



# General Assembly

Sixty-eighth session

**62<sup>nd</sup>** plenary meeting

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New York

Official Records

*President:* Mr. Ashe ..... (Antigua and Barbuda)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Sinhaseni (Thailand), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

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

## Agenda item 7 (continued)

### Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

**The Acting President:** Before proceeding further, I should like to consult members regarding an extension of the work of the Second Committee. Members will recall that, at its 57th plenary meeting, on 25 November 2013, the General Assembly agreed to extend the work of the Second Committee until Friday 6 December 2013. However, I have been informed by the Chairman of the Second Committee that the Committee requests an additional extension of its work to Wednesday, 11 December 2013, in the expectation that such an extension would facilitate reaching consensus on the pending draft resolutions before the Committee.

May I therefore take it that the General Assembly agrees to extend the work of the Second Committee until Wednesday, 11 December 2013?

*It was so decided.*

**The Acting President:** I now draw the attention of the General Assembly to draft decision A/68/L.23, circulated under agenda item 69, entitled "Promotion and protection of human rights". Members will recall that at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 20 September 2013, the General Assembly decided to allocate agenda item

69 to the Third Committee. In order to enable the General Assembly to take action expeditiously on the document, may I take it that the Assembly wishes to consider agenda item 69 directly in the plenary meeting and proceed immediately to its consideration?

*It was so decided.*

## Agenda item 69

### Promotion and protection of human rights

#### Draft decision (A/68/L.23)

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now take action on draft decision A/68/L.23, entitled "Commemoration of the sixty-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights". May I take it that the General Assembly decides to adopt draft decision A/68/L.23?

*Draft decision A/68/L.23 was adopted (decision 68/522).*

**The Acting President:** May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 69?

*It was so decided.*

## Agenda item 76

### Oceans and the law of the sea

#### (a) Oceans and the law of the sea

#### Reports of the Secretary-General (A/68/71 and A/68/71/Add.1)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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**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/68/82)**

**Report on the work of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea at its fourteenth meeting (A/68/159)**

**Letter from the Co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group to the President of the General Assembly (A/68/399)**

**Draft resolution (A/68/L.18)**

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

**Draft resolution (A/68/L.19)**

**The Acting President:** I call on the Permanent Representative of New Zealand to introduce draft resolution A/68/L.19.

**Mr. McLay** (New Zealand): New Zealand aligns itself with the statement to be delivered shortly on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum by the representative of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

My delegation is pleased to join many others in sponsoring draft resolution A/68/L.18, entitled "Oceans and the law of the sea", which will be introduced by the representative of Trinidad and Tobago. We particularly compliment Ambassador Eden Charles on his careful stewardship of that draft.

New Zealand had the honour of coordinating the informal consultations on draft resolution A/68/L.19, on sustainable fisheries, and is pleased now to introduce that text on behalf of all of its sponsors. The draft resolution once again addresses important issues, such as the conservation and management of sharks, including the need to implement science-based management measures, and the global ban on large-scale pelagic drift-net fishing and its implementation through collaborative fisheries enforcement activities and efforts to assess and mitigate the by-catch of non-target

species, particularly through standardized reporting of the relevant data.

For the first time, this year's draft resolution also recognizes the need to tackle the causes of ocean acidification and to implement strategies to minimize its impacts on marine ecosystems. Particular focus is being given to the impact of acidification on the ability of certain organisms to build shells and skeletal structures and the threats that that problem could pose to food security.

A number of key outcomes from other forums, both regional and global, were considered in the draft resolution; for instance, the recent listing of five shark species and two species of manta ray in appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. The draft resolution encourages States, where appropriate, to cooperate in establishing non-detriment findings for shared stocks listed in the Convention's appendices.

The draft resolution also touches on a number of issues relating to illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. That reflects the international community's ongoing concern with IUU fishing and its impact on our ability sustainably to manage fish stocks. Coastal States, flag States, port States and market States all have critical roles to play in the fight against IUU fishing.

In that regard, the draft resolution recognizes participative surveillance activities in West Africa and efforts to ensure greater transparency in reporting on the activities of charter vessels in regional fisheries management organizations. The draft resolution also calls upon States to initiate work within the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations aimed at elaborating guidelines and relevant criteria relating to catch documentation schemes, including possible formats.

The draft resolution continues to recognize the central role of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the 1995 Fish Stocks Agreement in the regulation of international fisheries.

The tenth round of informal consultations of States parties to the Fish Stocks Agreement will be held in April 2014. The draft resolution notes that that meeting will, among other matters, consider the regional, subregional and global implementation of that Agreement and the initial preparatory work for the resumption of the

Review Conference on the Fish Stocks Agreement. That consultation will be an important step in ensuring that all the foundations are in place for a successful Review Conference.

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 in respect of both draft resolutions.

Again, we thank Ambassador Eden Charles of Trinidad and Tobago for his expert coordination of the draft resolution on "Oceans and the law of the sea". I also would like to express my appreciation for the hard work and cooperation of delegations in crafting both draft resolutions. It is our hope that such constructive and collaborative engagement will be maintained as we continue to address the numerous and complex issues that face our oceans and our fisheries.

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Trinidad and Tobago to introduce draft resolution A/68/L.18.

**Mr. Charles** (Trinidad and Tobago): Trinidad and Tobago is honoured once again to have coordinated informal consultations on draft resolution A/68/L.18, entitled "Oceans and the law of the sea". That important exercise to deal with a significant item on the agenda of the General Assembly would not have been successful without the support of all delegations, which demonstrated a tremendous degree of cooperation and flexibility as they pursued and defended their national interests during two rounds of intensive negotiations.

Let me also pay tribute to the Director and staff of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for their excellent stewardship and advice throughout the process. I also wish to commend my colleague, Ms. Alice Revell of New Zealand, who coordinated the negotiations on the other draft resolution on oceans and law of the sea, which relates to sustainable fisheries and is contained in document A/68/L.19.

The draft resolution before us contains elements necessary in the view of the negotiating delegations for the management, preservation and sustainable use of the resources of our oceans and seas, as well as guidelines for the conduct of States in discharging the obligations flowing from the international law of the sea, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

During the negotiations, delegations recognized that oceans, seas and coastal areas form an integrated and essential component of the Earth's ecosystem, which must be recognized in order to ensure the success of efforts to sustain those resources under international law, as reflected in the Convention, which provides a legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and seas and of their resources for sustainable development.

As was the case during the 2012 negotiations, delegations were in agreement that elements of the Outcome Document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want" (resolution 66/288, annex), should be reflected in the text of the draft. Consequently, draft resolution A/68/L.18 contains language dealing with several aspects of that outcome document, including matters relating to the health of our oceans and marine biodiversity, which are negatively affected by marine pollution and debris.

Draft resolution A/68/L.18, which is 48 pages in length, is comprehensive in character and scope, and takes the obligations of States into consideration. Those obligations arise from the Convention and other global agreements and regional undertakings. They include, but are not limited to, the peaceful settlement of disputes; the work of 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; and matters concerning the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction, to name a few.

Each paragraph of the draft resolution was adopted by consensus, as delegations ensured that the text contained language that represented no less than their minimum negotiation positions after discussions by the whole group, as well as matters that were subject to more intimate examination by smaller groups appointed by the coordinator.

At the same time, delegations agreed that, where past practice had to be dispensed with in order to accommodate a particular development, they were prepared to do so, but based on a specific understanding. That relates, for instance, to paragraph 40 on the number of days for the convening of the Meeting of States Parties

to the Convention on the Law of the Sea in 2014. The paragraph was agreed to on the understanding that five days would be allocated to the Meeting of States Parties in 2014, instead of the practice of allocating more than five days in election years. It was further agreed that that provision would be adopted on an exceptional basis and was based on a number of factors. First, no floating seat would be the object of the elections next year, and secondly, all of the meetings on oceans and the law of the sea to be held in 2014 would have to be financed within existing resources.

Each paragraph of the document is important to the object and purpose of the draft resolution. As coordinator, however, I was very pleased by delegations' efforts to agree on language for improving the conditions of service of members of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. That followed the establishment of a working group on that subject at the twenty-third Meeting of States Parties, co-chaired by Mr. Tomas Heidar of Iceland.

I was particularly pleased too with an agreement on the role of seafood in global food security as the discussion theme for the 2014 Meeting of the Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea. I also commend the landmark agreement, in my estimation, on the terms of reference for UN-Oceans, an inter-agency mechanism that seeks to enhance coordination, coherence and effectiveness of the competent United Nations system of organizations and the International Seabed Authority. Delegations must also be commended for agreeing to dates for the meetings of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group to study issues relating to the use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction.

After 10 days of intensive negotiations of the whole, which also included a series of small groups and bilateral meetings, delegations were able to agree on a draft resolution that seeks to aid Member States, as well as other entities, in implementing their obligations in terms of ensuring, among other things, the sustainable use of our oceans and seas. It is my expectation today that the same spirit of cooperation and understanding as characterised the negotiations will be demonstrated by the delegations present, and that the draft under consideration, which is by no means a perfect document, will be adopted by consensus.

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

Community (CARICOM): Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and my own country, Jamaica.

CARICOM continues to attach high importance to our participation in the annual debates in the plenary of the General Assembly on the items related to oceans and the law of the sea and sustainable fisheries. In that connection, we greatly appreciate and wish to thank the Secretary-General for his reports, which provide comprehensive overviews of recent and ongoing developments relating to ocean affairs, the law of the sea and sustainable fisheries. The reports rightly highlight the ongoing need to address all oceans issues as a whole, through an integrated, interdisciplinary and intersectoral approach. In that regard, we particularly welcome the Secretary-General's commitment to improving cooperation and coordination at all levels and to continuing to support Member States in their efforts to maintain healthy oceans for prosperity.

We also take this opportunity to thank the coordinators of the two draft resolutions, A/68/L.18 and A/68/L.19, Ambassador Eden Charles of Trinidad and Tobago and Ms. Alice Revell of New Zealand, for their able stewardship of the informal consultations. We also commend the Director and staff of the Division for Ocean Affairs and Law of the Sea for continuing to provide guidance and support to Member States in undertaking and implementing matters relating to oceans affairs, the law of the sea and sustainable fisheries.

CARICOM participates in this year's debate against the backdrop of growing concerns about the myriad threats being posed, largely owing to human activity, to the world's oceans and seas. The CARICOM States are particularly concerned about the damaging impact of climate change and ocean acidification caused by the spike in greenhouse-gas emissions into the atmosphere, which leads to coral bleaching, an increase in invasive species and other negative effects caused by anthropogenic activities. As the global temperatures rise and fish stocks dwindle, further threatening livelihoods and food security, it is clear that oceans are now more at risk than ever before.

It is for those reasons that CARICOM welcomes and continues to encourage increased activities at the national, regional and international levels to mitigate the impacts of climate change, with specific focus



on the unique and particular vulnerabilities of small island developing States (SIDS) in the management, conservation and sustainable development of oceans and seas.

