



General Assembly

Seventieth session

68th plenary meeting
 Tuesday, 8 December 2015, 10 a.m.
 New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Lykketoft (Denmark)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Alyemany (Yemen), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 79

Oceans and the law of the sea

(a) Oceans and the law of the sea

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/70/74 and A/70/74/Add.1)

Report 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/70/418)

Report on the work of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process (A/70/78)

Letter from the Co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole to the President of the General Assembly (A/70/112)

Draft resolution (A/70/L.22)

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

Draft resolution (A/70/L.19)

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of New Zealand to introduce draft resolution A/70/L.19.

Mrs. Schwalger (New Zealand): New Zealand had the honour to coordinate the informal consultations on draft resolution A/70/L.19, on sustainable fisheries, and is pleased to introduce that text on behalf of all its sponsors. This year's draft resolution, which I introduce today on behalf of the coordinator, Ms. Alice Revell, is a further step forward in the conservation and management of fisheries, which are an essential resource for sustainable development in much of the world.

My delegation is also pleased to join many others in co-sponsoring draft resolution A/70/L.22, entitled "Oceans and the law of the sea", to be introduced by the representative of Trinidad and Tobago. We compliment Ambassador Eden Charles on his careful stewardship of that draft.

The fisheries draft resolution addresses important issues, such as the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, and in particular the commitment to conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas and marine resources contained in Goal 14 of the outcome document (resolution 70/1). It also addresses issues such as work undertaken in other forums to promote the conservation and management of sharks and the convening in May 2016 of the resumed Review Conference on the 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

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Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, and related instruments.

Key outcomes from other forums, both regional and global, are considered in the draft resolution. That includes the listing last year of 21 species of sharks and rays under the appendices to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals.

Combating illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing continues to be a key focus of the draft resolution. This year, the draft resolution addresses an advisory opinion given by the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea on the request for an advisory opinion by the Subregional Fisheries Commission, which relates to the responsibilities of flag States and IUU fishing. It also encourages States to apply appropriate penalties to any vessels engaging in IUU fishing in order to deter future violations. That focus reflects the international community's ongoing concern over the negative impact of IUU fishing on the sustainable management of fish stocks and its recognition that there is a shared responsibility in addressing the issue.

This year, the draft resolution also emphasizes the central importance of providing a safe working environment for those engaged both in fishing activities and in monitoring compliance. In what can at times be a difficult and harsh environment, it is essential to reduce as much as possible the dangers that both crew and observers face.

The draft resolution also urges States parties to the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement to take into account the special requirements of developing States, including small island developing States, when cooperating to establish conservation and management measures for straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks. The draft resolution states that this should include ensuring that, in accordance with the Agreement, such measures do not transfer a disproportionate burden of conservation action onto developing States. It also notes ongoing efforts to better develop a common understanding of the concept of disproportionate burden.

The draft resolution continues to recognize the central role of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement in the governance of international fisheries. We note that only four days ago, 4 December marked 20 years since the Fish Stocks Agreement was opened for signature. The draft resolution requests the

Secretary-General to resume the Review Conference on the Agreement from 23 to 27 May 2016. That will be an important event for assessing the ongoing effectiveness of the Fish Stocks Agreement in securing the conservation and management of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks.

The draft resolution also builds on the decision to proceed with another review of bottom fishing in 2016, by deciding that a two-day workshop to inform that review will take place in August. The review will focus on ensuring effective implementation of existing United Nations-mandated measures on bottom fishing and make further recommendations, where necessary.

New Zealand thanks Director Gabriele Goettsche-Wanli and the staff of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for their expertise and support on both draft resolutions. And we again thank Ambassador Eden Charles of Trinidad and Tobago for his expert coordination of the draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea.

My delegation would also like to thank Alice Revell, who could not be here today, for her work in successfully coordinating this text over the past four years. We wish her successor, Andreas Kravik of Norway, well in taking up this responsibility from next year. Finally, I wish to express my particular appreciation for the hard work and cooperation of delegations in crafting both draft resolutions. It is our hope that this constructive and collaborative engagement will be maintained as we continue to address the numerous and complex issues that face our oceans and fisheries.

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Trinidad and Tobago to introduce draft resolution A/70/L.22.

Ms. Boissiere (Trinidad and Tobago): At the outset, I wish to convey the regrets of Ambassador Eden Charles, Chargé d'affaires ad interim of the Permanent Mission of Trinidad and Tobago to the United Nations, who coordinated draft resolution A/70/L.22, entitled "Oceans and law of the sea", but is unable to be here today. I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution.

We wish to express our sincere gratitude to the sponsors of the draft resolution, as well as to other delegations, for their constructive participation, flexibility and support during the consultations. We are also grateful to the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for the provision of Secretariat services

and advice throughout the two rounds of consultations that ended on 24 November.

We also welcome the reports of the Secretary-General on oceans and law of the sea (A/70/74 and A/70/74/Add.1), which provide very useful and relevant information on the various issues covered in the draft resolution.

The draft resolution contains important elements necessary for the management, preservation and sustainable use of the resources of our oceans and seas, along with guidelines for the conduct of States in discharging their obligations. The draft resolution remains one of the most comprehensive texts adopted annually by the General Assembly. It addresses the obligations of States that flow from the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and other global agreements, as well as regional undertakings.

Some of the important areas covered by the draft resolution include the peaceful settlement of disputes; the work of the treaty bodies established under the Convention, namely, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf and the International Seabed Authority; maritime safety and security and flag State implementation; marine science, marine biodiversity, marine environment and marine resources; matters concerning the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction; the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects; the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea; capacity-building and regional cooperation; and the activities of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea.

During negotiations, delegations highlighted the important agreement reached at the United Nations Summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, held from 25 to 27 September, and agreed that the draft resolution should welcome the outcome document entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, as adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 70/1, of 25 September. Delegations also reaffirmed the commitment to conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development under Goal 14 of the outcome document, as reflected in the draft resolution before us today.

During the negotiations, delegations expressed concern over the increased number of requests to the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for additional outputs and servicing of meetings in resolution 69/292, and in relation to the support to be provided by the Division as secretariat of the Regular Process during the second cycle of the Process. In that regard, delegations agreed to request the Secretary-General to make proposals in the context of the 2016-2017 budget in order to strengthen the capacity of the Division, including through the redeployment of existing resources, and to ensure that it can carry out the functions in resolution 69/292, and in its capacity as the secretariat of the Regular Process, in an efficient manner.

Further, the draft resolution notes the convening of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in Paris, which began on 30 November and will end on 11 December. In that regard, delegations recognized the importance of raising awareness of the adverse impact of climate change on the marine environment, marine biodiversity and sea level.

In the draft text, delegations also recall resolution 69/292, entitled “Development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction”. The draft resolution also underscores the importance of the work of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and the International Seabed Authority, in accordance with the Convention. In the draft text, delegations also encourage relevant international organizations and other donors to consider supporting the Endowment Fund of the International Seabed Authority in order to promote the conduct of collaborative marine scientific research in the international seabed area.

In addition, as reflected in the draft text, delegations recognize the importance of the Trust Fund for the purpose of facilitating the preparation of submissions to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf for developing States, particularly the least developed countries and small island developing States, as well as to assist developing countries in meeting travel and daily subsistence allowance costs associated with meetings of the Commission.

Following 10 days of intensive negotiations, including a series of small group and bilateral meetings, delegations were able to achieve consensus on each paragraph of the draft resolution, which seeks to assist Member States and other entities in implementing obligations geared towards, among other things, the sustainable use of our oceans and seas. I am therefore pleased to commit the draft resolution to the Assembly for its consideration. It is my hope that the same spirit of cooperation and understanding that characterized the negotiations will be demonstrated by delegations and that the draft resolution contained in document A/70/L.22 will be adopted by consensus.

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

Ms. Cujo (European Union): I am speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania, as well as Ukraine and Armenia, align themselves with this statement.

I would like to begin by recalling important developments in relation to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The EU and its member States believe that the framework Convention represents the constitution of the oceans, reflects customary international law and establishes the overarching legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. We hope that the goal of universal participation in the Convention will one day be met.

While we continue to subscribe to the vital importance of preserving the integrity of the Convention, we acknowledge the necessity of ensuring that the Convention remains relevant and able to meet today's challenges, as well as those of the future. Consequently, the EU and its member States look forward to the negotiation process that will start next year on an international legally binding instrument under the Convention on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Again this year, the EU and its member States have continued to demonstrate their commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, as well as to 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, by actively participating in the consultations that led to the draft resolutions submitted to the General Assembly today. We believe that these draft resolutions serve to bring to the attention of the General Assembly and to the general public important issues in the marine domain, including fisheries. Consequently, we encourage a more positive, constructive and flexible approach during future negotiations so that important issues can be reflected in these resolutions.

We wish to express our appreciation for the excellent stewardship of Chairs Ambassador Eden Charles and Ms. Alice Revell and for their unrelenting efforts to reach a consensus. We would also like to thank all the co-Chairs and facilitators of the various meetings that fed into the draft resolutions and whose work facilitated that of the delegations.

The importance of oceans and their resources in the context of sustainable development was recognized by world leaders in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1, annex), which includes Goal 14, "Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development". We wish to stress the importance of the Goal and the need for its proper implementation to counter the major threats that the marine environment continues to face, including climate change, marine debris, including plastics and microplastics, invasive alien species, eutrophication and dead zones, anthropogenic underwater noise, and overfishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, all of which contribute to the declining health of the marine environment and the continuing loss of marine biodiversity.

Consequently, the EU and its member States welcomed the sixteenth meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, which dealt with the topic of oceans and sustainable development, and look forward to the seventeenth meeting in 2016, on the topic of marine debris, plastics and microplastics. The EU and its member States would also like to reiterate their support for the initiatives to tackle those threats, taken in the context of the relevant legal instruments and frameworks and of relevant global, regional and sectoral bodies, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, including those taken under the auspices of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

We hold that regional and subregional dimensions are important in tackling some of those challenges so that we can better take into account regional specificities and are fully in line with the obligation to cooperate, as stressed in the Convention. That is why we support the work of the regional seas conventions, as well as that of regional fisheries organizations and arrangements, and promote the recognition of their work in these draft resolutions.

The EU and its member States welcome the completion of the first global assessment for the marine environment, including socioeconomic aspects, and express satisfaction at the realization of such a momentous piece of work, requiring scientific and technical input from experts throughout the world. We support the continuation of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects, and the launching of a second cycle, which should build on the experience and knowledge gained from the first cycle.

The EU and its member States are also appreciative of the work of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf in discharging its mandate. We also duly welcome the decisions of the twenty-fifth Meeting of States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea regarding the work of the Commission. We recognize that there are issues relating to the conditions of service of the Commission, and consequently we will be participating in efforts to try to resolve those issues.

Turning now to the sustainable fisheries draft resolution (A/70/L.19), the EU would like to register its satisfaction at the importance accorded to the problem of illegal, unreported and unregulated fisheries. It is estimated that IUU fishing takes around 11 to 26 million metric tons of fish each year, with value of between \$10 billion and \$23 billion. It constitutes a major threat to marine biodiversity and ecosystems, undermines national and regional efforts to achieve sustainable fisheries, and penalizes those fishers who respect the rules. Consequently, we are pleased at the increasing development of national action plans to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU and encourage States that have not done so yet to adopt them.

We also believe that penalties in relation to cases of IUU fishing should be adequate in severity so as to effectively secure compliance, deter further violations

and deprive offenders of benefits from such activities. We encourage States, especially those that have already signed, to ratify the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing, which is an important tool to fight this scourge, with a view to its rapid entry into force. We also encourage States to tackle the issue of vessels without nationality that are responsible for significant amounts of IUU fishing.

