



General Assembly

Distr.: General
9 September 2022

Original: English

Seventy-seventh session

Item 73 (a) of the provisional agenda*

Oceans and the law of the sea

Oceans and the law of the sea

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report, which covers the period from 1 September 2021 to 31 August 2022, is submitted pursuant to paragraph 371 of General Assembly resolution [76/72](#). It is also being submitted to States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, pursuant to article 319 of the Convention. The report contains information on major developments relating to ocean affairs and the law of the sea at the United Nations and its specialized agencies, funds, programmes and bodies, as well as in other intergovernmental organizations.

* [A/77/150](#).

** Owing to word count limits for reports mandated by the General Assembly, an advance, unedited version of the report, with comprehensive footnotes, is available on the website of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea at:
www.un.org/depts/los/general_assembly/general_assembly_reports.htm.



I. Introduction

1. The ocean provides more than half the oxygen needed for life on the planet, the main source of food for over a billion people and employment for almost 40 million individuals, yet it remains under constant threat from human activities.
2. Approximately 8 million tons of plastic waste enter the ocean every year, disrupting marine life and threatening coastal communities, in particular in small island developing States that depend heavily on fishing and tourism. Plastic pollution has reached the deepest ocean trenches. Nearly 80 per cent of wastewater is discharged into the ocean and seas without treatment and coastal dead zones are growing. Fish stocks are harvested at unsustainable levels, coral reefs are bleaching and dying, and marine ecosystems are degrading.
3. Climate change also continues to have an impact on the ocean, as sea level rise, ocean heat and ocean acidification broke new records in 2021.
4. Building upon the outcomes of significant ocean-related meetings in 2022, including the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development and the intergovernmental conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, collective action is urgently needed to address threats to the ocean and restore its health for prosperity in order to realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including Goal 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development) and its 10 targets.
5. The United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, which covers the period 2021–2030, provides an important opportunity to improve ocean health by increasing understanding and providing scientific support for policies and innovations that enhance the sustainable development of the ocean.
6. The legal framework for all activities in the oceans and seas is well-established in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the world’s “constitution for the oceans”, with 2022 marking the fortieth anniversary of its adoption.
7. The present report highlights key activities and developments relating to ocean affairs and the law of the sea, including those undertaken by the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations pursuant to General Assembly resolution 76/72. It should be read together with other reports relevant to oceans and the law of the sea issued by the United Nations during the period under review, as well as the detailed contributions provided by the United Nations and its specialized agencies, funds, programmes and bodies, as well as in other intergovernmental organizations.¹

II. Impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on ocean issues

8. During the reporting period, ocean-related activities gradually resumed, following the coronavirus disease (COVID-19)-related disruptions of the previous two years. Considerable efforts were made to ensure the sustainable, inclusive and environmentally resilient recovery of key sectors of the ocean-based economy, with

¹ All contributions are available at: www.un.org/Depts/los/general_assembly/contributions77.htm.

particular emphasis on small island developing States and those disproportionately affected by the pandemic. Despite the recovery of some sectors, the pandemic continued to have an impact on the ocean-based economy, as well as on individuals and communities that rely on the ocean and its resources.

9. Precarious conditions and inequalities suffered by seafarers and fishers were exacerbated by the pandemic, as they faced challenges in relation to their health, safety and well-being, including the ability to join vessels and be repatriated. Seafarers experienced insufficient access to medical care, vaccines and shore leave, as well as unprecedented cases of abandonment, prompting continuing calls to designate seafarers as “key workers”.

10. The COVID-19 pandemic continued to compound social challenges and exacerbate inequalities. Informal workers, migrants and women in the fishing industry were often excluded from government pandemic-relief programmes and had limited access to health care, social security coverage or paid sick leave. The decimation of jobs and opportunities increased poverty and slowed progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

11. Global fisheries and aquaculture were affected by a decline in demand and production, a reduction in income and disruptions to monitoring, control and surveillance. Mitigation of and adaption to the pandemic were largely determined by industry resilience and national capabilities, including through the enhanced use of digital tools and the diversification of supply sources and markets. Ongoing capacity-building and awareness-raising initiatives provided an opportunity to galvanize action to support artisanal and small-scale fisheries, including in the context of the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (2022).

12. Moderate growth is expected for maritime trade in the 2022–2026 period, with the caveat of pandemic-related uncertainties. While the short-term outlook was favourable, pandemic-accelerated trends, such as decreased reliance on distant foreign suppliers, digitalization, autonomous shipping and decarbonization, could reshape the future shipping landscape.

13. Ocean observing activities continued despite interruptions in research vessel operations that impeded the deployment and replacement of measuring equipment. Studies on the long-term impacts of the pandemic on ocean science are ongoing.

14. Events and capacity-building activities resumed in person and in hybrid format, and were often tailored to create better response measures to counter the impacts of the pandemic.

III. Legal and policy framework

15. Ocean-related meetings held in 2022, as well as during events commemorating the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, saw renewed calls for universal participation in the Convention and its implementing agreements.

16. As at 31 August 2022, the number of parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and to the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 remained at 168 and 151, respectively. The number of parties to the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks increased from 91 to 92, following the accession of Togo on 11 May 2022.

17. Further progress on the development of the legal framework for the oceans and seas was made at the fourth session of the intergovernmental conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, held from 7 to 18 March 2022. A fifth session, convened from 15 to 26 August 2022 and guided by a further revised draft text of an agreement prepared by the President of the Conference, made substantial progress towards the finalization of the text of an agreement related to marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. Owing to lack of time, the session was suspended at the close of the allotted two-week period and is to be resumed at a date to be determined.