CARICOM is therefore heartened by the outcome of last year's United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development — Rio+20 — where the international community demonstrated renewed political will to enable the sustainable use of the oceans and their resources for present and future generations. Looking beyond Rio+20 to the post-2015 development agenda, we must maintain the political momentum, and the sustainable use of our ocean and sea resources must be part of our discourse.

The Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, which will be held in Apia, in Samoa, provides a further opportunity for focusing the increased attention of the global community on the oceans and seas, particularly from the unique vantage point of SIDS. CARICOM places tremendous importance on the Third SIDS Conference. Indeed, on the road to Apia, our regional preparatory process, which culminated with the interregional meeting held in Barbados in August, has laid out our priority areas of focus and actions in addressing oceans and seas. They include the protection and preservation of marine biodiversity, management of coral reefs and associated ecosystems, and the strengthening of sustainable and responsible fisheries management mechanisms.

In order to achieve our objectives, we request the continued support of the international community for the work of the Caribbean Sea Commission in advancing the designation of the Caribbean Sea as a special area covering sustainable development. Consequently, we wish to express appreciation for the ongoing work of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and other bodies that have partnered with us over the past year. We particularly welcome the partnership of the UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme, the International Coral Reef Initiative and other Caribbean counterparts in developing a manual on the control and management of lionfish.

At the same time, we acknowledge our own regional conservation efforts, as demonstrated by the Summit of Caribbean Political and Business Leaders held in May 2013, where the second phase of the Caribbean Challenge Initiative was launched to accelerate marine conservation action in the Caribbean, including the protection of sharks and rays across the region.

CARICOM supports the ongoing work of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group to study issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. We believe that all States must support that initiative, which is seeking to develop a global legal regime to ensure that such resources are conserved, managed and exploited for all States, including small island developing States. In that regard, we welcome the decision in draft resolution A/68/L.18, which is expected to be adopted later today, to task the Working Group with making recommendations to the Assembly on the scope, parameters and feasibility of an international instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. CARICOM will be participating in the meetings of the Working Group in 2014, with a view to advancing the mandates of the Group.

As States parties to the Convention, we seek to uphold one of the cardinal obligations established in it, namely, the protection and preservation of the marine environment. We welcome reports that the first global integrated assessment of the state of the marine environment — the World Ocean Assessment — is on schedule to be completed by next year. CARICOM is pleased to have appointed experts to participate in that important process.

CARICOM participated in the fourteenth meeting of the Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, which discussed the impact of ocean acidification, an emerging issue of particular relevance to small island developing States. Those discussions provide a substantial basis for work to move ahead in that area. Next year's topic, the role of seafood in global food security, is particularly timely and relevant to CARICOM, given growing concerns over the future of the region's seafood reserves.

The question of sustainable fisheries resources continues to engage the CARICOM region. An example is the important work being carried out by the CARICOM Regional Fisheries Mechanism aimed at the sustainable development and management of the region's fisheries sector. The region is expected to enhance its contribution to the global management of fisheries resources by 2014, when CARICOM Heads of Government adopt the CARICOM Common Fisheries Policy.

Nevertheless, there are issues that continue to require the support of all States. In that regard, we must mention that there is still strong concern about

the persistence of illegal and unregulated fishing in Caribbean waters, which is threatening the economic and social viability of our fisheries and undermining the effectiveness of conservation management.

Over the past year, the three institutions created by the Convention continued to cover new ground in carrying out their mandates. CARICOM is extremely pleased with the efforts of the International Seabed Authority in discharging its obligations under Part XI of the Convention. CARICOM welcomes the successful outcome of the Authority's 19th Session, which culminated in the approval of two plans of work for exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts, the adoption of amendments to the Regulations on Prospecting and Exploration for Polymetallic Nodules in the Area, and the decision on a fixed overhead charge payable annually by contractors to cover the administration and supervision of contracts. The latter decision on cost recovery is timely, given the demand on the Authority to administer an increasing number of contracts, and it will contribute to the effective functioning of the Authority.

With the doubling of contracts for prospecting and exploration, we are witnessing an exciting phase of activity, and we commend the Authority for the steps being taken in the elaboration of an exploitation code. Consequently, we wish to emphasize the need for parties to the Convention to attend and participate in the meetings of the Authority to ensure the successful completion of its current and future work.

Article 82 of the Convention establishes a framework for the Authority to distribute to States parties the proceeds from those States parties that have received recommendations from the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf to extend their jurisdiction over the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles and that have exploited the resources of that maritime zone. We commend the Authority for its efforts in hosting workshops aimed at giving effect to Article 82 and wish to encourage all Member States to support that objective.

The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea must also be commended for its impressive work. We welcome its increasing activities, both in terms of caseload and the number of rulings. CARICOM is pleased that the Tribunal continues to play an active role in the capacity-building of developing countries through its series of workshops on the settlement of

disputes related to the law of the sea in different regions of the world. We benefited greatly from the workshop on "The role of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea in the settlement of disputes relating to the law of the sea in the Caribbean region", held in Mexico City on 5 and 6 June 2013, in collaboration with the Government of Mexico and the Association of Caribbean States.

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 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 article 76, paragraph 8, of the Convention. With regard to the increasing workload of the Commission, we welcome the strategies that have been adopted to address its considerable workload, including by increasing to 21 the number of weeks it is in session per year, as well by the establishment of two new subcommissions.

We also welcome the decision of the twenty-third Meeting of States Parties to establish an open-ended working group on the conditions of service of the Commission. An outcome of the Working Group's deliberation is for the Secretary-General to explore options for the provision of medical insurance for members of the Commission from developing countries, whose participation may be facilitated through the Voluntary Trust Fund. We look forward to receiving the Secretary-General's positive findings on the matter, which is critical to the effective participation of members from developing countries in the sessions of the Commission.

As committed State parties, CARICOM States are cognizant of the challenges to effective implementation of the Convention and deriving benefits from the overall legal framework governing all aspects of ocean space. We therefore share the observation in the report of the Secretary-General that

"[a]dequate capacity, be it human, technical or financial, is a fundamental building block for compliance with relevant instruments and to benefit from the oceans and their resources" (A/68/71/Add.1, para. 159).

In that regard, we express appreciation to the various partners that have contributed technical and financial assistance to CARICOM States over the years.

CARICOM is pleased that since the adoption and entry into force of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, 166 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. As we continue to promote the universal acceptance of that legal framework, which governs all aspects of ocean space, it is our view that 2014, which marks the twentieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention and establishment of the International Seabed Authority, provides another opportunity for us to continue the process of raising public sensitivity and awareness, particularly in the young, who are the future custodians of the common heritage of humankind.

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

**Ms. Cujo** (European Union): I speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. Ukraine aligns itself with this statement.

This year, once again, the EU demonstrated its commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and to the 1995 Fish Stocks Agreement by actively participating in discussions that led to drawing up the draft resolutions that have been introduced in the General Assembly today. It is important to highlight that next year will mark the twentieth anniversary of the entry into force of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which the EU firmly believes is a factor for stability, peace and progress, and that it holds special importance in a difficult international context. The EU would like to reiterate the importance it attaches to preserving the Convention's integrity and its pre-eminent role as the legal framework for all oceans issues and ocean-related activities.

The European Union welcomes the omnibus draft resolution (A/68/PV.18), which gives primary importance to the major challenges to the oceans, such as the declining quality of the marine environment and the continued loss of marine biodiversity. The EU has always supported the work of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group and welcomes the intersessional workshops held in May 2013, which provided valuable scientific and technical expert information.

We also wish to highlight the decision taken in line with the recommendation of the Working Group

to establish a preparatory process within the Group to address, on an urgent basis, building on the work of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group and, before the end of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly, the issue of the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdictions, including by taking a decision on the development of an international instrument under the Conventions. The EU would like to stress the benefit of the participation of civil society in the work of the Working Group and welcomes the fact that the role of civil society is endorsed in the omnibus draft resolution.

We welcome the fact that the omnibus draft resolution recognizes the scale of the challenge and the amount of continuous effort required to combat piracy and armed robbery. The EU remains committed to combating piracy and undertakes efforts in that regard, in particular in the framework of its Operation EU NAVFOR Atalanta. The EU notes with serious concern the increase in the number of attacks against ships in the Gulf of Guinea and supports the measures taken to address that issue.

Draft resolution A/68/L.18 addresses the concerns raised by the issue of climate change and its effects on the oceans, seas and natural resources. To respond to the debates in the international community, the draft resolution equally takes into account various issues relating to such phenomena as oceans eutrophication, acidification, fertilization, carbon dioxide discharge into the atmosphere and greenhouse-gas emissions. The European Union also notes with alarm the growing evidence of the harmful effects of marine litter, especially microplastics, on wildlife and habitats and on marine biodiversity and environments. Marine litter is a growing global environmental issue, as highlighted at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20. We strongly support the concerns of the General Assembly with regard to the increasing threat from marine litter to human health and safety, ecosystem services and sustainable livelihoods.

One of the gravest threats that our oceans are suffering from, and which is caused by anthropogenic emissions of carbon dioxide, is ocean acidification, which was tackled this year in the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (UNICPOLOS). The phenomenon is already having a negative effect on marine ecosystems, particularly on organisms that have calciferous bodies

such as corals and crustaceans, and can seriously impact food security in the future. The scientific evidence presented at UNICPOLOS was irrefutable and incontrovertible. Both draft resolutions that we are adopting today have recognized that fact. The EU fully supports the call to tackle the causes and impacts of ocean acidification and to improve the resilience of marine ecosystems.

Turning to the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries (A/68/L.19), the EU continues to view the importance of the draft resolution in highlighting the most crucial and topical issues with respect to sustainable fisheries. We are thus pleased to see that this year great attention has been given to the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. The EU considers that IUU fishing is a global problem that undermines the conservation and sustainable use of marine living resources and consequently that its elimination plays a vital role in ocean governance. In particular, we are happy to note that the General Assembly has recognized the need to develop the international law framework to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing, particularly with regard to the chartering of fishing vessels, participatory surveillance activities and the development of catch document schemes, on which work will soon be begun in the context of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

The EU would like to highlight two conservation issues where, unfortunately, it was not possible to achieve progress this year. The EU remains concerned that the unethical practice of shark finning — which involves slicing off a shark's fins while it is still alive and throwing its body back into sea, where it can take days to die — continues to take place. While we appreciate that more States are taking measures to prevent and deter the practice, the EU would have liked to see the General Assembly send a stronger message in this matter. The EU was also disappointed that it was not possible to strengthen the language pertaining to marine protected areas for fisheries purposes, which the EU considers to be an important tool for the conservation and sustainable use of marine living resources and on which we are still far from meeting the agreed target of achieving 10 per cent coverage of the oceans by 2020.

Lastly, the European Union would like to express its gratitude to the Secretariat, including 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 (A/68/71 and A/68/71/Add.1), an invaluable compilation of recent developments. We would also like to thank the coordinators of the two draft resolutions for their unrelenting efforts to reach a consensus and to express our appreciation for the excellent cooperation demonstrated by all delegations during the negotiation of both draft resolutions.