The EU remains fully committed to achieving the maximum sustainable yield for our fisheries and is working to achieve that goal by 2020 at the latest. In fact, we have already reached that target for 26 stocks this year. The EU is a strong supporter of the Fish Stocks Agreement, which sets out principles for the conservation and management of highly migratory and straddling fish stocks, and elaborates on the fundamental principle of cooperation in the Convention to ensure conservation and promote the objective of the optimum utilization of fisheries resources both within and beyond the exclusive economic zone. We view the resumed Review Conference that is to take place next year as an important tool to improve the effective implementation of the Agreement. We also look forward to the review of measures to address bottom fishing, including the useful workshop scheduled to take place next year.

We have taken note of the programme budget implications of the draft resolutions for the 2016-2017 biennium. We wish to stress the importance of ensuring that the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea can properly carry out the functions mandated to it during the next biennium. At the same time, we wish to stress that the estimates presented that relate to the proposed programme budget for 2016-2017 do not prejudice the Secretary-General's submission to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee of his proposed budget for the 2016-2017 biennium, or those bodies' consideration of these proposals in the course of this month. These estimates should therefore not be perceived as having been endorsed by the EU and its Member States today.

Lastly, the EU and its member States would like to express their gratitude to the Secretariat and to the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for the work done during the year, including the preparation of the annual report on oceans and the law of the sea, as

an invaluable compilation of recent developments. We note the increased number of requests to the Division for additional outputs and servicing of meetings in resolution 69/292 and in relation to the support to be provided by the Division as the secretariat of the Regular Process during its second cycle. We reiterate the importance of ensuring that the Division can properly carry out the functions mandated to it.

Mr. Otto (Palau): I am honoured to speak on behalf of the 12 members of the Pacific small island developing States (SIDS) with a presence at the United Nations, namely, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and my own country, Palau. In so doing, I would like to associate our statement with that to be delivered on behalf of Papua New Guinea as Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum.

We would like to thank Ambassador Eden Charles of Trinidad and Tobago and Ms. Alice Revell of New Zealand for their able leadership in bringing these negotiations to a successful conclusion, and are pleased to support the adoption of the draft resolutions on oceans and the law of the sea, and sustainable fisheries. We would like also to pay special tribute to Ms. Revell, given her years of service on sustainable fisheries, as coordinator on a draft resolution that is of great importance to us. We wish her well in her future endeavours. By the same token, we look forward to Norway continuing the good work on sustainable fisheries in the coming years.

The Pacific SIDS attach particular importance to this agenda item and its two associated annual resolutions. In addition to the two aforementioned draft resolutions, we further note that the Second Committee has already adopted a draft resolution (A/C.2/70/L.3/Rev.1) for the convening of a high-level United Nations conference to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14. We look forward to the adoption of that draft resolution by the Assembly under the current agenda item in the days ahead.

We consider the oceans to be the lifeblood of our economies and our societies. We are therefore keenly attuned to the mounting negative impacts on its health, driven by human activity. Overfishing, as well as illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing; marine pollution, including from microplastics; the destruction of marine habitats and other threats

to marine biodiversity; and climate-change driven impacts such as ocean acidification are among a number of serious threats to the health and resilience of our shared ocean. Those serious and mounting impacts are not merely threats to our ocean, but constitute a serious challenge to sustainable development. Healthy, productive and resilient oceans and seas are critical, *inter alia*, to poverty eradication, access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food, economic development, and essential ecosystem services.

The Pacific SIDS were at the forefront of those advocating for the inclusion among the Sustainable Development Goals of a stand-alone goal dedicated to the conservation and sustainable use of our oceans and seas. We welcome the inclusion of SDG 14 in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) and look forward to beginning the critical work of implementation to meet the targets on protecting marine ecosystems, addressing acidification, ending IUU fishing and increasing benefits to small island developing States and least developed countries, among others. In that regard, we welcome the follow-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the first United Nations conference to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, to be held in Fiji from 5 to 9 June 2017, to ensure the integrity of the delivery of SDG 14 by involving all relevant stakeholders.

The recognition of the importance of oceans to sustainable development was underscored by the theme of this year's meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, under the theme "Oceans and sustainable development: integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, namely, environmental, social and economic". We welcome the report of the Co-Chairs on its work (A/70/78) and its place within this year's omnibus resolution.

We were not alone in reacting with deep concern to recent reports that marine biodiversity has undergone considerable decline over the past 40 years, with populations of marine vertebrates declining at a rate of 49 per cent, and some at rates near 75 per cent. Given the critical role that oceans and ocean health play in our societies and development, this news is stark indeed, especially when coupled with the increasingly adverse impacts that climate change and carbon dioxide emissions are having on our oceans and seas. The scientific reports lend urgency to the work to be

undertaken by the preparatory committee to develop a legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. We look forward to its first meetings early next year and to making substantive progress on all elements of the package in the preparatory committee.

We continue to acknowledge the contribution of the International Seabed Authority to the ongoing capacity-building initiatives targeting developing countries, and look forward to making further progress in the development of a comprehensive set of rules governing seabed mining to ensure the effective protection of the marine environment from the harmful effects that may arise from activities in the area. We have stated on numerous occasions just how important the work of the International Seabed Authority is to the Pacific small island developing States, with our exclusive economic zones amounting to more than 30 million square kilometres and directly being adjoined to the lucrative Clarion-Clipperton zone.

We also acknowledge the important contributions of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, with many Pacific small island developing States making submissions to that body in the past year. We therefore welcome the steps taken to ensure developing States, especially least developed countries and SIDS, are able to fully participate in the deliberations of the subcommissions on their applications.

This year's draft resolution on fisheries (A/70/L.19) will be a critical tool in the realization of target 14.4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to effectively end overfishing; illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; and destructive fishing practices. The importance of healthy fisheries to our economies and livelihoods cannot be overstated, and the Pacific has been a site of global leadership in investing in fisheries management and monitoring, control and surveillance activities. This work, though, does not take place in a vacuum, and we are pleased that this year's draft resolution contains robust text on the need to provide accurate, complete and reliable data to support scientific stock assessment and ecosystem approaches to fisheries management. This year's draft resolution also makes considerable strides in recognizing the need for target reference points in the management of fish stocks, which will help enable a long-term sustainable exploitation of such stocks.

We are also pleased that the draft resolution we are set to adopt on fisheries includes important text on the obligation to ensure that a disproportionate burden of conservation action is not transferred to developing States, including Pacific small island developing States and SIDS in general.

I would like to close with an expression of appreciation to the partners that have provided support to our countries in this area of critical interest. In particular, we would like to mention Australia and New Zealand, through their traditional partnerships, both here in New York and in the region, on our common interests on the ocean and fisheries. We also would like to thank Sweden for its commitment in partnering with Fiji to host the first United Nations conference on oceans in Fiji. We would also like to recognize Italy for its partnership with the Pacific small island developing States to implement the inaugural Pacific small island developing States' fellowship on oceans and seas for 2016 through the joint committee mechanism here in New York. Finally, we would like to thank the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for their ongoing hard work and support, especially with regard to capacity-building and its technical support and legal advice.

Mr. Katota (Zambia): I welcome the opportunity to deliver this statement on behalf of the group of landlocked developing countries (LLDCs). We take note of the Secretary-General's report contained in document A/70/74, on oceans and the law of the sea, and the acknowledgement that the oceans provide a wide range of services to human society, which play a critical role in each dimension of sustainable development, either directly or through impacts on services in other sectors.

The overall socioeconomic development of LLDCs is constrained by our lack of direct territorial access to the sea, remoteness and isolation from the world market and high transit costs. We appreciate the fact that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) specifically acknowledges some of these factors and the special needs of our countries. Let me highlight some of the provisions. In its preamble, the Convention acknowledges the necessity to take into account the interests and needs of humankind as a whole and, in particular, the special interests and needs of landlocked countries related to the right of access to and from the sea, freedom of transit, as well as their right to explore resources in the exclusive economic zone of

coastal States and the granting of their nationality to ships. In article 125, the Convention states that

“[l]andlocked States shall have the right of access to and from the sea for the purpose of exercising the rights provided for in this Convention” [and that] “landlocked States shall enjoy freedom of transit through the territory of transit States by all means of transport”.

Article 87 states that “the high seas are open to all States, whether coastal or landlocked”, and article 148 calls on the participation of developing States, including landlocked developing countries, in activities in the Area, which is the seabed beyond national jurisdiction.

More than half of the 32 landlocked developing countries are currently State parties to UNCLOS, and they constitute nearly 10 per cent of the International Seabed Authority membership. We would like to reaffirm our rights and provisions established in that Convention and the declaration that the seabed, ocean floor and the subsoil thereof, beyond the limits of national jurisdiction, as well as its resources, are the common heritage of humankind, the exploration and exploitation of which are undertaken for the benefit of humankind as a whole, irrespective of the geographical location of States.

While landlockedness, geographical isolation and remoteness from world markets constitute our core challenges, they are by no means the only ones. The Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, adopted during the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries, held last year in November in Vienna, calls for structural economic transformation, capacity development and resilience building. We are confident that the international community, including international organizations, will support the LLDCs in the implementation of this important development blueprint.

Allow me to briefly highlight areas of special interest for LLDCs regarding today’s important deliberations.

While LLDCs reaffirm the importance of the Convention, only a little over half of our countries have ratified it. A number of factors can explain this situation, among them, the difficulties that our countries face and their inability to undertake this important process on their own. It is for this reason that we call upon the

International Seabed Authority and other stakeholders to help our countries in their accession processes, as well as other technical assistance to help us be able to ratify, implement and effectively utilize the provisions of the UNCLOS.

I would also like to highlight the needs that exist when it comes to the participation of LLDCs in maritime research. As the Convention unambiguously says, all States, irrespective of their geographical location, have the right to conduct marine scientific research subject to the rights and duties of other States as provided for in the Convention. The Convention specifically provides for the participation of landlocked and geographically disadvantaged States in marine scientific research being conducted in neighbouring coastal States’ waters. The Convention also states that all States, irrespective of their geographical location and competent international organizations, also have the right to conduct maritime scientific research in the water column beyond the limits of the exclusive economic zone.

Despite this provision, I would like to highlight the inability of LLDCs to undertake costly maritime research on their own, and their non-participation in the few maritime scientific research projects being undertaken by their coastal neighbours. It is for that reason that we call upon the maritime scientific community to enhance its support to LDCs and involve them in their activities.

We commend the efforts of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea to organize regional workshops to provide representatives of States with information on the jurisdiction of the Tribunal and the procedural rules applicable to cases before it. We also appreciate the capacity-building activities of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, and wish to call upon the Division to encourage and support greater participation of the LLDCs in its capacity-building activities and annual meetings.

We would like to reiterate the need to consider the special challenges that landlocked developing countries face in accessing and utilizing the common resources of our seas. It is for this reason that we once again reiterate that it is only through solidarity and support that LLDCs can overcome their isolation from multilateral processes, including in activities related to the Convention on the Law of the Sea.

We also acknowledge the important work done by the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf,

in particular the establishment of the outer limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured. We call upon the Commission to ensure that all established interests of landlocked developing countries in the Convention are preserved and/or enhanced. Key among them are our right of access to and from the sea and freedom of transit, and our established rights related to the exclusive economic zone of coastal States.

Ms. Bird (Australia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum members represented at the United Nations, namely, Fiji, the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and my own country, Australia.

The Pacific Islands Forum members are constituents of large-ocean States. Our combined ocean space of around 40 million square kilometres of ocean and islands is bigger than the landmass of China, Canada, the United States, India and Australia combined. Our people's lives, cultures and identities are intrinsically intertwined with the oceans. Our livelihood has largely been sustained for centuries through the resources of the oceans. For us, our ocean is our home and our future.

That is why the Pacific Islands Forum as a region has shown global leadership in marine conservation and management, from our traditional marine area-based management and the implementation of marine protected areas to the adoption of innovative and ambitious solutions such as vessel day-trading schemes for fisheries conservation and sustainable development. Yet despite our tremendous efforts and ambitions, our work will remain in vain without genuine and durable partnerships with the international community.