18. Following resumption of the in-person sessions of the International Seabed Authority in December 2021, its Council endorsed a road map to advance work on the draft regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area. A call was made during the thirty-second Meeting of States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea for a 15-year extension of the two-year deadline to complete the adoption of the rules, regulations and procedures necessary to facilitate the approval of plans of work for exploitation in the Area based on the need, inter alia, to obtain sufficient scientific information to avoid potentially irreversible damage to deep-sea ecosystems.

19. Following its postponement in 2020, the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 was held in Lisbon from 27 June to 1 July 2022 and resulted in the adoption of a declaration entitled “Our ocean, our future, our responsibility”, in which the need to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, was affirmed. This topic was also the subject of one of the interactive dialogues held at the Conference.

IV. Maritime spaces

20. The bodies established under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, namely, the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, the International Seabed Authority and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, continued their activities contributing to the implementation of the Convention with respect to maritime zones and boundaries, albeit with some limitations resulting from the pandemic, including postponements and operational adjustments.

21. With the general easing of pandemic-related restrictions, the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf resumed in-person meetings for its fifty-third, fifty-fourth and fifty-fifth sessions. Further to the decision by the Meeting of States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to extend the five-year term of office of the current members of the Commission by one year on an exceptional basis, 20 members of the Commission were elected at the thirty-second Meeting of States Parties and will begin their five-year term of office on 16 June 2023.

22. In addition to its work on the draft regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area, the Council of the International Seabed Authority approved eight applications for the extension of approved plans of work for exploration for polymetallic nodules and continued work to implement and further develop regional environmental management plans and advance marine scientific research in the Area.

23. With regard to the peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with part XV of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, consideration of a number

of cases was concluded: *The M/T “San Padre Pio” (No. 2) case (Switzerland/Nigeria)* was discontinued by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea by agreement of the parties; the International Court of Justice delivered its judgment in the cases concerning *Maritime Delimitation in the Indian Ocean (Somalia v. Kenya)* and *Alleged Violations of Sovereign Rights and Maritime Spaces in the Caribbean Sea (Nicaragua v. Colombia)*; and arbitral proceedings, administered by the Permanent Court of Arbitration, in *The “Enrica Lexie” Incident (Italy v. India)* were closed.

24. States parties deposited charts or lists of geographical coordinates of points concerning baselines and the outer limits of maritime zones.²

V. Importance of the human dimension

25. Cumulative pressures on the ocean and its resources pose direct threats to the people whose lives and livelihoods depend on them, in particular fishers, seafarers and other workers in ocean sectors and in coastal communities. The effects of climate change are a matter of urgent concern, especially in the protection of vulnerable populations in small island developing States and least developed countries.

A. Labour at sea

26. As the COVID-19 pandemic continued to have a negative impact on seafarers and fishers, International Labour Organization (ILO) member States committed to a human-centred recovery from the pandemic that was fully inclusive, sustainable and resilient, as well as to the accelerated implementation of the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work adopted in 2019 (A/73/918, see also General Assembly resolution 73/342). States emphasized policies that addressed inequalities and prioritized the creation of decent work for all, including specific measures to promote quality employment and economic development, worker protections, universal social protection and social dialogue.

27. The COVID-19 pandemic also led to a spike in cases of seafarer abandonment, with only 31 of 95 cases being resolved in 2021. The number of reported cases in 2022 as at the date of the present report was already 46. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) member States were called upon to ratify and implement the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, and other relevant international instruments to address those challenges. The IMO Legal Committee also endorsed guidelines for port State and flag State authorities on how to address seafarer abandonment cases.

28. An ILO special tripartite committee adopted resolutions relating to COVID-19 vaccinations for seafarers and the implementation and practical application of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, during the pandemic, as well as eight amendments to the Code of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, to improve the living and working conditions of seafarers, drawing upon lessons learned, including the provision of personal protective gear and the repatriation of abandoned seafarers. The committee also adopted resolutions on harassment and bullying, sexual assault and sexual harassment in the maritime sector, contractual redress for seafarers, and ensuring a greater degree of protection and assistance for abandoned seafarers.

29. The Executive Committee established by the Secretary-General set up an ad hoc inter-agency task force to consider, inter alia, the responsibilities of parties to the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, relevant to the protection of the rights of seafarers during the COVID-19 pandemic and their recognition as key workers. ILO

² See www.un.org/Depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/depositpublicity.htm.

also established a joint action group on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on transport workers and the global supply chain tasked with identifying challenges faced by seafarers and transport workers; identifying gaps in, and raising awareness of, existing international guidance and operational protocols; and identifying countries for specific, coordinated action. The ILO Joint Maritime Commission agreed to raise the minimum basic wage for an able seafarer.

30. Collaboration continued among ILO, IMO and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), as well as other specialized agencies, to ensure the safety and security of seafarers, fishers and others working in the maritime sectors. FAO supported small-scale fisheries at the global, regional and national levels on various matters, including the empowerment of women, through capacity development trainings on post-harvest practices as a way to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on small-scale fishing.

Gender equality and ocean issues

31. Women continued to constitute a significant proportion of the global fisheries and aquaculture workforces. However, they faced increasing challenges in getting access to decent work and suffered from discrimination, poor working conditions and limited social protection. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) proposed 10 guiding principles for gender mainstreaming in the integrated management of coastal and marine ecosystems, in the light of the different impacts that coastal and marine degradation have on men and women.³

32. ILO collaborated with the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Association des consultants cadres pour le développement multisectoriel et intégré du Sud to support resilient communities and the empowerment of women through fish processing in Madagascar. ILO published a strategy report aimed at increasing the visibility of gender inequality within the fishing and seafood processing sectors and resetting it through a gender transformative approach.