**Mr. Pedersen** (Norway): The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea sets forth the legal order for the world's seas and oceans. It provides a solid foundation for peaceful, responsible and predictable management of the oceans. All processes related to the oceans must be dealt with within the framework of the Convention.

An integrated ecosystem-based approach to marine management forms the basis of Norwegian marine policy. Norway applies the precautionary principle and has developed integrated management plans for its sea areas. The plans provide a framework for the sustainable use of natural resources derived from those areas in a way that maintains the biodiversity of the ecosystems.

Global food security is an important priority for Norway, and oceans are critical in that regard. Healthy marine ecosystems and sustainable and responsible marine management are of vital importance if the oceans are to be a source of human food. It has been agreed that the fifteenth meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea will focus on the role of seafood in global food security. Norway welcomes that. Fisheries, aquaculture and food security will also be discussed in other forums, such as the Committee on World Food Security and the Second International Conference on Nutrition.

From a fisheries and aquaculture perspective, it is vital that we seek to sustain healthy marine ecosystems whose living resources can provide food and serve as a source of income for present and future generations. It is widely recognized that healthy, well-functioning and productive ecosystems will provide optimal levels of production for harvesting. Thus, the fishing and aquaculture sectors are dependent on healthy ecosystems and clean oceans.

Norway supports measures to strengthen sustainable fisheries management and actions to



protect vulnerable marine ecosystems from destructive fishing practices. The challenge is to find the best way to combine such measures with fishing activities in all fishing countries, including developing countries. The regional fisheries management organizations play a key role in that context, in addition to the responsible coastal and flag States.

The fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing is crucial for safeguarding the world's fish stocks. Combating 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 that issue. Norway encourages States to initiate a process within the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations for the elaboration of a global catch documentation format to support trade in legal fisheries products. A common format will bolster trade in legal fisheries products and at the same time prevent illegal fisheries products from entering the market. As a number of States have developed different and conflicting catch documentation schemes, a common catch documentation scheme would be a valuable tool in the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

Norway also recognizes that in some instances there is a link between illegal fishing and transnational organized crime. It is important that we — in the United Nations and in other multilateral forums — continue to develop a common understanding of transnational organized fisheries crime, as well as the tools needed to combat that type of crime. The establishment of INTERPOL's Fisheries Crime Working Group and Project Scale are good examples of the work being done in the area.

Marine biological diversity is essential to all human life. Norway is committed to the protection and sustainable use of marine resources both inside and outside areas of national jurisdiction. Depending on where an activity takes place, the responsibility for the protection and sustainable use of marine resources rests with the coastal State, the flag State or the State otherwise responsible for activities outside national jurisdiction.

Based on discussions at the United Nations and elsewhere in recent years, it appears that most Member States agree that we need to do more to ensure the protection and sustainable use of marine resources. However, questions have been raised regarding the extent to which the protection of marine biodiversity

in areas beyond national jurisdiction can be enhanced within the existing legal framework and the extent to which existing legal instruments sufficiently regulate access to and sharing of benefits from genetic resources in areas outside national jurisdiction.

Norway remains open to negotiating new instruments if that is deemed necessary. 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 has an important role to play in identifying what is possible within the existing legal framework and any gaps in the framework that may make it necessary to negotiate new instruments. Norway will continue to actively support and participate in that Group with a view to contributing to a decision on the possible development of a new international instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, before the end of the Assembly's sixty-ninth session. We encourage all States to share their views on the feasibility, parameters and scope of a possible new instrument before the next meeting of the Working Group, in March 2014.

Clear maritime boundaries are essential for identifying which States have rights and obligations in which areas under the law of the sea. That is important in relation to the sustainable exploitation of marine resources and environmental protection. A clear legal framework also promotes peace and security.

The establishment of the outer limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles is a key element in the implementation of the Convention and is necessary in order to clarify the legal framework for future shelf activities and protection of the marine environment. It also has important development implications. The Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf makes a significant contribution in that regard. It is therefore crucial that the Secretary-General and the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea continue to make every effort to ensure efficient working conditions for the Commission.

Establishing the outer limits of the continental shelf is a complex process. For many developing countries without sufficient financial and human resources, preparing the necessary submissions to the Commission is a challenge. Norway would like to encourage all States able to do so to assist developing countries in preparing the documentation for submission to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf.

**Mr. Shihab** (Maldives): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report, contained in documents A/68/71 and A/68/71/Add.1, on the impact of ocean acidification on the marine environment. I would also like to express our appreciation to the Director and the dedicated staff members of the Division for Oceans and the Law of the Sea for their support to Member States on all ocean issues, including this year's negotiations on the draft resolutions on sustainable fisheries (A/68/L.19) and on oceans and the law of the sea (A/68/L.18). My delegation also wishes to put on record our thanks to Ambassador Eden Charles of Trinidad and Tobago and Ms. Alice Revell of New Zealand for their able guidance as coordinators of the informal consultations on the relevant subjects.

The economy of the Maldives depends to a large extent on coastal and marine ecosystems and the biodiversity they harbour. Fishing has been a way of life in our country for generations, and our traditions and practices have been internationally recognized as sustainable. Pole-and-line fishing is the backbone of our fisheries industry, and that unique fishing method ensures that marine life is protected. However, the ever-increasing global depletion of that valuable resource is a tragedy, not only for the environment as a whole but also for our economy. The degradation of our ecosystems and the food webs that sustain our fish stocks are of great concern to my delegation.

My delegation therefore finds it incomprehensible that three years after failing to meet the 2010 targets of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which sought to minimize unsustainable fishing practices and reverse the loss of biodiversity, we as an international community are still faltering or even regressing rather than taking the right steps to meet Aichi Biodiversity Target 6, which calls for all fish to be harvested sustainably following an ecosystem-based approach. The blatant neglect of that basic principle has led to massive depletions in shark populations and to practices that are wholly unsustainable.

The Maldives, however, having implemented a shark sanctuary in its territorial waters since 2010, has taken initiatives to combat that trend and welcomes the addition of five shark and two manta ray species listed in appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora in March. Furthermore, we are proud to be part of the group of countries that sought to introduce stronger language on the management of shark fisheries and the prohibition

of shark finning during this year's negotiations. There is an increased willingness to address such unsustainable and often unethical practices, even if it is not yet fully manifested in written texts. And we hereby express our firm commitment to continue working with our partners to make sure that that momentum is not lost.

There is also newfound momentum in the marine debris debate. The issue of marine debris, including plastics, has recently attracted some attention, and we support initiatives to address its environmental impact and to change consumption patterns and waste-management practices in order to limit its sources. The Maldives is particularly concerned that such transboundary pollutants may thwart its efforts to sustainably manage its marine environment.

The Maldives would also like to stress the fact that anthropogenic carbon dioxide emissions drive climate change, which leaves in its wake rising sea levels. The contribution of the Maldives to such emissions is negligible, while their potential damage to our country is catastrophic. To make matters worse, those emissions have also led to ocean acidification, hampering the ability of calciferous marine organisms to develop their skeletons. Those organisms include our coral reefs, the foundation on which our tourism and fisheries industry depend. Our reefs are already threatened by coral bleaching. Such existential threats to the foundation of the Maldives' economy, its territorial integrity and ultimately its sovereignty are a cause for deep concern. It is unfortunate that the political will needed to reduce carbon dioxide emissions is still lacking. The fact that the dangers that nations like the Maldives face are apparently not enough to galvanize concerted efforts on the part of the international community is an absolute tragedy that will prove to be one of the greatest shortcomings of this century.

The Maldives and other small island developing States (SIDS) are committed to doing their part. We are doing so by reducing our dependence on processes that generate carbon emissions and by eventually eliminating them from our economy. In that regard, the Maldives has announced that it will become carbon-neutral by 2020. But in order to accomplish that ambitious goal, it will need the cooperation and assistance of our bilateral and multilateral partners.

In 2011, the Maldives established an entire atoll as a UNESCO biosphere. Since then, the country has scaled up its commitments, announcing the transformation of the entire nation into a biosphere reserve. With

19 paragraphs devoted to the oceans in the Outcome Document of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, “The Future we want” (resolution 66/288, annex), our announcement could not have been more timely. Yet we are alarmed that only one year later, the political will to honour Member States’ common commitment to protecting and restoring the health, productivity and resilience of the oceans and marine ecosystems, maintaining their biodiversity and enabling their conservation and sustainable use for future generations — or even to address the issue of the oceans in the post-2015 development agenda — has seemed to falter. In the Outcome Document of the 2011 Barbados Meeting on World Heritage and Small Island Developing States, the SIDS stated clearly that the oceans and seas are a thematic priority for them and should be prominently reflected in the post-2015 development agenda, including through consideration of a thematic sustainable development goal. For the Maldives, the oceans and seas are an integral and indivisible part of development. An agenda that does not take that fact into account would be meaningless for us.

We recognize that these are challenging times for Member States, but the Maldives cannot help wondering whether we as an international community can really afford the lack of progress, and even the danger of regression, witnessed in our dealing with so many of the critical issues of our time — overfishing, climate change and sustainable development as a whole. After all, we are only borrowing the world from our children. We should not risk it for short-term gains or squander our communal bounty. Marine environments have sustained civilizations through generations past and can sustain generations to come. The truth of that will be found in our actions, our positions and our decisions. The truth of that will be found in our legacy.

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

I am pleased to support today’s draft resolutions on oceans and the law of the sea (A/68/L.18) and on sustainable fisheries (A/68/L.19).

In 1967, the late Ambassador Pardo of Malta, a small island nation, took the floor at the General Assembly to urge serious international action to protect and advance the sustainable development of the world’s oceans (see A/PV.1639). The existing frameworks at that time were unable to meet future challenges, and the global response that followed Malta’s call has given us a rich and impressive pageant of international cooperation.

Today’s call from the Pacific Islands Forum, however, is no less urgent than that of 1967. There are serious shortfalls in the environmental health of the world’s oceans and the living and non-living resources therein. The world is not yet equipped to respond to the challenges that we already face, let alone the risks facing us all in coming years. It would be an unquestionable moral and political failure for the world to turn its back on the failing health of nearly three quarters of our planet’s surface. In too many instances and for too many decades, the political commitment on paper has failed to translate into real commitment through action. In the context of preparing the post-2015 development agenda, we must avoid those pitfalls.

In the view of the members of the Pacific Islands Forum, oceans, seas and fisheries must be given priority consideration in the preparation of the United Nations’ post-2015 development agenda, especially in the discussions on sustainable development goals. The leaders of the Forum, in establishing the Pacific Oceanscape Framework, strongly emphasized “the critical importance of ensuring the sustainable development, management and conservation of our ocean”. The Pacific island nations are leading the world with our own commitment and action, but we cannot act in isolation without partnerships.

I ask my fellow ambassadors within this body, if they will not join the Pacific nations in leading, that they follow, and if they cannot follow, that they not stand in the way of urgent political progress on oceans and fisheries in the sustainable development context. For the Pacific nations, healthy, productive and sustainable oceans represent not only a primary economic pathway for many of our members but also a resource with a much broader international benefit. Oceans are ultimately not only an issue for the small island developing States (SIDS) but also a matter that impacts each and every Member of the United Nations.