The work of the Pacific Islands Forum on oceans is underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and augmented by our Pacific Oceanscape Framework, which addresses issues concerning the health, productivity and resilience of our Pacific Ocean. To coordinate, guide and drive that agenda forward in our region, we have appointed a Pacific Oceans Commissioner, who guided and led our inaugural and successful Pacific Oceans Alliance meeting in July 2015 in Suva, which addressed oceans-related issues, including the evolving developments

on marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

In September, Pacific leaders at the forty-sixth Pacific Islands Forum in Papua New Guinea adopted a road map for Pacific sustainable fisheries, with a main focus on oceans and fisheries. The road map represents a significant achievement and milestone for us as a region and further underscores the Pacific region's unwavering collective commitment to conservation and sustainable use of the oceans. The road map articulates the outcomes the region seeks from sustainable fisheries and specific strategies to achieve those outcomes, including strengthening rights-based management approaches, the adoption of target reference points and harvest strategies, leveraging additional development opportunities for small island developing States (SIDS), enhancing community-based management and increasing employment and the contribution of fisheries to food security, nutrition supply and livelihoods. Our leaders again reaffirmed the central importance of increasing economic returns and ensuring the sustainable management of fisheries, including the eventual transition to catch-based systems. It was also acknowledged that the current effort-based management system had brought significant economic returns to parties to the Nauru Agreement.

It was for this reason that the Pacific Islands Forum members pursued a number of text proposals in this year's draft resolution on sustainable fisheries (A/70/L.19). We were pleased that, on the basis of our proposals, some key substantive improvements were made to the draft resolution. In particular, a clearer focus on the need for target reference points in fisheries management; the need to improve data reporting to regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) and to clamp down on incomplete reporting, which makes fisheries management decisions within RFMOs difficult; the need for RFMOs to take into account the special requirements of developing countries and to ensure that the disproportionate burden of conservation action is not placed on SIDS.

We were, however, disappointed that a recognition of the road map for Pacific sustainable fisheries was not incorporated into the draft resolution. The road map represents a shared vision of the region in the management of its key oceans and marine resource conservation and management and, like other regional initiatives before it, should have been reflected. An acknowledgement of the road map would have been

an important stride in our quest for fair and equitable returns from our oceans and marine resources, which, regrettably, remain inadequate.

Looking ahead to 2016, the Pacific Islands Forum members welcome the decision taken by the General Assembly to develop an international legally binding instrument under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction, and to establish a preparatory committee to make recommendations on the elements of a draft text for such an instrument by the end of 2017. We note that the Pacific Island Forum leaders expressed their strong support for launching those negotiations, and the Pacific intends to actively engage in them beginning in March 2016. The region is committed to achieving substantive progress on this issue. We are pleased that one Forum member — Nauru — will serve on the bureau of the preparatory committee.

As custodians of a vast expanse of oceans and seas, Pacific Islands Forum members championed the adoption of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 on the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and seas and their marine resources for sustainable development, which now forms an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) adopted in September by world leaders. This represents a significant achievement and an acknowledgement by the international community of the fundamental importance of oceans to global sustainable development, a recognition that was missing in the Millennium Development Goals. We would urge all States to commit to the full and effective implementation of SDG 14, including through supporting an effective process for follow-up on and review of the goals and targets. We are committed to doing our part.

Our strong ties with the oceans and seas also drove our sponsorship and support for the joint initiative of Fiji and Sweden on the United Nations Conference in June 2017 in Suva on the implementation of SDG 14, which is an important contribution to build political momentum and support for the implementation of Goal 14 that brings together all stakeholders. This same commitment underpins our strong support for marine protected areas.

The Pacific continues to lead the way on oceans management, and we are proud that there continue to be significant marine sanctuaries announced in

our region, including new 620,000-square-kilometre ocean sanctuary surrounding the Kermadec Islands in the South-West Pacific, announced by New Zealand's Prime Minister during the general debate of the General Assembly (see A/70/PV.23).

Mr. Rattray (Jamaica): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

CARICOM continues to attach great importance to our participation in the annual debate in the plenary of the General Assembly on the items relating to oceans and the law of the sea and sustainable fisheries. In this regard, we greatly appreciate and thank the Secretary-General for his annual report on recent and ongoing developments relating to ocean affairs and the law of the sea (A/70/74).

We wish to acknowledge the significant contribution that the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea and its partners continue to make in monitoring developments in this area. The Caribbean Community also commends the Division for the high-quality assistance provided to Member States in the implementation of the provisions of the Convention and the relevant General Assembly resolutions. At the same time, we note the substantial increase in the activities of the Division and the consequent need for additional resources to ensure the effective discharge of its responsibilities. In this regard, we welcome the provisions made in the first draft omnibus resolution (A/70/L.22) to address this matter and urge that additional resources be approved by the Fifth Committee. We take this opportunity to thank the coordinators of the two draft resolutions — Ambassador Eden Charles of Trinidad and Tobago and Ms. Alice Revell of New Zealand, respectively — for their able stewardship of the informal consultations.

The year 2015 has been a defining year in global affairs, with world leaders charting the most comprehensive and universal global agenda for sustainable development, of which oceans is an integral part. Indeed, as emphasized in Agenda 21 and reaffirmed in “The future we want” (resolution 66/288, annex), we cannot speak of sustainable development without acknowledging that the marine environment is an essential component of the global life-support system. Guided by the Samoa Pathway, CARICOM States are only too aware that oceans and seas, along with coastal areas, are intrinsically linked to the

sustainable development of Small Island Developing States.

CARICOM States fully welcome the adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (resolution 70/1) and the key commitment contained therein to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, as reflected in Goal 14. With Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14, the international community has a clear goal and 10 associated targets to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and seas for present and future generations. We must now move swiftly towards implementation.

A robust follow-up and review process is therefore key. CARICOM is of the view that the General Assembly must play a role in assisting Member States in the implementation of SDG 14. Accordingly, we find merit in the discussion of the topic at the appropriate time within the ambit of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea. In this connection, we note that the Consultative Process has traditionally been the forum to facilitate the annual review by the General Assembly of developments in oceans affairs.

CARICOM participates in this year's debate against the backdrop of the global efforts under way in Paris at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to address the effects of climate change, including the myriad threats being posed to the marine environment and marine biodiversity. As small island developing and low-lying coastal States, CARICOM States are particularly concerned with the adverse impacts of climate change and ocean acidification. We therefore anticipate that the Paris Conference will deliver an ambitious outcome.

This year has also been decisive for action on ocean governance, with the landmark decision taken by the General Assembly on 19 June to develop an international legally binding instrument under the Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. This decision, set forth in resolution 69/292, is one to which CARICOM States attach high priority. Over the past decade, we have joined an overwhelming majority of Member States, intergovernmental organizations and civil society in calling for urgent action to halt the unprecedented

loss of marine biodiversity, as well as to address the glaring gaps in ocean governance, in particular the lack of access to and benefit-sharing in marine genetic resources for developing countries.

CARICOM States look forward to actively participating in the two-year preparatory process established by resolution 69/292 to elaborate the elements of the new arrangement. In this context, we welcome the early appointment of the Chairman of the preparatory process, Ambassador Eden Charles of Trinidad and Tobago, under whose able stewardship we anticipate a successful outcome leading to the negotiating conference.

As States parties to the Convention, we seek to uphold one of the cardinal obligations contained therein: the protection and preservation of the marine environment. We therefore welcome the completion of the first global integrated assessment of the state of the marine environment, namely, the world ocean assessment. The completion of the assessment is timely, given the supporting role it can play in the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Indeed, the General Assembly's approval of its summary will provide a better understanding of the state of the marine environment, thus empowering States to make informed decisions towards enhancing legal and institutional frameworks for the conservation, exploration and sustainable use of the resources of the oceans and seas, in an effort to preserve these resources for generations to come. CARICOM congratulates the Group of Experts, the pool of experts, the secretariat and the Bureau, under the able guidance of the Chairs, Argentina and Portugal, on the successful completion of the assessment. CARICOM is pleased to have appointed experts to participate in this important process, and we anticipate making a similar contribution in the second cycle.

CARICOM supports the launch of the second cycle of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects. In so doing, we underscore the need to take into account the lessons learned from the first cycle, in particular the need to address the critical issue of resource scarcity and budget allocation. Furthermore, as we move forward, we wish to highlight that the small island developing States (SIDS) still need assistance in enhancing their capacity to undertake national assessments through knowledge transfer or other appropriate mechanisms.

Over the past year, the three institutions created by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea continued to cover new ground in carrying out their mandates. With regard to the International Seabed Authority, CARICOM is pleased with the efforts of the Authority in discharging its obligations under Part XI of the Convention. CARICOM welcomes the successful outcome of the twenty-first session of the Authority, which culminated in the adoption of procedures and criteria for the extension of an approved work plan for exploration, and of a decision requiring States, in accordance with their obligations, to confirm to the Secretary-General of the Authority their continuation of their sponsorship for the duration of the extension of their plans of work. The ongoing work on the development of a regulatory framework for the exploitation of deep-seabed minerals in the Area is a matter of importance, and we therefore welcome the list of priority deliverables adopted at the twenty-first session.

CARICOM States are pleased that the work of the Authority continues in earnest, with 27 approved plans of work for exploration for marine mineral resources in the Area and 15-year contracts for exploration of polymetallic nodules, polymetallic sulphides and cobalt-rich crusts. CARICOM also welcomes the efforts of the Authority to give effect to article 136 of the Convention, on the established principle of the common heritage of mankind. As such, we commend the Authority for its efforts to build capacity in developing countries through the voluntary trust fund and the endowment fund for marine scientific research in the Area and through the recently formalized internship programme.

We also commend the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea for its impressive work, and we welcome its increasing activities, in terms of both caseload and the number of rulings. We are pleased that the Tribunal continues to play an active role in the capacity-building of developing countries through its training programme on dispute settlement under the Convention.

CARICOM takes this opportunity to reaffirm its support for the work of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. We are encouraged by the important contribution that the Commission continues to make with respect to submissions made by coastal States seeking to extend the limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles, in accordance with paragraph 8 of article 76 of the Convention.

With regard to the increasing workload of the Commission, we welcome strategies that have been adopted to address its considerable workload. We also note the ongoing work of the Open-ended Working Group on the Conditions of Service of the Commission. We welcome provisions in the draft resolution to resolve the matter of working space, as well as the efforts of the Assembly to address the provision of medical insurance to members of the Commission, which is critical to the effective participation of members from developing countries in the Commission's sessions.

The question of sustainable fisheries resources continues to engage the CARICOM region, and we attach priority to the important work being carried out by the CARICOM Regional Fisheries Mechanism, aimed at the sustainable development and management of the subregion's fisheries sector. The implementation of the CARICOM Common Fisheries Policy, adopted last year, is contributing to those efforts.

Nevertheless, there are issues that continue to require the support of all States. We register our strong concern over the persistence of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in Caribbean waters, which is threatening the economic and social viability of our fisheries and undermining the effectiveness of conservation management. In that connection, CARICOM welcomes the advisory opinion of the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea, pursuant to the request submitted by the Subregional Fisheries Commission on 2 April, which strengthens the efforts of States and regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements to combat IUU fishing.

In the absence of a single comprehensive policy or legal regime, we recognize the value and effectiveness of unilateral measures to prevent IUU fish from entering target markets. We urge States to take into account, directly or through regional fisheries management organizations or arrangements, the special requirements of developing States, in particular SIDS, when applying such unilateral measures. We encourage cooperation with developing States in order to enhance their capacity to implement those measures and to ensure that they are applied in a manner that is fair, transparent and non-discriminatory.

CARICOM States welcome the attention given to the issue of alien invasive species in draft resolution A/70/L.19, on sustainable fisheries, given the adverse impact on Caribbean fisheries of the predatory lionfish.

We are particularly pleased that the draft resolution also highlights our concern over the recent massive influx of Sargassum seaweed into the waters of the Caribbean and its negative impact on aquatic resources, fisheries, shorelines, waterways and tourism.

