further highlighted through our participation as a member of the Global Ocean Alliance and the Ocean Conservation Pledge, which we signed at the twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change together with 16 other nations. In February 2023, Canada will also host the fifth International Marine Protected Areas Congress in Vancouver alongside host First Nations and in partnership with the International Union for Conservation of Nature and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society. It will be another milestone in global efforts towards the 30 by 30 goal, as well as an opportunity to build on the momentum gained over the past few years.

Canada has a long-standing commitment to our oceans and to maintaining a rules-based international maritime order based on international law, of which UNCLOS is a fundamental part. Our approach to the law of the sea is shaped by the fact that we are an ocean nation as well as an Arctic nation. The maritime areas of Canada's Arctic archipelago — which have been used since time immemorial by the Inuit, who still occupy those areas — are covered by ice for most of the year, making it difficult to differentiate between where the land stops and the water starts. A good example of the unique way that the Inuit manage and use the maritime domain in the Arctic is the Nunavut land-use plan. By including proposed protections for caribou sea-ice routes, as well as ice protections for Inuit hunting and transportation purposes, this modern-day holistic-management tool addresses a multitude of different issues and uses of the ice and water. The specificity of the Arctic environment is also recognized by UNCLOS, which gives coastal States the right to adopt

and enforce non-discriminatory laws and regulations for the prevention, reduction and control of marine pollution from vessels in ice-covered areas within the limits of the exclusive economic zone.

In conclusion, given all the challenges we have experienced this year, I would like to provide an important example of the rules-based international order at work in relation to Canada's ocean boundaries. In June, Canada signed a treaty with Denmark and Greenland resolving our territorial dispute over Hans Island, as well as the maritime boundary dispute with Denmark in the Lincoln Sea and the continental-shelf overlap in the Labrador Sea, which has resulted in the longest maritime border in the world and one that is now uncontested. The efforts by our countries to resolve those boundary issues stand as a testament to the rules-based international order. In the years and decades to come, as we address the many challenges faced by our world's oceans, we must continue to rely on and adhere to international law, including UNCLOS in particular.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The ocean is the cradle of life and a treasure trove of resources. It contains invaluable wealth bestowed by nature on humankind. As we speak, unprecedented global changes throughout the past century are gaining momentum and the impact of climate change on humankind is unfolding. New problems and challenges in relation to the ocean continue to emerge.

All parties should seize the opportunity presented by the consensus reached at this year's United Nations Ocean Conference to deepen international cooperation on oceans, promote the sustainable development of oceans and accelerate the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals. All should uphold true multilateralism, fully leverage the critical role of the United Nations in global ocean governance, ensure the equal right of developing countries to engage in ocean governance and advance the building of a maritime community with a shared future. All parties should continue working to improve the modern system of the law of the sea anchored in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, other ocean-related treaties and customary international law, while steadily advancing negotiations on international agreements on marine biodiversity and on regulations for exploiting international seabed resources. It is also essential to expedite research on and the elaboration of international rules governing issues such as sea-level rise and marine plastic pollution.

In the past year, the International Seabed Authority (ISA), the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf achieved positive progress, respectively contributing to the implementation of the principle of the common heritage of humankind, promoting the peaceful settlement of intentional disputes and determining the outer limits of the continental shelf of coastal States beyond 200 nautical miles. China is the largest financial contributor to the International Seabed Authority and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and has been making contributions to the Commission's voluntary trust fund over the years. China believes that all parties should objectively assess their prospects for deep-sea exploitation and steadily advance the work of the ISA. The international judicial arbitral institutions should interpret and apply UNCLOS accurately in its entirety and in good faith, adhere to the principle of countries' consent and fully respect the right of all countries to choose their own dispute-settlement modalities. The Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf should strictly abide by the rule enshrined in its procedures that no submission involving an unresolved dispute should be considered, in order to avoid involvement in land or sea disputes of coastal States.

The sustainable development of fisheries as an important part of global ocean governance bears on the food security and economic development of all countries. As a responsible fishery State, China has always been committed to the science-based conservation and sustainable use of fishery resources to promote the sustainable development global fisheries. In that regard, I would like to underscore the following points,

First, with regard to the sustainable use of fishery resources, China attaches great importance to ecosystem-based fishery management and is determined to strengthen the application and scaling up of ecological and environmentally friendly fishing practices, as well as to implement an independent high-seas fishing moratorium, step up scientific fishery research and encourage scientific and technological innovation and smart development in order to actively contribute to marine biodiversity conservation and global fisheries governance.

Secondly, to strengthen the rigorous management of pelagic fisheries, China has put in place a comprehensive management system and measures

such as pelagic fishing licences. China has honestly fulfilled the obligations set out for it by regional fishery organizations and in agreements to which it is a party, while continually building its capacities and improving its level of compliance. Meanwhile, we are constantly refining our systems for monitoring pelagic fishing vessel positions and supervising high-seas trans-shipments, as well as regulating the import and export of pelagic aquatic products, in order to strengthen pelagic fishery supervision and compliance.

Thirdly, China takes a zero-tolerance approach to illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing activities. We steadfastly support the international community in combating IUU fishing, continue to bolster the supervision of our own fishing vessels and are considering joining the Agreement on Port State Measures to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing. In the meantime, we firmly oppose malicious attempts by any country to discredit other countries in the name of combating IUU fishing.

The ocean is our shared home. Its protection and sustainable use are a common goal and duty of humankind. China stands ready to work hand in hand with all parties to make new and greater contributions to better global ocean governance and the well-being of humankind.

Ms. Cerrato (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, it is important to emphasize that on the fortieth anniversary of the adoption and opening for signature of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Honduras — a State party since December 1982 — recognizes UNCLOS as the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas should be carried out, given its strategic importance as the basis for activities and cooperation in the marine sector at the national, regional and global levels.

My delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his reports during the current session (A/77/68, A/77/331 and A/77/155) and welcomes the report on the work of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea at its twenty-second meeting (A/77/119) and the reports on the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on the Regular Process (see A/77/327 and A/77/596). I would also like to thank Singapore and Norway for their leadership in the consultation processes for the draft resolutions we will adopt on oceans and the law of the sea and sustainable fisheries, which my delegation supports (A/77/L.33 and A/77/L.36).

My country is situated in an area at high risk from the effects of climate change and has suffered the consequences of devastating hurricanes and other natural phenomena, which is why we urgently need to see efforts redoubled at the global level to counteract those effects. We must make the most of this crucial moment to ensure that the solutions we adopt are based on science, technology and innovation with a view to guaranteeing the sustainability of the oceans, protecting the heritage of future generations and achieving resilient recovery.

Together with the Netherlands, Honduras currently has the honour of holding the co-chairship of the General Assembly 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. In that regard, I urge States parties to continue strengthening their periodic scientific assessments of the state of the marine environment in order to improve the scientific basis for the formulation of public policies in line with the four brief documents based on the *Second World Ocean Assessment*, focused on climate change, Sustainable Development Goal 14, the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and marine biodiversity.

My country's priorities include continuing to work in the context of national, regional and international programmes and strategies to eliminate the use of plastic and plastic waste in the seas and oceans in order to attain a healthy marine environment. We therefore urge other Member States to curb pollution caused by garbage and waste dumped in rivers that flow into the ocean and seas. In that context, my country is honoured to participate as a founding member of the Group of Friends to Combat Marine Plastic Pollution.

Honduras reiterates that as part of the work of implementing Sustainable Development Goal 14, in the resumed fifth session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee, to be held in February and March 2023, it is extremely urgent that we conclude a legally binding instrument, within the framework of UNCLOS, on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. Among other things, it will enable the establishment of effective cross-sectoral marine protected areas aimed at maintaining the global health of the ocean, as well as capacity-building and marine technology transfers for

developing countries on the high seas. For that reason, my country calls for redoubling efforts to conclude negotiations on a robust treaty as soon as possible.

Finally, as indicated by the Secretary-General in his report (A/77/331), my country calls on the international community to strengthen cooperation for the safety of migrants and refugees at sea. Concerted efforts must be made to ensure their protection, in particular through the implementation of adequate and effective search-and-rescue and safe disembarkation mechanisms.

We also still need concerted action to protect underwater cultural heritage, as well as to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment in all ocean-related sectors of governance.

Mr. Pedroso Cuesta (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba attaches fundamental importance to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea with regard to the maintenance and strengthening of peace, international law and the sustainable development of the oceans and seas. The Convention is a major milestone in the codification of international law and has been ratified by the vast majority of States. The Convention establishes an appropriate and universally recognized legal framework within which all activities relating to the oceans and seas should be conducted. It is important to preserve the integrity of the Convention and the implementation of its provisions as a whole. Matters related to the oceans and the law of the sea should fall under the supervision of the General Assembly in order to ensure greater coherence in their application for the benefit of all Member States.