The theme of food security and its relation to global oceans, proposed for next year’s meeting of the Informal

Consultative Process, is particularly important to the Pacific nations. Our small island nations are also large ocean nations. Our fish help to feed the whole world as a valuable source of protein and nutrition. But some of our fish stocks stand at the very edge of overexploitation at a rate and scale that will threaten the food security not only of our own populations but also of that of the wider international community.

Next year, the nation of Samoa will host an international conference on small island developing States (SIDS) and sustainable development. We welcome the theme “Genuine and durable partnerships for the sustainable development of SIDS”, and we are especially pleased that the Secretary-General has already confirmed his attendance. Yet there is still concern that, despite all the commitments expressed through the draft resolutions before us today, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement, and through many other forums and instruments, partnerships with small island nations on oceans, the commitments on fisheries and marine resources with regard to both island nations and the resources available run the risk of being neither lasting nor genuine. Let us use the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, to be held in Samoa in 2014, as a valuable opportunity to correct the course where and when that is needed.

In that respect, the members of the Pacific Island Forum emphasize a key call that was voiced at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and has been reiterated in the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries before us today, wherein:

“States urged the identification and mainstreaming by 2014 of strategies that further assist developing countries, in particular the least developed countries and small island developing States, in developing their national capacity to conserve, sustainably manage and realize the benefits of sustainable fisheries, including through improved market access for fish products from developing countries.” (*A/68/L.19, para. 161*)

I sincerely hope that that paragraph and the many others that highlight the goal to better assist small island nations in realizing sustainable benefits from oceans and fisheries resources will be far more than empty handshakes. Next year’s Samoa meeting on the SIDS will be a true litmus test to see where the international community has measured up to our

respective commitments and where we may still be falling short.

The members of the Pacific Islands Forum welcome the new international attention to ocean acidification provided in both the omnibus draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea and the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries now before us. We have long been concerned about such impacts, many of which are already visible, and about the scale of the future risks that threaten the viability and integrity of our coral reef ecosystems. Indeed, for coral atoll nations such as my own, the Marshall Islands, ocean acidification poses an unquestionable threat which, when combined with other climate impacts, threatens our long-term survival. We are pleased that the global community has now committed to tackling the causes of ocean acidification, building marine resilience to its impacts, especially that of coral reefs, and enhancing capacity-building and technology transfer, especially for small island developing States.

The members of the Pacific Islands Forum welcomed this year’s robust debate on the importance of better addressing shark conservation and management and shark-finning practices. At least 80 species of sharks and rays can be found within our region, and, given that around half of such species are highly migratory, our shark population is vulnerable to overexploitation. Indeed, some of our members, including my own nation, have announced and are establishing many of the world’s strongest shark-protection measures, including the largest sanctuary zones. Our Pacific Islands Regional Plan of Action on Sharks sets out a strong regional commitment to the management arrangements called for both within the International Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks and in the conservation measures of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission. We are concerned about the potential gap between United Nations resolutions and national actions, and we are pleased that this year’s draft resolution underscores the true urgency for States to establish science-based management measures for sharks where scientific information is uncertain or inadequate.

The Pacific Islands Forum recalls the agreement adopted at the Rio+20 Conference to take a decision on whether to commence negotiations of an international instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction



by the end of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly. Our members remain committed to working towards that deadline. In that respect, we welcome the fact that the General Assembly has agreed to hold two meetings of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group on that topic in 2014 to discuss the scope, parameters and feasibility of such an instrument.

Oceans and fisheries are not only some of our region's most important environmental resources and potential economic drivers, but also a wider global resource. For us in the Pacific, they are the very foundation of our island identities. Many of our Forum leaders are those who remind the General Assembly every September of the increasing urgency for action and the shortfall in political will on oceans and fisheries. It is not my hope but my firm expectation that our partners will not be silent to such calls.

**Mrs. Deiyé** (Nauru): At the outset, let me associate my delegation with the statement delivered by the representative of the Marshall Islands on behalf of the Pacific Island Forum. 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 the draft resolutions on this item (A/68/L.18 and A/68/L.19) to a successful conclusion.

Oceans and the law of the sea are a critical topic to Nauru. Island nations have a unique dependence on oceans. 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, and we hope to ensure healthy oceans and access to their resources not only for ourselves, but for future generations as well. 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 at risk. Numerous pressures, such as climate change, overfishing and habitat destruction are negatively affecting the health, resiliency and productivity of the oceans. The combined impacts of climate change, which include sea-level rise, increased sea-surface temperature and intensified storm activity, and the adverse effects of ocean acidification caused by increased dissolved carbon dioxide, heighten the threat to ocean health. Coral reef ecosystems are particularly susceptible to climate change and ocean acidification,

and may be the first marine ecosystems to collapse without urgent and increased mitigation action.

Urgent and deep reductions in greenhouse-gas emissions are a global imperative. Additionally, given existing levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and oceans, building the resilience of vulnerable marine ecosystems to the impacts of climate change and ocean acidification is essential to enabling sustainable development and eradicating poverty. We were pleased, therefore, with the focus placed on that issue at the meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea and are gratified by the new text to be adopted, which highlights the need for capacity-building and technology transfer to study and minimize the impacts of ocean acidification. We also note the commitment by all to tackle the causes of ocean acidification — a commitment that must be translated into action.

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, not only affecting the food source, which we depend on, but also negatively affecting whole ecosystems. Continued overfishing and the severe depletion of by-catch stocks, such as sharks, undermine efforts to strengthen the management and conservation of oceanic fisheries. We are pleased, therefore, that the strengthened language highlighting the need to address by-catches, including through urgently establishing science-based measures to ensure the long-term sustainable use of sharks, will be adopted. While more needs to be done, we see that as a step in the right direction.

We will also need to find a way to reduce overfishing and overcapacity in fishing fleets in order to enable new actors to enter. While the international community has long recognized the special requirements of small island developing States (SIDS) 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.

For us in Nauru, we are proud that the biomass of all the highly migratory and straddling tuna fish stocks in the tropical area assessed by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) are above the levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield, and that none of those tropical regional fish

stocks require rebuilding, thanks largely to effective cooperation among coastal States of the region.

We do, however, have concerns that the biomass of bigeye tuna might be reduced below maximum-sustainable-yield levels by 2015, if the current high levels of fishing continue, and we hope that the collective membership of the WCPFC will follow the lead of the parties to the Nauru Agreement in imposing compulsory limits on the vessels under their jurisdiction, in particular longliners. The nations that are parties to the Nauru Agreement expect to apply an overall effort to limit longline fishing in their combined exclusive economic zones — an area of nearly 14 million square kilometres — from 1 January 2014.

One of our biggest problems at the moment is not with highly migratory and straddling stocks — which we feel are coming under control in the tropical western Pacific — but with artisanal reef fisheries. The information needs of local fisheries are of an order of magnitude more complex than those of tuna fisheries, and yet in our region the development resources devoted to them by the international community are, actually, of an order of magnitude smaller.

Those are national issues and, of course, require national action, but we would ask that international initiatives and regional agencies not lose sight of the fisheries that are so important to our people at the local level and that they not concentrate their efforts exclusively upon the straddling and highly migratory fisheries, with respect to which they can get the most recognition or obtain the easiest wins.

I am not talking about more basic research on reef ecosystems; we have enough reef species lists to last us a lifetime. What we need is more attention to fishing itself — building systems that work at the local level by talking to fishermen, compiling hard information on their activities and needs, and helping them to work out socially applicable solutions to any overfishing that is identified. We urge that those considerations be taken under advisement in the work undertaken by our partners and the United Nations system in the lead-up to the International Conference on SIDS and the International Year of Small Island Developing States.

Before closing, I wanted to touch on a final topic — 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 look forward to engaging on the next steps.

In “The future we want” (resolution 66/288, annex), leaders committed themselves to protecting and restoring the health, productivity and resilience of oceans and marine ecosystems, enabling their conservation and sustainable use for present and future generations. We believe that we will have moved in the correct direction with the adoption of draft resolutions A/68/L.18 and A/68/L.19 today. We look forward to further advancing that work through the eventual adoption of a sustainable development goal on oceans — one with clear targets and goals to ensure we are on the correct trajectory so that oceans can continue to support us.

**Mr. Heidar** (Iceland): At the outset, I would like to express Iceland’s appreciation for the high standard of assistance provided to Member States by the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, headed by the new Director, Gabriele Goettsche-Wanli, including the preparation of reports and many other activities. I would also like to thank my colleagues, many of whom are in this room today, for their excellent cooperation and good spirits during the negotiations on the draft resolutions on oceans and the law of the sea (A/68/L.18) and on sustainable fisheries (A/68/L.19). The two coordinators, Ambassador Eden Charles from Trinidad and Tobago and Ms. Alice Revell from New Zealand, deserve special thanks for their excellent performance.

I would furthermore like to recognize the presence here today of the Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority, Nii Odunton, and the President of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, Shunji Yanai.

Iceland continues to be a strong supporter of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which is, without a doubt, one of the greatest achievements in the history of the Organization. The Convention, the first and only comprehensive treaty in that field, provides the legal framework for all uses of the oceans and their superjacent air space and subjacent seabed and subsoil. Few treaties have contributed so much to peace, security and the rule of law in the world.

It is imperative that the Convention be fully implemented and that its integrity be preserved. We welcome the recent ratifications of the Convention by Timor-Leste and the Niger, which bring the total number of States parties to 166, and we call on those States that have not yet done so to ratify the Convention in order to fully achieve the goal of universal participation.

The three institutions established by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea play a very important role in the implementation of the Convention, and we note with satisfaction that they are all functioning well and are more active in their work than ever before. There has been substantial growth in the judicial activities of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, not only in terms of the number of cases but also as regards the complexity and variety of matters before the Tribunal.

The International Seabed Authority has completed work on the parts of the mining code relating to prospecting and exploration of three categories of mineral resources. The main current challenge before the Authority is to develop regulations on the exploitation of those minerals, as the potential for such exploitation is probably higher than ever before. The first set of regulations on the exploitation of polymetallic nodules in the Area will presumably be prepared by 2016. We should bear in mind that some contractors are in the final phase of their exploration activities. A substantial number of work plans for the exploration of mineral resources have been approved by the Authority, and in most cases, contracts have been concluded.

The Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf has received 69 submissions from coastal States, including Iceland, regarding the establishment of the outer limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles, and further submissions are expected in the near future. The Commission has already issued 18 recommendations to coastal States. In the light of its heavy workload, we welcome the decision of the Commission to extend the duration of its sessions in New York to 21 weeks annually for five years and to take measures to ensure that nine subcommissions can consider submissions simultaneously. That should expedite the consideration by the Commission of the long queue of submissions pending.

