



General Assembly

Seventy-first session

54th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 7 December 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Thomson (Fiji)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 73

Oceans and the law of the sea

Draft resolution (A/71/L.27)

(a) Oceans and the law of the sea

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/71/74 and A/71/74/Add.1)

Report on the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects (A/71/362)

Report on the work of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea at its seventeenth meeting (A/71/204)

Draft resolution (A/71/L.26)

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

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

Report of the Secretary-General (A/71/351)

Draft resolution (A/71/L.24)

The President: I should like to inform members that action on draft resolution A/71/L.26, entitled “Oceans and the law of the sea”, has been postponed to a later date to allow time for the review of its programme budget implications by the Fifth Committee.

I shall now make a brief statement.

The ocean is the lifeblood of our planet. It is a vital and complex ecosystem that billions of people depend on for their livelihoods, food security, cultural identity and traditions. We are all united by the ocean with its boundless energy, indispensable trade routes and its marine resources that feed our communities. As we meet, however, our beloved ocean is in peril and the state of its health has begun to threaten humankind’s sustainable place on this planet. The overexploitation of fish stocks and pollution from fertilizers, plastics and waste are diminishing its resources, while climate change is exerting enormous pressure on the ocean, coasts and marine ecosystems. Rising sea levels, ocean acidification, increasing deoxygenization and reduced mixing of ocean waters are exacerbating those challenges, while the changing interaction between the ocean and the atmosphere is affecting our climate, weather and air quality.

The importance of the ocean to humankind and to the planet was acknowledged by world leaders

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in 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-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).

16-41791 (E)



Accessible document

Please recycle



last year when they adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2030 Agenda critically included Sustainable Development Goal 14, which aims to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. It pursues urgent action to reverse the cycle of decline in which our ocean is currently caught.

The General Assembly has a central role to play in protecting the ocean and its resources. The resolutions that have been considered and adopted under the oceans agenda are essential to those efforts. I would like to highlight the following key observations about the draft resolutions before us. The annual oceans omnibus draft resolution (A/71/L.26) reflects the critical importance of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. I welcome its focus on important broad-ranging issues relating to the ocean and the law of the sea and the central importance that it gives to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. That includes capacity-building, the peaceful settlement of disputes, the work of the International Seabed Authority, maritime safety and security, marine environment and resources, the protection of refugees and migrants at sea, and the safety of fishers and vessels.

The decision to focus the annual Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea on climate change and oceans in 2017 and on anthropogenic underwater noise in 2018 is welcome. Also welcome is the importance placed on the First Global Integrated Marine Assessment for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and the work on the second cycle of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects.

I also join in encouraging delegations to continue the high levels of good will and momentum for the first and second sessions of the Preparatory Committee for the development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdictions. The annual sustainable fisheries draft resolution (A/71/L.24) highlights the nexus between that issue and food security, prosperity and poverty reduction for current and future generations. I share delegations' concerns, as expressed in the draft resolution, that illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing constitutes a serious threat to fish stocks, marine habitats and ecosystems, and that efforts

to deter and combat such fishing must be renewed. The draft resolution that will be adopted later today, declares 2 May annual World Tuna Day and is therefore an important step in recognizing the critical role of tuna to sustainable development, food security, economic opportunity and the livelihoods of so many around our planet.

The high-level United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14, to be held here in New York from 5 to 9 June 2017, is the next milestone in our collective efforts to save the ocean. The Conference will bring together all stakeholders, Governments, civil society, scientific and academic experts and local communities in our collective endeavour. I am confident that, under the able leadership of Sweden and Fiji, as co-presidents of the Conference, and of Portugal and Singapore, as co-facilitators of the call to action, the Conference on Oceans and Seas will indeed be a game changer in securing the political and voluntary commitments, the launching of the strategic multi-stakeholder partnerships and the mobilization of the global ocean community to drive action to effectively implement SDG 14 by 2030. I encourage everyone to participate in the preparatory meetings for the Conference, which will be held on 15-16 February. I encourage all Governments to participate in the Conference itself in June at the highest level. During that week, we will also be celebrating World Environment Day on 5 June and World Oceans Day on 8 June.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge and thank the co-chairs, who have led the processes under this agenda item, including Barbados, New Zealand, Cyprus, Peru and Trinidad and Tobago. I would also like to thank Norway, South Africa and Nauru, on behalf of the Pacific island developing States, for their work and dedication as coordinators of the draft resolutions.

I now give the floor to the representative of Norway to introduce draft resolution A/71/L.24.

Mr. Kravik (Norway): Norway had the honour to coordinate the informal consultations on draft resolution A/71/L.24, on sustainable fisheries, and is pleased to introduce that text on behalf of all its sponsors. This year's text is a further step forward in the conservation and management of fisheries, which are an essential resource for sustainable development.

My delegation is also pleased to join many others in sponsoring draft resolution A/71/L.26, entitled "Oceans

and the law of the sea”, to be introduced by Thembile Joyini of South Africa. We compliment Mr. Joyini on his careful stewardship of that draft.

The fisheries draft resolution addresses important issues such as achieving sustainable fisheries, combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, addressing fishing overcapacity and improving subregional and regional cooperation so as to achieve sustainable fisheries management. It also addresses issues undertaken in other United Nations forums, such as the workshop on bottom fisheries in August and the resumed Review Conference in May on 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. Key outcomes from other forums, both regional and global, are also considered in the draft resolution.

This year’s informal consultations also considered the impact of bottom fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks, as mandated in paragraph 162 of resolution 69/109. The review was undertaken with a view to ensuring the effective implementation of the measures therein and to make further recommendations, where necessary. Delegations agreed on new provisions to enhance the regulations of bottom-fishing activities. Notably, the draft further highlights the importance of adequate conservation and management measures to prevent significant adverse impacts from bottom fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems. The draft text articulates urgent actions that States and regional fisheries-management organizations have to take in that regard.

Furthermore, this year’s draft resolution encourages necessary measures, where appropriate, consistent with international law, in order to prevent and deter vessels without nationality from engaging in or supporting illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. Such vessels operate on the high seas without governance or oversight. That reflects the international community’s ongoing concern over the negative impact of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing on the sustainable management of fish stocks and its recognition that there is a shared responsibility to address that issue. The draft resolution also emphasizes the central importance of providing a safe working environment

for those engaged both in fishing activities and in monitoring compliance.

The draft resolution also urges States parties to the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement to take into account the special requirements of developing States, including small island developing States, when cooperating to establish conservation and management measures for straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks.

Norway is of the firm view that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea provides the universal and unified framework for the peaceful, responsible and predictable management of the oceans and seas. All activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out within that framework. In ever-changing conditions, the Convention provides clarity with regard to both the obligations and the rights of States.

Clear maritime boundaries are essential for identifying which State has rights and obligations in which areas under the law of the sea. The establishment of the outer limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles is of key importance in that regard. The Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf also plays a significant role in that work.

This year, Norway is pleased to be able to make a contribution to the voluntary trust fund for the purpose of defraying the cost of participation of the members of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf from developing States in the meetings of the Commission. We encourage other States to also consider contributing to that fund.

As coordinator, I would like to personally thank Director Gabriele Goettsche-Wanli and the staff of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for their expertise, professionalism and invaluable support on both draft resolutions. And we again thank Thembile Joyini of South Africa for his expert coordination of the draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea. Let me also thank Alice Revell of New Zealand for her work in successfully coordinating the fisheries resolution over the past four years.

Finally, let me conclude by conveying Norway’s appreciation for the hard work and cooperation of delegations in crafting both draft resolutions. It is our hope that that constructive and collaborative engagement will be maintained as we continue to

address the numerous and complex issues that face our oceans and fisheries.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa to introduce draft resolution A/71/L.26.

Mr. Joyini (South Africa): As the Assembly is aware, South Africa has the honour to coordinate the informal consultations on draft resolution A/71/L.26, entitled “Oceans and the law of the sea”, and is now pleased to introduce the draft resolution on behalf of all its sponsors and other delegations in general.

This important exercise on the General Assembly’s agenda would not have been possible without the support of all delegations, which have demonstrated tremendous cooperation and flexibility as they pursued and defended their national interests during the two rounds of negotiations of five days each, which ended on 22 November. As the coordinator, I would be remiss if I did not also acknowledge the support provided to me during the negotiations and the intersessional period by the Director and the staff of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, which provided secretariat services and advice to the coordinator throughout the process.

South Africa is also pleased to be one of the countries that has sponsored the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries (A/71/L.24), which was just introduced this morning by my friend Mr. Andreas Kravik of Norway. My delegation extends its compliments to him on his careful stewardship of the informal consultations on the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries. It was well done.

Returning to the omnibus draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea, draft resolution A/71/L.26 before us recognizes the important contribution of the sustainable development and management of the resources and uses of the oceans and seas to the achievement of international development goals, in particular those contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As such, it calls upon States to implement the Sustainable Development Goals outlined in the outcome document of the United Nations summit leading to the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, as adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 70/1, of 25 September 2015, which includes Goal 14 on the conservation and sustainable use the oceans,

seas and marine resources for sustainable development and recalls that the Goals and targets are integrated and indivisible.

It welcomes the outcomes of the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, held in September 2016, especially the resolutions on the “Oceans and seas” (UNEA-2/10), “Marine plastic litter and micro-plastics” (UNEA-2/11), “Sustainable coral reefs management” (UNEA-2/12) and the “Role, functions and modalities for the United Nations Environment Programme implementation of the SAMOA Pathway as a means of facilitating achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals” (UNEA-2/4).

It recalls the annual General Assembly resolutions on the law of the sea and on oceans and the law of the sea, including resolution 69/292, of 19 June 2015, on the development of an internationally legally binding instrument under the Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, and its decision to convene the high-level 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, to be held from 5 to 9 June 2017, coinciding with the World Oceans Day on 8 June in order to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, as well as its resolution 70/303 on the modalities for that Conference. It also acknowledges the rich discussions and exchanges of views at the first and second sessions of the Preparatory Committee, established by resolution 69/292, held from 28 March to 8 April and from 26 August to 9 September, and notes, in that regard, that the third and fourth sessions of the Preparatory Committee are scheduled to take place in 2017.

The draft resolution before us welcomes the progress of the work of the International Seabed Authority on the exploitation regulations, in particular the delivery of the initial working draft of the exploitation regulations during the twenty-second session of the International Seabed Authority, while taking note that all State parties and other stakeholders have been invited to provide input into the draft and encourages the Authority to continue its work on the exploitation regulations as a matter of priority and in accordance with the list of priority deliverables endorsed by the Council of the International Seabed Authority.

It also welcomes with satisfaction the fact that the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea is commemorating the twentieth anniversary of its establishment and welcomes the commemorative events, including the twentieth anniversary commemorative ceremony and the twentieth anniversary seminar, held in Hamburg from 5 to 7 October, and expresses its appreciation to those who have contributed. It further notes with satisfaction the progress in the work of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf and the fact that it is currently giving consideration to a number of submissions regarding the establishment of the outer limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles.