Cuba underscores the importance of continued efforts by the United Nations to promote common action in order to reduce the vulnerability of our oceans in the light of the environmental, social and economic consequences that climate change has brought about for developing countries, especially less developed countries, small island developing States and coastal States, particularly those with low-lying areas. The effects of climate change on the oceans represent an important risk to those countries' economies, biodiversity, food security and human health. We must continue to intensify our cooperation and coordination in counteracting those effects, which will ultimately benefit humankind, the oceans and our planet as a whole. To that end, it is essential that developed countries comply with their commitments regarding the provision of official development assistance to developing

countries, especially least developed countries and small developing island States, and that technology transfers and capacity-building are supported.

The two draft resolutions that we will adopt today — the omnibus draft resolution on the oceans and the law of the sea (A/77/L.36) and the draft resolution on sustainable fishing (A/77/L.33) — are the result of long and intense negotiations. We thank the delegations that have shown flexibility and a desire to promote the resolutions' objectives. We also thank the Norwegian facilitators under whose leadership we have successfully concluded our negotiations. The draft resolutions take important steps towards the full implementation of existing instruments on the oceans at the global and regional level.

Cuba has made major efforts to implement national strategies for the sustainable development and protection of the marine environment, with a view to achieving the consistent, continuing and effective implementation of the provisions of the Convention. Those efforts can be seen in particular in the Constitution adopted by the Cuban people by referendum in 2019, which lays out the rights and obligations of the State and its citizens with regard to the protection of the environment, including the marine environment, and to fighting climate change. Cuba has a solid institutional framework and national legislation relating to the law of the sea and has taken every possible measure to counter criminal offences at sea such as illicit trafficking in narcotics and psychoactive substances, human trafficking and piracy.

Cuba reiterates the importance of fostering international cooperation in the management of marine resources and the protection of the oceans and their biodiversity within the principles of international law, respecting the sovereignty of States, their territorial waters and the resources found in their exclusive economic areas and the continental shelf. We actively support the work of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf and call on all Member States to support it so that the Commission has the resources it needs to carry out its work. We must acknowledge the huge volume of work that the Commission's members are dealing with and their desire to examine each case exhaustively and as quickly as possible. It is therefore important that the Commission be able to conduct its work swiftly and effectively, and at the same time meet all of the legal requirements established to that end. Cuba will support both draft resolutions to be submitted for the consideration of the General Assembly.

Mr. Oh Yuchan (Republic of Korea): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for presenting us with a comprehensive report on the oceans and the law of the sea (A/77/331). My gratitude also goes to the coordinators for their leadership and hard work, which should be particularly appreciated this year, when in-person consultations have finally resumed after three years of pandemic. Korea is happy to be a sponsor of draft resolution A/77/L.36, which is the result of active in-person discussions among Member States.

The draft resolution takes stock of recent important developments in the marine environment, marine biodiversity, marine science and many other areas related to the oceans and the law of the sea. It also takes note of a new capacity-building programme sponsored by Korea, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea Workshop for Legal Advisers, which was held in September after a long delay owing to the coronavirus disease pandemic. Capacity-building is essential in that it enables Member States to attain the knowledge and capabilities needed to fully implement the Convention and to respond in a timely manner to emerging challenges. Korea supports all capacity-building activities organized or sponsored by Member States and remains committed to furthering them.

The draft resolution also addresses a diverse range of imminent challenges facing the oceans, including climate change, the loss of marine biodiversity and potential sources of harm such as underwater noise and marine debris. Recognizing the serious impact of those challenges, many States have reaffirmed their desire to promote the sustainable use of the oceans and seas by fully realizing Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which give a concrete shape to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) framework by setting specific targets and indicators for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans. As acknowledged by world leaders at the 2022 Ocean Conference, concerted action to accelerate the implementation needed to achieve SDG 14 will be vital to keeping our oceans healthy and productive for future generations. As a State surrounded by seas on three sides, Korea also strongly supports the implementation of SDG 14 in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

This year marks the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of UNCLOS. As a constitution for the oceans and seas, UNCLOS has been the cornerstone of the

international legal regime encompassing our seas and has played a crucial role in promoting the sustainable and peaceful use of our oceans. The Convention has also enabled us to tackle various challenges in our oceans with remarkable flexibility. The Republic of Korea has always been a staunch supporter of UNCLOS and of its universal and unified character.

However, challenges still lie ahead — climate change, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and marine pollution, just to name a few. We have a shared responsibility to address those challenges by coordinating efforts under the UNCLOS framework. This year the international community was closer than ever to concluding a legally binding international agreement under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of maritime biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, which will definitely serve as great momentum for our finalization of the intense negotiations in the upcoming year. Korea is fully confident that this history-making enterprise will open up a new era for the UNCLOS regime. Given the situation of our oceans and seas and the evident willingness of States to address the situation, this is the time to act together with a sense of urgency and set our differences aside in order to come to a consensus.

The Republic of Korea reaffirms its commitment to upholding UNCLOS and to continuing to work towards a sustainable and peaceful future for our oceans and for humankind.

Mr. Gómez Robledo Verduzco (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): We know that 600 million people depend on the oceans and seas for their livelihoods through activities such as fishing, aquaculture, tourism, transportation and trade. The sustainable use of maritime resources strengthens the well-being of communities and helps to reduce development gaps and inequalities, both within and among States. Now that we have celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Mexico is convinced that the adoption of a legally binding international instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ), the so-called BBNJ process, should be the highest priority of the international community in the area of the law of the sea.

Such an implementing agreement will serve to address issues that are more relevant today than ever before. There can be no doubt that the fifth session of the intergovernmental conference of the BBNJ process,

held this year, was the one in which we made the most progress. If we maintain that level of ambition and the necessary political will, we are convinced that we will be able to conclude our work during the resumed fifth session, to be held early next year. We also recognize the importance of the process for establishing a legally binding international agreement on marine plastic pollution in order to address another major challenge in protecting the marine environment.

Mexico reiterates its conviction that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea remains the cornerstone of global governance of the oceans. We once again call on those who have not done so to ratify or join that very important instrument and to cooperate with the bodies created by it. In that context, Mexico rejects all unilateral acts contrary to the legal regime of the territorial sea, the exclusive economic zone and the airspace above them. For Mexico, it is unacceptable that, for reasons of protecting the freedom of navigation and overflight, the sovereign rights of coastal States should be violated. The right to innocent passage and other freedoms of navigation — even for naval vessels and aircraft — must be compatible with UNCLOS and must take due account of the rights and duties of coastal States. Therefore, Mexico reiterates that only through cooperation and coordination mechanisms can we guarantee that the objectives of the maintenance of international peace and security, the peaceful settlement of disputes, the due exercise of sovereign rights and the protection and preservation of the marine environment will be duly achieved.

We are grateful for the cooperation between the International Seabed Authority and the international community in advancing the work on the draft regulations on the exploitation of mineral resources in the Area. We also acknowledge the work of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf and welcome the 20 new members of the Commission who will join the team in 2023. We reiterate our support for the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, whose President honoured us with his presence yesterday to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of UNCLOS and which has been able to consistently ensure the application of the law, while prioritizing the peaceful settlement of disputes. In particular, we welcome the holding of hearings in the case between Mauritius and Maldives. We also recognize the valuable work of the International Court of Justice and the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the settlement of disputes on ocean-related matters and the delimitation of sea borders.

However, Mexico reiterates its grave concern about the effects of climate change on the oceans, including rising sea levels and temperatures, deoxygenation and the acidification of the oceans. In particular, we are concerned about the impact of those realities on the millions of people whose lives and livelihoods depend on the oceans. We therefore note with interest the processes that could result in requests for advisory opinions to both the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and the International Court of Justice on climate change and its adverse effects on the oceans in the light of assumed legal obligations. Similarly, we will continue to attach due attention to the work of the International Law Commission on sea-level rise in relation to international law.

In conclusion, Mexico reiterates its absolute commitment to the protection of the oceans and the biodiversity that inhabits them. Life on this planet would simply be impossible without the oceans' resources and without ensuring their due protection. Today more than ever, we are compelled to act decisively to protect our seas and oceans in the face of the global climate and ecosystem crises that confront us.

Mr. Escobar Ullauri (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the submission of the report of the Secretary-General on the state of the oceans (A/77/331), as well as the reports 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 (see A/77/327), and on the work of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea at its twenty-second meeting (see A/77/119).

Given its status as a coastal developing country and in the context of the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14, Ecuador considers draft resolution A/77/L.36, on oceans and the law of the sea, and draft resolution A/77/L.33, on sustainable fisheries, to be especially significant, as they are a clear signal of the importance that the international community attaches to the state of the oceans and their contribution to sustainable development. We are pleased that the draft resolutions highlight the importance of protecting the marine environment, the challenges posed by climate change and the need to control pollution. In response to those challenges, we support the progress that is being made to develop a legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, as well as the progress made in the negotiations on a binding instrument for the conservation and sustainable use of marine diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

One of the greatest threats to the sustainability of the oceans is inadequately controlled fishing activities, including illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, which has a profound impact not only on the depletion of fish stocks but also on development prospects and food security. Based on international treaties, we will continue to demand that flag States take responsibility for those activities and adopt measures to prevent them.