Obviously, the workload of the Commission has implications for the conditions of service of its members. In particular, the long duration of Commission meetings in New York can negatively affect the careers

of its members, and a survey has revealed that many members are also not provided with the necessary medical coverage while in performance of Commission duties in New York, which is a serious matter. The Meeting of States Parties to the Convention earlier this year decided to establish an open-ended working group to consider those and other conditions of service of the members of the Commission. I would like to thank James Waweru of Kenya for co-chairing that working group with me. The working group held two meetings this fall and, as a consequence of its deliberations, Member States agreed to address the issue in the draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea.

Should it adopt the draft resolution, the General Assembly would first note the decision to establish the working group and expresses concern about the implications of the workload of the Commission on the conditions of service of its members. Secondly, the Assembly would reiterate the obligation under the Convention of those States whose experts are serving on the Commission to defray the expenses of the experts they have nominated while in performance of Commission duties. In that regard, States are urged to provide medical coverage for the experts they have nominated while in performance of Commission duties. Thirdly, the Assembly would request the Secretary-General to explore options for providing medical insurance coverage to members of the Commission from developing countries, whose participation may be facilitated through the existing voluntary trust fund, while in performance of Commission duties and to circulate his findings to Member States in advance of the Meeting of States Parties to be held in June 2014. I call on States to work together to improve the conditions of service of the members of the Commission. It should be recalled that the recommendations of the Commission carry a particular weight, as they form the basis for the establishment of final and binding outer limits of the continental shelf by coastal States.

One of the key current issues within the field of oceans and the law of the sea is the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. That issue is extremely broad in scope, as it includes basically all marine life in the water column beyond the exclusive economic zone and on the seabed beyond the continental shelf. It is imperative, therefore, before a decision is taken to develop a possible implementing agreement under the Convention, to define the scope of a possible agreement in order to ensure predictability and success.

We therefore welcome the decision of the General Assembly, under the draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea to be adopted, that the working group should hold two meetings next year and at least one meeting in 2015 to make recommendations to the Assembly on the scope, parameters and feasibility of an international instrument under the Convention. That will pave the way for a decision to be taken before the end of the sixty-ninth session of the Assembly on the possible development of such an instrument.

In Iceland's view, if the development of an instrument should indeed be considered feasible, attention should be devoted to the issue of the sharing of the benefits gained from the exploitation of marine genetic resources on the seabed beyond national jurisdiction. The definition in article 133 of the Convention with regard to the resources of the international seabed area includes only mineral resources, and no mention is made of living resources. When the Convention was drafted, such resources were generally not known to exist on the deep seabed, far from any sunlight. However, there has been a huge development in the knowledge of the deep seabed, and today living marine genetic resources are considered even more valuable than non-living mineral resources. It is therefore natural that the working group should focus on that issue.

In contrast, care should be taken not to reopen issues that are already subject to an adequate international legal regime. A good example of such an issue is high seas fisheries, which are subject to the legal regime of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea as complemented by the 1995 Fish Stocks Agreement. That Agreement provides the legal framework for the work of regional fisheries management organizations. The scope of a possible new instrument should therefore not include fisheries.

My country played an important role in the evolution of the law of the sea in the twentieth century, in particular in the gradual extension of the fisheries zone, which culminated in the 200-mile exclusive economic zone provided for in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. For the relatively newly independent Iceland, it was critical to gain control over its fishing grounds, which enabled us to combat overexploitation and ensure the conservation and sustainable use of our precious fishery resources.

Iceland has benefited immensely from the rights provided by the Convention, and that has paved our way in moving from poverty to prosperity and economic

independence. Unfortunately, many developing countries, in particular the least developed countries and small island developing States, as well as coastal African States, lack the capacity to benefit fully from the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and their resources. Obviously, coastal States must be able to have control over their exclusive economic zones and defend them against illegal fishing by vessels from other States. They must also have the scientific expertise that could provide sound advice on fisheries management. Furthermore, coastal States with the potential for a continental shelf beyond the 200-mile limit must be able to submit scientific information to that effect to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. Capacity-building is, therefore, essential to ensuring that developing countries are able to fully implement the Convention and benefit from the rights provided therein.

According to the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries, States are encouraged to cooperate closely with a view to enhancing the capacities of developing countries, and in particular small island developing States, in the field of fisheries through education and training. In that regard, the draft resolution recognizes the work of the United Nations University Fisheries Training Programme, in Iceland, which has contributed for 15 years to capacity-building in that field in developing countries; the programme has graduated 280 fellows from 47 countries and has, in addition, held 36 short courses in 12 countries.

Clearly, further capacity-building initiatives are required in the field of oceans and the law of the sea. However, it is also important to reach out and improve awareness of already existing opportunities. In that regard, I want to draw attention to the Rhodes Academy of Oceans Law and Policy, which annually offers a highly regarded three-week summer course in Rhodes, Greece. The basic objective of the Academy is to promote the rule of law in the world's oceans through education in the provisions of the Law of the Sea Convention and related instruments. The Rhodes Academy is a cooperative undertaking by six institutions, including the Law of the Sea Institute of Iceland. Over the past 18 years, more than 700 students from more than 130 countries have graduated from the Academy. It is perhaps the clearest sign of the success of the Academy that many Rhodes graduates represent their countries regularly at meetings on ocean affairs and the law of the sea here at the United Nations.



In discussions on sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda, Iceland will focus on four areas: renewable energy, land restoration, gender and, last but not least, oceans. The importance of oceans and seas for sustainable development is obvious and is reiterated once again in the draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea. In negotiations on possible sustainable development goals relating to the oceans, my country wishes to emphasize three issues: sustainable fisheries management, stronger pollution control to keep the oceans healthy, and capacity-building. Existing goals and targets that have been developed since world leaders met in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 provide a sound basis in that regard. Accordingly, we should focus our efforts on implementing those already agreed commitments.

We are pleased to note the decision, contained in the draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea, that the next meeting of the Informal Consultative Process will focus its discussions on the role of seafood in global food security, where emphasis will be given to the health of the oceans. In the light of the significant contribution of fisheries and aquaculture to food security and the livelihoods of millions of people, especially in developing countries, that could be a valuable contribution to the negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda.

Finally, I would like to highlight the importance of enhanced inter-agency coordination and cooperation on ocean issues within the United Nations system and recognize the work undertaken by UN-Oceans in that regard. I would like to thank Mr. Gustavo Pereira of Brazil for coordinating the revision by Member States of the terms of reference for UN-Oceans, which are annexed to the draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea. The new terms of reference provide that the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea will be the focal point of UN-Oceans. In the view of Iceland, that will strengthen the mechanism.

**Mr. Estreme** (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to thank both coordinators, Ambassador Eden Charles of Trinidad and Tobago and Ms. Alice Revell of New Zealand, for having conducted the negotiations on the draft resolutions that are before the General Assembly today (A/68/L.18 and A/68/L.19).

I would also like to recognize the presence in the Assembly, as happens every year, of the Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority, Mr. Nii Odunton, and of the President of the International

Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, Judge Shunji Yanai. I would also like to congratulate Mrs. Gabriele Goettsche-Wanli upon her appointment as Director of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea.

As we do every year in the Assembly, my delegation reiterates its view that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea is one of the clearest contributions to the strengthening of international peace and security, cooperation and friendly relations among all nations. The Convention constitutes one of the most significant international instruments in terms of its economic, strategic and political implications. The objective of the negotiators of the Convention was to resolve all matters related to the law of the sea in one single instrument.

Its provisions constitute, therefore, a delicate balance between the rights and the obligations of States, which emerged after nine years of negotiations. That balance must be preserved by all States, individually and as members of international organizations dealing with ocean affairs and other sorts of organizations. That delicate balance must be preserved even when addressing the new challenges in the field of the law of the sea that arise in connection with processes established in the context of the General Assembly, especially when addressing issues under the specific competence of the specialized agencies recognized by the Convention, by initiatives of the Secretary-General, by financial organizations, and by the coordinating mechanism known as UN-Oceans. The Convention has a clearly universal character, being accepted as a binding legal norm, even by non-States parties, for which it now constitutes customary international law.

The Argentine delegation will give an explanation of its position with regard to the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries (A/68/L.19). But allow me to make some remarks on the issues dealt with in that draft resolution as well as in the draft resolution on oceans and the Law of the Sea (A/68/L.18).

The question of biodiversity beyond the limits of national jurisdiction is one of the newest emerging issues in the law of the sea. The General Assembly decided to launch a process to ensure a legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, which also encompasses the possibility of negotiating a multilateral agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea — that is to say, an agreement implementing the relevant principles of the Convention.

The process will take place in the Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group specifically established by the General Assembly to address the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, in particular marine genetic resources as a whole, as well as the sharing of benefits, conservation measures, capacity-building and technology transfer. In 2013 and early in 2014, the Working Group will meet with a view to making recommendations to the General Assembly on the feasibility, parameters and scope of an international agreement under the Convention aimed at contributing to the decision that the General Assembly will have to adopt before its sixty-ninth session on convening a negotiating conference on an implementation agreement for the Convention. Argentina believes that agreeing on the parameters and scope of a possible future agreement is an essential step prior to the convening of a negotiating conference.

Regarding the substance of the issue, my delegation wishes to reiterate that it must be duly taken into account that the expression “areas beyond national jurisdiction” consists of two maritime areas, the high seas and the Area, and that one of the goals of the Convention was to develop the principles embodied in resolution 2749 (XXV), of 17 December 1970, in which the General Assembly solemnly declared, among things, that the area of the seabed and ocean floor and the subsoil thereof, beyond the limits of national jurisdiction, as well as its resources, “are the common heritage of mankind”, and that “the exploration of the area and exploitation of its resources shall be carried out for the benefit of mankind as a whole”. Argentina agrees with the view expressed by the Group of 77 and China in its last three ministerial declarations that that principle constitutes the basis for consideration of the issue.

Argentina is grateful to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf for its continued hard work. We should recall that, following decision SPLOS/229 of the Meeting of States Parties to the Convention, the Commission extended the length of its sessions and those of its subcommissions. With more extended sessions, some challenges have arisen. One is that the Secretary-General must take timely steps to ensure that the Commission and its subcommissions are provided with the necessary Secretariat services; another is ensuring that the Commissioners have health-care coverage while performing their duties. Argentina recognizes the efforts of Iceland and Kenya in leading

the Informal Working Group on the conditions of service of the Commission, supports the recommendations on the subject in draft resolution A/68/L.18 and will continue to support the Commission.

Additionally, I would like to recall once again that the work of the Commission has to do with demarcating the limits already defined in article 76 of the Convention and not with the rights of coastal States. Paragraph 3 of article 77 of the Convention provides that “(t)he 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 also reflected in paragraph 62 of the draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea (A/68/L.18).

The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea is the independent international legal institution created by the Convention. Since its establishment, the Tribunal has adjudicated 22 cases, all relating to different aspects of the law of the sea. I would like to highlight the advisory opinion issued in 2011 by the Seabed Disputes Chamber on the responsibilities and obligations of States sponsoring persons and entities with respect to activities in the Area, whose relevance is recognized by the Assembly.