CARICOM States express their appreciation to the various partners that have contributed technical and financial assistance to our development over the years. At the same time, we continue to emphasize the need for continued support for capacity building in order to effectively implement the Convention and its related instruments. As the Secretary-General's report acknowledges,

“Sustained financing to support ocean-related activities, including capacity-building initiatives, in support of the full implementation of the Convention is critical” (A/70/74/Add.1, para. 135).

That has been underlined in the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the third International Conference on Financing for Development.

In conclusion, CARICOM is pleased that since the adoption and entry into force of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, 167 States have become party to that landmark instrument. The steady increase in the number of States parties is encouraging and serves as testimony to the continued relevance and significance of the Convention. CARICOM therefore urges those States that have not yet acceded to the Convention to do so with a view to ensuring its universal acceptance.

Mrs. Bruell-Melchior (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): This year, consideration of the agenda item on oceans and the law of the sea comes just a few months after the historic adoption in September of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), which recognizes the rightful place of the oceans, the seas and their resources in sustainable development. The Principality of Monaco advocated for the establishment of a Sustainable Development Goal specifically devoted to the oceans, seas and marine resources, and welcomes the additional support it lends to the implementation of many provisions in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which constitutes a visionary tool of sustainable development.

Monaco, as usual, is a sponsor of the draft resolutions on the viability of fisheries (A/70/L.19) and on the oceans and the law of the sea (A/70/L.22). I would like to thank the two coordinators, Ms. Alice Revell of New Zealand, who performed that function for the last time, and Ambassador Eden Charles, Deputy Permanent Representative of Trinidad and Tobago.

It is with great satisfaction that my delegation welcomes the agreement reached, which represents the culmination of four years of hard work, during which Monaco proposed the explicit highlighting in the omnibus draft resolution of the recognized serious threats to all marine species that occupy the highest trophic levels, including in particular marine mammals, sea turtles and marine birds. That success was achieved thanks to the constructive approach of all delegations, especially those that originally had reservations, as well as through the efforts of the two facilitators from Singapore, Natalie Morris-Sharma and Daniel Yao, who led the official consultations in a balanced and effective manner.

We believe that the vulnerable situation of the aforementioned species, which are the subject of specific provisions in the United Nations Law of the Sea, deserved to be taken into account in the draft resolution in the same way as other pressures on the oceans and their resources. In that new provision, the General Assembly calls on States and competent international organizations to cooperate and coordinate, in full compliance with their mandates, their research efforts aimed at mitigating the impact of marine debris, ship strikes, underwater noise, persistent contaminants, coastal development activities, oil spills and discarded fishing gear. By extension, the entire integrity of the marine ecosystem is in danger, and the preservation of the largest components of the oceans must therefore be particularly ensured.

My delegation welcomes the work done by the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea and the report of the Secretary-General (A/70/74), and shares the conviction that economic and social development depends on the sustainable management of the planet's natural resources, including those of the seas and oceans. All of the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 14 must be fully implemented to ensure that the oceans can continue providing the services on which we depend. To that end, our approach must be consistent, collective, integrated and multisectoral if it is to produce real results at the

global level. We therefore support the convening of a United Nations high-level conference in support of the implementation of SDG 14.

Moreover, my delegation is pleased to note the work of the mechanism for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socioeconomic aspects, and in particular the first global integrated monitoring of the marine environment. We welcome the organization of and high-level participation in Oceans Day, held in Paris on 4 December at the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The resilience of the oceans to the impact of carbon dioxide emissions and climate change must be bolstered. The numerous activities of the ocean climate platform also helped give the oceans the full attention that they deserve in the framework of the Paris discussions.

The fight against all of the pressures to which the oceans and seas are subject naturally takes a number of forms. Marine pollution and the impact of marine debris, plastics and microplastics are cause for concern in the Mediterranean and all seas and oceans of the planet. Therefore, at the specific request of His Serene Highness Prince Albert II, the use of disposable plastic bags will be prohibited in the coming days in the Principality of Monaco. At the regional level, in the framework of the RAMOGE Agreement to prevent and combat pollution of the marine environment, in conjunction with France and Italy, a new strategy to collect debris and marine waste is being studied.

Another area of concern that has attracted the attention of the Principality in recent years is that of ocean acidification, a phenomenon that has impacts on both food security and tourism. The third international workshop devoted to the socioeconomic repercussions of ocean acidification was convened in the Principality in January 2014, and its conclusions can be found on the website of the Monaco Scientific Centre and on those of partner organizations. A summary of those findings may be found in a letter from the *Chargée d'affaires ad interim* of the Permanent Mission of Monaco to the Secretary-General (A/69/942).

The deterioration of the marine ecosystem and the loss of habitats are other serious challenges affecting small island developing States in particular. Capacity-building is particularly important, and the Principality will continue to support the outreach and education

programme with regard to international law, including through voluntary contributions to the Hamilton Shirley Amerasinghe fellowship.

Lastly, the preservation of 10 per cent of maritime and coastal zones also presents a challenge that we must meet. To that end, it is vital to identify areas in which there is an urgent need to establish marine-protected areas. As His Serene Highness Prince Albert II recalled during the Our Ocean Conference in Valparaiso, Chile, in October, marine-protected areas represent a sustainable solution that is practicable for everyone, ecologically responsible and financially appropriate. We must promote an integrated approach aimed at establishing an effective and consistent network of marine protected areas to mitigate the current fragmentation. Therefore, the development of an international instrument for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, under the auspices of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, will have a role to play in that respect and others. The Principality will play an active part in the work of the proprietary conference that will begin next year.

Mrs. Diéguez Lao (Cuba): Cuba attaches great importance to the role of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in maintaining and strengthening peace, order and sustainable development in the oceans and seas. The Convention is a major milestone in the codification of international law, and the law of the sea in particular, and has been ratified by the vast majority of Member States. It establishes an adequate and universally recognized legal framework within which all activities pertaining to the world's oceans and seas must be carried out.

It is important to maintain the integrity of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the implementation of its provisions as a whole. Oceans and the law of the sea affairs must fall under the supervision of the General Assembly so as to ensure greater consistency in their management for the benefit of all Member States.

Cuba has made and continues to make significant efforts in the implementation of national strategies for sustainable development and the protection of the marine environment, in order to achieve the consistent, progressive and effective implementation of the Convention's provisions. Earlier this year, for instance following several months of deliberations among delegations from various countries, including Cuba,

the Wider Caribbean Region Multilateral Technical Operating Procedures for Offshore Oil Pollution Response entered into force, the text of which has been posted on the website of the regional centre of the International Maritime Organization in the Caribbean.

The Cuban State possesses a solid institutional and legislative framework on the law of the sea. Cuba's Government takes all measures within its power to successfully address crimes committed at sea, such as the illicit trafficking of narcotic and psychotropic drugs, human trafficking and piracy.

Cuba reiterates the importance of strengthening international cooperation in the management of marine resources and in the conservation of the oceans and their biodiversity, in accordance with the principles of international law, with due respect for the jurisdiction of sovereign States and their territorial integrity, and in the management of marine resources within the limits of their exclusive economic zone and the continental shelf. We strongly support the commendable work of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, and urge all Member States to provide their support so that the Commission has all the resources it needs. The Commission must be able to carry out its work quickly and effectively and to fulfil its established legal requirements.

The continuing rise in sea levels threatens the territorial integrity of many States, especially small island States, some of which are doomed to disappear if immediate measures are not taken. The interconnection of oceanic systems and their close relationship with the dramatic climate change affecting humankind oblige us to comply immediately with the established commitments in both areas. Cuba has also demonstrated its commitment to protecting the environment and its relationship to the oceans and the seas.

I cannot conclude without expressing our appreciation for the work carried out by the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, as well as the coordinators of draft resolutions A/70/L.22 and A/70/L.19, which we are considering today and which will of course be supported by our delegation.

Mr. Plasai (Thailand): First of all, my delegation would like to commend and congratulate Mr. Eden Charles, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Trinidad and Tobago, for his able leadership in conducting the informal consultation on the omnibus draft resolution on oceans and the law

of the sea (A/70/L.22). Our appreciation also goes to Ms. Alice Revell for her coordination efforts on the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries (A/70/L.19).

We have witnessed this year many achievements in the areas of oceans and the law of the sea and sustainable fisheries, which are duly referred to in the draft resolutions presented today. These achievements will certainly shape progressive development of the law of the sea in the years to come. Allow me to mention a few of them.

First, we welcome the adoption of resolution 69/292, related to the development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. In our view, it is high time that the international community look at how the existing legal regime of the high seas under UNCLOS can be strengthened, in particular for the conservation and sustainable use of their marine resources. We also wish to stress our view that the basic principle applicable to those resources is that of the common heritage of humankind with equitable benefit sharing, as is the case with non-living resources of the seabed beyond national jurisdiction and the subsoil thereof. We appreciate the opportunity we had to actively engage in the work of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group to study issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction, and indeed look forward to constructively participating in the preparatory committee established by the said resolution.

Another milestone achievement this year was the adoption of resolution 70/1, related to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which finally established a stand-alone goal — Goal 14 — for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. In that regard, the Kingdom of Thailand reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the implementation and follow-up of Goal 14, and for that reason is pleased to sponsor the draft resolution on the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14.

One of the targets stipulated under Goal 14 is to end overfishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU fishing), a matter also

dealt with in detail in part IV of the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries. In that regard, we reaffirm our conviction that for maritime areas under national jurisdiction, the problem can be solved only through close cooperation between the coastal and the third-party flag States concerned. In addition, States must ensure, in accordance with international law, that they have jurisdiction over fishery activities conducted by their nationals and vessels flying their flag anywhere, and that their relevant laws and regulations are strictly enforced with zero tolerance.

We welcome the advisory opinion of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea in Case 21, according to which the obligation of a third party flag State to ensure that vessels flying its flag are not involved in IUU fishing in the exclusive economic zones of member States of the Subregional Fisheries Commission is an obligation of conduct or a due diligence obligation and not an obligation of result. In the Tribunal's words, the obligation is to

“‘deploy adequate means, to exercise best possible efforts, to do the utmost’ to prevent IUU fishing by ships flying its flag”.

We note the Tribunal's statement that its jurisdiction in the case is limited to the exclusive economic zone of the Subregional Fisheries Commission Member States. Yet, we find that the Tribunal's efforts result in an enlightening outcome, which has systemic and global implications and which will certainly be part of the progressive development of the international law of the sea.

At the national level, in view of the urgent need to combat IUU fishing, the Kingdom of Thailand has fundamentally revised its policy, laws and regulations. Last month, a new royal ordinance on fisheries came into force. It introduces a fundamental and comprehensive reform of the Thai legal framework governing fisheries. In addition, the Royal Thai Government has approved a new National Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate IUU fishing. Both instruments aim, inter alia, to fulfil Thailand's responsibilities as flag State, coastal State, port State and market State. Work is also in progress to set up a new, fully automated national monitoring, control and surveillance system for Thai fishery activities and a system of traceability for fishery products imported to, transiting through and exported from the Kingdom.

Thailand is of the firm view that the time is ripe and right for the global community to pay more attention to the oceans and the seas and their resources, which we have taken for granted for decades. We are now at a critical juncture with the upcoming discussion on a new international legally binding instrument, the implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the increasing global awareness and efforts in combating IUU fishing. It is important that we maintain the political will expressed by our leaders this year and ensure that the oceans, the seas and marine resources are properly taken care of in our efforts to achieve sustainable development for all.

Mrs. Deiyé (Nauru): At the outset, let me associate my delegation with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Australia, Ambassador Bird, on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum, and the Permanent Representative of Palau, Ambassador Otto, on behalf of the Pacific small island developing States. Like others, we would also like to thank Ambassador Eden Charles of Trinidad and Tobago and Ms. Alice Revell of New Zealand for their able leadership in bringing the negotiations on draft resolutions A/70/L.19 and A/70/L.22 to a successful conclusion. We would also like to thank the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for its consistent support and professionalism on these critical matters.