The draft resolution recalls the responsibilities and functions entrusted to the Secretary-General by the Convention and the related General Assembly resolutions, including resolutions 49/28 and 52/26, and notes the increased number of requests to the Division for the additional output and service of meetings, pursuant to resolution 69/292 and in relation to the support to be provided by the Division as the secretariat of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, Including Socioeconomic Aspects, during the second cycle of the Regular Process and to ensure the allocation of appropriate resources to the Division for the performance of its activities, under the approved budget of the Organization.

It also recognizes the importance of the trust funds established pursuant to resolution 55/7 to facilitate the participation of members of the Commission on the Limitations of the Continental Shelf from developing States in the meetings of the Commission and in fulfilling the requirements of article 6 of annex II to the Convention, noting with appreciation the recent contributions made to them, while observing with concern that the lack of funds in the voluntary trust fund for the purpose of defraying the cost of the participation of the members of the Commission on the Limits of Continental Shelf from developing States in the meetings of the Commission may prevent the Commission from implementing the decision of the twenty-sixth meeting of State parties that requested the Commission to meet for up to 26 weeks and may preclude the Commission from advancing its work as a result of the potential lack of a quorum at the 2017 session. In that regard, we urge States, international financial institutions, donor agencies, intergovernmental organizations,

non-governmental organizations and natural and juridical persons to contribute to the aforementioned trust fund. We express our appreciation to those who have contributed.

In conclusion, following 10 days of intensive negotiations, including a series of small-group and bilateral meetings, delegations were able to reach consensus on each paragraph of the draft resolution, which seeks to assist Member States and other entities in implementing the obligations geared towards, inter alia, the sustainable use of our oceans and seas. I am therefore pleased to commit the draft resolution to the Assembly for its consideration. It is my hope that the same spirit of cooperation and understanding that characterized the negotiations will be demonstrated by delegations and that draft resolution A/71/L.26 will be adopted by consensus when the time for adoption comes.

Mr. Otto (Palau): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the 12 members of the Pacific small island developing States, namely, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and my own country, Palau, to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/71/L.27, entitled “World Tuna Day” under agenda item 73 on the oceans and the law of the sea, and to move it to action. Owing to time constraints, a longer version of my statement will be circulated to the wider membership.

We are pleased that currently 93 countries from all regions of the world have joined us in sponsoring the draft resolution to declare 2 May as World Tuna Day. We would therefore like to express our profound appreciation to all the delegations that have sponsored the draft resolution. We humbly invite other delegations to join in sponsorship before adoption today.

The draft resolution for World Tuna Day, under consideration today, underscores the critical importance of tuna for the social and economic welfare of many States, as those fish support some of the world’s largest and most valuable fisheries, as well as of the many people who rely on them for their livelihoods. World Tuna Day is intended to create global awareness regarding the value and importance of tuna to the multitude of lives and livelihoods around the world and its contribution to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

as well as the critical role that tuna plays in marine ecosystems.

The global economic activity that tuna fisheries can directly and indirectly generate is remarkable. Every year, at least 2.5 million tons of global tuna catch is destined for the canning industry and globally around 256 million cases are consumed, valued at \$7.5 billion. Therefore, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the world's tuna and billfish fisheries is intrinsically linked with providing food security, vital livelihoods and economic benefits in many regions of the world. In my own region, tuna has for centuries provided an important source of food for Pacific Islanders and employment, as well as much intangible cultural and traditional value to our peoples.

Today, tuna fishing is also an important source of income, and for some of our members, the tuna resources within their 200-mile exclusive economic zones represent their only significant renewable resource and their best opportunity for sustainable economic development. In addition to the critical economic value of tuna, it plays an important role in the marine ecosystem. The declining tuna population and changes in their food-web dynamics may impair the oceans' capacity to generate basic ecosystem services, which are vital to human health, welfare and economic activities.

Despite their importance, tuna face serious challenges to their long-term sustainability. There are more hooks and nets set in the oceans for tuna than any other group of fish. And as we have noted at the United Nations and in other forums, the issues surrounding tuna include the overcapacity of fishing fleets, the equitable allocation of fishing rights among fishing nations, the implementation of the precautionary approach and the ecosystem approach, and efforts to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. In order to have healthy populations of tuna in the future, we need to strengthen our efforts to end overfishing and IUU fishing, and also to ensure that the gear used in tuna fishing does not endanger other ocean life.

Those issues, among others, were the drivers for the parties to narrow the tuna fishing agreements in 2011 and to designate 2 May as World Tuna Day. We were pleased to celebrate it with friends here at the United Nations for the first time earlier this year. Given the work that is being undertaken on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, especially Sustainable Development

Goal 14 — to conserve and sustainably use the oceans and seas and marine resources for sustainable development — it is an opportune time to underscore the centrality of tuna for global food-security and sustainable-development aspirations, as well as to take the opportunity to showcase and share best practices on sustainable tuna conservation, use and management. And we are pleased that such a day will now be marked by the world as well. World Tuna Day is therefore necessary so as to protect such a magnificent species and protect our oceans and seas and the millions of people who rely on them. We celebrate tuna now and look forward to doing so well into the future. We look forward to adopting the draft resolution by consensus today.

Allow me to continue with general remarks on agenda item 73, entitled "Oceans and the law of the sea". At the outset, we, the Pacific small island developing States, would like to thank Mr. Thembile Joyini of South Africa and Mr. Andreas Kravik of Norway for their able leadership in bringing the negotiations on the draft resolutions to their successful conclusion, and we are pleased to support the adoption of the draft resolutions on oceans and the law of the sea, sustainable fisheries and World Tuna Day.

We attach particular importance to this agenda item. We consider the ocean to be the lifeblood of our economies and societies. We are therefore keenly aware of the increasing negative impacts on the health of oceans, which is driven by human activity. Overfishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; marine pollution, including from microplastics, the destruction of marine habitats and other threats to marine biodiversity, as well as climate-change-driven impacts, such as ocean acidification, are among a number of serious threats to the health and resilience of our shared ocean.

Those serious and increasing impacts are not merely threats to our oceans, but constitute a serious challenge to our sustainable development and our ability to meet the aspirations encompassed in the 2030 Agenda. Healthy, productive and resilient oceans and seas are critical for, inter alia, poverty eradication, access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food, economic development and essential ecosystem services.

The Pacific small island developing States (SIDS) were at the forefront of those advocating for the inclusion in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

of a stand-alone Goal dedicated to the conservation and the sustainable use of our oceans and seas. We therefore welcome the inclusion of SDG 14 in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We look forward to beginning the critical work of implementing that Goal in order to meet the targets on protecting marine ecosystems, addressing acidification, ending illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and increasing benefits to SIDS and the least-developed-countries (LDCs). In that regard, we welcome the follow-up to the 2030 Agenda, including the first high-level United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14. We congratulate the co-facilitators of that process, the Permanent Representatives of Portugal and Singapore, and we look forward to working closely with them so as to ensure a strong and successful conference.

We were not alone in reacting with deep concern to recent reports that marine biodiversity has undergone considerable decline over the past 40 years. Populations of marine vertebrates have been declining at a rate of 49 per cent, with some declining at rates near 75 per cent. Given the critical role that oceans and the health of the oceans play in our societies and our development, that news is stark indeed. That is especially true when it is coupled with the increasing adverse impacts that climate change and carbon-dioxide emissions are having on our oceans and seas. We are therefore pleased that, in next year's United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, we will bring focused attention to the issue of climate change and oceans.

In a similar vein, we note that reports addressed to the United Nations World Ocean Assessment lend urgency to the work undertaken by the Preparatory Committee to develop a legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. We believe that progress is being made in that work, and we look forward to concluding a successful Preparatory Committee with the two sessions that we have scheduled for 2017.

As we continue to acknowledge the contributions from the International Seabed Authority to the ongoing capacity-building initiatives targeting developing countries and look forward to further progress on the development of a comprehensive set of rules governing seabed mining so as to ensure the effective protection

of the marine environment from harmful effects that might arise from the activities in the area. We have stated on numerous occasions how important the work of the Authority is to the Pacific SIDS, as our exclusive economic zones amount to more than 30 million square kilometres and directly adjoin the lucrative Clipperton Fracture Zone. We also acknowledge the important contribution of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. We therefore welcome the steps taken to ensure that developing States, especially LDCs and SIDS, are able to fully participate in the deliberations of subcommissions if they wish.

The importance of healthy fisheries to our economies and livelihoods cannot be overstated. The Pacific has been a site of global leadership in investing in the management of fisheries and in the monitoring of control and surveillance activities. Nonetheless, that work does not take place in a vacuum. We reiterate our call regarding the need to provide accurate, complete and reliable data in order to support scientific stock assessment and ecosystem approaches to the management of fisheries. We also emphasize, as we did at the Review Conference, that the need for target reference points in the management of fish stocks will help enable the long-term sustainable exploitation of such stocks and that the obligation to ensure that a disproportionate burden of conservation action is not transferred to developing countries, including SIDS. We would like to thank the Office for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for their ongoing hard work and support, especially relating to capacity-building, and their technical support and legal advice.

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

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

We are meeting here to adopt two important draft resolutions: one on oceans and the law of the sea (A/71/L.26) and the other on sustainable fisheries (A/71/L.24). The EU and its member States have participated actively in the consultations preparing those draft resolutions as committed parties to the

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and its implementing agreements, including the Agreement for the Implementation of the Law of the Sea Convention relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. We believe that the draft resolutions serve to focus the attention of the General Assembly and the general public on important issues in the marine domain, including fisheries.

We would like to express our appreciation for the excellent stewardship demonstrated by both coordinators. We would also like to thank all of the co-Chairs and facilitators of the various meetings that fed into the draft resolution preparation process and whose work facilitates the work of delegations. We also recognize the constructive participation of other delegations in the negotiations, which ensured a positive outcome in both cases, with the inclusion of numerous important and topical issues.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, with its 168 parties, including the EU, is rightly considered, including by the EU and its member States, as the constitution of the oceans, reflecting also customary international law and establishing the overarching legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. We sincerely hope that the goal of universal participation in the Convention will one day be met. In that respect, we welcome the accession of Azerbaijan to the Convention earlier this year.

The EU and its member States also support the need to enhance ocean governance as a fundamental cornerstone for preserving and protecting the marine environment and biodiversity, and ensuring sustainable development, as well as peaceful relations between States. We continue to subscribe to the vital importance of preserving the integrity of the Convention. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the necessity of ensuring that the Convention remains relevant and is able to meet today's challenges, as well as those of the future. That can be achieved through the development of new implementing agreements.

Consequently, the EU and its member States are happy to acknowledge the progress achieved in the first two sessions of the Preparatory Committee in preparing recommendations on an international, legally binding instrument under the Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use

of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. That has enabled significant unpacking of the issues at stake. We would like to thank the Chair of the process, Ambassador Eden Charles of Trinidad and Tobago, for his sterling stewardship, as well as the other four facilitators of the various informal groups.