At the national level, and with the objective of protecting its marine resources, Ecuador has adopted fisheries management measures and anti-pollution regulations. It has also updated the boundaries of the Galapagos Marine Reserve and created the Hermandad Marine Reserve, with an area of 60,000 square kilometres, in addition to the archipelago's existing reserves, thereby increasing its area from 133,000 to 193,000 square kilometres, including an area of 30,000 square kilometres in which all destructive activities are prohibited.

On the other hand, and while we underscore several of the elements contained in the draft resolutions, we are obliged to note that the references to capacity-building and the transfer of marine technology remain limited. We must not forget that they are elements that are critical to developing countries' ability to reap the benefits derived from marine resources.

In conclusion, we thank the coordinators of the informal consultations on both draft resolutions, Singapore and Norway, for their outstanding coordination. We would also like to thank the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for its expertise and hard work during the consultations.

Mr. Fifield (Australia): This year we observe 40 years since the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which is quite simply a remarkable feat of multilateralism; 40 years later, Australia remains committed to upholding the integrity of the Convention in the future. We reaffirm the universal and unified character of UNCLOS. It sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. Since the Convention came into force, it has been the legal blueprint for establishing all maritime zones, maintaining maritime peace and security and protecting our oceans.

As a maritime nation, Australia believes that a strong governance regime for our oceans is critical. We would like to see the sovereignty of all States

respected. We are committed to protecting the rights and freedoms of all States, including the freedoms of navigation and overflight. We recognize that the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources is critical, particularly in our Pacific region. Australia recognizes the importance of the connection of First Nations Australians to land and waters and the unique knowledge and cultural practices that they hold from being stewards of Australia's land and waters for more than 60,000 years. We emphasize the immense contribution that indigenous peoples can make to addressing shared regional and global development challenges, including climate change and the health of the oceans.

UNCLOS sets out clear, comprehensive and exhaustive rules on baselines, maritime zones and the classification of features. Australia does not accept maritime claims that are inconsistent with UNCLOS. It is our strong position that the rules and principles of general international law do not displace the Convention and cannot be relied upon in such a way. We believe that UNCLOS — the constitution for the ocean and seas — provides the foundation for a peaceful and predictable South-East Asia and Indo-Pacific region. The Convention is central to a rules-based order in the maritime domain, in which all countries can cooperate, trade and thrive.

Australia reiterates its concerns about the destabilizing actions and serious incidents in the South China Sea, which have eroded trust and confidence, have increased tensions and undermine peace and security in the region. We maintain that any maritime disputes, including those in the South China Sea, should be resolved peacefully in accordance with international law, particularly the Convention.

Australia was pleased to take part in the fifth round of negotiations for an implementing agreement under UNCLOS for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). We acknowledge the substantial progress made during the negotiating round and look forward to its resumption in early 2023. The conclusion of an ambitious and comprehensive BBNJ agreement is a key part of Australia's commitment to the protection and preservation of the marine environment.

As a member of the Pacific family, Australia recognizes that climate change is an existential threat for the Pacific region. The Pacific Islands Forum's

Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the face of Climate Change-Related Sea-level Rise recognizes that the principles of legal stability, security, certainty and predictability that underpin UNCLOS are relevant to its application in the context of sea-level rise and climate change. We encourage other States to support the interpretation of UNCLOS set out in the Declaration. We acknowledge the important work done this year at the meetings of the International Seabed Authority (ISA). We note the importance of ongoing elaboration and standardization by the ISA of rules, regulations and procedures to ensure the effective protection of the marine environment.

In conclusion, I should like to say that Australia is proud to have co-sponsored draft resolution A/77/L.36, on oceans and the law of the sea. In this fortieth year of UNCLOS, Australia reflects on how our oceans have benefited from the multilateral system underpinning the Convention and the rules and norms it sets out. The full and effective implementation of UNCLOS will further establish a maritime domain that is stable, peaceful, prosperous and respectful of sovereignty.

Mr. Hossain (Bangladesh): The significance of oceans for the survival of humankind is well established. Covering more than 70 per cent of the surface of the Earth, they provide vital benefits to the global population. More than 3 billion people rely on the oceans for their livelihoods, and more than 80 per cent of world trade is transported by sea. However, today the ocean and its ecosystem are under severe stress from a wide range of imminent crises, including those related to climate change, sea-level rise, unsustainable fishing, pollution and oil and gas extraction. We thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/77/331), and we also thank the coordinators for their excellent work in facilitating draft resolutions A/77/L.36 and A/77/L.33. As part of its steadfast commitment to the obligations of the annual draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea and the annual draft resolution on sustainable fisheries, Bangladesh has once again co-sponsored both draft resolutions.

As a low-lying coastal country, Bangladesh attaches a high level of importance to the health of the ocean. Climate-induced sea-level rise may have a devastating impact on the lives and livelihoods of the people of Bangladesh. A one-metre rise in sea-level rise could submerge approximately 40 per cent of the southern coastal part of Bangladesh, resulting in internal displacement, food insecurity and economic losses.

However, Bangladesh has undertaken several initiatives to mitigate the adverse impact of climate change on the oceans. We were one of the first countries to sign and ratify the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). We have resolved our maritime boundary disputes with neighbouring countries in accordance with part XV of UNCLOS. We have also provided technical and scientific information to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf in support of our claim to the outer continental shelf of the Bay of Bengal under the relevant provision of UNCLOS. At the national level, we have updated our national legislation to bring it into conformity with UNCLOS. The newly enacted Maritime Zones Act and the blue economy development workplan of Bangladesh will ensure the efficient utilization, conservation and scientific management of our marine resources.

The ocean is our global commons. Our common future will therefore be significantly determined by the way we conserve, develop and tap into oceanic resources and services. I would like to make a few points in that regard.

First, we recall that the theme of the twenty-second meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea focused on ocean observing. As climate-induced sea-level rise is the gravest threat to the health of our oceans, an integrated global ocean-observation system will play a critical role in addressing the adverse impact of climate change and ocean warming through the delivery of harmonized ocean information to decision makers at the local, regional and global levels. In that regard, we welcome the adoption of the Global Ocean Observing System 2030 Strategy to build a fully integrated global ocean observing system by 2030. We hope that it will serve as a full ocean-observing value chain and offer a free flow of the required information to end-users.

Second, we commend the important work of the three bodies under UNCLOS — the International Seabed Authority, the International Tribunal for Law of the Sea and the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) — to support ocean governance through their respective mandates. However, we wish to express our concern about the current working methods of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, which has a long backlog of pending submissions. Bangladesh submitted to the CLCS in 2011 the required technical and scientific

data in support of the establishment of its continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles. The preparation of the submission entailed substantial financial and technical investments, which as a least developed country was not an easy undertaking for us. Yet we prioritized the submission and invested resources in its conclusion.

We also took measures to resolve our maritime boundary with our neighbours through the dispute-settlement procedure prescribed by UNCLOS. To give effect to that new development, we prepared an amended submission that was submitted to the Commission at its fifty-fourth plenary session, on 2 March. However, we are deeply disappointed by the Commission's decision not to establish a subcommission for Bangladesh to settle the matter, given that the maritime boundary disputes of Bangladesh with its neighbours have already been resolved through the dispute-settlement mechanisms established by UNCLOS itself. We believe that the Commission has a responsibility to process the submissions of State parties based on their merits and through strict adherence to the provisions of the Convention.

In that regard, I would like to flag another important matter. It is very difficult for Bangladesh to maintain the institutional memory of the scientific and technical data of its submissions for an indefinite period, as data-retaining technology are changing and our relevant experts are retiring from service. We therefore need a time frame to indicate when Bangladesh's turn may come for consideration. We earnestly hope that the CLCS will soon form a subcommission to review the amended submission of Bangladesh. My delegation is ready to provide any information or clarification that the Commission may require in that regard.

Third, we would like to express our grave concern about the loss of migrants' lives on land and at sea and, in that regard, we welcome the General Assembly's endorsement of the Progress Declaration of the International Migration Review Forum in order to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration. Given the paramount importance of the issue, Bangladesh, along with Turkey, El Salvador and Honduras, came up with a specific proposal to include in the omnibus resolution 72/266 and worked with all delegations to reach a consensus text. However, it is a matter of great disappointment that our proposal was not adopted, owing to a lack of consensus. We hope to be able to obtain broader support for the proposal in the new year.

Fourth, women are significantly underrepresented in ocean affairs. According to UNESCO, they account for only 38 per cent of the world's researchers in ocean science, and the rate is even lower for women in developing countries. In most cases, it is not their lack of ability to contribute but rather gender stereotypes and social barriers that result in women's underrepresentation in ocean science and marine research. In that regard, we welcome the launching of the Impact Group on Research and Oceans for Women by the International Gender Champions Network, of which Bangladesh is a proud member.