Oceans and the law of the sea are a topic critical to Nauru. Island nations have a unique dependence on oceans and seas. Marine and coastal resources are vital to our economies, our food security and our cultures. The sustainable use of marine resources is one of our primary tools for eradicating poverty. We hope to ensure healthy oceans and access to their resources not only for ourselves, but also for future generations. In order to do that, we will need to better manage and conserve our resources within and beyond national jurisdictions. Despite the importance of oceans to us all, we are putting their health and continued ability to provide for us at risk.

In “The future we want” (resolution 66/288), leaders committed themselves to protecting and restoring the health, productivity and resilience of oceans and marine ecosystems and to enabling their conservation and sustainable use for present and future generations. We took an important step in that direction with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), and, inter alia, the stand-alone Sustainable Development Goal on oceans

and seas. The implementation of the Agenda will be critical in showing our will to make the paradigm shift that we have been calling for, and critical for countries like Nauru. In that regard, the ability of the international community to deliver in areas such as oceans will be critical. Let me congratulate the joint initiative of Fiji and Sweden for the holding of a United Nations conference on the implementation and follow-up to Goal 14.

We hope for an ambitious agreement to be agreed in Paris later this week — one that will help us alleviate the stress that the adverse impacts of climate change place on our oceans. The science is clear that climate change poses a great challenge for the health and productivity of the oceans. It is also clear that humans have caused changes to the climate system that are linked to the warming of oceans. Sealevels are rising, with devastating effects on vulnerable communities, especially to those in our region.

Oceans absorb more than 70 percent of greenhouse-gas emissions and are becoming more acidic as a result. Ocean ecosystems are degrading. Corals, which sustain much of marine life, are vulnerable to the bleaching and death caused by the warming temperatures. It is for those reasons that Nauru places such a high premium on a successful outcome in Paris.

After climate change and ocean acidification, overfishing is the next greatest threat to ocean health. We are taking far too many fish and at rates that we know are not sustainable. That not only affects a food source that we depend on, but also negatively affects whole ecosystems. As a step to better address the issue, we are pleased to note the new text regarding the provision of complete and accurate data to regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) to enable better management and conservation of fish stocks. In that same vein, we are pleased to see the text highlighting the need to target reference points in our management of fisheries. Limit reference points need to be matched with target reference points that permit long-term sustainable exploitation of stocks with the best-case scenario.

We must also urge that more is done to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. Regional estimates put lost earnings from IUU at anywhere from millions of dollars to over \$1 billion. For economies like ours those numbers are staggering. If we are to be true to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development (resolution 70/1) and the commitments made to the small island developing States, we must do much more to eliminate IUU fishing and ensure that the income from fishing goes to the rightful resource owners.

While the international community has long recognized the special requirements of small island developing States in fisheries, concrete steps need to be taken to give effect to those words. That includes the need to ensure access to, and participation in, fisheries. We also need to ensure that States and RFMOs work to address the existing obligation in article 24 (c) of the Fish Stocks Agreement to take into account the special requirements of developing States, including SIDS, when establishing conservation and management measures for straddling fish stocks, including the need to ensure that such measures do not transfer a disproportionate burden of conservation action.

International action is vital if we are to ensure the continued viability of the oceans, marine ecosystems and fisheries, which are linked to our national sustainable development strategies. There is a growing need to measure the effectiveness of our actions to adapt to climate change and build the resilience of our resources. We need a risk-informed development plan in order for us to assess the climate risks and to build our national and institutional capacity to enable a resilient future. Nauru reiterates its call to be part of the United Nations Development Programme's 5-10-50 programme in that regard.

Before concluding, I wanted to touch on a final topic, namely, the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. The creation of a legal regime on biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction via the development of an implementing agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea is critical for the protection of the high seas. The high seas are essential to ensuring food security and biological diversity, and are also crucial to the economies and livelihoods of small island developing States, including Nauru. We are pleased that the work in that regard is progressing, and we look forward to engaging actively in the preparatory committee session to commence next March.

Mr. Pedersen (Norway): The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) provides the universal and unified framework for the peaceful, responsible and predictable management of the oceans

and the seas. All activities in the oceans must be carried out within that framework. In ever-changing conditions, the Convention provides clarity with regard to both obligations and rights. The framework is also indispensable for the sustainable use of marine resources as well as for shipping, protecting the marine environment, cooperation and marine scientific research.

World leaders are now gathered in Paris to make this year a turning point in our transition to low-emission societies. While acknowledging the current and projected adverse effects of climate change on the marine environment and on marine biodiversity, we reiterate the need for international cooperation to prevent further ocean acidification, enhance the resilience of marine ecosystems and support marine science.

This year we adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1). The 2030 Agenda seeks to complete what has not yet been fully achieved, including ending poverty, hunger, disease and gender inequality, and providing access to water and sanitation. The new Sustainable Development Goals and targets are integrated, indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development. The time has come to complete the work we have started. We must ensure that no one is left behind.

If we are to achieve Goal 14, namely, to conserve and ensure the sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources, it will require the implementation of international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

In order to realize the potential of marine resources, protect marine biodiversity and implement the law of the sea, we need to develop cooperation and build capacity. The EAF-Nansen Project is a Norwegian development programme established in 1974. It aims to reduce poverty and improve food security, primarily in sub-Saharan Africa. The programme supports developing countries in their efforts to strengthen regional and national marine research, with a view to promoting the sustainable management of living marine resources.

The human hardship, suffering and losses caused by unsafe migration by sea are affecting us all. That is a complex situation that calls for a comprehensive and multifaceted response. It is important not to lose sight of the obligation to provide assistance to people

in distress, irrespective of their status, the obligation to provide a place of safety for those rescued at sea and the need for prompt disembarkation. Flag, port and coastal States must all take seriously their various obligations to ensure maritime safety.

Norway has always been a strong supporter of 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. This year we were pleased to be able to mark the twentieth anniversary of the Agreement's opening for signature. It has proved to be an important instrument for implementing the provisions in UNCLOS relating to straddling and highly migratory fish stocks. We value the Agreement's focus on regional implementation and the way it incorporates a set of essential governance principles, including a precautionary approach and ecosystem considerations. The obligation in the Agreement to help developing States parties implement it is an important priority for Norway and this year, therefore, we made a contribution to the Assistance Fund under part VII of the Agreement.

We welcome the bottom-fishery review due to take place in 2016. The General Assembly's commitment to addressing the effects of bottom fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems, together with follow-up by regional fisheries management organizations (RFMO) on the resolutions related to the issue, is a good example of the ability and willingness of RFMOs and States to implement the Fish Stocks Agreement and take responsibility for protecting biodiversity.

At this point, the Agreement has 82 States parties, and we encourage more States to consider becoming party to it, since ensuring the broadest possible participation in the Agreement is key to realizing its intentions. We look forward to the resumption in May next year of the Review Conference on the Agreement, at which we hope we can agree on a set of recommendations that will further strengthen the implementation of UNCLOS and the Fish Stocks Agreement with regard to straddling and highly migratory fish stocks.

Combating illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing is crucial to safeguarding the world's fish stocks. IUU fishing has been one of the main issues on the international fisheries agenda for the past decade, and we must continue to cooperate on it. Norway would

like to urge for formulating a global catch documentation scheme aimed at supporting the trade in legal fisheries products, and we welcome the fact that the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has undertaken to draw up guidelines and other relevant criteria relating to catch documentation schemes. Norway also welcomes the work of INTERPOL and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) against transnational organized fisheries crime. In 2012, INTERPOL established a fisheries crime working group that has led to a number of arrests of persons involved in fisheries crimes around the world, and UNODC recently convened a meeting on fisheries crime under the auspices of the Indian Ocean Forum on Maritime Crime. Norway also supports the work of the International Labour Organization in combating forced labour in the global fishing industry.

Norway is committed to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity, both within and outside areas of national jurisdiction, and welcomes the General Assembly's decision to develop an international legally binding instrument under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. A new instrument, fully integrated into the established architecture on the law of the sea, could add value by fully recognizing, complementing and strengthening cooperation and coordination within and between existing international and regional organizations. We look forward to the first meeting of the preparatory committee in March 2016. We are committed to the negotiations and hopeful that there will be productive discussions that will produce a draft text of elements for a new agreement by the end of 2017.

Mr. Orozco Barrera (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would first like to thank Ambassador Eden Charles of Trinidad and Tobago and Ms. Alice Revell of New Zealand for their tireless work as the coordinators, respectively, of draft resolutions A/70/L.22, on oceans and the law of the sea, and A/70/L.19, on sustainable fisheries, and for their conduct of the discussions with seriousness and transparency and in a constructive spirit that reflected the diversity of all the States participating in them.

Colombia is one of five countries with the highest levels of marine biodiversity in the world. Thanks to its bio-geographic status, with coasts on both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, it has the privilege of possessing an enormous variety of naturally occurring marine and

coastal ecosystems, whose health depends not only on coherent and responsible national management but also on that of other countries abutting those oceans. As a highly diverse country whose territory links two oceans, Colombia is committed to conserving, protecting and sustainably developing the oceans by implementing policies, plans and programmes that emphasize the issue's importance, nationally and globally. In that regard, we have been an active participant in discussions of the important processes related to these matters that have been developed within the framework of the United Nations and that have been expanded, in particular since the adoption, during this session, of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1).

For all those reasons, Colombia acknowledges the valuable contribution that the draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea represents in indicating the progress being made in that area. However, the draft resolution is based on the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, to which Colombia is not party. That is why, as we have stated repeatedly, the Republic of Colombia would like to point out that the draft resolution and our participation in its adoption should not be seen or interpreted as implying our acceptance of the provisions of that international instrument.

The constructive spirit guiding our country regarding the oceans and the law of the sea is founded on the firm conviction that all nations have a commitment to them, based on the fact that it is on them that a sustainable future for the world largely depends. Colombia is ready to cooperate with other nations in working to tackle the challenges of protecting the health of our oceans. We have established a new institutional framework for coastal and marine issues and a new and comprehensive vision whereby the sea, the coasts and their resources become key elements in our new efforts to help build, at the global level, not only a sustainable nation but also sustainable seas, by fulfilling the international commitments we have undertaken on the environment.

Mr. Madimi (India): At the outset, I would like to thank Ambassador Eden Charles of Trinidad and Tobago, the coordinator of draft resolution A/70/L.22. Today I will speak on sub-item (a) of agenda item 79, on oceans and the law of the sea, a subject of importance and interest to the whole international community.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), together with its related Agreements, represents a major achievement in the codification and progressive development of international law. It enjoys broad acceptance, with 167 States currently parties to it. It provides a legal framework for the use of the oceans and seas and their resources by establishing a delicate balance between the need for economic and social development and the need to protect and preserve the marine environment and conserve and manage its resources.

The oceans cover almost three quarters of the Earth. As States look to ocean resources as a means of economic growth and social advancement, the development of ocean-based economies is attracting more attention. Over the past 20 years, the Convention has made a major contribution to promoting sustainable development of the oceans and seas and thereby to the economic and social advancement of all peoples of the world. That is reflected in “The future we want”, the outcome document of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (resolution 66/288), the Millennium Development Goals, adopted in 2000, and the outcome document of the Summit of 25 September in 2015, “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (resolution 70/1). Goal 14, which includes over 17 targets, recognizes the importance of and the critical role to be played by the oceans and seas in the achievement of the post-2015 development agenda.

We must, however, remember that achieving the full potential of oceans and seas depends on carrying out ocean-based activities in a sustainable manner, in accordance with internationally agreed principles, in particular the principles set out in the Convention. Our oceans face huge challenges, including the deterioration of the marine environment, biodiversity loss, climate change, illegal fishing practices and practices relating to the maritime safety and security, including acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea. We are glad to note that, due to the commendable work of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia, piracy has been brought under control through international cooperation and coordination.