33. To address the underrepresentation of women in ocean science and facilitate collective action, the International Gender Champions network launched the Impact Group on Research and Oceans for Women. The International Seabed Authority conducted a gender mapping exercise of the deep-sea research field in least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, as part of the Women in Deep-Sea Research project. In the shipping sector, IMO designated 18 May as the “International Day for Women in Maritime”.

B. Migration by sea

34. Amid ongoing restrictions on movement due to the COVID-19 pandemic, refugees and migrants continued to resort to dangerous irregular journeys by sea in search of international protection or a better life, with thousands of individuals dying or reported missing. Smuggled migrants risked being trafficked, kidnapped or subjected to inhuman and degrading treatment. In some regions, the absence of an effective search and rescue system resulted in non-response or lengthy delays in disembarkation.

35. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) continued to offer support to national authorities in the establishment of regular and safe migration pathways, as well as safe disembarkation and the implementation of protection-sensitive entry systems for vulnerable people arriving by sea to help to

³ United Nations Environment Programme, *Gender Mainstreaming in Coastal and Marine Ecosystems Management: Principles, Case Studies and Lessons Learned* (2022).

prevent refoulement, reduce the use of irregular migration routes at sea and deter the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons, including through regional forums, such as the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime.

36. UNHCR repeatedly called for greater search and rescue coordination among States, particularly in the Mediterranean, and for States to provide granular data on refugees and migrants disembarked after rescue at sea, without which targeted programmes remain a challenge. Several agencies issued a joint statement that included a call to further develop, in line with international law, the requirement of delivering persons retrieved at sea to a place of safety.

37. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) launched a project on strengthening transregional action and responses to counter the smuggling of migrants and protect their rights across multiple migration routes. UNODC also worked with Bangladesh through the Global Action against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants in respect of the Andaman Sea.

38. International cooperation on migration included the first International Migration Review Forum, held at United Nations Headquarters in New York in May 2022, to review progress in implementing the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. The Forum concluded with the adoption of a progress declaration (subsequently endorsed by the General Assembly by its resolution 76/266), aimed, inter alia, at developing safe and predictable arrival procedures for all migrants, promoting responsibility-sharing in providing a place of safety in accordance with international law and developing search and rescue procedures with the primary objective of protecting the right to life.

VI. Maritime safety and security

39. In addressing challenges faced by seafarers from the COVID-19 pandemic, efforts were made to improve living and working conditions on the basis of lessons learned. IMO adopted comprehensive actions, including by consolidating issues related to crew change, access to medical care, “key worker” designation and the prioritization of seafarers for COVID-19 vaccination.

40. The IMO Council held an extraordinary session to consider the impacts on shipping and seafarers in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, at which IMO committees were requested to enhance efforts to support affected seafarers and commercial ships and to consider implications of the implementation of IMO instruments. The IMO Maritime Safety Committee urged the IMO secretariat to continue its efforts with regard to the establishment of safe maritime corridors and the safe evacuation of seafarers from the affected area. Actions to facilitate the evacuation of seafarers from the war zone area were also adopted.

41. Following its regulatory scoping exercise, the Maritime Safety Committee continued work on a regulatory framework for maritime autonomous surface ships. It agreed to develop a goal-based instrument to regulate the operation of such ships with a target completion date of 2025 and approved a road map for developing a goal-based code for them.

42. IMO continued to develop further mandatory provisions and non-mandatory guidelines for ships operating in Arctic and Antarctic waters, including the consideration of the application of the International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters to ships not covered by the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974. Its Maritime Safety Committee also adopted amendments to the

Convention to modernize the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System and improve radiocommunications in polar waters.

43. Work continued on the prevention of fraudulent registration and registries of ships, with the IMO Assembly encouraging IMO member States to review national laws relating to the prevention and suppression of all forms of maritime fraud and urging Governments to take cooperative measures to combat maritime fraud, including by exchanging information and reporting the names of ships and registries involved in fraudulent acts.

44. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) continued to collaborate with IMO and the International Hydrographic Organization on coordinated and standardized meteorological and oceanographic information, forecasts and warning services for safety at sea. The International Hydrographic Organization supported the creation and maintenance of interoperable maritime data product specifications. The International Whaling Commission focused on collaborative ways to minimize ship strikes and developing a ship strike database. The Pacific Islands Forum began work to revive the role of traditional knowledge to inform work on oceans, including maritime safety, and to establish a regional expert working group on cultural and traditional knowledge. UNODC continued to provide guidance to create a framework for submarine cables protection and resilience in the eastern Indian Ocean. It also provided technical assistance in Yemen on port security, including the safeguarding of Internet cables and coastguard response to the disruption of global maritime trade routes.

45. Ongoing efforts continued to address a wide range of crimes at sea, including piracy and armed robbery against ships; migrant, drug and weapon smuggling, including that of nuclear materials and firearms; trafficking in persons; illegal traffic in hazardous wastes and other wastes and illegal traffic in hazardous chemicals; illegal trade in marine species; fisheries offences, including illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; illegal bunkering; and intentional damage to submarine cables and the marine environment. Port security also remained a high priority.

46. Piracy and armed robbery against ships continued to decrease globally in 2021. In the first half of 2022, the International Maritime Bureau received the lowest number of reported incidents for the first half of any year since 1994; however, some areas saw an increased number of incidents, including the Singapore Strait.