Fifth, to ensure a balance between the equitable and efficient utilization of ocean resources, the conservation of marine resources and the protection and preservation of the marine environment, it is imperative to ensure the early conclusion of an agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). We acknowledge the process made towards such an agreement, and we hope that the resumed fifth session of the BBNJ Intergovernmental Conference, to be held in New York from 20 February to 3 March 2023, will come up with the final text of the agreement.

Sixth, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing remains one of the greatest threats to fish stocks and marine ecosystems and continues to have serious and major implications for the conservation and management of ocean resources, as well as the food security and economies of many States, particularly developing States. It is important that every State urgently take all steps to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. We hope that the upcoming Review Conference on the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement, to be held in New York in May 2023, will provide an opportunity for political leaders to renew their commitment in that regard.

Seventh, capacity-building and the transfer of marine technology remain crucial for the implementation of UNCLOS and related instruments, particularly for developing countries, least developed countries and small island developing States. In that regard, we stress the need for international cooperation at the national, regional and global levels to address gaps in capacity-building and technology transfer in ocean affairs and the law of the sea.

Mr. Hamid (Maldives): My delegation welcomes the report of the Secretary-General (A/77/331) and draft

resolutions A/77/L.33 and A/77/L.36, which represent important developments in the area of oceans and law of the sea.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda.

We are proud to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the adoption and opening for signature of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and we thank Singapore and Norway for their able leadership in the consultations leading up to the submission of the draft resolutions.

The world's oceans are under constant and continuous threats from pollution, overfishing, warming temperatures and acidification. As previous United Nations reports and scientists have warned, without a dramatic shift in human behaviour, our countries are on track to permanently alter oceanographic processes and change how the Earth's climate is moderated. The crisis affecting our oceans is an existential threat to all of humankind. The time to take action and save our oceans is now.

This year's theme, which calls attention to the Global Ocean Observing System, is an excellent starting point. The world's oceans cover 71 per cent of the Earth's surface, and humankind relies on their support for our economic, cultural, social and environmental development and well-being. Ocean observing allows us to examine the effects of climate change and provides valuable insights to policymakers and countries alike. It also aids in weather forecasting, which can save lives and promote sustainable development for a globalized ocean-based economy. We need more accurate ocean-observing systems, and the 2030 Strategy is essential for providing the international community with much-needed resources.

The call for continued collective action against marine plastic pollutants remains essential. Shifts in consumption patterns and production mean that plastic pollution will remain a key challenge for the current generation. The Maldives is a country comprised of hundreds of islands and thousands of kilometres of coastline. For large ocean States like the Maldives, any harm to the ocean through plastic pollution or other climate change-based problems threatens the coral reefs, the fish stocks and the beaches, which are the lifelines of our two key industries — fisheries and tourism. Moreover, the coral reefs serve an additional critical function as the first line of defence in protecting

our islands against sea swells, king tides and beach erosion. That is why we welcome the commencement of negotiations on an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, in which my country is an active participant.

An ocean-observing system is also necessary for our security. Multilateral cooperation on that system will allow us to make informed policy decisions that better protect our people from climate change, as well as make the best decisions for ecotourism and sustainable development.

That is why the Maldives is committed to protecting the world's oceans. We support the global initiative to protect 30 per cent of the world's oceans by 2030. In that effort, we have designated 79 marine protected areas, including 14 per cent of our coral reefs. Also, we set a national target to fully phase out single-use plastics by 2030.

However, protecting the oceans is too difficult for any single country, especially for a small island developing State like the Maldives, to accomplish alone. This colossal effort requires global multilateral cooperation in order to ensure that every country, every locality and every community, in every corner of the globe, is equipped with the resources necessary to take care of our oceans.

The ocean-monitoring system is an integral part of the solution to solving the constellation of threats that our ocean faces. The Maldives believes that the most serious threats to the ocean are global warming and sea-level rise. We refer back to the special report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), published in October 2018, which warned of the devastation awaiting marine ecosystems if we continued to fail to take dramatic action to limit global warming to 1.5°C. Remaining below the IPCC's temperature threshold would provide small island developing States (SIDS), like the Maldives, more space for adaptation, although we will still face potentially irreversible losses of marine and coastal ecosystems at 1.5°C. Particularly devastating for the Maldives, which relies on coral reefs to support our tourism industry and fisheries industry, is the fact that 70 to 90 per cent of coral reefs would be severely degraded with a global increase of 1.5°C. That number would rise to 99 per cent with a 2°C increase.

Global warming and climate change are existential threats to the Maldives. Our archipelago is comprised of small atolls, and we are one of the lowest-lying countries in the world. Since 1989, the Maldives has been persistent in our advocacy for stronger collective action in combating sea level rise. In November 1989, the Maldives hosted the first-ever Small States Conference on Sea Level Rise in order to build a coalition that could mitigate against that threat. But more than three decades later, the world is struggling to make headway. While SIDS have galvanized support, they are not capable of preventing sea level rise without more multilateral support manifested through solutions such as the ocean-monitoring system.

We are now in a position in which we need to seriously evaluate the possible legal implications of sea level rise. It has impacts on maritime boundaries and internal and external migration, and, most importantly, it poses an existential threat to low-lying countries such as ours. The Maldives would therefore like to reference the work of the International Law Commission on sea level rise in relation to international law in its report this year (see A/77/10).

For the Maldives, in particular, climate scientists have forecast that, before this century ends, our islands will be inundated — erased from the world map. The Maldives notes that the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States has shaped conventional notions of what defines a State. With sea-level rise, there is historical and legal precedent for looking past that Convention. International instruments recognize that States created under international law possess an inalienable right to take measures to remain a State. Therefore, other theories of statehood, such as international recognition, should be part of any future statehood analysis arising from sea-level issues. That forecast requires solidarity and empathy, as well as advanced legal planning. It requires solidarity and action today — not 10 years, 20 years or 30 years down the road. The cost of inaction now is a gamble that my country cannot afford to take.

We would also like to address the issue of protecting persons affected by sea level rise. Although there are existing frameworks that deal with the protection of persons affected by disasters, there is no adequate framework to deal specifically with persons affected by sea level rise. Those affected by sea level rise have specific needs that are distinct from the challenges customarily associated with conventional disasters.

The Maldives would like to highlight that climate change is not a natural disaster, but a human-induced one. Therefore, the topic is intrinsically related to transboundary harm and international accountability.

The effects of climate change disproportionately affect the most vulnerable sectors of the world's population. Women, children, seniors and persons with disabilities, among other groups, are all particularly exposed to the threat of sea level rise. In the light of the international law instruments that relate to vulnerable populations, the Maldives argues that there ought to be an intersectional approach to the debate, and that this approach is essential.

We have the power and the capacity to protect and promote the health of our oceans. We must take collective action and continue to work towards regulating the large swaths of the deep blue ocean waters that are currently ungoverned. The Maldives welcomes the convening of the fifth session of the intergovernmental conference on an international legally binding instrument under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. This fifth meeting is a significant milestone in ocean governance because it represents the culmination of decades of groundwork. The Maldives has engaged constructively in these discussions with the objective of finalizing the instrument as soon as possible, and we are confident in the Conference and its ability to reach that goal. Like in other instruments under UNCLOS, we wish to reiterate the importance of having the special circumstances of SIDS reflected in that instrument.

As the need for an ocean-monitoring system has made clear, our work in oceans and the law of the sea is only as good as the best available science. In that regard, it is crucial to promote research as well as facilitate capacity-building and the transfer of marine technology for developing countries. We need to be able to effectively engage and supplement our ongoing efforts. The Maldives has been a strong advocate of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, from 2021 to 2030. We take note of the progress that has been made in engaging stakeholders to formulate the plan, such as the recently concluded United Nations Climate Change Conference, held in Egypt, and encourage all Member States to engage constructively in tailoring a framework that will deliver country-driven results.

The world's oceans literally connect us and sustain life as we know it. From the top of the Himalayas to the sandy beaches of the Maldives just above the sea, our future is inextricably bound to the health of the global marine environment. I ask everyone to join us in protecting this valuable intergenerational resource.

Mr. Hernandez Chavez (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Chile wishes to thank the coordinator of the draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea (A/77/L.36), Ms. Natalie Morris-Sharma, and the coordinator of the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries (A/77/L.33), Mr. Andreas Motzfeldt Kravik, for their efforts in reaching balanced texts that would enable a large number of Member States to join consensus. That is why my delegation decided to co-sponsor the draft resolutions. Likewise, Chile takes note of and values the Secretary-General's reports on these matters (A/77/68, A/77/331 and A/77/155) and recognizes the work carried out during this period by the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea in the multiple tasks assigned to it.