We thank the Secretary-General for his reports contained in documents A/70/74 and A/70/74/Add.1, on issues concerning oceans and the law of the sea. We note that the reports describe the contribution of oceans to the environmental, social and economic dimensions

of sustainable development and the manner in which the Convention on the Law of the Sea addresses those three dimensions, along with opportunities for, and challenges to, their enhanced integration in relation to oceans. We welcome the report contained in document A/70/78, on the work of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea at its sixteenth meeting, during which deliberations focused on integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development, namely, the environmental, social and economic, as well as on opportunities for, and challenges to, enhancing the integration of those three dimensions.

Another area in which the international community is engaged relates to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. We welcome the General Assembly’s adoption, on 19 June, of resolution 69/292, which calls for the development of an international legally binding instrument under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction and the establishment of a preparatory committee to make substantive recommendations to the General Assembly on the elements of a draft text of an international legally binding instrument under the Convention. We also welcome the appointment of the Chair of that preparatory committee and look forward to participating in its meetings in the next two years.

The smooth functioning of the institutions established under the Convention, namely, the International Seabed Authority, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, hold the key to the proper implementation of the provisions of the Convention and to the achievement of the desired benefits from the uses of the seas. We therefore support all efforts towards ensuring their efficient and effective functioning and note with satisfaction the progress made by those institutions in their respective areas.

As a country with a vast coastline and numerous islands, India has a traditional and abiding interest in maritime and ocean affairs and, as a responsible partner of the international community, assures the Assembly of its full cooperation in efforts towards ensuring the proper management and sustainable use of the oceans and seas.

Ms. Tan (Singapore): For many years, my delegation has been a strong advocate of the oceans and seas and an active participant in the various discussions and negotiations that take place at the United Nations on matters relating to the oceans. We are a small island developing State with big dreams for the oceans. We are members of the Group of Friends of the Oceans and Seas and a member of the Council of the International Seabed Authority. We were also recently re-elected to the Council of the International Maritime Organization, of which we have been a member since 1993. We are firm believers in the critical role of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea as the constitution of the oceans and seas. We reiterate our call to all States to become party to the Convention.

In my statement today, I will focus on three aspects, namely, marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, the work of the International Seabed Authority, and forthcoming oceans events.

This year was a landmark year for United Nations deliberations on marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. On 19 June, the General Assembly adopted, without a vote, resolution 69/292, on the development of an international legally binding instrument under the Convention on the conservation and sustainable use of areas beyond national jurisdiction. Negotiations on the resolution were not straightforward. Nevertheless, an agreement was reached to establish a preparatory committee to make substantive recommendations to the Assembly on the elements of a draft text and for the preparatory committee to start its work in 2016.

The issues on the table for the preparatory committee to deliberate on are incredibly complex. The first preparatory committee session will be upon us in just over three months. My delegation looks forward to contributing constructively to the process. We may not have all the answers, but we need to be ready at least to ask the right questions. Throughout our work, we also need to fully appreciate the existing legal framework as provided by the Convention. We must respect the closely interrelated nature of the provisions of the Convention and the delicate balance of interests enshrined therein.

It bears repeating that the Convention is the overarching framework for governance of the world's oceans and seas. That is recognized in various General Assembly resolutions, in various outcome documents of our meetings at the United Nations, as well as in

the outcome documents of summits and conferences, including in relation to sustainable development. Occasionally, though uncommonly, we see references to the Convention as setting out "a" legal order for the seas and oceans. That happened most recently in paragraph 135 of the Secretary-General's report (A/70/74). The usage is unfortunate, particularly when elsewhere in the same paragraph the Convention is recognized as providing "the" basis for addressing the closely interrelated problems of ocean space as a whole. My delegation's starting point is, and has always been, the indisputable fact that the legal basis of, and legal regime for, the oceans and seas is contained in the Convention. The need for the the appreciation of that fact cannot be overstated, particularly as we embark on the next phase of discussions on the development of an international legally binding instrument under the Convention.

Furthermore, my delegation wishes to proceed on the basis of consensus during all the deliberations on areas beyond national jurisdiction. We learned from the history of the negotiating process of the Convention that the consensual approach, as embodied in the gentleman's agreement, was integral to enabling the Convention to garner overwhelming support in the form of signatures of 117 States on the day the Convention opened for signature, on 10 December 1982. The consensus procedure has also been lauded for enabling the Convention to withstand the test of time. We would do well to heed that lesson from history.

With respect to the work of the Authority, Singapore reiterates its support for the Authority's efforts to prepare draft regulations for exploitation as well as on a payment mechanism. We welcome the deliberations at the twenty-first session of the Authority over the regulatory framework for the exploitation of polymetallic nodules. We were happy to have been able to contribute to the discussions.

We were also pleased to have been associated with the efforts to promote a broader appreciation of the work of the International Seabed Authority. In particular, earlier this year, the National University of Singapore's Centre for International Law collaborated with the Authority to organize a workshop on mineral exploitation in the Area. The workshop was successfully held in Singapore in June.

Singapore firmly believes that it is important to have in place a regulatory framework that is consistent

with international law, including the Convention. It is also critical that the framework ensure that the exploitation of resources in the Area is conducted in not only a commercially feasible manner, but also an environmentally sustainable one. As an expression of this firm belief, earlier this year, Singapore enacted our deep seabed mining act and established a licensing regime to ensure that Singapore companies undertake exploration and exploitation activities in a responsible manner. We look forward to the Authority's continued work on the regulatory framework on exploitation, in consultation with the relevant stakeholders. We recognize that the development of the regulatory framework will most likely be an iterative process. We call for the redoubling of our efforts, even while bearing in mind the resources available to the Authority.

My delegation was encouraged by the improved attendance at the twenty-first session of the International Seabed Authority in July. However, attendance at the twenty-first session still fell short of a quorum. My delegation looks forward to greater participation at next year's session of the Authority, particularly considering the important work that will be undertaken then.

In addition to the commencement of the work of the preparatory committee for the development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction in 2016, and the twenty-second session of the Authority, next year promises to be exciting one for a number of reasons. I would like to highlight one of them.

The year 2016 marks the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) and the establishment of its Information Sharing Centre (ISC) in Singapore. ReCAAP is the first regional Government-to-Government agreement to promote and enhance cooperation against piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia. To date, 20 States from across Asia, the Americas, Europe and Oceania have become contracting parties to ReCAAP. Since its inception, the ReCAAP ISC has established itself as a key centre for information-sharing in the fight against piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia.

The international shipping community has benefited from the timely and analytical reports of the

ReCAAP ISC, while cooperation among Governments in the areas of information exchange, cooperative arrangements and capacity-building has been enhanced through the ReCAAP framework. Singapore continues to take a serious view on piracy and armed robbery against ships. We are therefore pleased that the ReCAAP ISC has developed over the past nine years into an important mechanism that enables littoral and user States to keep shipping in Asia safe and secure.

In addition, with the General Assembly's recent adoption of the resolution on the United Nations conference to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, which Singapore sponsored, we look forward to the convening of the high-level conference in Fiji in June 2017. Indeed, the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) marked the beginning of a process. The effective implementation of sustainable Development Goal 14, which aims to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, will take political will.

My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his comprehensive reports on this agenda item (A/70/74 and A/70/74/Add.1). We thank Ambassador Eden Charles of Trinidad and Tobago for his work in coordinating the informal consultations on the omnibus draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea (A/70/L.22). We also thank Ms. Alice Revell of New Zealand for her stewardship of the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries (A/70/L.19) in her final year as coordinator this year, and over the years. Additionally, we commend the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for its sterling work and indispensable assistance to Member States.

Ms. Jonsdottir (Iceland): Iceland attaches great importance to the draft resolutions under discussion today. For an island State such as Iceland, which is heavily dependent on the sustainable use of living marine resources, maintaining healthy oceans and marine ecosystems is a constant priority.

In order to accommodate different views on the variety of issues covered in these draft resolutions, firm coordination is needed. Iceland would wholeheartedly like to thank Ambassador Eden Charles of Trinidad and Tobago, coordinator of the draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea (A/70/L.22), and Ms. Alice Revell of New Zealand, coordinator of the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries (A/70/L.19),

for their able stewardship and excellent coordination. We wish Ms. Revell all the best in her new position and thank her for her years of dedicated work as coordinator. Furthermore, Iceland would like to thank the Secretariat, including the able staff of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, for their good work and assistance provided to Member States.

Iceland would like to stress the importance of reaching consensus among Member States in negotiations in this important field of work and achieving a balance in the outcome of negotiated texts. An example from the last two rounds of negotiations on the draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea, regarding an article on human-related threats to marine life, shows how even a wide gap between national positions can be bridged with excellent, neutral facilitation, a thorough search for common ground and solution-oriented cooperation of the parties concerned.

Ocean affairs are of growing importance for the international community as a whole. That is reflected in the conventional ocean affairs forums here at the United Nations, where 2016 will be an exceptionally busy year, with a review of the 1995 Fish Stocks Agreement and a review of actions taken by States and regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements regarding bottom fishing. Furthermore, Sustainable Development Goal 14 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) highlights the importance of conservation and the sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources. Iceland recently co-sponsored the initiative of Fiji and Sweden to hold a conference to support the implementation of that goal. Iceland also welcomes an increased focus on ocean affairs in relation to climate change, including at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in Paris, where a special Oceans Day was held last Friday, 4 December. Iceland would also like to recall and welcome the commemoration, in March, of the twentieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement, to which 82 States are now parties.

The field of oceans and the law of the sea is constantly developing. A notable step in that regard is the decision set forth in resolution 69/292 on the development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond

national jurisdiction. Iceland would like to congratulate Ambassador Eden Charles on his appointment as Chair of the preparatory committee for that process. We have full confidence that his able chairmanship will guide Member States in the challenging two-year preparatory process that lies ahead. During that time, the preparatory committee will be faced with the task of making substantive recommendations to the General Assembly on the elements of a draft text of an international legally binding instrument under the Convention.

The scope of the subject matter is broad, and as yet not fully delimited. In that regard, Iceland would like to point out that the process should not reopen issues that are already subject to a sufficient international legal regime; nor should it undermine existing relevant legal instruments and frameworks and relevant global, regional and sectoral bodies. High seas fisheries, which are subject to the legal regime of the Law of the Sea Convention, are a good example in that regard. That regime was complemented by the 1995 United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement, which provides the legal framework for the work of regional fisheries management organizations and for high seas fisheries. The scope of a new legally binding instrument under the Convention should accordingly not include fisheries.

As stated at the outset, oceans and the law of the sea are matters of growing importance in various forums. A growing number of requests for outputs and servicing of meetings has unavoidably entailed an additional workload for the Secretariat, in particular for the Division of Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea. We commend the good work of the Division's able staff, but underline our view that sufficient funding for the Division is imperative. Iceland therefore welcomes the request to the Secretary-General in the draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea to make budget proposals for strengthening the Division's capacity to carry out its functions.

Similarly, the working conditions of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf have been a matter of concern. Although the Commission has already issued 22 recommendations, it has a large number of submissions to consider and continues to have a significant workload. Given the important work of the Commission and its current challenging working conditions, Iceland is pleased to note the request in the draft resolution on the oceans and the law of the sea for immediate improvements. Iceland also welcomes

the interim measures set out in the same resolution regarding medical coverage for the members of the Commission and calls for a permanent solution to that matter.

This year, as always, Iceland was a dedicated participant in the negotiations on the draft resolutions on sustainable fisheries and on oceans and the law of the sea, and is pleased to be a sponsor of both draft resolutions.

Mr. Simonoff (United States of America): The United States is pleased to co-sponsor the draft resolutions (A/70/L.19 and A/70/L.22) on oceans and law of the sea and on sustainable fisheries. This debate provides an opportunity for the global community to further commit to the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean and its resources, as reflected in both Sustainable Development Goal 14 of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) and in the completion of the first-ever world ocean assessment, which represents a historic first step towards setting up a regular process to review the environmental, economic and social aspects of the world's oceans and seas and to ensure science-based decision-making.