The importance of oceans and their resources in the context of sustainable development was recognized in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We subscribe to the view that responsible decision-making at all levels aimed at conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas and marine resources is crucial for achieving sustainable development. Consequently, we look forward to the conference that will be held next June to support the implementation of Goal 14 on oceans, and we will participate actively in the work needed to prepare it. We consider that the proper implementation of that Goal is necessary in order to counter the major threats that the marine environment continues to face, including climate change, marine debris, including plastics and micro-plastics, invasive alien species, eutrophication and dead zones, anthropogenic underwater noise, overfishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing — all of which contribute to the declining health of the marine environment and the continued loss of marine biodiversity.

The European Union and its member States recognize that climate change will have significant adverse impacts on oceans and their ecosystems, which will have social and economic consequences, particularly for developing countries. As signatories to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, we reiterate the call for parties to implement their obligations under that Agreement and further call on those States that are not yet party to the Agreement to become so, with a view to working together, in a coordinated manner, in order to tackle one of the major threats to oceans and life on Earth. Thus, we welcome that the eighteenth meeting, next year, of the Informal Consultative Process will deal with the effects of climate change on oceans.

The European Union and its member States also continue to be firmly committed to the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects. We consider that the coming second cycle should enhance the scientific information available to managers and policymakers so as to improve the quality of decision-making. We would like to thank all

the scientists and other colleagues who have offered to work voluntarily on that important process.

Lastly, on draft resolution A/71/L.26, entitled “Oceans and the law of the sea”, the European Union and its member States regret that the oral statement on the programme budget implication before us was submitted so late in the process. That statement should have been issued in a timely manner, so as to allow Member States to consider it thoroughly before taking action. We would like to insist that agreement on the draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea is without prejudice to the discussion in the Fifth Committee on the revised estimates presented to us.

Turning now to draft resolution A/71/L.24 on sustainable fisheries, the European Union is a strong supporter of the United Nations 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, which sets out principles for the conservation and management of highly migratory and straddling fish stocks and elaborates on the Convention’s fundamental principle of cooperation in order to ensure conservation and promote the objective of the optimum utilization of fisheries resources — both within and beyond the exclusive economic zone. Consequently, we consider that the resumed Review Conference, which took place in May, can be seen as an important tool to improve the effective implementation of that Agreement.

We would like to register our satisfaction that it was possible to agree on recommendations covering a number of important issues, such as flag State responsibility and due diligence, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, vessels without nationality, strengthening the role and effectiveness of regional fisheries-management bodies, and working conditions aboard fishing vessels. We thank Professor Fábio Hazin of Brazil for his able chairing of the Conference. We also welcome the entry into force of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing on 5 June, as we consider it to be an important tool for preventing, deterring and eliminating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

The European Union is also satisfied with the outcomes of the review of bottom-fishing measures,

including the useful workshop that was held in the context of the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries. We recognize that States, individually and through regional fisheries bodies, have undertaken necessary measures to implement the provisions of previous resolutions. However, we also note that implementation has not been sufficient in all cases and areas. We believe that more and better science, as well as more stringent implementation of measures, is necessary, if vulnerable marine ecosystems — including deep-sea fish stocks — are to be protected from such bottom-fishing activities.

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

Mr. Katota (Zambia): I am pleased to deliver a statement on behalf of the 32 landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) on agenda item 73 (a), entitled, “Oceans and the law of the sea”, with particular focus on draft resolution A/71/L.26, which was coordinated by Mr. Ndembile of South Africa.

Oceans, coastal areas and seas are an essential component of the Earth’s ecosystem and a primary provider of economic and social services to humankind. Therefore, the importance of the sustained protection and conservation of the seas and oceans, including their resources, for the survival of humankind cannot be overstated. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the importance of those resources for the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and, thus, emphasizes their conservation and their sustainable use.

It is in that regard that we welcome all initiatives taken at all levels — including at the national, regional and international levels — to protect those resources in order to ensure their sustainability. As noted in draft resolution A/71/L.26, the early entry into force of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change on 4 November 2016 is a welcome development and its implementation is even more important for efforts to achieve sustainable development.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) gives rights to landlocked States to utilize the oceans, seas and marine resources, and more than half of the 32 landlocked developing countries are currently State parties to UNCLOS. According to

article 69 of the Convention, landlocked States have the right to participate, on an equitable basis, in the exploitation of an appropriate part of the surplus of the living resources of the exclusive economic zones of coastal States of the same subregion or region, taking into account the relevant economic and geographical circumstances of all the States concerned. In addition, landlocked States also have a right to the high seas, to lay submarine cables and pipelines, to construct artificial islands and other installations permitted under international law, to fish, to conduct scientific research and to navigate the high seas, as stated in articles 87 and 90 of UNCLOS. Landlocked States have the right to sail ships flying their flag on the high seas, as indicated in articles 90 and 91.

However, while LLDCs have those rights, their utilization of those provisions remains quite minimal. Their limited participation is particularly due to financial and technical resource constraints, lack of awareness and ratification, limited technologies, as well as limited access to the sea. Let me highlight some of the needs of those countries, which are also well captured in the draft resolution being adopted today.

First of all, there is a need for capacity-building. The landlocked developing countries require capacity-building so as to be able to understand the rights and obligations in the Convention and to fully implement it, thereby enabling them to benefit from the sustainable use of the oceans and seas, and to fully participate in the protection of the marine environment and its conservation. They need technical support so as to be able to participate fully in global and regional forums on ocean affairs and the law of the sea. Secondly, the transfer of technology is essential in particular to build capacity in marine science research in order to enable the LLDCs to participate. Thirdly, financial support is necessary to support the participation of LLDCs in activities related to the implementation of UNCLOS.

The LLDCS therefore call on partner regional and international organizations to be cognizant of the challenges faced by the LLDCs in implementing UNCLOS and other regional and international agreements related to the use and conservation of the oceans and seas and in safeguarding their legitimate rights and interests, and to ensure balance in norm-setting.

We welcome the call made in resolution A/71/L.26 for the Secretary-General to convene the twenty-

seventh Meeting of States Parties to the Convention in June 2017. As I mentioned earlier, the participation of the LLDCs is limited owing to the specific challenges that they face. It is nevertheless important that the Meeting address the specific challenges of LLDCs and allocate time to discuss their issues and identify recommendations on how to foster their participation in the utilization and protection of the oceans and seas in order for them to contribute to the successful implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14.

Mrs. Chigiya (Micronesia): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the States members of the Pacific Islands Forum. We would like to thank Mr. Joyini of South Africa, Mr. Kravik of Norway and Mrs. Deiye of Nauru for bringing negotiations on the respective resolutions to their successful conclusion. We look forward to their adoption.

We welcome the continued emphasis on the universal and unified character of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). UNCLOS remains of vital strategic importance as the basis for national, regional and global action and cooperation in the marine sector and it should continue to be reflected as such in the oceans omnibus resolution (A/71/L.26). It connects to a number of important events that have happened this year, and I would like to highlight them and their interlinkages.

In late March and early April, we had the first session of the Preparatory Committee established by General Assembly resolution 69/292 for the development of an internationally legally binding instrument under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. It was followed by the second session during the summer. Our discussions were productive and we made good progress thanks to the skilful leadership of Ambassador Eden Charles of Trinidad and Tobago in steering our discussions.

We are, however, dismayed at the lack of progress achieved so far in the context of the oceans omnibus resolution, which would clearly have been an effectual statement. As many of us have been racing to meet the deadline to submit inputs by Monday, we will now need to study this wealth of information in order to prepare ourselves for the next session of the Preparatory Committee, which will start in March 2017. We certainly hope to continue to make good progress as we are now at the halfway point in the preparatory process.

On 2 May, the Pacific countries celebrated World Tuna Day here at the United Nations. Tuna is an important part of our life in the Pacific. It provides employment, food security and many other benefits. In fact, many people in our region have a spiritual connection to tuna. It is therefore only logical that the United Nations would recognize the importance of the Day, and we are looking forward to adopting draft resolution A/71/L.27 later today. So far, over 90 countries have sponsored the draft. We thank them for their support, and we invite everyone else that has not yet done so to join us.

In June, the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea examined marine debris, plastics and microplastics. The discussion was both timely and comprehensive; it looked at the scale of the problem and also at a comprehensive set of solutions, from prevention to removal. We welcome the report of the Chairs (A/71/204) on the work of the Informal Consultative Process and its place within this year's omnibus resolution. We also welcome the renewal of its mandate and that it will focus on the interaction of oceans and climate change next year.

In August, we stressed the importance of the successful implementation of the second cycle of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects. It is essential that science underpin policymaking on oceans and fisheries issues. The process here at the United Nations for obtaining the best available science is the development of the World Ocean Assessment. We welcome the decisions taken on the scope and duration of the second cycle.

In September, we finished the modalities for the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, which will be co-hosted by Fiji and Sweden in New York during the week of World Oceans Day next year. We welcome the appointment of the Permanent Representatives of Portugal and Singapore to facilitate the preparations, and we look forward to working closely with them. The planned concise outcome document in the form of a call for action will set the tone of our work, but the real success of the Conference will depend on the partnership dialogues. All stakeholders, States, intergovernmental organizations, the private sector and civil society are asked to contribute to this success and to further the agenda by committing themselves to fully implementing Goal 14.

We will all need to strengthen and accelerate the implementation of the commitments we have already undertaken and put new ones on the table. Healthy, productive and resilient oceans are the key to the future of our blue planet. Given the vastness of the Pacific Ocean, we have always seen ourselves as custodians in protecting and sustainably using our oceans.

At the forty-seventh Pacific Islands Forum held earlier this year in my country, our leaders adopted the Pohnpei Ocean Statement: A Course to Sustainability. The theme reinforces the inseparable link between our oceans, seas and the Pacific Island peoples and their values, traditional practices and spiritual connections. In this regard, the Pacific Islands Forum will continue to advocate for healthy, productive and resilient oceans here at the United Nations. We see this as a contribution to our efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In closing, I want to thank all who have contributed to and supported these processes.

Ms. Wilson (Australia): It gives me great pleasure to reflect on what has been a very busy year for oceans and law of the sea. As we have just heard from the Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum, the range of key meetings and events that she outlined represents just a summary of what we have achieved over the year.

Collectively, we made positive progress in discussions on a legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction under the skilful guidance of Ambassador Eden Charles of Trinidad and Tobago, which has been acknowledged by others. The Informal Consultative Process discussed the extent of the challenges posed by marine debris, plastics and microplastics, but also, what was more important, it explored options for working together at all levels to address these challenges.

In fisheries, we considered progress in the implementation of the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement through the Review Conference and implementation of the General Assembly bottom-fishing measures, as set out in resolution 64/72 and resolution 66/68. The annual oceans omnibus draft resolution (A/71/L.26) and the sustainable fisheries draft resolution (A/71/L.24) provided vehicles to reflect on all these issues and on other developments in the law of the sea. We found the relevant discussions rich and productive, chaired, respectively, by the very capable

Mr. Thembile Joyini of South Africa and Mr. Andreas Motzfeldt Kravik of Norway.