As we indicated yesterday in the debate to commemorate 40 years of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) (see A/77/PV.48), the Convention constitutes the cornerstone of international law for marine affairs, since it is the legal basis for the development of activities in the oceans and establishes the framework for cooperation, collaboration and understanding among States for the conservation of the ocean, the protection of marine ecosystems and the sustainable use of its resources.

Chile participates actively in the Council and Assembly of the International Seabed Authority, in which rules and guidelines of great importance for the regulation of the Area are discussed. In that regard, we consider that the legal framework governing usage must be of a high standard in order to safeguard the rights of future generations and duly implement the obligations deriving from article 145 of the Convention.

In that regard, Chile wishes to reiterate its concern about the triggering of the rule of Section 1, paragraph 15 of the Annex to the 1994 Agreement on the implementation of Part XI of UNCLOS. We believe that this is an issue that should be of concern to the Assembly, which is why, together with Costa Rica, we tried to call the attention of the membership to the developments that are having an impact on vast areas of the subsoil that constitute the common heritage of

humankind. Accordingly, updates to paragraph 71 and a new paragraph 72 were incorporated into the draft omnibus resolution, first, to recognize that the impact of the coronavirus disease pandemic was, in our opinion, an insurmountable obstacle, and therefore constitutes a case of force majeure in that it prevented States from negotiating meaningfully at least until the end of the twenty-sixth session of the Authority. Secondly, Chile considers that it is necessary to complete an effective, adequate and widely discussed regulatory framework before mining in the Area begins, in order to ensure effective compliance with the applicable norms of the 1994 Agreement and, in particular, in order to implement article 145 of the Convention. We therefore call on the States Parties to the UNCLOS to pragmatically discuss alternatives in the pertinent instances of the Authority and the Meeting of the States Parties to the UNCLOS, taking into consideration that, in application of the precautionary principle, we have the responsibility not to authorize the initiation of mining in the Area until there is sufficient scientific knowledge.

Furthermore, Chile wishes to highlight four issues it considers important for the ocean agenda that should continue to be given special consideration by the General Assembly. First, within the framework of the UNCLOS, Chile is actively participating in the negotiation of the international legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction and considers that decisive progress was made in the fourth and fifth sessions during 2022. We will make every effort to ensure that in the resumed session consensus can be reached on an ambitious text that generates a legal framework to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in waters beyond national jurisdiction, which, inter alia, allows the establishment of protected marine areas in that area, with the aim of protecting at least 30 per cent of the global ocean by the year 2030, a goal that science has established to secure the health of the oceans worldwide. Likewise, before the resumption of the Intergovernmental Conference, we believe it is relevant to call on all States to show flexibility and especially for developed countries to agree on the establishment of an equitable mechanism for sharing the benefits derived from marine genetic resources for the benefit of all humankind.

Secondly, we consider that ocean pollution, especially plastic pollution, is an issue that we must address urgently. We hope that in 2023 we will make

decisive progress on an international agreement to address the problem through multilateral commitments.

Thirdly, I would like to mention that, since 2015, Chile has consistently promoted actions to highlight the importance of the nexus between the ocean and climate change. We used that approach as President of the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (COP25), calling it the “Blue COP”. Our work on this matter comprised an extensive period that began in 2019 and achieved important advances in 2021 with the twenty-sixth session of the Conference in Glasgow. Chile therefore considers positive and supports paragraph 220 of the draft omnibus resolution that refers to the annual dialogue on climate change and oceans in the framework of the Conferences of the Parties to the UNFCCC whose objective is to make progress on concrete actions and enshrine the ocean as an important element of climate-change policies.

Fourthly, my country expresses its support for the process for developing a post-2020 global biodiversity framework within the framework of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, whose efforts to protect 30 per cent of the ocean by the year 2030 we fully support. In this regard, we would note that, together with the United States of America, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama and Peru, we have formed a coalition called “America for the Protection of the Ocean” where we are committed to creating a space for collaboration, cooperation and exchange of experiences in matters related to marine protected areas in the Pacific Ocean and to working together to achieve the goal of the “30 by 30” initiative.

Finally, we wish to congratulate Portugal on the excellent organization and success of the second Ocean Conference and pledge our support to the organizers of the next Conference in 2025 so that progress may be made on concrete actions to ensure the preservation of the ocean and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal 14 targets.

Ms. Medina (United States of America): The United States is pleased to co-sponsor the General Assembly draft resolution on oceans and law and the law of the sea (A/77/L.36), as well as the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries (A/77/L.33). The United States greatly values the platform the General Assembly provides to elevate important ocean and fisheries issues through these draft resolutions.

We agree wholeheartedly with the Secretary-General’s profound words yesterday:

“The ocean is life, the ocean is livelihoods and the ocean binds humankind together across history and across cultures” (A/77/PV.48, p. 2).

That, of course, is why we are in this Hall today.

We gather today towards the end of what has been a supercharged year of ocean action. It began with the One Ocean Summit in France and then the United States was proud to co-host with Palau the seventh “Our Ocean” Conference, which closed with more than 400 commitments, worth more than \$16 billion, to protect and conserve the ocean and its resources. And then of course there was the second United Nations Ocean Conference, which was another wonderful achievement that advanced transformational ocean initiatives. We congratulate the hosts and the Conference secretariat for all its successes.

But the ocean remains under threat from multiple stressors, including the profound impacts of greenhouse-gas emissions, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, plastic pollution and biodiversity loss, to name just a few. These multifaceted challenges demand innovative solutions that will protect the ocean, the livelihoods it supports and the ecosystem services it provides.

Perhaps there is no more cross-cutting issue than climate change. As President Biden has said, climate change is the existential threat of our time. As greenhouse-gas emissions increase, our ocean is becoming warmer, more acidic and less productive, with a cascade of harms on communities and livelihoods around the world. The most devastating of these impacts is sea-level rise, which threatens the very existence of some island nations, which have spoken so profoundly about that issue today, and the livelihoods of people from coastal States around the world.

The United States will work with coastal States towards the goal of lawfully establishing and maintaining their baselines and maritime-zone limits in the face of sea-level rise. The United States will not challenge the full extent of such baseline and maritime-zone limits despite sea-level rise caused by climate change, and it urges other countries to do the same in order to protect and ensure the stability, security, certainty and predictability of maritime entitlements that are vulnerable to sea-level rise.

We also must apply every lever available to reduce emissions to keep the 1.5°C degree goal within reach and to improve ocean and coastal resilience. This includes leveraging the power of ocean-based climate solutions. For example, we must spur the transition to a zero-emission shipping sector. That is why we launched, with Norway, the Green Shipping Challenge at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 27), which featured more than 40 major announcements from countries and non-State actors on such issues as the production of zero-emission fuels, investment in zero-emission vessels and technologies, and the creation and advancement of green shipping corridors.

We also must scale up our efforts to ensure that offshore renewable energy is created. The United States is a leader in offshore wind, with national goals to deploy at least 30 gigawatts of offshore wind by 2030 and 15 gigawatts of floating offshore wind by 2035. We are also a founding member at COP 27 of the Global Offshore Wind Alliance, which will promote the ambitious uptake of offshore wind globally and contribute to achieving increased total offshore wind capacity. But we cannot stop there. We must also protect and restore coastal ecosystems that store carbon and protect our coastlines from climate impacts. That is one reason why we launched the Ocean Conservation Pledge, a commitment by Governments to conserve or protect at least 30 per cent of ocean waters under their jurisdiction by 2030. Sixteen countries endorsed the Pledge at COP 27, and we encourage others to join us as well, especially now that the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity is already under way with that ambitious 30-by-30 framework, which we must achieve, and we will need ocean territories to do that.

Ambitious action to conserve more of the ocean is also critical to protecting biodiversity, maintaining the health of the ocean and increasing the resilience of marine ecosystems. Leading scientists have identified a 30 per cent conservation target by 2030 as the minimum needed to support ocean-system functionality. The United States, of course, fully supports the goal of conserving or protecting 30 per cent of the global ocean by 2030, and we led an effort to memorialize the importance of that goal in this year's draft resolution on oceans. We were disappointed that States were unable to agree on including it, but we will not give up. We

are hopeful that Member States will come together to recognize the importance of 30-by-30 through next year's draft resolution.

Another essential tool for protecting biodiversity will be the conclusion of a new agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). The BBNJ agreement is an unprecedented opportunity to coordinate the conservation and sustainable use of high-seas biodiversity across management regimes, including, for the first time, a coordinated and cross-sectoral approach to establishing high-seas marine-protected areas. We look forward to working with all delegations to finalize the BBNJ agreement and are determined to successfully conclude it by the end of next year's Ocean Conference, to be hosted by Panama.