47. The Security Council adopted resolution [2634 \(2022\)](#), in which it called upon Member States in the Gulf of Guinea region to, inter alia, criminalize piracy and armed robbery at sea under their domestic laws. The IMO Assembly adopted a resolution on the prevention and suppression of piracy, armed robbery against ships and illicit maritime activity in the Gulf of Guinea, in which it called upon IMO member States to assist in efforts to mitigate piracy in the region. Following the continued improvement of the situation off the coast of Somalia, the authorization in Council resolution [2608 \(2021\)](#) for States and regional organizations cooperating with Somalia to fight piracy off its coast expired in 2022. The trust fund to support initiatives of States countering piracy off the coast of Somalia also ceased its operations.

48. International cooperation to address other maritime crimes continued. UNODC provided training, capacity-building and technical assistance globally, including by convening maritime law enforcement dialogues in South-East Asia and supporting the Indian Ocean Forum on Maritime Crime. The United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa supported joint efforts of regional institutions on maritime safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea. United Nations entities also launched a consultative mechanism to address maritime security in the region. The International Criminal Police Organization

supported member countries in coordinating investigations and facilitating information exchange in relation to the kidnapping of seafarers in the Gulf of Guinea.

49. The European Union Naval Force Operation Atalanta continued to protect WFP vessels and other vulnerable vessels off the coast of Somalia. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia also continued to support the revitalization of the National Maritime Coordination Committee of Somalia.

VII. Climate change and the ocean

50. The ocean continues to absorb the vast majority of excess heat accumulating in the climate system as a result of increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases, as well as a significant proportion of anthropogenic carbon dioxide emissions, helping to slow climate change, but also leading to ocean warming, sea level rise and deoxygenation and acidification. The past seven years have been the warmest on record, with both ocean heat content and global mean sea level reaching their highest recorded values in 2021, while ocean acidification continues to increase.

51. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reported that climate change caused substantial damage and increasingly irreversible losses in coastal and ocean marine ecosystems, the extent and magnitude of which were larger than previously estimated. The widespread deterioration of ecosystem structure and function, resilience and natural adaptive capacity was observed, as well as shifts in seasonal timing, with adverse socioeconomic consequences, in addition to increases in extreme weather events, adverse effects on ocean-based food production, local losses of species and mass mortality events.

52. States increasingly recognized the important link between climate change and the ocean. The political declaration issued at the close of the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 highlighted the alarming effects of climate change on the ocean and marine life and the importance of implementing the Paris Agreement to reduce risks and impacts significantly and help to ensure the health, productivity, sustainable use and resilience of the ocean (General Assembly resolution 76/296, annex). A significant number of voluntary commitments relating to climate change were made by States and other stakeholders, including during an interactive dialogue dedicated to minimizing and addressing ocean acidification, deoxygenation and ocean warming.

53. In the Glasgow Climate Pact, adopted by the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change at its twenty-sixth session, in 2021, States integrated and strengthened ocean-based action in the Framework Convention processes, including by calling for an annual ocean and climate change dialogue. The 2022 annual dialogue focused on strengthening and integrating national ocean-climate action, enabling ocean-climate solutions, and optimizing institutional connections. Recognizing the importance of further monitoring and understanding climate change impacts and opportunities, calls were made for strengthened support for ocean observation systems.

54. In terms of mitigation, a significant increase in the level of ambition of nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement is needed to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C. An increase in ocean-related mitigation measures, already contained in many such contributions, could both assist in bridging the gap and provide significant economic opportunities.

55. In supporting mitigation efforts, IMO initiated a revision of its strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from shipping for possible adoption by 2023. IMO also adopted a resolution on black carbon in the Arctic, urging the voluntary use of cleaner

alternative fuels or methods of propulsion. Projects related to blue carbon ecosystems and ocean acidification were also reported.

56. With respect to adaptation, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Nairobi Work Programme expert group on oceans produced reports on coastal adaptation and nature-based solutions and enhancing the resilience of oceans, coastal areas and ecosystems. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) continued work on the impacts of climate change and extreme weather events on seaports and other critical coastal transport infrastructure to assist with the development of adaptation response measures. Various actions were taken by FAO, UNEP and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) to strengthen resilience, including that of vulnerable coastal communities and in relation to technologies to address the impacts of climate change. Capacity-building and technical assistance projects addressed the climate change vulnerability and poverty nexus. Through capacity-building, research and the provision of technical expertise, including relating to nuclear and nuclear-derived tools and techniques, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) continued to help States to address climate and ocean change impacts, including ocean acidification, deoxygenation and sea level rise. The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization developed guidelines for the study of climate change effects on harmful algal blooms.

57. In terms of financing, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change highlighted the need to mobilize public, private and innovative sources of finance to take advantage of the mitigation and adaptation potential of coastal and ocean-based activities and scale up financial and technical support for developing countries. UNCTAD estimated that adaptation costs in developing countries were 5 to 10 times greater than currently available adaptation finance and that the gap was widening. Urgent increases in adaptation finance remain necessary for developing countries, including small island developing States, as recognized in the Glasgow Climate Pact and affirmed at the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14.

VIII. Ocean sustainability

58. Ocean health continues to decline as a result of, among other factors, increased ocean acidification, eutrophication and plastic pollution, endangering the planet's largest ecosystem and affecting the livelihoods of billions of people. Transformative actions rooted in science, technology and innovation are needed to reverse the trend and achieve ocean sustainability, including through sustainable ocean-based economies that balance economic growth with environmental protection and social development. Advancing nature-based solutions, ecosystem-based approaches could help to ensure a sustainable, inclusive and environmentally resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, including by implementing a "source-to-sea" approach that directly addresses the links between land, water, coastal and marine ecosystems in support of holistic natural resources management and economic development.