Australia is pleased to co-sponsor both draft resolutions, given our particular interest as an island nation in the protection and sustainable use of the ocean and its resources. It welcomes the continued recognition of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) as setting out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. UNCLOS is of central strategic importance as the basis for national, regional and global action and cooperation in the marine sector. In turn, it underpins trade between nations and supports economic growth. With over 160 States parties, UNCLOS is one of the most widely subscribed agreements in modern international legal and diplomatic history. It is vital that the integrity of the Convention be preserved, and it is appropriate that the oceans omnibus resolution should continue to reflect the universal and unified character of UNCLOS.

Separately, we thank States for supporting the text proposed by Australia on illicit wildlife trafficking in the context of the oceans omnibus resolution. This text provides further recognition of the serious and growing problem of illicit wildlife trafficking, and of the need for enhanced regional and global cooperation and coordination of the response. An effective response requires coordinated international action, and we are pleased that the oceans draft resolution highlights, in this regard, the relevance of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the United Nations Convention against Corruption and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

We are also pleased that this year's ocean's draft resolution includes a reference to the vital role played by coastal blue carbon ecosystems in climate adaptation and mitigation. Blue carbon ecosystems are some of the most threatened in the world, and there is an urgent need to work together to both protect and restore them. To this end, Australia announced at the Paris Climate Change Conference in 2015 that we were establishing an International Partnership for Blue Carbon. In recent months, we have been delighted to welcome new members: France, the United States, the United Arab Emirates, Sierra Leone and the Nature Conservancy.

At the recent Climate Change Conference in Marrakech, Morocco, Australia announced, with France, a new plan of action for the International Coral

Reef Initiative (ICRI). Recognizing the impact of the recent global bleaching event on the world's coral reefs, including Australia's own Great Barrier Reef, the plan gives ICRI an enhanced focus on climate change, including the role that coral reefs and related coastal blue carbon ecosystems can play in climate adaptation and mitigation.

We look forward to continuing to work together to ensure the health, sustainability and security of our oceans.

Mr. Zahir (Maldives): As a low-lying series of atolls that are both reliant on the ocean and directly threatened by changes to the marine environment, my country, the Maldives, views matters relating to the oceans and seas as critically important. We therefore greatly appreciate the attention and time being paid to the significant challenges faced by the world's oceans and seas and welcome the adoption of the annual resolutions under this agenda item. My delegation further welcomes the Secretary-General's reports under this item (A/71/74 and A/71/351), which serve as an important catalogue of the debate and negotiations on this issue. We also recognize and thank the coordinators of draft resolution A/71/L.27 for their commitment in leading the informal discussions.

The ocean has sustained life on earth for billions of years and serves to balance all the delicate ecosystems on our planet. It is nature's source of immeasurable wealth, which we as humans have only just begun to explore. It is not only an asset, but a necessity to the continuation of life as we know it. This is precisely why we need to ensure that the oceans remain a source of life for future generations, instead of evolving into a threat to their existence as a result of our own thoughtless actions.

Given the interconnected nature of our oceans, human actions that adversely impact the oceans directly or indirectly affect us all, including those of us who do not cause or even contribute to these problems. Small island States, the major part of whose geography consists of ocean, are the most susceptible to falling victim to these adverse impacts.

As one of the biggest threats facing our generation, the wide-ranging and often irreversible impacts of climate change, are not only altering our atmosphere, but ravaging our oceans as well. With the aggregate increase in ocean temperatures throughout the world, thermal stress caused by events such as El Niño has

amplified, causing severe coral bleaching across Maldivian reefs, compromising marine ecosystems and posing challenges to bait fisheries. Similarly, with the increase in surface temperatures, the thermocline layer has regressed, leading to the decline of surface skipjack tuna catches. Ocean acidification, also directly linked with greenhouse-gas emissions, has chemically changed marine environments, resulting in detrimental impacts on the ecosystems, whose extent remains to be discovered.

The increase in water temperatures, coral bleaching and ocean acidification and the deterioration of the marine environment have impacted not only fisheries, but tourism as well, with adverse consequences for the two largest economic industries in the Maldives. The world at large needs to enhance efforts to mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change and global warming, in the interest of intragenerational and intergenerational equity.

Another significant cross-border issue plaguing our oceans is abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear. It is estimated that there are over 640,000 tons of abandoned fishing gear throughout the world's oceans and that they will take hundreds of years to disintegrate. During monsoon seasons, abandoned fish-aggregating devices and ghost nets drift into Maldivian waters, destroying reefs and entangling cetaceans and other marine life. This poses a risk not only to the marine environment, but to humans as well, owing to the introduction of microplastics into the food chain. In addition to mitigating the risks to human and environmental health, there is also an economic incentive for us to address this issue. A cost-benefit analysis has demonstrated that the expense of retrieving such gear is minute compared with the loss of revenue incurred by failing to do so. We need to take collective action to stop contributing to this problem, which impacts the world at large, and to start reversing the damage that has been done already.

Ocean plastic pollution and marine littering as a result of incompetent waste management create equally harmful risks for the global oceans and marine wildlife. On a global scale, we need to reduce both the production and the consumption of plastic, and at the same time, ensure that waste management plans are improved to intercept plastic waste and utilize the potential economic benefits that are to be reaped from recycling. In this regard, we in the Maldives have already begun to address ocean plastic pollution

through a partnership between Parley for the Oceans and a local non-governmental organization (NGO), Biodiversity Education and Awareness Maldives.

The value and significance of the oceans is recognized best by small island States, as our relationship with the oceans transcends economic value. The strong social and cultural ties we have with the oceans form a part of our unique identity. Therefore, we Maldivians have embraced our role as custodian of the oceans and have undertaken numerous measures to conserve and sustainably use our oceans.

In line with target 14.5 of the Sustainable Development Goal, on conservation and sustainable use of oceans and seas, the Maldives has designated 42 marine protected areas throughout its national waters, totalling more than 24,494 hectares of reef area. Furthermore, the Environmental Protection Agency has identified 274 environmentally sensitive areas based on their biodiversity, uniqueness and the economic benefits of preservation. However, to attain the goal of conserving 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas by 2020, we call upon other countries to enhance conservation efforts in their jurisdictions as well. The UNESCO biosphere reserve in Baa Atoll in the Maldives is an illustration of how the economic benefits of marine protected areas outweigh the restrictions in development activities.

Similarly, with regard to protecting the unique biodiversity contained within coral reef ecosystems, the Maldives has undertaken extensive efforts to restore coral reefs through coral propagation. This methodology is being successfully utilized by tourist resorts and NGOs. Additionally, a coral reef monitoring framework, involving civilians and scientific researchers, has been established to support the national coral reef monitoring programme and to keep closer track of what is happening in our reefs. Not only do coral reefs present diverse ecological value, but our main industries — tourism and fisheries — rely on them.

The Maldives is recognized as a global leader in sustainable fisheries. It utilizes sustainable fishing methods, such as the pole and line fishing and handline fishing, and educates the industry through the development of a fisheries' curriculum, and reducing the exploitation of live bait species through a live bait fishery management plan. We have established a fisheries information system, which ensures traceability

throughout the value chain and is among one of the best traceability systems in the world. Strong policies have also been developed to introduce mariculture in the Maldives with the goal of diversifying the fisheries sector and reducing stress on existing fish stocks.

However, because we lack the capacity and resources to monitor our territorial waters adequately, the Maldives continues to fall victim to illegal fishing throughout our exclusive economic zone. This has resulted in economic losses greater than \$600 million and is a major setback in our efforts to protect fish stocks and marine environments. It is becoming abundantly clear that we, as small island States, with our inherent constraints in capacity and resources, cannot bear the burden of protecting the oceans alone. As the ocean is a resource that connects us all, this is a global issue for which the responsibility should be shared by the world. We all need to become the guardians of our Earth's oceans.

In this regard, the Maldives welcomes the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, on conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources, which will be convened in New York next year. We believe it will be a useful platform, which will bring all countries together to discuss how to implement the Goal, build partnerships and share mutually beneficial experiences and best practices. We hope that it will deliver a strong call for action as an outcome.

While we at the United Nations are engaged on many oceans issues, including such varied processes as governance, fisheries and the conservation of species, we need to rethink our systems of engagement. The oceans and their resources form an interconnected system, and our approaches towards their preservation must reflect that reality. We need to stop working in silos and urgently adopt a more coordinated and comprehensive response.

The establishment of a Preparatory Committee on an international legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction presents us with a unique opportunity to address gaps in ocean governance and protection. We must utilize this opportunity and work together constructively. Indeed, the process of establishing such an instrument on biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction may, over the years to come, lead to one

of the most important legal regimes in this context. It is our sincere hope that it will result globally in the large-scale change that is required to give our oceans a fighting chance.

We need to stop poisoning the waters on which we rely on for food. We need to stop exploiting the ocean's resources without regard for the long-term consequences, especially when it is being done illegally. We need to stop wiping out entire species which have thrived for millions of years. We need to stop polluting the Earth's atmosphere in a way that could change the nature of the ocean and we need to preserve the wealth of our oceans for our future generations.

Ms. Picco (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): Healthy and productive oceans for our present and future are indispensable for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Sustainable Development Goal 14—to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development—further strengthens the responsibility of the General Assembly to ensure the effective implementation of commitments made for oceans and law of the sea.

The United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, to be held next June, provides us an opportunity to address the challenges facing the world's oceans. Monaco, which supported the initiative of Fiji and Sweden, intends to substantially contribute to preparations therefor and to the Conference itself, in particular by sharing expertise on issues relating to ocean acidification, which is a consequence of climate change and affects marine life.

Ocean acidification is indeed a phenomenon that undermines the health of our oceans and especially affects coastal areas. Since 2010, the Scientific Centre of Monaco and the International Atomic Energy Agency's Environment Laboratories, which are based in Monaco, have organized with several partners, three workshops focusing on the socioeconomic impacts of ocean acidification. These impacts are especially significant on fishing, aquaculture, tourism, the culture and adaptation to climate change of coastal communities. The fourth workshop will be held in the Principality of Monaco from 15 to 17 October 2017.

His Serene Highness Prince Albert II is a dedicated advocate for the oceans and their resources. He has been unrelenting in his personal commitment to ensuring that the oceans find their rightful place in the climate negotiations, as, until now, the oceans have

occupied a relatively marginal place in international climate negotiations, which have focused on land-based carbon dioxide emissions by man, on the role of carbon dioxide capture by forests and the adaptation measures that are necessary for climate change. This changed with the launch of the Ocean and Climate Platform of UNESCO's International Oceanographic Commission in 2015. The Platform has contributed to the integration of the major role of oceans in the climate regulation within the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

The role of oceans in climate regulation also motivated Monaco to join the High Ambition Coalition. The Coalition enables our efforts to be further mobilized, not just during the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, but also within all the relevant frameworks, as was recently seen successfully at the International Maritime Organization and the International Civil Aviation Organization.

I would also like to point out that Monaco is currently hosting a scoping meeting for the special report on climate change and oceans and the cryosphere of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which brings together 103 experts from 40 countries. The drafting of this special report, which Monaco was highly involved in, is a critical stage in the consideration of the oceans in the face of climate change. This report is expected to be completed by 2019.