I would like to mention case 20, *ARA Libertad*, to which my country was a party, in which the Tribunal duly issued a provisional order for the release of the frigate *ARA Libertad*, an Argentine warship, in the framework of arbitral proceedings that ended in an amicable settlement with the Republic of Ghana, about which my country is particularly pleased. Argentina has supported the work of the Tribunal since its establishment, and is one of the 34 States parties that have accepted its jurisdiction. Today, Argentina welcomes the fact that the Tribunal has consolidated its jurisprudential authority as the specialist court on the law of the sea, conceived when the Convention was being negotiated, as well as its contribution to the preservation of the integrity of international law.

Regarding UN-Oceans, the coordinating mechanism for the secretariats of the relevant entities, Argentina supports the revised terms of reference that are annexed to the draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea, and welcomes the fact that the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea will be in charge of the coordination of UN-Oceans. In that regard, I would like to recognize the work of Mr. Gustavo Pereira of Brazil.

As regards the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries (A/68/L.19), my delegation would like to reiterate the importance of maintaining the rule that all negotiations on the law of the sea should proceed by consensus, as has been the legacy in negotiations on the Convention. During the sixty-fifth session, that rule was disregarded on one aspect of the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries, and my delegation was obliged to mention that in its explanation of vote (see A/65/PV.59, page 31). We would like to recall that consensus is the only way to ensure wide acceptance of the resolutions of the General Assembly and should therefore be respected in negotiations on that topic.

Concerning the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems, with reference in particular to 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 should 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 coastal States over the full extent of that maritime area. The conservation and management of such resources is therefore governed by the exclusive powers of those coastal States, which have the responsibility to adopt the necessary measures regarding those resources and their associated ecosystems that might be affected by fishing practices that could have a destructive impact, including bottom fishing on the high seas. In that regard, I would like to recall that Argentina has adopted measures for conserving the sedentary resources and vulnerable marine ecosystems throughout its continental shelf.

As is the case every year, the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries recalls, in paragraph 143, the exclusivity of the rights of coastal States over areas of their continental shelf that extend beyond 200 nautical miles. In addition, and in accordance with what I have just referred to, paragraph 144 notes both the conservation measures adopted by coastal States and their efforts to ensure compliance with those measures over the full extent of their continental shelf.

Also regarding fisheries, my country wishes to reiterate its concern about the incipient trend of attempts to legitimize, through General Assembly resolutions, the endeavours of regional fisheries management organizations to adopt measures that exceed their spatial, material and individual scope of application. Argentina objects to Assembly resolutions being so interpreted, in particular with respect to measures

whereby those organizations claim any kind of authority with regard to vessels flying the flag of countries that are neither members of such organizations nor have consented to measures of this kind, inasmuch as that would contradict one of the basic norms of treaty law.

Finally, as we do every year when we take up the Secretary-General's report on oceans and the law of the sea and both draft resolutions, Argentina wishes to express its recognition of the entire staff of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for their professionalism, seriousness and dedication, as well as for the assistance that they spontaneously provide Member States in matters of their competence.

**Mr. Alday González (Mexico)** (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like first of all to express our appreciation to the individuals and institutions that contribute to the comprehensive, consistent implementation of the legal regime governing the law of the sea as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982.

First, we recognize the efficacious work of the coordinators of the two draft resolutions that will be adopted in the framework of the item under consideration by the Assembly. We thank Ms. Alice Revell of New Zealand, coordinator of the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries (A/68/L.19), and Ambassador Eden Charles of Trinidad and Tobago, coordinator of the omnibus draft resolution on the oceans and the law of the sea (A/68/L.18). We also wish to recognize the high quality of the work of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, led by Gabriele Goettsche-Wanli.

Likewise, we wish to thank the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea for promoting the successful workshop on the settlement of disputes in the Caribbean held last June in Mexico City, conducted jointly with the Government of Mexico in its capacity as Chair of the Ministerial Council of the Association of Caribbean States.

We also cordially thank the International Seabed Authority for conducting an awareness-raising seminar on 11 and 12 November, also in Mexico City, on the work of the Authority and the opportunities for Mexico in the area of deep-seabed mining. That successful exercise drew the interest of various governmental sectors and of industry and research centres affiliated with Mexico's public universities.

Moreover, we appreciate the initiative of Norway in proposing the role of seafood in global food security as a topic for the fifteenth Informal Consultative Process. That will doubtless be an excellent opportunity for the co-Chairs of the Process to include matters of great importance such as the role of aquaculture, as well as socioeconomic concerns, as they draw up the agenda for the meeting. We believe that at this juncture we must avoid revisiting themes that have already been covered in past meetings of the Process, such as illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and its contribution to sustainable development, considered, respectively, at the first and fifth meetings.

Likewise, we appreciate the understanding agreed in the framework of negotiations for the omnibus draft resolution with respect to the exceptional five-day length of the next Meeting of States Parties to the Convention, despite the fact that there will be elections for judges for the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. It has become the practice for the Meeting of States Parties to last more than five days whenever there are elections for the Tribunal or the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, so as to have sufficient time for those elections. In that connection, and given the number of meetings on the sea that this venue will host in 2014, the dates indicated in the omnibus draft resolution are exceptional and should not be viewed as a precedent for subsequent Meetings of States Parties in which there are elections.

I now turn to three specific points reflected in the omnibus draft resolution that, taken together, give an account of the importance of the scope of the sustainable use of the oceans within the framework for the implementation of the Convention.

First, my delegation notes that consideration of the acidification of the oceans during the last meeting of the Informal Consultative Process could not have been more timely, given the scale of the problem. The draft resolution makes a number of references to the issue, and its inclusion was the result of work by a large group of delegations, to whom we express our deepest and most sincere appreciation. We hope that the level of attention to the problem will elevate it to the already very long list of urgent matters related to the marine environment.

Secondly, we are pleased to note that the draft resolution invites the International Seabed Authority to consider developing environmental management

plans additional to that already adopted with regard to the Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone. In that connection, it is important that the Authority consider similar solutions for zones in which there are already exploration contracts in the Indian Ocean, the Atlantic Ocean and soon in the Western Pacific Ocean.

With respect to my third and final point, it behoves us to point out that both the text of the draft resolution and the body of resolutions already adopted on the issue in the course of prior sessions assign the highest importance to the sustainable development of the oceans and seas, summed up by the role of the Convention in this area, as it is the legal framework in which all marine activities are carried out. In that regard, we should note that the General Assembly's annual resolution on oceans and the law of the sea properly incorporates the item of the sustainable development of ocean spaces, which account for more than 70 per cent of the planet's surface.

Given that the Assembly's annual resolution on oceans articulates that logic and is the ideal way to promote action on the issue, the preambular paragraph of this year's draft resolution that notes that the meeting of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, to be held in February 2014, will examine, *inter alia*, the issue of oceans and seas should be interpreted as a neutral reference to the process that will not in any way prejudice the result of that meeting.

Mexico takes note of the diverging positions of Member States, specifically and implicitly the reference in the draft resolution on oceans to the establishment of sustainable development goals in view of the risk that could represent for the Convention's unified character and for avoiding influencing other ongoing processes of the General Assembly, such as that relating to marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdictions. Moreover, consistent implementation of the legal framework of the Convention and follow-up to the recommendations set out in the resolution should remain the axis of the international community's efforts to achieve sustainable development on oceans.

I now turn to the issue of sustainable fishing. Mexico is committed to promoting the sustainable use and long-term conservation of marine resources in the framework of fishing instruments to which it is party. Mexico manages its fisheries in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and has given special attention to promoting selective fishing



techniques so as to reduce to a minimum the discards and catch of juveniles and non-target species, as well as to avoid catching associated species.

In that connection, considering the situation of certain highly migratory species in some areas of the high seas, Mexico actively promotes measures aimed at recording, marking, numbering and monitoring fish-aggregating devices. Such measures include fishing techniques to reduce selectivity and the negative impact on marine ecosystems. For the first time, rules on the use and control of fish-aggregating devices were established in the framework of the 85th meeting of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, held in June in Mexico.

Regarding sharks, Mexico reaffirms its readiness and commitment to conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources and shares the concern generated by the issue, and agree that there is a need to consider the socioeconomic impacts on affected populations. Mexico has established an appropriate regulatory framework to manage and conserve its shark populations, including a ban on fishing them during the most important reproductive periods of the principal species and on the use of fins only. In addition to those realities, the largest fleets targeting the species have been subjected to observation and monitoring programmes, ensuring full compliance with the regulations.

Finally, we acknowledge the efforts at the international level carried out by international organizations, particularly the regional fisheries management organizations, including the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, among others. We recognize that those institutions are the ideal bodies to promote measures for the conservation and protection of marine resources and that their successful efforts will make possible the sustainability of fisheries for future generations.

**Mr. Shapoval** (Ukraine): I wish to thank the Secretary-General for the wide-ranging elements of his reports on oceans and the law of the sea (A/68/71). Ukraine has the honour to co-sponsor both resolutions A/68/L.18 and A/68/L.19. Our appreciation also goes to the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for its able stewardship during the informal consultations on the draft resolutions before the Assembly today and to the coordinators of both documents.

Aligning itself with the statement made earlier by the observer of the European Union, Ukraine would like to intervene in its national capacity.

Ukraine has been consistently committed to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea — a comprehensive legal framework covering all aspects of activities in the oceans and seas. My delegation has actively participated in the consultations and is very grateful to all delegations for their cooperation and support. Ukraine is very pleased that its initiatives aimed at reinforcing cooperation between Member States and the relevant international bodies in developing national legislation on piracy have been supported in the course of the consultations and are reflected in the draft omnibus resolution (A/68/L.18). We strongly believe that the fight against piracy cannot yield sustainable results without fighting impunity and bringing to justice perpetrators of acts of piracy, as well as their organizers and facilitators on land. Current statistics in that respect are very encouraging: more than 1,200 individuals suspected of piracy are being prosecuted or are awaiting prosecution in more than 20 States.

We welcome the ongoing cooperation within the United Nations in this field and look forward to working closely with interested Member States and competent international institutions in further developing national legislation against piracy and strengthening mechanisms aimed at bringing pirates, hijackers and their sponsors to justice. It goes without saying that the significant 37 per cent decrease today in the number of attacks by pirates and armed robbers worldwide, especially in the South China Sea, the Indian Ocean and in South America, is a result of national and multilateral initiatives and regional mechanisms for cooperation in combating and preventing piracy and armed robbery at sea.

However, the current declining trend in the number of attacks is reversible and predominantly depends on the international naval patrol. In that regard, Ukraine is proud that its frigate *Hetman Sahaidachniy*, a flagship of the Ukrainian naval forces that is equipped with a deck helicopter, is now policing the waters off the Horn of Africa as part of NATO's Operation Ocean Shield.

New challenges to maritime safety and security are emerging and much work is still ahead of us. We express particular concern about the growing trend in attacks on ships off West Africa, in the Malacca Strait

and in the Mediterranean Sea, as recently reported by the Secretary-General. According to his report, the majority of attacks worldwide occurred or were attempted in port areas. Ukraine urges coastal States, flag States and industry to make every possible effort to ensure the safety and security of maritime shipping, especially in the listed regions.