With regard to deep-seabed mining, the United States shares the concerns being raised about the need for more scientific research on the marine environment and the possible harmful effects of seabed mining. Much more research is needed in that regard. This is the decade of ocean science, after all. Let us use this time well and not make irreversible mistakes. The United States' exclusive economic zone and continental shelf are immediately adjacent to the Clarion-Clipperton Zone, where a broad range of interests, including those of our indigenous communities that rely on an accessible and sustainable marine environment, have the potential to be directly and negatively affected by seabed mining. For an effective regulatory regime, we must have much more research to understand the likelihood of negative effects on the marine environment from exploitive activities in the area and the steps needed to minimize and mitigate them. We must also actively pursue a global agreement on plastic pollution, because we know that it can now be found everywhere in the ocean, from pole to pole and at the bottom of the Mariana Trench, the deepest part of the ocean, and in giant gyres found globally.

We must also build the protection of aquatic ecosystems and resources into our fisheries management. Destructive fishing practices are harming vulnerable marine ecosystems all over the world, and we must put an end to them. We must support sustainable fisheries and food systems without further degrading water quality, habitats and ocean ecosystems. The United States welcomes the significant progress that has been made in protecting vulnerable marine ecosystems from destructive fishing practices since we last reviewed

bottom-trawling fishing in 2016. In fact, since 2016, the scientific understanding of the important contribution of vulnerable marine ecosystems to supporting healthy fisheries has dramatically improved. Between the relevant General Assembly resolutions and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations guidelines for the management of deep-sea fisheries in the high seas, we have the tools to adequately protect such ecosystems and ensure the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks. However, we need even, robust implementation of those tools in every region of the world. We were disappointed that our proposal for the draft resolution on fisheries to include advancing the use of the precautionary approach to bottom fishing did not gain the support of all Member States. But again, we remain hopeful that we can work together to move the ball further at the next opportunity.

We must also work to reduce all forms of ocean pollution, including ocean noise. We are keenly aware that the negative effects of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing damage our oceans, undermine maritime security and endanger law-abiding fishers and communities that rely on fish. Too often, IUU fishing is coupled with criminal activities such as trafficking and labour-rights abuses, including forced labour. Left unchecked, those labour abuses undermine economic competitiveness, maritime security, fishery sustainability and the livelihoods and human rights of fishers around the world. That is why President Biden issued a national security memorandum on combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and associated labour abuses in order to address the problem of forced labour in the fishing industry, especially in IUU fishing.

While the problems of IUU fishing are pervasive and complex, we cannot be afraid to tackle those challenges and raise our standards. We invite all countries to join the IUU Fishing Action Alliance, which the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada launched at the United Nations Ocean Conference. By joining the Alliance, countries pledged to take urgent action to improve the monitoring, control and surveillance of fisheries, increase transparency in fishing fleets and the seafood market and build partnerships to close the net on bad actors.

Finally, the United States underscores the central importance of international law, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the universal and unified character of which is emphasized

in the draft resolution on oceans before us today. We are seeing attempts to impede the lawful exercise of navigational rights and freedoms under international law, and it is more important than ever that we remain steadfast in our resolve to uphold those rights and freedoms. We call on all States to fashion their maritime claims and conduct their activities in the maritime domain in accordance with international law, as reflected in the Convention, to respect freedom of navigation and overflight and the other lawful uses of the sea that all users of the maritime domain enjoy and to peacefully settle disputes in accordance with international law.

We reiterate our deep concern about expansive and unlawful maritime claims in the South China Sea that do not have a basis in the Convention, and call on all claimants to comport their maritime claims with the international law of the sea, as reflected in the Convention. With regard to the draft resolutions on oceans and on fisheries, we refer the Assembly to our general explanation of position delivered on 21 November to the Second Committee, which underscores the independence of the World Trade Organization, among other issues.

In conclusion, the United States would like to thank the coordinators of the informal consultations on both draft resolutions, Ms. Natalie Morris-Sharma of Singapore and Mr. Andreas Kravik of Norway, for their outstanding contributions in that regard. We would also like to thank the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for its expertise and hard work throughout the consultations on both draft resolutions. Finally, we express our appreciation and gratitude to all delegations for their flexibility and cooperation in working together to address the numerous and complex issues that lie ahead of us for the ocean and all its resources. I thank them and wish them and their families happy holidays.

Mr. Botto (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): Once again this year, my delegation would like to thank the coordinators of the two draft resolutions before the General Assembly today — Ms. Natalie Morris-Sharma of Singapore, facilitator of draft resolution A/77/L.36, on oceans and the law of the sea, and Mr. Andreas Kravik of Norway, facilitator of draft resolution A/77/L.33, on sustainable fisheries. Monaco is again a co-author of these two draft resolutions. I would also like to thank the Division of Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea in particular for the support provided to the delegations throughout the year.

As expected, 2022 has been a particularly rich year for the oceans. The United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 was successfully hosted by Portugal in Lisbon in June. Significant progress was made at the fifth session of the Intergovernmental Conference on Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) in August in New York. The intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment began its work with a first meeting in Punta del Este, Uruguay. The agreement reached in Geneva in June to reduce harmful fishing subsidies is another very encouraging sign.

We are pleased that the ocean is increasingly being taken into account in the Conferences of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. However, our efforts will have to continue in 2023 and in the following years because, beyond strengthening the legal framework, it is not enough to hold meetings and adopt documents, even if they are binding. The health of the oceans and seas depends on their effective implementation.

Our action — or inaction — will determine whether the planet we leave to future generations will be liveable, under the conditions we have known until now. The oceans are no exception to this observation. The pressures on marine ecosystems, habitats and biodiversity must be addressed without delay and without respite.

In this pivotal year, we must consider the past, the present and the future. First of all, how can we not mention the commemoration on the fortieth anniversary of the adoption and opening for signature of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea that we celebrated yesterday in this very Hall (see A/77/PV.48)?

Monaco reaffirms that this “constitution for the oceans” defines the legal framework for all activities in the seas and oceans and establishes a balance of rights and obligations to be respected by all. Adopted in 1982, it is truly a visionary instrument focused before its time on peace and sustainable development.

Since the signing of the Convention at Montego Bay, a double phenomenon has become more pronounced. On the one hand, our knowledge of the oceans has improved, along with our scientific tools, our ability to

observe and understand the oceans and the phenomena that affect them, and, on the other hand, pressures on the oceans and their resources have increased.

The representatives of Tonga and Monaco, His Excellency Mr. Viliami Va'inga Tōnē and Her Excellency Ms. Isabelle Picco, respectively, co-chaired the meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea last June, which focused on ocean observation.

Overfishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, marine pollution, habitat destruction and biodiversity losses have been increasing, and we are currently at a tipping point. As the world is facing the beginnings of a sixth mass extinction, Monaco has always promoted marine protected areas, and it is convinced that they are the best tool to ensure adequate protection of marine biodiversity.

This is why the Principality will continue to advocate the establishment of a network of well-connected and effectively managed marine protected areas and why Monaco also supports the 30 x 30 campaign to protect 30 per cent of marine and terrestrial areas by 2030. In that regard, we regret that a reference to this voluntary initiative, supported by more than 100 States, could not be added to the draft omnibus resolution. While the decline of the ocean is documented, it is not inevitable, and we can and must reverse the trend.

Climate change and its adverse effects, such as ocean warming and acidification, deoxygenation and sea-level rise are a reality. No one can deny it, and all the scientific studies published over the past several years have repeatedly alerted us. Monaco has always supported the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and stresses that the conclusions contained in its successive reports must be taken into account and treated with the utmost seriousness and urgency.

The impacts of climate change are already being felt everywhere, albeit to varying degrees, as we know that some regions are more affected and subject to greater risks than others. Small island developing States and coastal communities in developing countries are particularly vulnerable. The frequency and strength of extreme weather events are also of great concern, as they wreak havoc on years of development.

Through the commitment of its Princes, Monaco has always supported science-based decision-making and scientific research and cooperation. On 22 October, the

first “Science Festival” was organized by the Museum of Prehistoric Anthropology, founded by Prince Albert I in 1902, and the Monaco Scientific Centre, founded by Prince Rainier III in 1960. These two institutions were able to present their activities to the public, particularly in relation to scientific research on corals, the poles and biomedical research.

The Oceanographic Institute founded by Prince Albert I, the centenary of whose death we are celebrating this year, is also a world-renowned institution. The Principality is proud to host on its territory the Environment Laboratories of the International Atomic Energy Agency and the International Hydrographic Organization, which contribute to a healthier and safer ocean. The Monaco Scientific Centre also conducts important research, inter alia, on ocean acidification and the links between the ocean and human health.

Under the leadership of His Serene Highness Prince Albert II, who was one of the first Heads of State to call for a Sustainable Development Goal specifically dedicated to the ocean, Monaco is looking to future timelines with the same determination that has guided our commitments in international forums to date. The commitments of the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development must absolutely be met. Monaco supports France and Costa Rica in their desire to convene the third United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 in 2024–2025.

We must think about future generations and anticipate the needs of a growing world population that will depend on the oceans, in particular, for its food and energy security. We must think about the long-term effects of the pressures on the oceans and the long-term benefits that their preservation guarantees.