Plastic waste in our oceans is another significant problem whose magnitude demands that action be taken urgently. It is terrifying to imagine the consequences of oceans harbouring more tons of plastic waste than fisheries resources. This looming disaster prompted Prince Albert II to sign the statement of intent to launch the international coalition to reduce plastic wastes in the sea during the United Nations Climate Conference held in Marrakech, Morocco. The quantity of plastic waste in the Mediterranean, which is, unfortunately, one of the most polluted bodies of water, is estimated at \$250 billion. To contribute to this awareness-raising, at the beginning of the year, Morocco banned single-use plastic bags. By 2020 disposable plastic utensils will also be banned.

Mr. Doualeh (Djibouti), Vice-President, took the Chair.

As was announced during the Our Ocean conference, held in Washington, D.C., in September, Monaco will provide a financial contribution over

three years to microinitiatives aimed at reducing plastic waste in the Mediterranean. However, our efforts will be in vain without the support of the industrial sector. Consumers have a decisive role to play, the choice being either to reduce dependence on plastic, which is becoming ever thinner and more resistant, or to consume fish with plastic. We work closely in this area with numerous international institutions and non-governmental institutions. Earlier this year, Prince Albert II led a delegation to the World Congress of the International Union of the Conservation of Nature, where over 100 motions were adopted, including on marine protected areas, biodiversity, management of oceans and ecotourism.

This year, the Preparatory Committee established to develop a legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction began its work. Jointly with Costa Rica, Monaco submitted a written contribution, prior to the second session, on the process of establishing area-based management tools, including marine protected areas. We firmly believe that marine protected areas are a lasting, viable, ecologically responsible and financially tailored solution to conserve fragile marine environments and to achieve our conservation goals.

Within the Mediterranean framework, beginning in 2013, Monaco committed, together with France and Tunisia, to an initiative which is aimed at supporting the establishment and management of marine protected areas by establishing an innovative trust fund. Morocco and Albania have since joined us, and the Union for the Mediterranean has extended its political support. The trust fund is sustained by contributions from public and private donors, including international donors, and by foundations, businesses and sponsors. The aim is to extend long-term support and additional funding for specific projects. This year the Principality provided €500,000.

That initiative reflects the commitments under the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and the Aichi goal No. 11. Initiatives launched by this trust fund should allow the establishment of a network of marine protected areas that are ecologically representative and effectively managed. To do so, the funds will be leveraged to improve already existing marine protected areas and to foster the creation of new ones. The provision of seed

capital to Morocco and Tunisia was announced during the Second Forum of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean, which was recently held in Tangier.

Monaco is the headquarters of the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Neighbouring Atlantic Area, an international organization that recently marked its twentieth anniversary. The Agreement recently signed a memorandum of cooperation with the United Nations Environmental Programme, the aim of which is to establish a regular dialogue with the secretariat of the Convention for Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution. Political cooperation and contacts with fisheries and human activities which generate threats to cetaceans will also be strengthened. The Agreement is also confirmed in its pilot role under the ecosystem-based approach within the Barcelona Convention as regards cetacean populations and noise pollution, which have become major concerns for the conservation of living marine resources.

We are also host to the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO), which was set up in 1921 in Monaco. As such, I would like to draw the attention of the General Assembly to the priorities of that international organization. Unfortunately, it remains largely unknown to the wider public. Since 2001, IHO has enjoyed observer status in the General Assembly. The promotion of safe navigation and the protection of the marine environment are two priorities for IHO, and its representatives regularly participate in meetings in New York. The benefits of hydrography, bathymetry and seabed mapping are critical for trade and tourism, but this has not been sufficiently underscored. Imagine, 85 per cent of the seabed has not yet been directly measured. That means that the surface of the planet Mars has been mapped to a greater extent than our oceans.

Therefore, our delegation has plans to improve the drafting of the appropriate paragraphs in the omnibus resolution on the oceans and law of the sea at the next session. As the 2005 Protocol that aims to strengthen the IHO Convention entered into force on 8 November, any State requesting to join IHO will no longer have to secure the approval of two thirds of the existing members and, in practice no State's request is denied, that means that the time required for accession to membership will be reduced. Until now, it has taken two to three years.

In conclusion, I would like to warmly thank the facilitators of the two draft resolutions under discussion, which we are co-sponsoring. I would also like to thank the States which submitted draft resolution A/71/L.27, on World Tuna Day, which we are also co-sponsoring. The small island developing States, with which we work closely, invite Member States to respect a fair balance between conservation and sustainable use of our very valuable marine resources.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to begin this statement by welcoming the various reports of the Secretary-General both on the oceans and the law of the sea and on sustainable fisheries.

Today, as the General Assembly considers the draft resolutions relating to oceans and the law of the sea, Peru reaffirms its historic commitment to the protection of the oceans and the conservation of fishery resources and other marine living resources. Peru is an extremely diverse country, and we recognize the great potential that this has for its sustainable development, for the maintenance of our ecosystems and for the well-being of our population, as can be seen in the high priority that my country attaches to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Goal 14, "Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources".

My country welcomes the current preparatory process for the United Nations Conferences to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, and we reiterate our full support for all the General Assembly processes relating to oceans and the law of the sea. We also express our recognition for the priority given to this issue by the President of the General Assembly.

In that regard, my delegation had the honour to co-chair the seventeenth meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, at which the areas of concentration were marine debris, plastics and microplastics. On that occasion, we were able to see that, in order to solve this problem, we need a comprehensive multisectoral approach that does not just include the participation of Governments at various levels, but also that of international organizations, civil society and industry. Peru is pleased to see that draft resolution A/71/L.26, "Oceans and the law of the sea", decides that the Informal Consultative Process will focus its

discussions at its eighteenth meeting on the theme “The effects of climate change on oceans”. We believe that, with the recent entry into force of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which Peru has signed and ratified, it is vital that the General Assembly address that issue.

Peruvian waters are some of the most productive on the planet, providing 20 per cent of pelagic production worldwide, and in that way we contribute to global food security. We recognize, however, the fragile nature of the oceans and the various factors which threaten them. That is why Peru was one of the first countries to declare the need to protect fishery resources and other marine living resources. In that regard, my delegation, together with others, actively promotes in various forums the establishment of rules to eliminate fisheries subsidies, which contribute to overfishing and overexploitation. They have negative effects on the sustainability of marine resources, trade, food security and in general on sustainable development. At the same time, the stated objective is consistent with target 14.6 of the 2030 Agenda.

In view of the former, my delegation wishes to conclude this statement by reiterating its strong commitment to all General Assembly processes that relate to oceans and the law of the sea, in conformity with our historic concern about the protection of the oceans and our position as a biologically extremely diverse country that recognizes the great potential that such diversity represents for future generations. In that regard, we express our support for the draft resolutions on oceans and the law of the sea (A/71/L.26) and on sustainable fisheries (A/71/L.24), and we are co-sponsoring draft resolution A/71/L.27, which designates World Tuna Day.

Mr. Rattray (Jamaica): My delegation welcomes the opportunity to participate in the debate on agenda item 73, “Oceans and the law of the sea”, including sub-item (b) on sustainable fisheries. We thank the Secretary-General for his annual comprehensive report (A/71/74) on developments and issues related to ocean affairs and the law of the sea.

As an island State, our fortunes and existence are inextricably tied to the oceans, and we therefore value and hold dear efforts aimed at their preservation and protection. For that reason, we had hoped to see even stronger language in the draft resolution on the oceans and the law of the sea (A/71/L.26), in keeping with the collective commitment to which we are all

held accountable. It is our view that the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides an essential framework for us to advance our work in that regard. Through a dedicated focus on Goal 14 and its corresponding targets, we are provided an opportunity to ensure effective management and conservation of our maritime resources for sustainable development.

Jamaica is pleased to note the steady progress that is being made in various forums devoted to oceans and the law of the sea. We applaud the many efforts that have been made at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels with the convening of numerous workshops and meetings, and other initiatives, all of which have the common objective of ensuring that we remain faithful to our obligations in this critical field.

As host of the International Seabed Authority, we are committed to the work that is being undertaken to secure the resources in the Area for the benefit of all, as well as to preserve and protect the environmental integrity of the deep seabed. We take this opportunity to reiterate our congratulations to Mr. Michael Lodge on his election as the Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority, during the twenty-second session of the Authority, held earlier this year.

Jamaica has consistently underscored the need for cooperation and collaboration to ensure that developing countries, such as ours, are able to claim their share of the global commons. That is a fundamental principle enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The inviolable and non-derogable nature of this principle is a fundamental underpinning of our continuing discourse on oceans and the law of the sea.

Our long association with this process, dating back to the adoption of UNCLOS, continues to inspire our belief that there is tremendous scope for even greater cooperation on issues relating to our seas and oceans. For that reason, we are heartened by the very positive and congenial atmosphere that characterizes our discussions on biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. We remain convinced that the successful conclusion of a new instrument on the protection and conservation of the marine resources in areas beyond national jurisdiction is a necessary and important complement to ensure effective ocean governance.

Given the significant technological and scientific advances that have been made since the adoption

of UNCLOS, it is imperative that we examine and establish the requisite framework to effectively govern the management and sustainable use of our marine resources. Moreover, we believe that this should be done in a fair and equitable manner. We regard the International Seabed Authority as an essential institution that should feature in any regime going forward. What the discussion on biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction strives to accomplish is best addressed within the context of what the Authority currently provides. Its work to date, as well as its strategic value as an organization that brings together so many member States, makes the Authority the most suitable institution to ensure that the new instrument for the biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction is provided with the structure required for effective implementation. For my delegation, therefore, it is of vital importance that we make use of existing mechanisms as opposed to creating new ones.

The participation of developing countries in the deliberations on oceans and the law of the sea is central to any meaningful consideration of the issue. While we all have a vested interest and stake in this important matter, many of our countries are heavily dependent on the oceans and their resources for their very survival. Much of our way of life in Jamaica, including our food and nutrition, the tourism industry and our recreational activities, hinge on ensuring that our maritime space is adequately protected and its resources are sustainably used. It is worth noting that fish is the second most important protein in our diet, next only to poultry. In addition, the contribution of tourism to Jamaica's economy represents 30 per cent of our gross domestic product.

Consequently, threats to our marine environment, which include overfishing, pollution and the impact of climate change, represent a real danger to our economic viability. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations 2016 report, *The State of the World's Fisheries and Aquaculture*, global total capture fishery production in 2014 was 93.4 million tonnes, of which 81.5 million tonnes were from marine waters. The report notes that the world's marine fish stocks have not improved overall, despite notable progress in some areas, and that biologically sustainable levels of fish stocks have decreased from 90 per cent in 1974 to 68.6 per cent in 2013.

We wish to place on record our deep appreciation for the invaluable work done by the Division for Ocean

Affairs and the Law of the Sea, the tireless efforts and unswerving commitment of which has been central to our achievements to date. The Division merits our continued support and requires commensurate resources to enable it to continue to function effectively.