We welcome the discussions on the initiatives regarding the use of privately contracted armed security personnel on board commercial vessels, including initiatives by the International Maritime Organization, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, the International Organization for Standardization and Working Group 2 of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia.

Lastly, along with eliminating the roots of piracy on land and suppressing its manifestations at sea, measures taken by the international community in that field should also include addressing the impacts of piracy, especially regarding its victims. As one of the major seafarers' origin States, Ukraine is actively engaged in the cooperation among Member States, the International Maritime Organization, the International Labour Organization and other actors aimed at developing measures to protect the welfare of seafarers who are victims of pirates, including their post-incident treatment and reintegration into society. We highly appreciate the work carried out in this field and stand ready to do our utmost to protect the interests of seafarers.

**Ms. Picco** (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me to thank the former Director of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, Mr. Serguei Tarassenko, and to congratulate Ms. Gabriele Goettsche-Wanli, the new Director, on her appointment to lead the Division she knows well and where she has dedicated a large part of her career as an international civil servant. Monaco feels that it is extremely important for Member States to be able to count on the professionalism and devotion of a cohesive and dynamic team, which will enable the Secretary-General to fulfil his obligations as the depositary of the central legal instrument for oceans and seas, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

In thanking the Secretary-General for his many reports, I would also like to welcome the leadership of the co-Chairs of the Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea and the

work of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group on marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction, as well as the facilitators of the two draft resolutions (A/68/L.18 and A/68/L.19), which Monaco co-sponsors.

I welcome the presence among us of the Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority, Mr. Nii Allotey Odunton, and of the President of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, Mr. Shunji Yanai.

My delegation is pleased that the work we have carried out in recent months concerning oceans and the law of the sea has been productive. The fourteenth meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, which dedicated its work to the impacts of ocean acidification on the marine environment, was very important at a time when ocean acidification is reaching levels that have not existed for 30 million years and that are now threatening all aspects of marine life. Industrial aquaculture and the natural fauna are already suffering from ocean acidification. The possible effects of acidification on the absorption of sound could also have harmful consequences for the reproduction of marine mammals.

That phenomenon is seriously threatening small island developing States as well as coastal developing States. It also threatens to destroy all sustainable development efforts, because measures to mitigate the effects and to adapt to the changes due to acidification come on top of those related to sea-level rise and extreme weather events, which are consequences of climate change.

It is also important that the General Assembly recall the importance of provisions in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea related to marine scientific research and the related technology transfer. Monaco has been committed to this area for many years, and it will continue to support marine scientific research. The Ocean Acidification International Coordination Centre, created last year in the Environment Laboratories of the International Atomic Energy Agency, is called upon to develop and cooperate with other institutions in order to contribute to the development of knowledge, which is the only thing that will enable us to adopt a strategy that takes into account the social, economic and environmental dimensions of ocean acidification.

The intersessional work and the work at the meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction have also enabled progress in understanding the challenges and difficulties of a topic that is essential for an integrated approach to conservation and the sustainable exploitation of marine biodiversity. In accordance with the draft resolution (A/68/L.18) that the Assembly will soon adopt, next year we will begin consideration of the scope, parameters and feasibility of an international instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. I would like to briefly highlight three other topics in the omnibus draft resolution.

First, we note that trafficking in natural resources has intensified and is one of the most serious threats to the development of the least developed countries. The transnational nature of those illegal activities and the existence of links with organized criminal networks require further strengthening of international cooperation. We therefore welcome INTERPOL's Project Scale against illegal fishing. Although recently created, it has had significant successes. We also welcome the mechanisms established by the European Union that entered into force on 1 January 2010.

The draft resolution we are considering today also has several paragraphs dedicated to piracy and transnational organized crime, including human trafficking, which is afflicting several regions of the world. Beyond the human rights violations, it also threatens maritime traffic and the security of crews and affects tourism, to cite a few consequences of those scourges. My delegation is paying great attention to those issues and assures the bodies and institutions concerned of its support.

Lastly, we express our satisfaction with the new mandate and terms of reference that the General Assembly is preparing to approve for UN-Oceans. The various entities that comprise UN-Oceans have our full trust. Monaco considers that the cooperation of all partners and coordination of their respective activities under their mandates are essential for the implementation of the policies established by Member States.

The omnibus draft resolution makes many references to the outcome document, "The future we want", that our Heads of State and of Government adopted at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 (resolution 66/288, annex). It is even more relevant now, since issues related to oceans

and seas are essential in the definition of a framework for the implementation of "The future we want" and the post-2015 development agenda.

Allow me to recall the appeal launched by His Serene Highness Prince Albert II in September 2013, during the general debate at the Assembly's sixty-eighth session:

"In accordance with the Monaco Message on the acknowledged importance of the oceans in 'The future we want' (resolution 66/288, annex), which was adopted in November 2011, I am once again committing to promoting the role of the oceans in the definition of the post-2015 agenda and to reiterating my support for a sustainable development goal focusing on the oceans. Climate regulation, food and nutrition security, energy, tourism, transport and international trade — all areas that directly or indirectly affect the oceans — are linked to the three pillars of sustainable development. I think it is also essential to reaffirm how fundamental the oceans are to the world and how serious are the risks presented to them through the excessive human activity that contributes to their acidification and the acceleration of the drop in the resources they contain." (A/68/PV.5, p. 48).

The questions related to oceans and seas are considered each year in a plenary meeting of the General Assembly, such as the one today. The definition of sustainable development goals also falls under the mandate of the Assembly. There can be no contradiction between those mandates. There should, on the contrary, be convergence.

I would also like to insist on the importance given by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to landlocked States. That should be emphasized because, far from favouring coastal States, a sustainable development goal for oceans must recognize the dominant role of healthy and protected oceans for all States, island, coastal or landlocked. The intrinsic link between life on land and life in the oceans and seas obliges us, if we truly wish to adopt an inclusive, sustainable development framework for future generations, to define a sustainable development goal for oceans and seas.

That does not mean modifying the various institutions and convention bodies that act in the various sectors of conservation and management, nor becoming involved in programme implementation. A

sustainable development goal could, on the other hand, allow increased political mobilization for the most urgent priorities. As an example, the Monaco Message, adopted in November 2011, envisages three axes of sustainable development for oceans: food security, energy and sustainable tourism.

In the energy sector, Monaco is a trailblazer for seawater heat-pump technology. Since 2011 it has been involved in the project Optima Pac, the Mediterranean Sea competitiveness hub that seeks to build a true industrial sector of marine thermal energy. Monaco has approximately 70 pumps on its coastline, which produce between 15 and 20 per cent of the energy that it uses. In using those sites, the project brings university research laboratories in oceanology and industries together in a consortium with know-how and skills that mobilize researchers and engineers.

Another priority for Monaco is the development of marine protected areas. Monaco participated in the third International Marine Protected Areas Congress, held from 21 to 28 October in two iconic French cities on the Mediterranean, Marseille and Ajaccio. Co-organized by the French Agency for Marine Protected Areas and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, the Congress, which meets every four years, brought together nearly 1,500 participants, scientists, managers, elected officials and non-governmental organizations from 87 nations from around the world.

Monaco is working alongside the international community to redouble efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by the 2015 deadline. The post-2015 development framework and definition of the sustainable development goals must, in line with the commitment made in 2012 at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, grant to the oceans and seas the dominant place they hold for the survival of our planet and the sustainability of life on Earth.

**Mr. Ishikawa (Japan):** Let me first join the other representatives in thanking the coordinators of draft resolutions A/68/L.18 and A/68/L.19 — Ambassador Eden Charles, Deputy Permanent Representative of Trinidad and Tobago, and Ms. Alice Revell of New Zealand — for their tremendous work. I also wish to thank all Member States who have worked together in a spirit of cooperation during the informal consultations on the resolutions. My appreciation also goes to the Secretariat for its assistance.

With regards to sub-item (a) of agenda item 76, “Oceans and the law of the sea,” we would like to point out that Japan is a maritime State surrounded by water. It is dependent on maritime transport for nearly all imports of energy resources, including oil and mineral resources.

To advance the rule of law in the oceans, commons for the international community as a whole, compliance with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, is extremely important. The Convention prescribes principles such as safety at sea, freedom of the high seas comprising freedom of navigation and freedom of overflight, and peaceful settlement of disputes. The adoption of the draft resolution, which contains the aforesaid principles, as the consensual will of the Member States is also very important for maritime States like Japan and for the whole international community. Therefore, Japan is pleased to co-sponsor draft resolution A/68/L.18, on oceans and the law of the sea.

Japan would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the accession to the Convention by the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste and the Republic of the Niger.

Japan highly appreciates the important role the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea plays in the peaceful settlement of disputes and the maintenance and development of the rule of law for the oceans. While cases have been continually submitted to the Tribunal, Japan welcomes the fact that the Tribunal’s work covers various fields and that the number of its achievements has further increased. They include the response to the request for an advisory opinion from the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission, the order in the *M/V “Louisa”* case and the prompt deliveries of orders in response to requests for provisional measures in a number of cases. Japan, as the largest contributor to the Tribunal’s budget, is committed to continuing its full support for the valuable work of the Tribunal.

Japan considers the election of persons of competence to be one of the most important elements for the further development of the Tribunal’s activities. From that viewpoint, Japan decided to renominate President Shunji Yanai of the Tribunal as a candidate in the election of members of the Tribunal, which is to be held in June 2014. President Yanai has been a member of the Tribunal since 2005 and its President since 2011.



With regard to the International Seabed Authority, Japan welcomes the approval by the Council of a plan of work for exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crust by Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation, during the nineteenth session of the Authority, in July of this year. Since its establishment, Japan has attached importance to the role to be played by the Authority in the international management of exploration for and exploitation of mineral resources in the Area, known as the common heritage of mankind. Japan highly appreciates that the Authority has steadily carried out its mission to establish maritime legal order in the Area, including the amendments to the Regulations on Prospecting and Exploration for Polymetallic Nodules in the Area.

In view of the importance of ensuring a well-balanced approach between exploration and environmental protection of the Area, Japan highly values the Authority's activities on those issues in adopting the guidance for contractors for the assessment of the possible environmental impacts arising from exploration of marine minerals in the Area, and the workshops organized by the Authority. Japan has been supporting activities undertaken by the Authority with both human and financial resources, including its contribution to the Voluntary Trust Fund of the International Seabed Authority in the amount of \$44,760 this year. Japan would like to express its intention to continue its support for the Authority in various fields.

Japan wishes to pay tribute to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf for its tremendous efforts in expediting its consideration of the numerous submissions through such measures as extending the duration of the Commission's sessions and establishing a new subcommission. Bearing in mind the Commission's important role under the Convention, Japan, as part of its human resources contribution, nominated a member of the Commission. Also this year, Japan made an additional contribution of \$352,100 to the Trust Fund in order to defray the costs of participation in the Commission's meetings by Commission members from developing States. Japan firmly believes that voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund by States parties will promote the smooth and expeditious consideration of the Commission's submissions.