59. Ocean sustainability remains a focus of global commitments to achieve the 2030 Agenda, as reflected in the outcomes of the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, and the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council on the theme "Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". Ocean sustainability also continued to guide the implementation of the Ocean Decade and remained a central focus in implementing

the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

60. Efforts to achieve ocean sustainability continued at all levels, including by developing and implementing regulatory frameworks, strategies, action plans and tools, promoting sustainable trade in ocean-related goods and services, advancing scientific knowledge and technological innovation, promoting cooperation, coordination and partnerships, building capacity and providing technical assistance, mobilizing resources, and mainstreaming gender perspectives and women's empowerment, as well as implementing international law, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and related instruments.

61. However, as highlighted in the *State of the Ocean Report 2022*, quantitative understanding of the ocean is drastically incomplete, and current knowledge is insufficient to inform solutions to ocean-related issues effectively. Further efforts are needed to, inter alia, communicate findings on the lack of quantitative knowledge on the ocean, promote the Ocean Decade as the prime platform to transform ocean science, support sustainable ocean planning and management and strengthen the ocean science-policy interface.

62. Many developing States, in particular least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, continue to face challenges in strengthening the means of implementation and in developing partnerships for ocean sustainability. Inadequate financing and investments for the development of sustainable ocean-based economies also remained a major challenge. Owing to fiscal constraints and high levels of external debts, which have been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as gaps in technical capacities, many small island developing States and least developed countries continued to face challenges in gaining access to financing, including through international capital markets. Many small island developing States continued to face limited access to concessional development finance, owing to the primary use of gross national income for allocating concessional finance, which was insufficient to capture their vulnerabilities. Innovative financing solutions are needed, including to leverage private and philanthropic funding, as well as blended finance instruments, such as risk insurance, debt swaps and blue bonds.

63. Steps were taken to address those challenges, including through the High-level Panel on the Development of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index for Small Island Developing States, which could help to facilitate access to concessional financing for developing sustainable ocean-based economies. The United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 also resulted in commitments on exploring, developing and promoting innovative financing solutions to drive the transformation to sustainable ocean-based economies and to address barriers to accessing financing.

A. Increasing knowledge and understanding and promoting marine science and technology

64. As highlighted at the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, held under the theme "Scaling up ocean action based on science and innovation for the implementation of Goal 14: stocktaking, partnerships and solutions", ocean science and science-based decision-making, as well as the need to further strengthen the science-policy interface, were crucial for the conservation and sustainable development of the oceans and their resources.

65. Significant progress was made to implement the vision of the Ocean Decade, with 43 programmes, 146 projects and 51 contributions endorsed as Decade Actions. Five Decade Collaborative Centres were established to provide coordination support, and the Advisory Board of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and 28 National Decade Committees became operational. At the regional level, six task forces acted as convening partners for the development and operationalization of regional plans and programmes. The Ocean Decade Africa Road Map was also launched and engagement with stakeholders continued.

66. During the twenty-second meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, held on the theme “Ocean observing”, delegations stressed the need to cooperate and collaborate at all levels to overcome capacity gaps, make data widely accessible and encourage data-sharing activities.

67. Under the Global Ocean Observing System, which consists of more than 8,900 ocean observing platforms across 12 global networks, the operation of networks affected by the COVID-19 pandemic resumed, though at a reduced scale. A co-design workshop was held with observing and modelling communities and key user stakeholders. The Executive Council of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission decided in June 2022 that information from member States on experiences regarding sustained observations in areas under national jurisdiction should be collated and reported to the Commission Assembly in 2023.

68. Specific actions were taken to further research on ocean acidification, deoxygenation, ocean and blue carbon, harmful algal blooms, marine invasive species, marine pollution, including marine litter, marine species and ecosystems, bathymetry and oceanography, and more generally to strengthen regional and national ocean observations, including early warning systems. New data were also collected for indicators 14.3.1 (Average marine acidity (pH) measured at agreed suite of representative sampling stations) and 14.a.1 (Proportion of total research budget allocated to research in the field of marine technology) of the Sustainable Development Goals, while data on indicator 14.4.1 (Proportion of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels) were assessed and reported in 2022. Data continued to be collected under the auspices of various conventions, together with the promotion, in some instances, of technology transfer.

69. Efforts were under way to improve data management and sharing. The International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange network comprises 93 national data centres, while the Ocean Biodiversity Information System saw an exponential increase in its data records, containing nearly 100 million occurrences drawn from 4,000 data sets. The WMO Unified Data Policy was approved and requires WMO member States to make certain ocean observation data freely available. Work continued on standardizing hydrographic frameworks and deep-sea taxonomy. The International Seabed Authority launched an initiative to advance, through knowledge-sharing, scientific understanding of deep-sea ecosystems in the Area. The World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly recognized the importance of science monitoring and reliable telecommunications submarine cable systems for climate change and seismic monitoring.

70. Activities continued to strengthen the regular scientific assessment of the state of the marine environment and enhance the scientific basis for policymaking. The third cycle of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects (2021–2025) began its first round of regional workshops to inform the scoping exercise and the development of annotated outlines of the assessments to be produced, collect regional data, raise awareness, provide information to the scientific community and generate its interest

in contributing to the drafting of the assessments. A separate first round of regional workshops aimed at strengthening the ocean science-policy interface also began. Four brief documents for policymakers based on the second *World Ocean Assessment* will be finalized during the sixteenth meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole of the General Assembly on the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects, focusing on climate change, Sustainable Development Goal 14, the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and marine biodiversity.

71. The first pilot edition of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission *State of the Ocean Report* was issued in 2022 to complement the World Ocean Assessment process in providing accessible information on the state of the ocean and its management.