The need for resources is also critical in the case of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. My delegation is concerned that the lack of adequate resources has limited the participation of members from developing countries who were elected to serve on that body. Without broad-based representation, can we truly say that the Commission has indeed fulfilled its mandate? We therefore urge countries that are in a position to do so, to make the necessary resources available to the Commission. We welcome the support that has been provided by donor countries to the voluntary trust fund established for the purpose of facilitating the participation of experts from developing countries. However, as overall funding levels are still far from satisfactory, we encourage others to consider making contributions in that regard.

In many respects, oceans remain largely uncharted, with vast numbers of species yet to be discovered. We therefore have an obligation to ensure that our focus is not just on how we can increase our knowledge about what lies beneath the surface of the sea, but also about how to increase our resolve to conserve and sustainably use those resources. For my delegation, therefore, the high-level United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, to be held in June 2017, assumes even greater significance, as it will afford us the opportunity to collectively and unreservedly address issues critical to the protection of our oceans.

We are at a vital point in our efforts to conserve and preserve our oceans and seas but can do so only if we remain steadfast in our commitment to work together and support one another. We must not resile from that responsibility but confront it with the seriousness and urgency that it requires. Rest assured that Jamaica stands ready to play its part in that regard.

Mr. Gafoor (Singapore): Singapore regards the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) as one of the most important international conventions in existence. It provides the overarching framework for governance of the world's oceans. Ambassador Tommy Koh of Singapore, who was the President of the third United Nations Conference on the

Law of the Sea, from 1980 to 1982, rightly described the Convention as a constitution for the oceans. Over the past two decades, UNCLOS has provided the legal framework for all activities in the oceans and seas, including international cooperation. In that regard, we welcome Azerbaijan's accession to UNCLOS. We urge those countries that have yet become parties to UNCLOS to do so as soon as possible.

The omnibus draft resolution (A/71/L.26) before us addresses a wide spectrum of activities that are carried out in the oceans and seas and impact the entire international community. The various initiatives and meetings relating to the Oceans and the Law of the Sea made for a full agenda for this calendar year. Those meetings were held independently of each other, but it is critical to underline the interlinkages between them. In our view, it is important to achieve and sustain coherence within and across the different processes, including by recognizing the place of UNCLOS at their core. In that regard, my delegation wishes to make a few comments on biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction; the International Seabed Authority (ISA); the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process; and the Regular Process for Global Reporting.

With regard to biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction, the Preparatory Committee had two fruitful sessions, in which my delegation actively participated. We welcome the opportunity for Mrs. Rena Lee, a member of the Singapore delegation, to contribute as the facilitator for the informal working group on capacity-building and the transfer of marine technology. UNCLOS enshrines a delicate balance of interests. The discussions on biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction need to recognize and respect that balance. We trust that the constructive attitudes of delegations will continue. Singapore will continue to move forward and work closely with other parties to ensure that we can collectively make progress on the basis of consensus.

With regard to the ISA, Singapore has continued to participate actively in the work of the International Seabed Authority, including as a member of the ISA Council. Mrs. Rena Lee of Singapore was elected this year to serve on the Legal and Technical Commission of the ISA for the period 2017-2020. That is a great honour for Singapore. It underscores our commitment to contribute constructively to the work of the ISA in safeguarding the common heritage of humankind.

We also welcome the continued progress of the ISA in establishing rules, regulations and procedures for activities in the Area under Part XI of UNCLOS.

Singapore welcomes the submission of the initial working draft of the regulations for exploitation at the twenty-second session of the ISA. We have submitted our comments on the draft. The completion of that work is a matter of priority. We also note the progress being made on the general and systematic review of the manner in which the international regime of the Area has operated. We look forward to the submission of the final report on the review by 15 April 2017. We thank ISA Secretary-General Nii Odunton for his leadership over the years, and we look forward to working with the incoming Secretary-General, Mr. Michael Lodge.

My delegation also participated in the seventeenth meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, established by the General Assembly, which addressed the topic of marine debris, plastics and microplastics. We welcome the opportunity to reflect on the science and the challenge posed by microplastics, the importance of prioritizing prevention, and the importance of an integrated approach to the management of activities, including coordinated action among various competent sectoral authorities. Next year, the Informal Consultative Process will focus on another pertinent topic: the effects of climate change on oceans. Singapore ratified the Paris Agreement on Climate Change three months ago. We welcomed its entry into force on 4 November this year. Climate change continues to pose a significant risk to many countries, especially to small island developing States like Singapore. We look forward to the exchange of views that will take place at next year's Informal Consultative Process.

With regard to the Regular Process, Singapore believes that its work on issues pertaining to oceans must continue to be informed by research into and information on the oceans and related human activities. UNCLOS establishes the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. However, stakeholders often have a limited view of the ocean that is focused on their own sectoral interests. We therefore appreciate the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects. It has an important role to play in aiding our understanding of the marine environment, including its economic and social aspects. The first cycle of the Regular Process

has been successfully completed. The first cycle resulted in the ground-breaking First Global Integrated Marine Assessment. The Assessment gave us very valuable insights. We must now build upon them for the second cycle of the Regular Process from 2016 to 2020 and keep the momentum going.

Another area in which we will need to keep the momentum going is with regard to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 on the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. In that regard, I wish to commend the President for his personal commitment and his leadership in supporting the United Nations Conference on Oceans and Seas to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14. We in Singapore share and support his vision that the Conference will serve as a platform for all stakeholders to come together and galvanize the international community into action to support the implementation of SDG 14. The outcome document, the partnership dialogues and the voluntary commitments to be announced at the Conference in June 2017 will make an important contribution to the implementation of SDG 14. Singapore attaches the greatest importance to the Conference. We regard it as an important priority not only for Singapore but for the entire international community. We look forward to actively participating in the Conference and to working with the two co-Chairs, Fiji and Sweden, as well as to working closely with all members of the international community to achieve a successful outcome.

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/71/74) on this agenda item. We also thank Mr. Thembile Joyini of South Africa and Mr. Andreas Kravik of Norway for their work in coordinating the informal consultations on the omnibus draft resolution (A/71/L.26) and the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries (A/71/L.24), respectively. We would also like to express our thanks to the Director and staff of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for their invaluable support to Member States during the informal consultations.

Mr. Dinger (United States of America): My delegation is pleased to co-sponsor draft resolutions A/71/L.26 and A/71/L.24, entitled, respectively, "Oceans and the law of the sea" and "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 many of those present know, Secretary of State John Kerry is a passionate advocate for the ocean because he recognizes that life on the planet depends on a healthy ocean. The ocean provides food and income for billions of people. It regulates our weather and climate. It generates over half the oxygen we breathe and it absorbs much of our excess carbon dioxide, helping to slow down the impacts of climate change.

But the ocean is in trouble. Over 30 per cent of the world's assessed fish stocks are overfished, and almost 60 per cent more are already being harvested at the maximum sustainable level. We add millions of tons of plastic into the ocean every year. The acidity of marine waters has risen 30 per cent since the industrial revolution, weakening the shells of some sea creatures, and the ocean has absorbed over 90 per cent of the Earth's additional heat since the 1970s, driving up ocean temperature and sea levels.

Secretary Kerry hosted the third Our Ocean conference in Washington, D.C., last September to focus the world's attention, once again, on the key ocean issues of our time — sustainable fisheries, marine pollution, climate-related impacts on the ocean and marine-protected areas — building on the commitments of the first Our Ocean conference in Washington in 2014 and the second in Valparaiso, Chile, in October 2015. Participants at the third Our Ocean conference announced new commitments to protecting the ocean, valued at over \$5.2 billion, and pledging to safeguard almost 4 million square kilometres of the ocean.

To date, participants from the three Our Ocean conferences have committed \$9.2 billion in initiatives to protect the ocean and pledged to safeguard nearly 9.9 million square kilometres of ocean. By adding the new Ross Sea region marine-protected area, the total protected area now comprises some 11.5 million square kilometres, an area roughly equal to the size of the continent of Africa or about 20 per cent of the Earth's land area.

We look forward to building on those successes at the next Our Ocean conference in Malta, in October 2017, to be hosted by the European Union, as well as the conferences to be hosted by Indonesia in 2018 and Norway in 2019. We are also pleased that the 2017

meeting of the Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea will address the effects of climate change on oceans.

The ocean and our climate are inextricably linked. The ocean absorbs much of our excess carbon dioxide and heat, but the damage caused by this phenomenon is already undermining marine ecosystems and coastal communities. Without additional action to limit emissions of greenhouse gases and rising temperatures, seas could rise up to 2 to 3 feet by the end of the century. Even modest temperature rises could affect more than one billion people living in areas exposed to regular coastal flooding and lead to more intense coastal storms. Many fish species are moving toward the poles in search of cooler waters, putting fishing economies at risk and endangering the more than 3 billion people around the world who rely on seafood for protein. Our coral reefs are showing signs of devastation as coral previously thought to be pristine and thriving is bleaching and dying.

That is why the ambitious goals and actions that countries agreed to in Paris last year are imperative and provide us with a hopeful path forward. Next year's Informal Consultative Process meeting will give us an opportunity to examine and raise awareness about the impacts of climate change on the ocean, marine ecosystems and coastal communities, and strengthen our resolve to fully implement the Paris Agreement.

We are also pleased that this year's draft resolution on sustainable fisheries has strengthened the call to Member States, both individually and collectively, to conserve and sustainably use fish stocks, in line with our broader efforts to promote healthy marine ecosystems. It has been a productive year at the United Nations for sustainable fisheries. We are glad that the new draft resolution acknowledges the important outcome of the resumed Review Conference of the United Nations on the Fish Stocks Agreement, at which delegations consolidated and strengthened numerous recommendations, including on issues related to the conservation and management of stocks and improving monitoring, control, surveillance and enforcement.

We also appreciate the discussion on the implementation of previous resolution language concerning bottom fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks. There is widespread recognition that considerable progress has been made in managing

bottom fishing and preventing significant adverse impacts on vulnerable marine ecosystems over the past decade, including the establishment of new regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) and binding conservation measures. The United Nations reviews and recommendations were essential elements of that effort. However, the draft resolution also emphasizes that such progress remains uneven. Implementation urgently needs to be strengthened by States and RFMOs.

This year's draft resolution on sustainable fisheries also contains important new or revised language in other priority areas. For example, delegations agreed to revise certain references to the Doha and Hong Kong ministerial mandates in the draft resolution that have become outdated in order to reflect that members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) are no longer negotiating under the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) framework. While the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries quotes paragraph 173 of resolution 66/288, "The future we want", including its references to the DDA and the Doha and Hong Kong ministerial mandates, these references have been included in the fisheries resolution since 2012 and are maintained for historical accuracy only.