Finally, I would like to reiterate the importance my delegation attaches to the early adoption and entry into force of the BBNJ agreement. On the other hand, while the conclusion of the work of the Intergovernmental Conference is the immediate priority, it is not an end in and unto itself. It may seem paradoxical to say that the real work will only begin at the end of a process that has already lasted more than 15 years, but it is crucial to keep in mind that only the effective implementation of this agreement and the proper functioning of future Conferences of the Parties will make it possible to change the situation and disrupt the status quo.

Mr. Peñaranda (Philippines): The Philippines thanks Singapore and Norway for ably coordinating this year’s draft resolutions on oceans and the law of the sea (A/77/L.36) and on sustainable fisheries (A/77/L.33), respectively. The Philippines is honoured to co-sponsor both draft resolutions. We thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/77/331) and the Secretariat and the Division of Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, for their support.

As an archipelagic State with waters encompassing an area six times greater than our land mass, our fate — as a nation and as a people — is tied to the global ocean. The global ocean is in a state of emergency. This is the cumulative result of unsustainable human activities and anthropogenic impact, as highlighted by the Secretary-General in his recent report. We must act together, decisively and urgently if we are to save the global ocean and achieve Sustainable Development Goal 14 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

As a maritime country, we are bound to the global fisheries sector, the global value chain in shipbuilding, global seafaring and maritime labour. The pandemic continued to have an impact on the ocean-based economy and on individuals and communities that rely on the ocean and its resources, according to the report. Seafarers notably faced challenges in relation to their health, safety and well-being. Indeed, cumulative pressures on the ocean and its resources pose direct threats to the people who depend on them. We appreciate the report’s focus on the human dimension.

At the centre of our efforts to protect the ocean are our people — the fisherfolk, the seafarer, the coastal citizen. Hundreds and thousands of Filipino seafarers are deployed in the world’s shipping fleets. It is with their health, safety and well-being in mind that the Philippines enhanced its commitment to the objectives and work of the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

In December, Permanent Representative Antonio Lagdameo of the Philippines was elected as President of the thirty-second IMO Assembly, when seafarers were recognized to be at the heart of shipping. In that capacity, we joined hands with the IMO secretariat and member States in placing seafarers at the centre of the organization’s work. The IMO adopted a resolution on comprehensive action to address the challenges of seafarers during the coronavirus disease pandemic, as noted in both the report and the resolution.

As we work together to end the pandemic and recover better, addressing the drivers that exert pressure on the world's oceans remains paramount. Climate change continues to have an impact on the ocean, as sea-level rise, ocean heat and ocean acidification broke new records in 2021, according to the report. Sea-level rise in the Philippines is about twice to three times that of the global average. As an archipelago, our numerous low-lying coastal areas and communities are vulnerable to sea-level rise and its effects. We therefore welcome the updates on climate change and its impacts, including sea-level rise and extreme sea-level events, noted in the resolution.

Speaking before the General Assembly, President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. said:

“Climate change is the greatest threat affecting our nations and peoples. There is no other problem so global in nature that it requires a united effort led by the United Nations” (A/77/PV.5, p. 3).

He called on industrialized countries to

“cut their greenhouse-gas emissions, provide climate financing and technology transfer for the adaptation for the most vulnerable and developing countries and lead by example” (ibid., p. 4).

In Egypt, at the twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, we renewed that call. The Philippines is committed to collective action to address climate change and other pressures on the global ocean.

Last year was not quite the super year for the oceans that we all anticipated and hoped for. Nevertheless, we have made significant strides in ocean-related processes, as captured broadly by the resolution, among others. We are close to finalizing an international legally binding agreement for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ), with the two BBNJ intergovernmental conferences held in March and August. The resumed fifth session of the BBNJ intergovernmental conference early next year holds promise. The President's proposal presents a way forward as we work towards a substantive and effective package of a BBNJ agreement. The Philippines remains fully committed to that process.

The second United Nations Ocean Conference finally took place in Lisbon in June, after two years of

delay, marking a new chapter in global ocean action. We look forward to the next one.

Last month in Punta del Este, Uruguay, we made a crucial step towards a legally binding global agreement to end plastic pollution, an initiative that the Philippines has championed from the start.

Our progress this year is an invitation to render each remaining year of the United Nations Ocean Decade a super year for the oceans, an opportunity to integrate ocean science, indigenous knowledge and innovation in policymaking for sustainable ocean management.

The Philippines is committed to the conservation of, and sustainable access to, straddling and highly migratory fish stocks — within and beyond the exclusive economic zone. We look forward to the Review Conference on the 1995 Agreement Relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks next year.

The Philippines reiterates that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. In Manila, we marked the fortieth year of that milestone achievement of multilateralism with a lecture conference entitled “UNCLOS at 40: The Philippine Contribution”.

We attach great value to the archipelagic regime under UNCLOS — a finely crafted balance resulting from careful consensus-building by States. As an archipelagic State, we reject attempts to upend that balance. Rules of general international law cannot prevail over the special regime created by UNCLOS.

The emergency facing the global ocean is a reminder to uphold and implement UNCLOS, especially with regard to addressing the drivers that apply pressure on it, such as disputes over access to resources and maritime boundaries.

Against the overarching framework of UNCLOS and those challenges, the Philippines hosted the twelfth Maritime Forum of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the tenth Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum this month, thereby enabling ASEAN member States and its partners to have a robust dialogue on common concerns: protecting the environment, the exploitation of the deep seabed and combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

The 2016 South China Sea Arbitration Award is a resounding reaffirmation of UNCLOS. Together they are the anchors of our positions and actions on the South China Sea. In that regard, the Philippines remains committed to negotiations on a code of conduct. The increasing number of incidents in the South China Sea underscores its importance. All must exercise self-restraint and refrain from destabilizing activities inimical to the conclusion of an effective and substantive code.

Mr. Elgharib (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Egypt would like to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for the reports submitted under today's agenda item (A/77/68 and A/77/331) and would like to thank the two coordinators of the two draft resolutions submitted today (A/77/L.33 and A/77/L.36). We thank them for their efforts within the framework of the negotiations, which have been conducted with great efficiency since 2019. In that context, allow me to make several comments.

Egypt is proud to be among the first countries to have signed and ratified the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). We did so in 1982, and we have attached great importance to the provisions of the Convention via our national structures, including our national committee on the law of the sea, which was set up for that purpose. Through the Convention, we have reached agreements with our neighbouring countries on the definition of our maritime borders. The most recent of those agreements, with Greece, was the establishment of an exclusive economic zone in August 2020.

The omnibus draft resolution on the oceans plays an essential role in the governance of our oceans and seas because it allows the various parties to monitor implementation through the United Nations and its entities. We therefore urge greater attention in the years to come to more concise and better preparation of draft resolutions in order to facilitate their implementation and promote dialogue with the various stakeholders and other parties.

Thirdly, Egypt considers the Convention, whose fortieth anniversary we are celebrating this year, to be a living document that is well placed to tackle various future challenges related to the governance of the oceans and seas. We therefore support efforts aimed at drafting an international legally binding instrument under UNCLOS for the conservation and sustainable

use of marine biodiversity resources beyond States' national jurisdictions, which would ensure that the benefits from those resources can be shared fairly and would enhance their status as part of the common heritage of humankind. We look forward to resuming the negotiations and concluding the treaty in 2023 as planned.

Fourthly, Egypt joins those who have expressed concerns about the unprecedented deterioration of the health of the oceans and seas, as indicated in various scientific reports. We therefore urge that measures be taken to address that grave problem, which is having a disproportionate impact on developing countries. In that regard, we stress the importance of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities among States, as well as the responsibility of every country to ensure that no serious damage is caused to the environment as a result of activities it conducts on its territory.

Fifthly, we were delighted that Egypt recently hosted the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Sharm El-Sheikh, which was able to take many new steps. The Sharm El-Sheikh Implementation Plan encouraged States to integrate ocean-related activities into their national environmental goals, emphasizing the centrality of enhancing the coordination between UNCLOS and the UNFCCC. For the first time, it was agreed at the Conference to establish a fund for loss and damages in order to compensate countries affected by climate change, including oceans and seas.

In conclusion, Egypt will continue to actively engage in all international efforts to enhance the implementation of UNCLOS, achieve Goal 14 of the Sustainable Development Goals and ensure the effective and legal governance of the oceans and seas.

Mr. Ghorbanpour Najafabadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset I would like to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General for his reports under the agenda item entitled "Oceans and the law of the sea" (A/77/68 and A/77/331), as well as to the coordinators of the informal consultations on draft resolutions A/77/L.33 and A/77/L.36. We thank the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for its efforts and invaluable support throughout the exercise. I would also like to reiterate my delegation's positions on a number of issues related to this agenda item.