As many of members know, Secretary of State John Kerry is a passionate advocate for the ocean. His hosting of the first "Our Ocean" conference in Washington, D.C., in 2014 drew global attention to the urgent need to promote the health of the oceans and to address key ocean issues, including sustainable fisheries, marine pollution and ocean acidification. This year we are extremely grateful for the leadership of President Bachelet and Foreign Minister Muñoz of Chile in hosting the second highly successful Our Ocean conference in October, where we saw Governments, non-governmental organizations, academia, charitable institutions and industry announce over 80 new initiatives on marine conservation, valued at more than \$2.1 billion, as well as new commitments on the protection of more than 1.9 million square kilometers of the ocean. The Our Ocean conferences are proving to be important catalysts for significant international action to protect the oceans and their resources. We look forward to the next conference in the fall of 2016, in the United States, and to the 2017 conference, to be hosted by the European Union.

Building on the momentum of the Our Ocean conferences, we were pleased to work with our colleagues this year to advance a number of critical

issues in the oceans draft resolution, notably, marine debris, especially plastics. Plastic waste pollutes every part of our ocean. It is killing marine life such as fish, sea birds and turtles. It is damaging our coral reefs, degrading the ocean's resilience and harming human health. The good news is that this is a solvable problem. We have the technology and the resources to improve waste collection, transportation, storage and treatment to keep plastic and other waste out of the ocean.

Over the longer term, we need to encourage innovation in redesigning products and packaging to use less plastic and to reuse plastics rather than discard them. We look forward to fruitful exchanges on marine debris, plastics and micro-plastics in the 2016 Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and Law of the Sea and hope that all participants will use that meeting to make real progress on stopping the flow of plastic waste into the ocean. Similarly, we are pleased that this year's draft resolution on sustainable fisheries has strengthened the call to ensure sustainable fisheries and to articulate the responsibilities of Member States, both individually and collectively. Member States recognize the need for science-based fisheries management tools and strong compliance measures that underpin international fisheries cooperation, concerted action to ensure the safety of fisheries observers who provide data that is critical to effective fisheries management, and continuing attention to the shared responsibility to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems.

The year 2016 will be an important year for sustainable fisheries issues, with another review of deep-seas fisheries scheduled, as well as plans for the resumption of the review conference of the parties to the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement. This year's sustainable fisheries draft resolution also includes important commitments to combat, illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing, including a call for further ratifications to bring into force the Agreement on Port States Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing. We are heartened by the continued progress in that regard, and we are pleased that the United States will very soon become party to that very important Agreement. We hope that the Agreement will have enough parties to enter into force in 2016.

The United States would like to thank Director Gabriele Goettsche-Wanli and the staff of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for their expertise and support on both draft resolutions. We

would like also to thank Ambassador Eden Charles of Trinidad and Tobago for his coordination of the oceans draft resolution, and Ms. Alice Revell of New Zealand for her coordination of the fisheries draft resolution. Both again did an outstanding job. We would particularly like to highlight our gratitude for the years of excellent leadership and very hard work by Ms. Revell as she departs from her position as coordinator, and to congratulate Andreas Kravik of Norway on his selection as the next coordinator for the sustainable fisheries draft resolution. Finally, I would like to express our appreciation for delegations' hard work and cooperation in crafting both draft resolutions. It is our hope that the spirit of cooperation will characterize our efforts to address the numerous and complex issues that lie ahead in the new year.

Mr. Nonomura (Japan): Let me join other representatives in thanking all Member States, the coordinators of the draft resolutions (A/70/L.19 and A/70/L.22) and the Secretariat for their hard work.

The sea is the very foundation, the international commons, of the entire international community, and promoting the rule of law at sea is vitally important. As Japan's Prime Minister Abe has said, we greatly value three principles of the rule of law at sea. The first is that States should make and clarify claims on the basis of international law; the second is that they should not use force or coercion in trying to advance claims; and the third is that they should try to settle disputes by peaceful means.

This year, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea issued one advisory opinion and two provisional measures. The arbitral tribunals rendered an award on jurisdiction and admissibility for the arbitration between the Philippines and the People's Republic of China, as well as one on merits for the *Arctic Sunrise* arbitration. As the leading contributor to the Tribunal's budget, Japan will continue to support it as much as possible. We hope these judicial bodies will continue to accumulate records in order to further strengthen the rule of law at sea.

Japan also greatly appreciates the role of the International Seabed Authority in establishing maritime legal order, and will continue to support its activities as much as it can in terms of both human and financial resources. When conducting exploitation, it is important to ensure an approach that achieves a good balance between exploitation and environmental protection. We

intend to continue engaging constructively in adopting a rational exploitation code that strikes a good balance between exploitation and environment elements.

Japan attaches great importance to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf for its contributions to the rule of law at sea, and we would like to reiterate our appreciation for its efforts in recent years to expedite its consideration of the numerous submissions it receives by lengthening its sessions. We would like to continue to engage constructively in the discussion of the Commission members' conditions of service. This year, Japan has provided approximately \$60,000 to the trust fund for defraying the costs of participation in Commission meetings for its members from developing States. We firmly believe that contributions by State parties, including Japan, will help ensure that submissions are considered smoothly and expeditiously.

With regard to the suppression of piracy off the coast of Somalia, Japan is of the view that we should pursue a multi-layered approach that includes operations by naval vessels, assistance aimed at enhancing maritime law-enforcement capacity in Somalia and its neighbours and other medium-to-long-term measures for stability in Somalia. With that in mind, since 2009 Japan has deployed destroyers and patrol aircraft to the region without interruption, contributed to maritime law-enforcement capacity-building, including by paying \$4.6 million to the International Maritime Organization's Djibouti Code of Conduct Trust Fund and \$4.5 million to the Trust Fund to Support Initiatives of States Countering Piracy off the Coast of Somalia. This year Japan also donated two patrol vessels to the Djibouti coast guard.

With regard to the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia, which in 2016 will celebrate the tenth anniversary of its entry into force, Japan has been sending executive directors to its information-sharing and supporting centres, and has also been a major donor to capacity-building programmes. We will continue to play a leading role in efforts to counter piracy and armed robbery at sea in the region.

Ms. Yparraguirre (Philippines): The Philippines appreciates the commitment and dedication of Ambassador Eden Charles of Trinidad and Tobago and Ms. Alice Revell of New Zealand for again coordinating, respectively, our annual draft resolutions on oceans

and the law of the sea (A/70/L.22) and on sustainable fisheries (A/70/L.19).

Taken together, those twin draft resolutions probably treat the most comprehensive subject that the General Assembly considers every year. That is not surprising when we recall that water covers more than two thirds of our planet's surface, and that one half of that surface is high seas, beyond the jurisdiction of any State. That reality informs Goal 14 of our 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), which binds us to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for development.

The Philippines is pleased to be a sponsor of today's draft resolution on sustainable fisheries. It reaffirms the commitments we made at the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) to eliminating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, ending subsidies that contribute to such fishing and over-capacity, and enhancing efforts to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems from significant adverse impacts. The Philippines is committed to the conservation and optimum utilization of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks, both within and beyond its exclusive economic zone, and to managing those stocks based on a precautionary approach and the best available scientific information. Last year, the Philippines became the eighty-second State party to the 1995 Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. We look forward to participating in the resumed Review Conference on the Agreement in May next year.

Sustained global cooperation on ocean matters is paramount. The oceans, seas and coastal areas form an integrated and essential component of our planet's ecosystem, and are therefore critical to sustaining it. This year's draft resolution builds on those of previous years by articulating our deepening concern about the continuing threat that human activity poses to marine environments and biodiversity. It contributes to a rule-based international regime. It reaffirms our Rio+20 commitments to improving our understanding of the adverse impact of climate change on oceans and seas. Science has begun to give us proof of the linkage. Two years ago, Typhoon Haiyan provided my country with a painful and tragic reminder of that. Like many

others at this eleventh hour, we are hoping for a positive outcome from the Climate Change Conference in Paris.

We must now take action to address marine pollution, including marine debris, which compromises the health of the oceans and marine biodiversity. We must neutralize, if not reverse, the adverse economic, social and environmental effects of the physical alteration and destruction of marine habitats that can result from land-based and coastal development activities. In that regard, the Manila Declaration on Furthering the Implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, cited in paragraph 199 of today's draft resolution, is very instructive.

The Philippines is fully committed to maritime safety and security and to the fight against piracy. The 2010 Manila Amendments to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers are consistent with that commitment.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) stands the test of time. We reiterate the call on all States that have not yet done so to ratify UNCLOS, thereby contributing to its universality. On the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations this year, we reaffirm our commitment to, and advocacy of, the rule of law. International law is the great equalizer among States. It allows small countries to stand on an equal footing with more powerful States. That should be the case for the multilateral treaty process, especially with regard to UNCLOS, our constitution for the oceans and seas.

The Philippines is fulfilling its solemn duty to settle international disputes peacefully. As many of those gathered here well know, the arbitral tribunal constituted under UNCLOS annex VII, as requested by the Philippines, found in its 29 October award on jurisdiction and admissibility that the tribunal has jurisdiction to hear the Philippine case. Last 30 November, the tribunal concluded its hearings on the merits phase. We believe that clarifying maritime entitlements will ultimately benefit everyone. We initiated this arbitration process to clarify our rights within our exclusive economic zone, specifically our fishing rights, rights to resources and rights to enforce our laws within our exclusive economic zone. The clarification of maritime entitlements will also help to ensure peace, security, stability and freedom

of navigation and overflight in the South China Sea. This arbitration process will also be instructive for other States considering the option of using the dispute settlement mechanisms under UNCLOS for the peaceful resolution of disputes.

Unfortunately, the artificial island-building on previously uninhabited reefs in order to change the status quo in the South China Sea has raised alarm and drawn protests from concerned countries, including our neighbours in the region. Those illegal construction activities not only undermine regional stability and the rule of law, they have also inflicted massive and disastrous environmental damage on one of the most diverse marine environments in the world. The tribunal has now entered into deliberations. It is not just the fate of the Philippines that now rests in their just and capable hands, but also of our region. We are confident that the tribunal will interpret and apply the law in a way that produces a truly just solution, a solution that will genuinely promote peace, security and good-neighbourliness in our region.

Mr. Fernandez Valoni (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, allow me to thank the two coordinators, Ambassador Eden Charles of Trinidad and Tobago and Ms. Alice Revell of New Zealand, for having conducted the negotiations on the draft resolutions (A/70/L.19 and A/70/L.22) before the General Assembly today. I would also like to acknowledge the presence in the Hall, as is the case every year, of the representatives of the International Seabed Authority and of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

As is the case every year before the Assembly, my delegation would like to reiterate that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea is one of the major contributions to the strengthening of peace, security, cooperation and friendly relations among all nations. The Convention is one of the international instruments with major economic, strategic and political implications. The goal of the negotiators of the Convention was to resolve all matters relating to the law of the sea in a single instrument. Its provisions therefore constitute a delicate balance of the rights and obligations of States, one that emerged after nine years of negotiations and that must be safeguarded by all States individually and as members of international organizations with competence in ocean affairs or other organizations.

That delicate balance should be preserved as well when addressing new challenges pertaining to the law of the sea and in processes established within the framework of the General Assembly, including the process pertaining to marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction and the implementation and follow up of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1). With regard to the latter, during the process that began at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, delegations came to the understanding that follow-up on the implementation of the 16 Goals would take place on the basis of existing structures, thereby avoiding duplication and the creation of new structures. That is why Argentina does not agree with the idea of holding a high-level conference of the United Nations, as provided for in draft resolution A/C.2/70/L.3 Rev.1, recently considered by the Second Committee. My country will actively participate in the negotiation of the modalities of such a conference in order to ensure that there is no overlap with competent forums on issues pertaining to oceans and the law of the sea, in particular the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, established by the General Assembly.