Those references in no way override or supersede the WTO Nairobi Ministerial Declaration, which was agreed by all members of the WTO in December 2015. At the WTO Ministerial Conference, WTO members could not agree to reaffirm the DDA. As a result, WTO members are no longer negotiating under the DDA framework. Therefore, the United States firmly considers that the remaining historical references to the DDA and Doha and Hong Kong ministerial mandates in the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries have no standing and do not serve as precedent for future negotiated documents. The draft resolution on sustainable fisheries also welcomes the entry into force of the Port State Measures Agreement, a key accomplishment of the international community that will help strengthen our efforts to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

Consistent with the emphasis on climate and the draft resolution on oceans, the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries includes important language, calling upon States and RFMOs to appropriately consider climate change and ocean acidification when establishing conservation and management measures, as well as strengthening cooperation to exchange

related scientific information and best practices. The draft resolution also recognizes the importance of work to rebuild stocks, combat IUU fishing and address ghost fishing by abandoning lost or discarded fishing gear.

Both the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries and the draft resolution on oceans this year recall the General Assembly's decision to convene the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, to be held in New York in June 2017. We thank Fiji and Sweden for co-hosting the Conference and welcome it as an opportunity for the global community to identify further cooperation and efforts needed to implement the Sustainable Development Goal 14 targets to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

The United States would like to thank Director Gabriele Goettsche-Wanli and the staff of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for their expertise and support on both draft resolutions. We would also like to thank Mr. Thembile Joyini of South Africa for his coordination of the draft resolution on oceans and Mr. Andreas Kravik of Norway for his coordination of the draft resolution on fisheries. Both did an outstanding job.

Finally, we would like to express our appreciation for the delegation's hard work and cooperation in crafting both draft resolutions. It is our hope that this spirit of cooperation will characterize our efforts to address the numerous and complex issues that lie ahead for the ocean.

Mr. Morales López (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Colombia would like to respectfully begin our statement by expressing our sincere thanks to Mr. Thembile Elphus Joyini of South Africa and Mr. Andreas Motzfeldt Kravik of Norway for their tireless efforts as coordinators of the draft resolutions A/71/L.26 and A/71/L.24, entitled, respectively, "Oceans and the law of the sea" and "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", by conducting the discussions with skill, transparency and a constructive spirit, which reflected the diversity that was present

during consultations on the part of all States that participated in them.

Colombia is a nation with enormous marine diversity. Thanks to its biogeographic conditions, with coasts on both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, it is considered to be a privileged country with an enormous variety of marine and coastal ecosystems, whose health depends not only on coherent and responsible national management but also on that of other countries abutting those oceans.

As a highly diverse country, Colombia is committed to conserving, protecting and sustainably developing those oceans by implementing policies, plans and programmes that emphasize the issue's national, regional and global importance. The country also has a solid institutional framework in the coastal and marine areas, which is guided by a comprehensive vision in which seas, coasts and their resources become key elements of the country's activities.

For that reason, Colombia acknowledges the valuable contribution that the draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea represents. However, the draft resolution is based on the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), a judicial instrument that Colombia has not ratified. Therefore, the tenets of the draft resolution are not obligatory or enforceable in my country, except for those towards which it has expressly shown its acceptance. Similarly, my country does not believe that the Convention is the only legal framework to regulate activities carried out in oceans. My delegation wishes to reiterate that Colombia is developing its activity in the marine environment in strict adherence to the international commitments that it has expressly adopted or accepted.

Finally, as we have already expressed on various occasions, the draft resolution and our participation in its adoption should not be seen or interpreted as implying our express or tacit acceptance of the provisions of UNCLOS. The constructive spirit that guides our country with respect to the oceans and the law of the sea is founded on the firm conviction that all nations have a commitment to protect the sea and its resources, based on the fact that a sustainable future for the world largely depends on them. Colombia is ready to cooperate with other nations in working to tackle the challenges of protecting the health of oceans.

Mr. Estreme (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, allow me to thank the two coordinators for

having conducted the negotiations on draft resolutions A/71/L.26 and A/71/L.24, before the General Assembly today.

My delegation reiterates that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea is one of the international instruments with major economic, strategic and political implications. Its provisions constitute a delicate balance of the rights and obligations of States, which must be respected by all Member States. This delicate balance should be preserved, including when addressing new challenges pertaining to the law of the sea and in processes established within the framework of the General Assembly, particularly those pertaining to marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The General Assembly decided to initiate a process to establish the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, which contemplates the possibility of formulating a multilateral agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The Preparatory Committee convened under resolution 69/292 should jointly and as a whole address the conservation and sustainable use of the marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, in particular marine genetic resources, including benefit-sharing, conservation measures, capacity-building and technology transfer, with a view to making recommendations to the General Assembly. Argentina believes that it is necessary to agree by consensus on the scope and parameters of a possible future agreement as an essential step before initiating a negotiation process.

With regard to the substance of the matter, my delegation would like to reiterate that due consideration must be given to what is at stake, namely, the conservation and sustainable use of biological resources of areas beyond national jurisdiction, and that the Convention solemnly declared that the area of the seabed and ocean floor and their subsoil beyond the limits of national jurisdiction, as well as their resources, were the common heritage of humankind, the exploration and exploitation of which should be carried out for the benefit of humankind. For Argentina, that principle is the basis for considering the issue and must be included in any future agreement.

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

Argentina would like to thank the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf for its arduous and ongoing work. With more extended sessions, some challenges have arisen. The draft resolution that we will adopt again provides for some provisional measures, to address, in particular, the issues of workspace and medical coverage. However, it is still necessary to work towards ensuring a permanent solution to the issues raised.

The function of the Commission is very important for Member States. We must therefore ensure that it be provided with adequate resources and needed conditions of service. We hope that, in the framework of the open-ended working group on the conditions of service of the members of the Commission, Member States will continue to make efforts so that emerging challenges are addressed effectively and expeditiously. In this regard, the continued assistance of the Secretary-General is highly relevant.

In addition, I would like to recall that the Commission's work pertains to demarcating the limit already established in article 76, and not to the rights of coastal States. Paragraph 3, article 77, part VI, 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 is reflected in paragraph 80 of draft resolution A/71/L.26, on oceans and the law of the sea.

Argentina welcomes this year as the twentieth anniversary of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and wishes to acknowledge the contributions to the development of international law, and of the law of the sea in particular, as well as the peaceful settlement of disputes. The Tribunal has a highly relevant job, as the judicial authority created by the Convention, to work to resolve cases relating to different aspects of the

law of the sea. Argentina has supported the work of the Tribunal since its establishment and is one of the State parties that have accepted its jurisdiction, to which we welcome the fact that it has been established as the specialized Tribunal on the law of the sea.

Turning to draft resolution A/71/L.24, on sustainable fisheries, my delegation must reiterate the need to avoid diverging from the rule with regard to any negotiation on the law of the sea originating from the Convention and move forward by consensus.

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

My country wishes to reiterate its concern about the trend towards attempts to legitimize through General Assembly resolutions efforts by regional fisheries management organizations to adopt measures beyond their spatial, material and personal scope of application. Argentina objects to such interpretations of General Assembly resolutions. Argentina also expresses its concern about the attempts to legitimize, through pronouncements of the Assembly, actions of groups of States that seek to regulate matters pertaining to the marine biological diversity of zones beyond national jurisdiction, when there is no universally agreed legal framework allowing for such actions.

Finally, Argentina expresses its acknowledgement and thanks to all the staff of the Division of Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for their professionalism and hopes that the measures to strengthen the resources to the Division provided for in the draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea will be approved within the framework of the Fifth Committee in a timely manner.

Mr. Akahori (Japan): Japan is a country surrounded entirely by the sea. Every year, on the third Monday in July, the Japanese celebrate Marine Day, a

national holiday, to express gratitude to the blessings of the sea and pray for prosperity as a maritime nation. Since ancient times, the sea has blessed us with food and continues to provide trade routes with all countries. Japan's activities on matters related to the ocean and the law of the sea are based on this sense of gratitude.

Japan is happy to co-sponsor draft resolution A/71/L.26, on the oceans and the law of the sea, along with more than 30 Member States. Open and stable seas are essential for the peace and prosperity of the international community as a whole, and it is necessary to maintain and promote them. The promotion of the rule of law at sea is therefore extremely important. That is why Prime Minister Abe has emphasized the following three principles on the rule of law at sea.

First, States should make and clarify their claims based on international law. Secondly, States should not use force or coercion in trying to advance their claims. Thirdly, States should seek to settle disputes by peaceful means. The draft resolution includes the spirit of all these principles. By adopting the draft resolution, Member States can express their collective will to uphold these principles.

Japan welcomes the increasingly important role of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea in the peaceful resolution of maritime disputes. We congratulate the Tribunal on its twentieth anniversary. We sincerely hope that the Tribunal will contribute to strengthening the rule of law at sea through the accumulation of important judgments. Japan's support for the Tribunal's twentieth anniversary symposium in Hamburg this past October is a symbol of our high regard for it and its continued role. Japan is the largest assessed contributor to the Tribunal and will continue to support its activities by providing highly qualified legal professionals.

Japan appreciates the International Seabed Authority's steady implementation of its mandate to build a maritime legal order concerning the international seabed area. A balanced approach to the exploitation of the deep seabed which takes environmental conservation into account is needed. Japan will continue to contribute to constructive discussions on formulating an exploitation code that strikes a reasonable balance between exploitation and the environment. Japan will also continue to be actively engaged with the work of the Authority, whose importance is ever increasing in terms of human and

financial resources. We are committed to proactively contributing to the development of a legal order for the deep seabed through the Authority.

Japan recognizes the important role played by the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf and has consistently contributed human and financial resources to support its activities. We decided to nominate Professor Toshitsugu Yamazaki of the University of Tokyo as a candidate for next year's elections to the Commission. Professor Yamazaki is one of Japan's most prominent marine geologists. We are confident that he will continue the tradition of Japanese members of the Commission, including current member Professor Urabe, of making a strong contribution to the Commission's work.

We are contributing to enable the participation of members of the Commission from developing countries. For that purpose, as part of our financial support to the Commission, we have contributed approximately \$56,000 this year to the Trust Fund. We are looking into further increasing that contribution next year. We hope that our contributions, together with those of all other Member States, will lead to the continued and rapid progress of the work of the Commission.

The world unfortunately continues to confront a wide range of non-traditional maritime-security challenges. As a country that benefits from maritime trade, Japan believes that it is vital to respond to piracy and armed robbery, which endanger sea lanes. We are a proud contributor to international anti-piracy efforts on this front.

Japan has continuously deployed its Self-Defense Forces in anti-piracy operations off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden since 2009. Further, in Asia, we have contributed human and financial resources to the activities of the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia, which celebrated its tenth anniversary this year. Japan has provided seamless support to coastal States seeking to increase their capacity to strengthen maritime-law enforcement. This support includes official development assistance, defence-equipment cooperation and capacity-building assistance with the goal of securing the rule of law. We hope to further enhance this assistance going forward.

Last year, resolution 69/292 launched the consultative process to develop an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations

Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. Japan welcomes the two sessions of the Preparatory Committee that were held this year for that purpose. Japan recognizes the great importance of the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction, and will continue to actively support the Preparatory Committee's work to develop a well-balanced, international legally binding instrument that benefits the entire international community.

Finally, with regard to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that pertain to the ocean, we welcome the plans to hold the high-level United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of SDG 14 in New York next year.