While recalling the importance of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) as a general legal framework for activities in the oceans and seas and acknowledging the status of the Islamic Republic of Iran as a State signatory to UNCLOS, we are of the view that the Convention is not the only legal framework governing activities carried out on the oceans and seas. We would therefore expect any negotiations on draft resolutions related to the oceans and seas to consider the position of States that are not party to the Convention and conduct themselves in an appropriate manner that recognizes those countries' legitimate concerns. Such an inclusive vision would lead to constructive engagement among a wider number of countries in supporting those draft resolutions. Furthermore, any constructive engagement by my delegation during the negotiations, including joining the consensus, should not be construed as a change in Iran's legal position in relation to UNCLOS. However, our firm belief that among other things we must preserve the ocean and its riches, in addition to guaranteeing the security and safety of marine operations, has motivated us to collaborate and coordinate constructively with other countries on ocean-related matters.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, as a coastal State in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, is committed to achieving the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 14, as well as ocean sustainability. We concur with the Secretary-General in his report (A/77/331) that science-based decision-making and a strengthened science-policy interface are crucial elements in ocean sustainability. We considered the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, held in Lisbon from 27 June to 1 July 2022, as well as its declaration entitled "Our ocean, our future, our responsibility", to be a promising step in that regard, and we are looking forward to the convening of the third United Nations Ocean Conference, which will be co-hosted by France and Costa Rica in 2025.

The Islamic Republic of Iran greatly values the efforts being made in sustainable fisheries management, which plays an important role in supporting the economic activities of various developing countries, conserving marine resources, maintaining healthy marine ecosystems and ensuring food security for all. With due regard for the recent decline in fish stocks, all countries, regional fisheries-management organizations and the relevant international institutions

should prioritize responsible fisheries management and the use of selective fishing methods, as well as combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

Rapid population growth, industrialization, urbanization, rising fishing demands, droughts and other natural disasters caused by global warming and climate change, as well as ineffective development policies, are depleting natural resources at an alarmingly rapid rate, posing serious threats to our region's marine environment and to sustainable development. Sea-level rise, biodiversity loss and declines in various species of native fauna and flora are just a few of the other challenges we are facing in our region. Given the increasing damage to and destruction of essential and economically important coastal ecosystems such as mangrove forests, coral reefs and fisheries livelihoods in the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman, we strongly encourage the coastal countries of the region to work together to protect those ecosystems. We reiterate the call for all relevant States to work together to protect the environment of our shared body of water and refrain from unilateral actions that could jeopardize its marine environment.

In terms of marine life and its preservation, any irresponsible construction of artificial islands and conduct of reclamation activities in the Persian Gulf will unquestionably harm the habitats and endanger the lives of rare and fragile marine species. The deployment and heavy presence of military fleets from outside the Persian Gulf region have not only affected the safety and security of coastal States and smooth navigation in the Gulf but have also exacerbated the problem of maritime pollution and the depletion of its marine resources. In that regard, the Islamic Republic of Iran is determined to carry out its laws and regulations in addressing any maritime pollution or environmental harm by vessels in its jurisdiction in the Persian Gulf.

The effects of climate change on oceans and seas are myriad, complex and interrelated. In order to counter them, developed countries must fulfil their commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change by providing financial resources, capacity-building and technology transfers based on their historical role, which is founded on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

With regard to sea-level rise, owing to the long-term and unavoidable social, economic and security challenges resulting from this environmental dilemma,

my delegation would like to emphasize that the practices of land reclamation, coastal fortification and other means for maintaining coastal areas, base points, baselines and islands can be considered an appropriate response to sea-level rise as long as such fortifications do not result in the creation of any new rights for States. We also believe that based on the international law of the sea, artificial islands, installations and structures do not enjoy the status of islands. Any discussion of the relationship between artificial islands and the change of maritime zones in relation to sea-level rise is therefore irrelevant.

In recognizing the importance of conservation and the sustainable use of marine biological resources in areas beyond national jurisdiction, the Islamic Republic of Iran supports the development of an effective, comprehensive and legally binding instrument in that area, consistent with the international law of the sea. In considering the common heritage of humankind as the guiding principle within the legal regime for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond national jurisdiction, including the access to and the sharing of the benefits of marine genetic resources, my delegation is looking forward to participating at the resumed fifth session of the Intergovernmental Conference on marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction in 2023.

The Islamic Republic of Iran reaffirms its commitment to the marine order based on the international law of the sea in order to protect the maritime rights and interests of all and to ensure that maritime activities are carried out in accordance with the international law of the sea. In that regard, in the general debate of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session (see A/74/PV.5), the Islamic Republic of Iran proposed an initiative based on dialogue, cooperation and mutual respect emanating from its commitment. We believe sincerely that the prolongation of conflicts and ever-escalating tensions among littoral States of the Persian Gulf is likely to seriously jeopardize regional development and prosperity. The Islamic Republic of Iran is positive that regional cooperation based on its proposal would ensure safety and security by upholding global maritime law, particularly in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. The same sentiment and understanding underlie our collaboration with other States in the region and beyond to combat maritime piracy, as recognized by the Secretary-General in his related reports and praised by the Security Council in a number of its resolutions.

The Islamic Republic of Iran considers that unmanned surface vessels, also known as sail drones, deployed for hostile or unfriendly purposes on the high seas and within our vicinity in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, are a threat not only to the safety and security of maritime navigation but to the security of coastal States as well. In that regard, the Islamic Republic of Iran will take whatever measures are necessary to prevent or eliminate such threats at sea whenever it is exposed to such threats.

We would also like to express our concern about the lack of an effective search-and-rescue system and, more importantly, about the unwillingness on the part of some coastal States that has resulted in a lack of responses or lengthy delays in the safe disembarkation of refugees and migrants at sea. Such incidents have had tragic consequences, including loss of life, and we therefore want to remind those countries of their obligation to protect refugees and migrants at sea.

Lastly, the consequences of the coronavirus disease pandemic, on top of unilateral coercive measures that were already in place as a result of the United States' maximum-pressure policy regarding my country and people, especially after the United States' withdrawal in 2018 from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, have made life more difficult for the average Iranian. My delegation has repeatedly said as much in its statements over the past few years. The disruption of Iranian shipping lines' freedom of navigation as a result of the harsh sanctions has had a significant impact on the provision of essential needs for people, including food, medicine, medical equipment and supply chains for various commodities. Such unilateral coercive measures are also considered a major obstacle to the development of ocean sustainability. We request that the international community reject those cruel sanctions and condemn such illegal unilateral actions, which put ocean sustainability, the safety of the seas and free trade at risk.

Mr. Alkatheeri (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): The United Arab Emirates is participating in today's debate on the Assembly's important agenda item on the oceans and the law of the sea at a time when the world is working to preserve the oceans and their essential role in supporting the global economy and sustainable development. The maintenance of maritime security and the preservation of marine environment and biodiversity are vital not only to coastal States but to the international community as a whole. The seas

and oceans are strategic assets for humankind in the work of providing food and facilitating international trade through maritime transportation and development activities with their various economic, social, touristic and cultural aspects.

With regard to international waters and corridors and their security, my country stresses the importance of ensuring freedom of navigation in international waters. Any threat to that freedom can affect food and energy supplies for the whole world. The recent recurring threats and attacks against carriers and ships in international waters and corridors have made it imperative for the international community to take serious practical steps to prevent such challenges. The United Arab Emirates is working with the international community at every level, especially as a member of the Security Council, to combat criminal activities that undermine security and navigation in the seas and oceans, including, for example, piracy and threats impeding maritime navigation, in addition to the effects of climate change on seas, oceans and the life of the environment. In that regard, I would like to highlight the following points.

The first concerns the protection of maritime navigation from criminal activities, including piracy and armed robbery. The United Arab Emirates has contributed constructively to that protection by participating in an anti-piracy task force and adopting related rules and plans. We have also convened many conferences on finding ways to combat activities related to piracy and armed robbery.

Secondly, the United Arab Emirates is always eager to promote its effective participation in such activities by launching special initiatives on sustainable development, specifically regarding Goal 14 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and relevant conferences. My country has joined the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People of countries that have

committed to protecting 30 per cent of lands and seas by 2030. We also note the work of the Intergovernmental Conference on 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 in areas beyond national jurisdiction. We look forward to working more effectively together with all international actors to reach a more consensus-based text for meeting the Sustainable Development Goals. It is also important to focus on capacity-building, information-sharing, data integration and enhancing gender equality in all ocean-related sectors.

Thirdly, the United Arab Emirates affirms that it will spare no effort at the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in our country in 2023, in order to resume the dialogue on accelerating the implementation of ocean-based climate solutions. We will also share our knowledge and experience with other countries and explore opportunities for entering into effective partnerships in countering all the challenges facing the international community, through cooperation and collaborative work.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates reiterates the importance of dialogue, international cooperation and respect for international laws, customs and progress in the implementation of the SDGs, particularly Goal 14, in order to preserve the oceans, seas and maritime resources while using them sustainably, with a view to achieving sustainable development. We emphasize that the seas and oceans are strategic assets for humankind.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker for this meeting. We will continue the debate in this Hall at 3 p.m.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.