B. Conservation and sustainable use of living marine resources

72. Despite global commitments in the 2030 Agenda regarding the sustainability of fish stocks, the status of the world's fish stocks continued to deteriorate, with 35.4 per cent of fish stocks fished at biologically unsustainable levels in 2019, up from 34.6 per cent in 2017.⁴ Additional urgent efforts are needed to ensure the long-term sustainability of fish stocks, as rebuilding overfished stocks could increase marine capture fishery production by 16.5 million tons and contribute to the food security, nutrition, economies and well-being of coastal communities.

73. A recent study suggested that scientifically assessed and intensively managed stocks at the regional and national levels had resulted, on average, in stock abundance levels either increasing or remaining at proposed target levels, thus highlighting the need to replicate and readapt those successful policies and regulations in fisheries that have not been managed sustainably and to create innovative mechanisms to promote sustainable use and conservation.⁵

74. A wide range of actions were taken to improve fisheries management at the global and regional levels. In the context of the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture, some activities have been focused on small-scale and artisanal fishing. The human dimension of fishing and fisheries also remained a key concern, owing in part to the continuing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Draft technical guidelines for the regulation and monitoring of trans-shipment were also developed at the FAO Technical Consultation on Voluntary Guidelines for Trans-Shipments, held from 30 May to 3 June 2022, for the consideration of the FAO Committee on Fisheries in September 2022.

75. The fifteenth round of the Informal Consultations of States Parties to the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement considered the implementation of an ecosystem approach to fisheries management and served as a preparatory meeting for the resumption of the Review Conference on the Fish Stocks Agreement. A multi-stakeholder workshop held in August 2022 will inform the further review by the General Assembly of actions taken by States and regional fisheries management organizations to address the impacts of bottom fishing on vulnerable marine

⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2022: Towards Blue Transformation* (Rome, 2022).

⁵ Ibid. See also Ray Hilborn and others, "Effective fisheries management instrumental in improving fish stock status", *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol. 117, No. 4 (January 2020).

ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks in November 2022.⁶

76. With regard to fisheries subsidies, the adoption of the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies by the World Trade Organization (WTO) in June 2022 brought the international community closer to meeting the commitment set out in target 14.6 of the 2030 Agenda. New disciplines on fisheries subsidies will have positive effects on the sustainability of marine fish stocks and fisheries by curbing subsidies to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, fishing of overfished stocks and fishing for unregulated high seas fish stocks. WTO will continue negotiations on the outstanding issues, with a view to making recommendations at the thirteenth WTO Ministerial Conference on additional provisions that would achieve a comprehensive agreement on fisheries subsidies, including further disciplines on fisheries subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing.

C. Protection and preservation of the marine environment and conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity

77. The United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 declared that there was a “global emergency” facing the ocean and that transformative action was needed to halt and reverse marine biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation and to protect and restore ocean health.

78. At the global level, the UNEP United Nations Environment Assembly convened an intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop by 2024 an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, and thereby to address one of the ocean’s most pressing pollution sources. An ad hoc open-ended working group had its first meeting to begin preparations for the work of the committee.

79. Related initiatives included a WTO ministerial statement on plastic pollution and environmentally sustainable plastics trade, the launch of the UN-Habitat Waste Wise Cities Tool to identify sources of plastic leakage from municipal solid waste management chains, the publication of reports by UNEP and the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection on marine litter and plastic pollution, and the IAEA Nuclear Technology for Controlling Plastic Pollution initiative to integrate nuclear techniques into plastic pollution control efforts. Various strategies and regional and national action plans relating to the marine environment, including marine litter, were adopted, amended or under development.

80. With respect to chemicals and waste, the United Nations Environment Assembly committed to strengthen efforts to achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and wastes and to reduce their release, including into water. Technical guidelines for the environmentally sound management of waste were adopted under the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal.

81. The protocols to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention) and the Minamata Convention on Mercury were amended with regard to pollution from offshore and land-based sources and to phase out certain mercury-added products by 2025, respectively. UNEP and the International Oil Pollution Compensation Funds provided technical assistance in relation to oil and chemical spills in various regions, while concerned stakeholders were undertaking international consultations regarding

⁶ See www.un.org/depts/los/bottom_fishing_workshop.htm.

the proposed release of treated nuclear wastewater at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station. The United Nations continued fundraising efforts to implement a United Nations-coordinated operational plan to address potential environmental damage from oil stored on board the floating storage and offloading unit *Safer* off the coast of Yemen. The International Whaling Commission continued work to address the impact of pollution on cetaceans.

82. With respect specifically to the impacts of shipping on the marine environment, IMO designated the Mediterranean Sea as an emission control area and approved proposed amendments to annex VI (Prevention of air pollution from ships) to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, with a view to applying stricter limits on ship-based sulfur oxide emissions from 2025. Amendments were made to the Protocol to the Barcelona Convention for the Prevention and Elimination of Pollution in the Mediterranean Sea by Dumping from Ships and Aircraft or Incineration at Sea. Amendments to the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments, 2004, making the commissioning of test of ballast water management systems mandatory, entered into force in June 2022.

83. Regarding marine biodiversity, negotiations continued at the intergovernmental conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, with sessions held in March and August 2022, and will resume at a date to be determined. Discussions also continued on the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity and on ecologically or biologically significant marine areas in the context of the Convention on Biological Diversity. During the reporting period, continuous intersessional work was conducted with respect to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, which is expected to be adopted during the second part of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, in December 2022.