Regarding maritime safety and security issues, we can say that, although we witnessed a marked reduction in the volume of pirate attacks off the coast of Somalia

and in the Gulf of Aden, the situation has remained unpredictable. Japan is of the view that, to suppress piracy, a multilayered approach that includes assistance to enhancing maritime law-enforcement capacity in Somalia and its neighbouring countries and other medium- to long-term efforts for stability in Somalia, in addition to operations by naval vessels, must be pursued.

Japan has been deploying destroyers and patrol aircraft to the region since 2009. In addition, Japan has contributed to enhancing maritime law-enforcement capacity, including through the disbursement of \$14.6 million to the International Maritime Organization Djibouti Code Trust Fund. Further, Japan has contributed \$3.5 million to the Trust Fund to Support the Initiative of States Countering Piracy off the Coast of Somalia. Japan also continues to play a leading role within the framework of the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia.

With regard to sub-item (b) of agenda item 76, entitled "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," as a responsible fishing State and a State party to United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the 1995 Fish Stocks Agreement, Japan is dedicated to addressing the promotion of sustainable use through the conservation and management of marine living resources and the appropriate conservation of the marine ecosystem, in cooperation with the parties concerned, through bilateral fisheries agreements, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and regional fisheries management organizations.

Japan welcomes recent developments in the management of high-seas bottom fishing, including the conclusion of arrangements concerning the establishment of new regional fisheries management organizations, which reflects past resolutions on sustainable fisheries, especially the ones adopted in 2006 (resolution 61/105) and 2009 (resolution 64/72). Japan will further promote the management of high-seas bottom fishing through efforts to enable those arrangements to enter into force at the earliest date, in cooperation with other parties and related organizations.

Before concluding, Japan reiterates its wish that the two draft resolutions before us, which are the result of intensive negotiations among Member States, which worked in a spirit of cooperation during the informal consultations, will be duly adopted at this session of the General Assembly.

**Mr. De Vega** (Philippines): At the outset, we thank Ambassador Eden Charles of Trinidad and Tobago and Ms. Alice Revell of New Zealand for their hard work, commitment and dedication in coordinating our annual draft resolutions on oceans and the law of the sea (A/68/L.18) and on sustainable fisheries (A/68/L.19), respectively.

At a combined 84 pages, the two draft resolutions taken together easily represent the most comprehensive subject that we consider on an annual basis. But that should not be surprising if we remember that, first, water covers two thirds of the planet's surface and, secondly, half of the planet's surface comprises high seas beyond the jurisdiction of any State.

Sustained global cooperation on ocean matters is paramount. Every day, the United Nations, its relevant specialized agencies, other international and regional governmental organizations and, of course, our own capitals discuss and take critical decisions on ocean matters. The gamut of issues is endless, from sustainable fisheries and the preservation of marine biodiversity to the delimitation of the continental shelf, the exploration and exploitation of minerals in the deep seabed, shipping, marine pollution, ocean acidification and climate change, scientific research, capacity-building and the settlement of disputes concerning rights and obligations arising out of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Last year, in Montego Bay, Jamaica, we commemorated the thirtieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The Convention — our constitution for the oceans — seeks to ensure global and regional peace, the rule of law and cooperation and stability in the just and sustainable use of marine natural resources.

The draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea builds on previous years' resolutions and contributes to the rules-based international regime. It articulates our deepening concern over the continued threat posed by human activity on marine environments and biodiversity. It once more reflects the key elements of the outcome document — "The future we want" — of the Rio de

Janeiro United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), held last year. The Rio+20 Conference recognized that oceans, seas and coastal areas formed an integrated and essential component of the planet's ecosystem, and are therefore critical to sustaining it. Most important for coastal developing countries and small landlocked States, the draft resolution also recognizes the importance of improving our understanding of the impact of climate change on oceans and seas.

In that regard, let me reiterate the Philippines' deepest gratitude to the Secretary-General and the entire team here at Headquarters and in the field, and to all Member States and international civil society, for their sustained outpouring of generosity, concern and support for our people since the unprecedented tragedy wrought by Typhoon Haiyan exactly one month ago in the Philippines. I thank them all very much. We shall never forget.

Now more than ever, we must take action to arrest marine pollution, including marine debris, which compromises the health of the oceans and of marine biodiversity. We also need to reverse the adverse economic, social and environmental impacts of the physical alteration and destruction of marine habitats that might result from land-based and coastal development activities. In that vein, the Manila Declaration on Furthering the Implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, referred to paragraph 174 of the draft resolution, points the way.

Next year will be another important year. In the spring, we will look forward to the first draft of the integrated global marine assessment, to be issued by the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects. We thank Portugal, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Argentina for their expert leadership of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole of the General Assembly on the Regular Process.

We also look forward to the three meetings 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, co-chaired by Sri Lanka and the Netherlands. The meetings will determine the

feasibility of launching negotiations for a treaty on this very important topic.

With a full quarter of the world's total population of seafarers, 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, referenced in paragraph 88 of the draft resolution, is consistent with our commitment.

The Philippines also supports the acceleration of the work of the three bodies created by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, namely, the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf; the International Seabed Authority, which will hold its twentieth session in Kingston next year; and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, which last year delivered its first-ever maritime delimitation judgment in the case between Bangladesh and Myanmar.

Turning briefly to the sustainable fisheries draft resolution, I would like to recall our global commitment undertaken in Rio de Janeiro — first, to eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; secondly, to eliminate subsidies that contribute to such fishing and over-capacity; and, thirdly, to enhance actions to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems from significant adverse impacts, including through the effective use of impact assessments. Those commitments carry over into our current draft resolution.

In addition, the draft resolution deals with many other critical issues, such as ensuring that the decisions taken by regional fisheries management organizations are based on the best available scientific information, the implementation of plans of action for the conservation and management of sharks, and the impact of industrial fishing on species low down on the food chain, given their important role as food for other species in the marine ecosystem. In that regard, the Philippines welcomes the selection of the topic of the role of seafood in global food security for the fifteenth United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, to be held next year.

In conclusion, we reiterate the call on all States that have not yet done so to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and contribute to its universality. The Convention stands the test of time, anchoring the rule of law and governing the rights

and responsibilities of nations — big and small, rich and poor, coastal and landlocked — in their use of the world's oceans. Its rules-based approach is also the way forward in addressing maritime disputes. We renew our call on those involved to avail themselves of the dispute-settlement mechanism in the Convention, even as we ask them to sustain the dialogue and continue exploring opportunities for cooperation to fulfil our shared aspirations.

**Ms. Villalta Vizcarra** (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of El Salvador, to commend the President for organizing today's debate on agenda item 76, entitled "Oceans and the law of the sea". Through you, Sir, I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his reports (A/68/71 and A/68/71/Add.1). I am also grateful for the reports on the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole (A/68/82) and of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process (A/68/159). Allow me, in the context of today's debate, to speak before the General Assembly on the issue of the Gulf of Fonseca.

The Government of the Republic of El Salvador would respectfully like to recall before the international community the proposal of the President of El Salvador, set forth in his statement to the General Assembly on 26 September 2007, aimed at establishing a regime for comprehensive and sustainable development with the participation and consent of the three coastal countries concerned (see A/62/PV.6). As a result of that proposal the Managua Declaration: the Gulf of Fonseca, a zone of peace, sustainable development and security, was signed on 4 October 2007, subsequently ratified by the Presidents of El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua on 30 March 2012. In addition, in their joint statement of 4 December 2012, the Presidents agreed to set up a tri-national commission with a view to maintaining the Gulf of Fonseca as a zone of peace, sustainable development and security. The commission would be presided over by the Foreign Ministers of the three countries to show the international community that all matters relative to the Gulf of Fonseca would be addressed by the commission. In that way, once again, a contribution was made in the effective observance of the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and of the Charter of the Organization of American States in terms of maintaining international peace and security.

With regard to the international legal status of the Gulf of Fonseca, the Gulf has been considered a gulf since time immemorial as was established in colonial documents and in royal decrees issued by the Spanish Crown since 1522. The name “Gulf of Fonseca” has been identified in numerous international instruments, such as the ruling of the Central American Court of Justice of 9 March 1907, the General Peace Treaty signed by El Salvador and Honduras on 30 October 1980, the compromise reached by El Salvador and Honduras on 24 May 1986 that brought the border dispute between the two States to the International Court of Justice, the Managua Declaration of 4 October 2007, and the Presidential Agreement of the Union of 2 April 2008. Each of those documents, *inter alia*, correctly uses “Gulf of Fonseca”.

El Salvador, as set forth in its letter dated 11 November 2013 addressed to the Secretary-General and made available to the General Assembly in document A/68/581, as well as to the Secretary General of the Organization of American States, is a country that respects its international obligations and has always advocated in favour of full compliance with the terms of the ruling handed down by the International Court of Justice on 11 September 1992, which set forth that for compliance with the maritime aspect, there must be an agreement based on international law, agreed upon by the Republics of El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua.

As I mentioned, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua participate in a tri-national commission that addresses the following matters: the protection of the environment and marine, coastal and land species; the promotion of sustainable tourism and social and community development; the economic and social development of the area; the strengthening of municipalities in the three countries; infrastructure and port development; and security and defence.

As a result of discussions in the commission, draft instruments and framework cooperation agreements are developed in the areas of environmental improvement, sustainable development and the protection of marine species in the waters of the Gulf of Fonseca, the development of tourism, port development, defence and security — all in compliance with the Managua Declaration and future regulations of its working group.

In step with the spirit of the Managua Declaration, in which we conceive of the Gulf of Fonseca as a

zone of peace, sustainable development and security, numerous actions and projects have been proposed aimed at using a tri-national focus to take advantage of the potential of the area for the preservation of the ecosystem, the development of tourism regionally and internationally, and for scientific research and the sustainable exploitation of the living resources in the Gulf. It is also an effort aimed at ensuring the security of the communities that live and work in the area.

In that framework, we are also working on proposals for economic development in the Gulf of Fonseca, through such projects as the establishment of a ferry system, a shipyard and future tax-free zones at the boarding and disembarkation points in the three countries. There is also an effort to bring to the area and environmental conservation and marine museum and a tri-national centre for marine research, with a view to bringing experts together from the three countries to promote research on, and conservation of, the area’s ecosystem and train students from each of the three nations. It is thought that an appropriate management of the area could eventually lead to the Gulf of Fonseca becoming a protected zone under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat, or a candidate for UNESCO biosphere reserve status, both of which are types of areas known for conservation, biodiversity protection, economic and human development activities in those zones, as well as research, education and global information exchange between different biosphere reserves globally.

El Salvador currently has a new perception of the importance of the law of the sea, of oceans and of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, as well as of the benefits that come for countries with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. That is why we are studying all of those elements in order to make decisions on our new ocean vision.

Allow me, in conclusion, to extend an invitation to a side event entitled “Gulf of Fonseca: challenges and opportunities for sustainable development”, to be held in Conference Room C on 11 December at 1.15 p.m. At that event, we hope to continue to address and discuss with all participants this topic of such great importance for my country and my region.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*