Before concluding, Japan would like to thank the delegation of South Africa for its important role in facilitating draft resolution A/71/L.26. We are also grateful to all Member States and the Secretariat for their support during the informal consultations. Japan is confident that this same spirit of cooperation will continue after the draft resolution's adoption in the General Assembly.

Mrs. Nguyen Phuong Nga (Viet Nam): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for the comprehensive reports contained in documents A/71/74 and A/71/74/Add.1, which provide information on recent developments relating to oceans and the law of the sea and emphasize the importance of the sustainable development of oceans and seas.

We would also like to express our appreciation for the enormous efforts of the General Assembly and its subsidiary organs, especially the outcomes of the seventeenth meeting of United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea and the twenty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. We encourage the General Assembly to take into account and support the recommendations contained in the reports of those meetings.

We welcome the outcomes of various 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 as further steps towards an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Viet

Nam appreciates the successful activities of the organs established by the Convention, including the twenty-second session of the International Seabed Authority, and the collaborative efforts of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf to consider the submissions made by States parties. We especially value the role, contribution and jurisdiction of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and other dispute-settlement mechanisms in the interpretation and application of UNCLOS.

After more than 30 years since its creation and more than 20 years since its entry into force, UNCLOS has been the most important legal document regulating all activities in the oceans and seas, contributing to peace and security and ensuring safety, security and freedom of navigation and overflight at sea. UNCLOS provides a comprehensive legal framework for the peaceful, equitable, sustainable and efficient management and use of marine resources for the prosperity of humankind. It obliges the States parties, whether big or small, to fully implement its provisions in good faith and in a responsible manner so that the sovereignty, legitimate rights and interests of all States are respected. Moreover, the Convention has provided a comprehensive and efficient framework for the peaceful settlement of disputes.

As a State party to the Convention and a coastal State on the East Sea, Viet Nam attaches great importance to the peace, stability and sustainable development of the oceans and seas. Viet Nam was among the first countries to sign and ratify the Convention and has always adhered to its provisions, respected the legitimate rights and interests of other nations and actively participated in activities within the framework of the Convention. Viet Nam encourages the General Assembly to pay due attention to sustainable development and conservation of marine diversity. Viet Nam urges all nations to respect and fulfil their obligations to ensure peace, stability and sustainable development of the oceans, according to the Convention and international law.

The ocean is an invaluable gift of nature to humankind, and it is our responsibility to preserve it for present and future generations. However, recent complicated developments in some parts of the world, including the East Sea, are posing a threat to international peace, security and sustainable development. We therefore call upon all parties concerned to exercise self-restraint, solve disputes by peaceful means in

accordance with international law, including UNCLOS, fully respect diplomatic and legal processes, implement the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea and expedite the completion of the code of conduct for the South China Sea.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm Viet Nam's commitment to the objectives and purposes of UNCLOS. We look forward to the high-level United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, to be held in June 2017, and will work closely with Member States to make the Conference a great success.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): More than 25 years ago, as a young diplomat I spoke for the first time from this very rostrum on this agenda item. Today, I would like to express our gratitude to the Secretariat and to the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for the work done during the intervening years, including the preparation of this year's annual report on oceans and the law of the sea and its addendum (A/71/74).

The issue of the marine environment continues to be a matter of most serious concern due to climate change, marine debris, overfishing and illegal fishing. It is therefore important to keep working to fulfil our commitments under the Sustainable Development Goals, Goal 14 of which recognizes the importance of oceans and their resources. We welcome the sustainable fisheries draft resolution (A/71/L.24), which addresses the problem of illegal, unreported and unregulated fisheries, which constitute a major threat to marine biodiversity and ecosystems.

Ukraine is strongly committed to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS), the constitution of the oceans, which reflects customary international law and establishes the overarching legal framework for all activities in oceans and seas. The States parties to UNCLOS have recognized the desirability of establishing, through the Convention, with due regard for the sovereignty of all States, a legal order for oceans and seas that will facilitate international communication and promote the peaceful use of oceans and seas, the equitable and efficient utilization of their resources, the conservation of living resources and the study, protection and preservation of the marine environment.

Unfortunately, today this universally recognized legal order faces great challenges in Ukraine and its adjoining maritime areas. In view of the occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine's rights as a coastal State in maritime zones adjacent to Crimea in the Black Sea and the Kerch Strait have been interfered with and usurped by the aggressor State. Ukraine is unable to carry out its international obligations under the relevant treaties and conventional instruments in the maritime areas appertaining to the Crimean peninsula, including the provision of the safety and security of navigation, the regulation of maritime traffic, the protection of the marine environment and search and rescue.

As a result, the north-eastern part of the Black Sea has literally become a grey area for international shipping, which is evidenced by the increased number of marine casualties and incidents. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that at the recent, ninety-seventh session of the Maritime Safety Committee of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), a document entitled "Safety and security of navigation in the north-eastern part of the Black Sea", submitted by Ukraine and Georgia, was considered, and it was agreed that monitoring of the security and safety of navigation in that part of the Black Sea should begin. Moreover, in September, Ukraine officially served the Russian Federation with a notification of arbitration and a statement of claim instituting ad hoc arbitral proceedings under UNCLOS to vindicate its rights as a coastal State in maritime zones adjacent to Crimea in the Black Sea, the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait.

We would like to echo the latest report of the Secretary-General on oceans and the law of the sea, which emphasizes that the ability of States to maximize benefits from oceans and seas and develop a sustainable ocean-based economy depends on maintaining and enhancing the security of maritime spaces. Given that, we condemn the incidents of piracy and armed robbery at sea, transnational organized crime and terrorism in the maritime domain, trafficking in persons, smuggling of migrants, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and other maritime activities that threaten global stability, security and prosperity.

Although we are encouraged by the achievements of the international community in countering maritime piracy, Ukraine wishes to underscore that no sustainable results are possible without dealing with the root causes of piracy and robbery at sea and bringing to justice

the perpetrators of such acts and their organizers and facilitators on land. We express our growing concern over the high number of incidents of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea. At the same time, we are glad to see that the number of the same incidents at sea off the Somalian coast has fallen to its lowest level since 1995. We are proud that Ukraine actively contributed to this positive dynamic, including throughout the first half of our elected term in the Security Council.

In conclusion, Ukraine urges coastal States, flag States and industry to do everything possible to ensure the safety and security of maritime shipping, especially in high-risk regions. Ukraine stands ready to further cooperate with the States Members of the United Nations, the IMO and other relevant actors, with a view to achieving the aforementioned goal, in accordance with existing international obligations.

Mr. Madimi (India): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Thembile Joyini of South Africa, Mr. Andreas Kravik of Norway and Mrs. Margo Deiye of Nauru for coordinating this year's draft resolutions A/71/L.26, A/71/L.24 and A/71/L.27, on oceans and the law of the sea, sustainable fisheries, and World Tuna Day, respectively, under sub-items (a) and (b) of agenda item 73. We are in fact one of the sponsors of the draft resolution on World Tuna Day, and we support the adoption of all three resolutions by the General Assembly.

India has a long maritime history. We have a long coastline — more than 7,500 kilometres — and we are located on the world's major maritime trading routes. Further, India has long been dedicated to multilateralism in the conduct of global affairs. We were one of the first signatories to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), in 1982, having actively participated in the intergovernmental negotiations leading up to the finalization of the Convention.

UNCLOS, together with related agreements, represents a major achievement in the codification and progressive development of international law. It enjoys the wide acceptance of 167 States parties and the European Union. The Convention, which is described as the constitution of the oceans and seas, provides the legal framework for the use of oceans and seas and their resources by establishing a delicate balance between the need for economic and social development, on the one hand, and the need to protect and preserve the marine

environment and conserve and manage its resources, on the other.

The oceans cover almost three quarters of the Earth. The States look to oceanic resources as a means to economic growth and social advancement; and development of an ocean-based economy is attracting more attention today. It is in this context that India, in its interactions with other States, especially the littoral States of the Indian Ocean, is underscoring the importance of cooperation in the blue economy.

In over two decades of its operation, the Convention has contributed pre-eminently to the sustainable development of the oceans and seas and to the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples of the world. This is reflected in the document entitled "The future we want" (resolution 66/288, annex) echoing the Millennium Development Goals adopted in 2000 and in "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", the outcome document of the 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Summit (resolution 70/1).

Sustainable Development Goal 14, which contains some 10 targets, recognizes the importance and critical role of the oceans and seas in the achievement of the post-2015 development agenda. In this regard, we appreciate the initiative of Fiji and Sweden to organize the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of the Goal 14, in June 2017, coinciding with World Oceans Day.

We must however be cognizant of the fact that realizing the full potential of the oceans and seas depends on carrying out ocean-based activities in a sustainable manner, in accordance with internationally agreed principles, in particular the principles contained in the Convention. Our oceans face huge challenges, including the deterioration of the marine environment, biodiversity loss, climate change, illegal fishing practices and issues relating to maritime safety and security, including the acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea. We are happy to have actively engaged with the work of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia, which has significantly contributed in controlling piracy in the western Indian Ocean.

We thank the Secretary-General for his report and its addendum on issues concerning oceans and the law of the sea (A/71/74 and A/71/74/Add.1). We note that the report outlines the contribution of oceans to the environmental, social and economic dimensions of

sustainable development, the manner in which UNCLOS addresses those dimensions, and the opportunities for, and challenges to, the enhanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development in relation to oceans.

We welcome the report of the seventeenth meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (A/71/204), in which the deliberations focused on the topic of marine debris, plastics and microplastics. We support the continuation of the Process for the next two years, since it is a unique forum for comprehensive discussion by all the stakeholders on the topics of interest to the world, within the framework of the UNCLOS and chapter 17 of the Agenda 21. We look forward to contributing to the discussion of the topics of the effects of climate change on oceans and anthropogenic underwater noise.

We also welcome the report of the seventh meeting 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/71/362). Further, we welcome the launching of the second cycle of the regular process of the global integrated marine assessment to evaluate trends and identify gaps in the oceans' health, and establish a programme of work for the period 2017-2020.

Another area of significant interest and importance to my delegation and to the international community is conservation and the sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. We appreciate the rich discussion and exchange of views at the first and second sessions of the Preparatory Committee on an international legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction, established by the General Assembly in resolution 69/292. We look forward to the two sessions that will be held next year in which the Preparatory Committee will make substantive recommendations to the General Assembly on the elements of a draft text for an international legally binding instrument under the UNCLOS. We appreciate the leadership of Mr. Eden Charles of Trinidad and Tobago and thank him for chairing and steering the Preparatory Committee proceedings in a very able manner.

The smooth functioning of the institutions established under the Convention, namely, the

International Seabed Authority, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, hold the key to the proper implementation of the provisions of the Convention and to the realization of the desired benefits resulting from the use of the seas. We therefore support all efforts towards ensuring these institutions' efficient and effective functioning and note with satisfaction the progress made by them in their respective areas.

Finally, India, as a responsible partner of the international community and as a country with a vast coastline and numerous islands, has a long-standing and abiding interest in maritime and ocean affairs and assures its full cooperation in efforts aimed at ensuring the proper management and sustainable use of the oceans and seas.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.