84. Coastal ecosystems, including mangroves, salt marshes, seagrass meadows and coral reefs, as well as marine migratory species and marine invasive species, continued to be a focus of attention. Growing concern for the conservation status of certain marine species, including sharks, rays and sea cucumbers, resulted in their inclusion in the appendices to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

85. Activities continued to support the implementation of various management tools, such as sustainable ocean plans, and ecosystem-based and precautionary approaches, including with respect to fisheries. Marine spatial planning was increasingly promoted as a tool for sustainable ocean use, including to take account of transboundary issues.

86. Area-based management tools, including marine protected areas, continued to be used worldwide, with proposals and initiatives made for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework to include a target of conserving 30 per cent of ocean areas by 2030. At the regional level, the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic designated a new marine protected area covering the North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Seamount to protect seabirds. In reviewing the implementation of the regional environmental management plan for the Clarion-Clipperton Zone, the Council of the International Seabed Authority approved the designation of four additional areas as areas of particular environmental interest. A draft regional environmental management plan for the northern Mid-Atlantic Ridge was also released.

IX. Strengthening international cooperation and coordination, including through integrated and cross-sectoral approaches

87. Activities aimed at strengthening cooperation and coordination continued at all levels. UN-Oceans hosted a high-level side event at the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 to, inter alia, showcase successful instances of inter-agency cooperation and coordination, including on ocean science and observation, climate change, harmful fisheries subsidies, the well-being of seafarers and capacity-building; highlight the crucial role of cooperation and coordination in leveraging resources and expertise; and draw attention to certain challenges, including with regard to gender mainstreaming and resource constraints for inter-agency cooperation.⁷ UN-Oceans also continued to hold regular meetings, including to discuss and adopt its programme of work for 2022, and shared information on activities and opportunities for collaboration.

88. UN-Oceans members actively supported ocean-related processes, such as the Ocean Decade, including as members of the Decade Advisory Board, the twenty-second meeting of the Informal Consultative Process and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change ocean and climate change dialogue. At the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, UN-Oceans made a voluntary commitment in relation to “The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea at 40: Successes and Future Prospects”.

89. The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Ocean, in close collaboration with Member States, contributed to high-level and other oceans-related events with a view to promoting the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, and reaching its targets. He conveyed messages centred, inter alia, around highlighting the connectivity between climate change, biodiversity loss and the decline of ocean health and promoting a successful United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Goal 14. As Co-Chair of the Friends of Ocean Action group of stakeholders, the Special Envoy contributed to its campaigns regarding the removal of harmful fisheries subsidies, the greening of shipping, renewable offshore energy, the Blue Carbon initiative, the control of plastic pollution, ending illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and other Goal 14-related issues.

90. Cooperation and coordination on ocean issues among intergovernmental organizations, States and other stakeholders was strengthened, including at the regional level and often on a cross-sectoral basis, including with regard to marine living resources, marine litter, such as marine plastics and microplastics, sustainable and resilient shipping, marine spatial planning and the use of area-based management tools, emergency prevention and response, and sustainable ocean-based economies. Progress was also made in promoting cooperation and coordination with respect to advancing ocean science, including in mobilizing the ocean data value chain, and in addressing the human dimension of ocean governance, such as gender mainstreaming and women’s empowerment, the well-being of maritime workers and protecting refugees and migrants at sea.

91. The importance of international cooperation and partnerships based in science, technology and innovation was highlighted at the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, at which commitments were made to enhance cooperation at all levels and establish effective partnerships, including multi-stakeholder, public-private, cross-sectoral, interdisciplinary and scientific partnerships. Delegations also called for enhanced inter-agency

⁷ See www.unoceans.org/activities/en.

coordination and coherence on ocean issues throughout the United Nations system, through the work of UN-Oceans, to support the implementation of Goal 14.

92. The high-level political forum on sustainable development conducted an in-depth review of the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, together with Goals 4, 5, 15 and 17. The resulting ministerial declaration stressed the need for an integrated, interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral approach to ocean management, as well as for enhanced cooperation, coordination and policy coherence at all levels to conserve and sustainably use the ocean, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. Relevant actors were encouraged to better address interlinkages, synergies and trade-offs among the Goals, including through whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches, among others.

X. Capacity-building and technical assistance to States

93. A wide range of capacity-building initiatives were implemented to assist developing States in managing ocean spaces, resources and activities sustainably, including through the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and related instruments.

94. The Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs provided information, advice and assistance to States and intergovernmental organizations and other stakeholders through its capacity-building programmes, including technical assistance projects and fellowships and participation in conferences, meetings, workshops and training events.⁸ Some in-person activities resumed as COVID-19-related restrictions lifted, while other programmes were conducted virtually to ensure the effective delivery of needs-based assistance to Member States, in particular least developed countries and small island developing States.

95. The Division continued to assist developing countries in implementing the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and its implementing agreements and in promoting strengthened, sustainable and inclusive ocean economies, including by taking into account constraints imposed by the pandemic.⁹ It also co-facilitated several workshops, together with UNCTAD, to assist Barbados, Belize and Costa Rica in developing ocean economy and trade strategies and realizing economic benefits from the sustainable use of marine resources.

96. The Division also continued to contribute to the development and implementation of the World Bank PROBLUE programme, including through online training in ocean governance, in partnership with the University of Melbourne Law School, the Maritime and Oceanic Law Centre at the University of Nantes, the International Seabed Authority and FAO. The Division also held, with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme country office, an in-person training event in Saudi Arabia to build capacity in ocean affairs and the law of the sea, with a focus on maritime boundaries and dispute settlement.

97. The Division continued to administer nine voluntary trust funds to assist developing States with the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and its implementing agreements, participation in ocean-related

⁸ See www.un.org/oceancapacity and www.un.org/Depts/los/general_assembly/documents/DOALOSListActivities1Sep202131Aug2022.pdf.