Argentina agreed to that conference with the understanding that its sole purpose is to provide political momentum, not to negotiate outcomes or recommendations. Argentina also agreed to hold the conference with the understanding that no further conferences of the kind would stem from it, as that would only create a structure parallel to and overlapping with existing forums. Argentina believes that there is a natural forum for the follow-up on Goal 14. That forum was created after the Johannesburg Summit precisely to discuss issues pertaining to the oceans from a sustainable development perspective, which falls under the purview of the General Assembly by way of the Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea. The Informal Consultative Process will undertake its review at its next session, in 2016, during which it may make recommendations to the High-Level Political Forum, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly on the modalities for such follow-up.

In due time, the Argentine delegation will speak in explanation of position with regard to the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries. Allow me to turn now to some of the issues addressed in that draft

resolution as well as in the draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea.

The issue of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction is one of the new emerging issues with regard to the law of the sea. The General Assembly decided to initiate a process to establish the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction that contemplates the possibility of formulating a multilateral agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, that is, an agreement to implement the relevant principles of the Convention.

The Preparatory Committee convened under resolution 69/292 should address in particular the conservation and sustainable use of the marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, along with marine genetic resources, including benefit-sharing, conservation measures, capacity-building and technology transfer, with a view to making recommendations to the General Assembly. Argentina believes that it is necessary to agree by consensus on the scope and parameters of a possible future agreement as an essential step before initiating a negotiation process.

With regard to the substance of the matter, my delegation would like to reiterate that due consideration must be given to what is at stake, namely, the conservation and sustainable use of biological resources of areas beyond national jurisdiction. Due consideration must also be given to the fact that one of the objectives of the Convention was to develop the principles embodied in resolution 2749 (XXV), of 17 December 1970, in which the General Assembly solemnly declared, *inter alia*, that the area of the seabed and ocean floor and the subsoil thereof beyond the limits of national jurisdiction, as well as their resources, were the common heritage of humankind, the exploration and exploitation of which should be carried out for the benefit of mankind as a whole. In line with the ministerial declarations of the Group of 77 and China, for Argentina, that principle is the basis for considering the issue and must be included in any future agreement.

My delegation wishes to express its concern about certain proposals made in the context of draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea that refer to trafficking in wildlife in the context of transnational organized crime. In that regard, consistent with the explanation

of vote made by my delegation in connection with resolution 69/314, I wish to stress that Argentina is convinced that the illicit trade in endangered species of wild flora and fauna, including by sea, requires compliance with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) as well as the cooperation of States to suppress such illicit trade. At the same time, it must also be consistent with the language of CITES so as to avoid confusion among legal institutions and the existing remedies under applicable international law.

Argentina would like to thank the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf for its efforts and its ongoing work. In line with decision SPLOS/229 of the Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Commission has extended the duration of its sessions and those of its subcommissions. With more extended sessions, some challenges have arisen. One of them is the crucial need to ensure that Commission members are provided with health coverage as they perform their duties. The draft resolution we will adopt provides for some measures, but they are far from ensuring a permanent solution to the issues raised, particularly with regard to the Commission members' workspace and medical coverage. The functions of the Commission are very important for Member States. We must ensure that it is provided the adequate resources and conditions of service commensurate with the importance of its work. We commend the coordinators from New Zealand and Kenya for their dedicated work in leading the open-ended working group on the conditions of service of the Commission. We hope that, in that framework, we the Member States will continue to make efforts so that emerging challenges are addressed effectively and expeditiously. We request the Secretary-General's assistance in that regard.

In addition, I would again like to recall that the Commission's work pertains to demarcating the limit already established in article 76, and not to the rights of coastal States. I also recall that paragraph 3, article 77, part VI, of the Convention provides that

“The rights of the coastal State over the continental shelf do not depend on occupation, effective or notional, or on any express proclamation.”

That reminder is reflected in paragraph 62 of the draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea.

The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea is the independent international institution created by the Convention. Since its inception, the Tribunal has been seized of 24 cases, all of them referring to different aspects of the law of the sea. Argentina has supported the work of the Tribunal since its establishment. It is one of the 34 States parties that have accepted the Tribunal's jurisdiction. Today, Argentina welcomes the fact that the Tribunal's jurisprudence has been strengthened, and we also welcome that it is now a specialized Tribunal conceived at the time of the negotiation on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. We welcome its contribution to preserving the integrity of international law.

Turning to the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries, my delegation must reiterate that we need to avoid diverging from the rule with regard to negotiations on the Convention calling for moving forward by consensus. At the sixty-fifth session, that rule was not followed with regard to one aspect of the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries, and my delegation had to make reference to it in our explanation of vote. We would like to recall that consensus is the only way to ensure broad acceptance of General Assembly resolutions and that the consensus principle must be respected on this matter when it comes to negotiating draft resolutions on the issue.

With regard to the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems, in particular paragraphs 83 to 87 of resolution 61/105 and paragraphs 113 to 117 and 119 to 127 of resolution 64/72 and the relevant paragraphs of subsequent resolutions, it must be recalled that, in accordance with article 77 of the Convention, the sedentary resources of the continental shelf are subject to the sovereignty rights of the coastal States in the full extent of that maritime area. Therefore, the conservation and management of such resources is under the exclusive powers of coastal States, which have the responsibility to adopt the necessary measures regarding such resources and their associated ecosystems, which could be affected by fishing practices that can have a destructive impact, including bottom fishing in the high seas. In that regard, I am pleased to recall that Argentina has adopted measures for the conservation of the sedentary resources and vulnerable marine ecosystems along the full extent of its continental shelf. Paragraph 156 of the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries recalls, as it does every year, the exclusivity of the rights of the coastal State to areas of its continental

shelf beyond 200 nautical miles. In addition, in line with that, paragraph 157 notes both the conservation measures adopted and the efforts made by coastal States to ensure compliance with those measures along the full extent of their continental shelf.

My country wishes to reiterate its concern at an increasing trend towards attempts to legitimize through General Assembly resolutions attempts by regional fisheries management organizations to adopt measures beyond their spatial, material and personal scope of application. Argentina objects to such interpretations of General Assembly resolutions, particularly when it comes to measures through which some organizations could claim some kind of authority over vessels flying the flag of countries that are neither members of such organizations nor have consented to measures of such a nature. That would contradict one of the basic norms of the law of treaties. Argentina also expresses its concern about the attempts to legitimize, through pronouncements of the Assembly, the attempts to legitimate actions of groups of States — some of them with an attempt to regulate regional or other types — that pertain to the marine biological diversity of zones beyond national jurisdiction, when there is no universally agreed legal framework allowing for such actions.

Finally, as is the case every year when we consider the Secretary-General's report on oceans and the law of the sea and the relevant draft resolutions, Argentina expresses its thanks to all the staff of the Division of Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for their professionalism, seriousness and dedicated work and the assistance that it willingly provides to Member States. We express our commitment, which we hope is shared by all Member States, to ensure that the measures to strengthen the resources to the Division provided for in the draft resolution on oceans and law of the sea will be approved within the framework of the Fifth Committee.

Ms. Liusa (Maldives): As a low-lying series of atolls, both reliant on the ocean and directly threatened by changes to the marine environment, the Maldives deems matters relating to the oceans and seas of critical importance. As such, we greatly appreciate the attention and the time being paid to the significant challenges faced by the world's oceans and seas. We welcome the upcoming adoption of the annual draft resolutions (A/70/L.19 and A/70/L.22) under this agenda item, which will further strengthen our moral and political voice on such matters. My delegation welcomes the

Secretary-General's 2015 reports (A/70/74 and A/70/74/Add.1) related to the law of the sea, ocean affairs and sustainable fisheries, which serve as an important point of reference on the debate and negotiations on this topic. We also recognize and thank the coordinators of the draft resolutions for their commitment in leading the informal meetings.

In September, the General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), in which Goal 14 sets out the necessary objective to conserve and sustainably use oceans, seas and marine resources, with specific targets to be achieved by 2030. The Maldives appreciates the efforts made to align the intent and design of Sustainable Development Goal 14 with the oceans omnibus and sustainable fisheries draft resolutions, as it is important that all stakeholders involved in oceans and oceans-related affairs embrace the Goal and contribute to its success.

The Maldives was a staunch supporter of the Goal related to oceans and seas. While having a goal and related targets to ensure the sustainable use and management of our oceans and seas is a big step in the right direction, we now have to ensure that the targets are implemented and that progress is reviewed and subject to follow-up. Numerous processes undertaken in various venues must all contribute towards the achievement of the Goal. And it is the need for targeted follow-up and review that led us to put our weight behind the initiative to have a United Nations conference to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14. We hope that the conference will enable us to gather together all the various stakeholders and work towards clearer, more ambitious implementation of the Goal on oceans and seas.

In addition to the importance of coordinating oceans initiatives with the 2030 Agenda, there needs to also be acknowledgement of and engagement with the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, the programme of action for the small island developing States (SIDS). Oceans and seas are a focal area of the Samoa Pathway, in which the intrinsic link between sustainable development and the protection of maritime ecosystems for small island developing States such as the Maldives is spelled out. Necessary linkages must be established in that regard to ensure that efforts are coherent and coordinated and that they contribute towards the achievement of Goal 14.

In order to achieve implementation, the Maldives continues to call for capacity-building in multiple areas, including technical undertakings and data collection and analysis. The need to provide baseline data to contribute to the understanding of, and response to, the many challenges facing oceans and seas is outlined in the 2030 Agenda and in the Secretary-General's report, whose final paragraph affirms the importance of capacity-building for

“achieving sustainable development and for enabling developing countries to realize benefits from the oceans and their resources [...] in a sustainable manner” (A/70/74/Add.1, para. 149).

Sustaining the wealth of oceans and seas is vital for the Maldives, as our citizens rely on the ocean for sustenance. Traditional cultural practices and livelihoods are intimately linked with the oceans. The two central economic industries in the Maldives are tourism and fisheries, both dependent on access to, and the sustainable management of, oceans. The Maldivian tourism brand relies on pristine ocean ecosystems, yet the Maldives is threatened by mounting marine degradation, including ocean acidification, which damages coral reefs.

On the national level, in tandem with maritime regions, we are undertaking many initiatives to preserve our highly successful sustainable tourism industry. Domestic policy requires strict environmental assessments before any construction, encourages the use of renewable energy and environmentally friendly materials and includes improving the sustainable management of waste, such as waste-to-energy sites to provide electricity directly from heat, reducing reliance on petroleum-fuel imports and greenhouse-gas emissions. However, we cannot tackle this issue alone. It is the responsibility of all States to address environmental management and combat climate change. We hope that the lofty commitments made can be met with real action.

Our fishing industry cannot cope with the world's illegal fishing and overfishing practices. Despite setbacks, the Maldives is hard at work domestically to achieve ecologically sustainable economic growth. From time immemorial, the fishing industry has used the pole-and-line technique, empowering local fishermen to capture only sustainable amounts while preserving the marine ecosystem, although the lack of processing and manufacturing capacity in the Maldives

means that we have been unable to retain much of the income associated with fisheries.

We continue to be alarmed by the impact that climate change has on coral bleaching, ocean acidification and the vulnerability of ocean ecosystems. That is why the Maldives, together with other small island developing States, has been unrelenting in calling for a ceiling in temperature rise of 1.5°C. Climate change threatens our economies, our food security, our homes and our very lives. The Maldives and other small island developing States therefore eagerly await the adoption by the end of this week of a legally binding climate agreement with ambitious targets that will aim to reverse the rising rate of emissions and stop the warming of the planet.

For those of us who live by the ocean and are sustained by its wealth, maintaining the health of the

oceans and seas of the world is vital. But as lifelines of the world, oceans are the regulators of the global climate and the source of food. Its treasures are indeed numerous. Oceans are not only an issue for islands or for coastal countries; they impact every nation and every single economy.

For too long, efforts to improve marine resilience have floundered, resulting in the dire situation facing our oceans and seas today. Let us embrace the energy displayed in this Hall today to mobilize international political will, fulfil our written commitments and measurably conserve and sustainably use our invaluable oceans and seas.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.