⁹ See www.un.org/oceancapacity/norway for additional information, including assistance available through the project activities.

meetings and intergovernmental processes and the settlement of disputes through the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.¹⁰

98. The International Seabed Authority continued its capacity development and training programmes on deep-sea issues, including through webinars and workshops, a fellowship and internship programme and the development of an e-learning platform. The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea established a junior professional programme on dispute settlement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Fellowships

99. Despite challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Division continued to implement its training activities successfully in 2021, albeit in a virtual format, and subsequently resumed in-person training activities in 2022. In December 2021, it delivered an online training programme to reinforce capacity in the context of the intergovernmental conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. After initial postponement, the highly appreciated 2020/21 United Nations-Nippon Foundation Critical Needs and Thematic Fellowships were delivered in hybrid format, with online training and supervision in the second half of 2021 and in-person activities in June 2022. The 2022 United Nations-Nippon Foundation Fellowship and the Strategic Needs Fellowship were delivered in person in March and August 2022, respectively. The implementation of the Hamilton Shirley Amerasinghe Memorial Fellowship on the Law of the Sea was postponed, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, and was expected to resume in 2023.¹¹

100. Overall, the fellowships are characterized by their broad geographical scope, with significant participation of fellows from least developed countries (25 per cent), landlocked developing countries (3 per cent) and small island developing States (24 per cent) in the United Nations-Nippon Foundation fellowships. Also noteworthy is the commitment to achieving gender parity in each of the United Nations-Nippon Foundation fellowship programmes implemented over the years and the increasing number of women receiving awards (44 per cent in the first decade of implementation, 2004–2014, and 51 per cent in the second decade thus far). As for the Hamilton Shirley Amerasinghe Memorial Fellowship on the Law of the Sea, it has ensured equal representation of men and women throughout its nearly 40 years of existence.

XI. Conclusions

101. The global ocean is in a state of emergency resulting from the cumulative effect of decades of unsustainable human activities and anthropogenic impacts, including

¹⁰ See www.un.org/oceancapacity/tf and https://www.un.org/Depts/los/general_assembly/SGReportTrustFunds1August202131July2022.pdf.

¹¹ Since 2004, in the context of the United Nations-Nippon Foundation Fellowship Programme, 173 individuals (90 men and 83 women) from 74 countries have been trained. Since 2018, under the United Nations-Nippon Foundation Sustainable Ocean Programme, 15 Critical Needs Fellows (6 men and 9 women) and 34 Thematic Fellows (17 men and 17 women) have been trained, and 181 delegates (87 men and 94 women) have undertaken training on the intergovernmental conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. While the Sustainable Ocean Programme ended in 2021, the Critical Needs Fellowship (renamed Strategic Needs Fellowship) continued in 2022. A total of 33 individuals (18 men and 15 women) from 30 developing countries have completed the Hamilton Shirley Amerasinghe Memorial Fellowship on the Law of the Sea since its inception, in 1986.

greenhouse gas emissions, marine pollution and the overexploitation of resources. Decisive and urgent action, greater ambition and innovation are needed at all levels to improve the health, productivity, sustainable use and resilience of the ocean and its ecosystems and to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 14 and the 2030 Agenda.

102. Significant economic opportunities may be realized through investment in ocean- and nature-based solutions, including climate-resilient coastal infrastructure, renewable ocean-based energy, sustainable shipping, the restoration and conservation of coastal ecosystems, the implementation of effective area-based conservation measures and integrated coastal zone management and the establishment of universal early warning system coverage. Encouraging steps are being taken, including through the increasing recognition of the ocean-climate-biodiversity nexus.

103. Science-based decision-making and a strengthened science-policy interface are crucial elements in ocean sustainability. Building on the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 and the Ocean Decade, increased science and innovation will help to understand ocean challenges and drive new global ocean action, including through private and public partnerships that support ocean research and sustainable management.

104. Urgent efforts are needed to address the challenges faced by developing States. Capacity-building, developing partnerships for sustainable ocean-based economies and adequate and sustainable funding are essential to support ambitious actions. Innovative financing solutions need to be identified and barriers to existing financing removed.

105. While there are initiatives currently aimed at strengthening international cooperation for the safety of refugees and migrants moving by sea, further concerted effort is needed to ensure their protection, including through the implementation of adequate and effective search and rescue arrangements and safe disembarkation.

106. Alongside those efforts, greater coordination is needed to strengthen regular and safe migration pathways at entry points and along migratory routes to assist vulnerable persons, including victims of trafficking and unaccompanied children, as well as refugees requiring international protection. Awareness-raising and information dissemination for refugees and migrants need to be enhanced.

107. Concerted efforts and collaboration among United Nations entities, Member States and international organizations are helping to protect and enhance the living and working conditions of seafarers and transport workers. Ensuring a global and integrated approach to those challenges, including through strengthened cross-sectoral cooperation and coordination, remains vital.

108. The continued deterioration of the status of fish stocks also requires urgent action, in line with the commitments made in the 2030 Agenda. The new WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies is a welcome development; however, States need to take the actions necessary to ensure its early entry into force and implementation, including through capacity-building initiatives.

109. On the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, revitalized efforts are needed to strengthen its full and effective implementation and that of its implementing agreements. International cooperation and coordination through integrated and cross-sectoral approaches, including through such mechanisms as UN-Oceans, continue to be critical to leverage expertise and limited resources, enhance synergies and reduce duplication.

110. The United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 mobilized action, with voluntary commitments made by participating Governments, international organizations and other stakeholders presenting important opportunities that will need to be acted upon if further progress is to be made.