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Official Records

President: Ms. Espinosa Garcés. (Ecuador)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Ten-Pow (Guyana), Vice-President, took the Chair.

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

Agenda item 78

Oceans and the law of the sea

(a) Oceans and the law of the sea

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/73/68 and A/73/368)

Reports on the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects (A/73/74 and A/73/373)

Report on the work of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea at its nineteenth meeting (A/73/124)

Draft resolution (A/73/L.35)

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

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

Draft resolution (A/73/L.41)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Singapore to introduce draft resolution A/73/L.35.

Mr. Gafoor (Singapore): My delegation is pleased to address the General Assembly on agenda item 78, “Oceans and the law of the sea”. This year Singapore had the great honour of coordinating the informal consultations on draft resolution A/73/L.35. The actual coordination was done by my colleague Ms. Natalie Morris-Sharma, Director of the International Legal Division of the Ministry of Law of Singapore. Due to her work commitments, Ms. Morris-Sharma was unable to join us today and has asked me to convey her regrets to the Assembly. She would also like to express her deep appreciation for the support given by all delegations to ensure an acceptable outcome for everyone. I would like to begin by introducing the draft resolution on her behalf.

The draft resolution before us remains one of the most comprehensive and important of the resolutions on oceans and the law of the sea adopted annually by the General Assembly. For that reason, it has come to be known as the oceans omnibus resolution. It covers a wide spectrum of activities and a broad range of issues, including those concerning the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and related agreements and instruments; capacity-building; the peaceful settlement of disputes; the work of the

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bodies established under the Convention, that is, the International Seabed Authority (ISA), the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea; maritime safety and security; the marine environment and marine resources; marine biodiversity; marine science; the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects; regional cooperation; the Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea; and the activities of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea.

This year informal consultations were held over nine days, from 1 to 4 October and from 14 to 20 November. As always, negotiations were intense and covered a wide range of issues. In the interests of time, I will not attempt to cover all the issues raised. I will, however, highlight six points as examples of issues that emerged from this year's negotiations.

First, the draft resolution takes stock of the activities of the International Seabed Authority. Among other things, it welcomes the progress of the work of the Authority on draft regulations for the exploitation of mineral resources in the Area and emphasizes the ongoing need for openness and transparency. It also welcomes the decision to adopt the International Seabed Authority's Strategic Plan for the period from 2019 to 2023 (ISBA/24/A/4), as well as the efforts of the Authority to make progress on the development of regional environmental management plans, in particular where there are currently exploration contracts.

Secondly, the draft resolution recognizes the needs of developing States in the context of making submissions to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. In that connection, the draft resolution amends the terms of reference, guidelines and rules of the Trust Fund for the purpose of facilitating the preparation of submissions to the Commission. The draft resolution also decides that the members of the Commission have the option of joining the Headquarters medical insurance scheme on payment of the full cost of the premium. That would be on an exceptional basis and without setting a precedent for other agenda items.

Thirdly, the draft resolution underscores the importance of the work undertaken by the Intergovernmental Conference to elaborate the text of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the

conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. In that regard, the draft resolution welcomes the holding of the organizational meeting and the first session of the Intergovernmental Conference. It also requests the Secretary-General to convene the second and third sessions of the Intergovernmental Conference in 2019.

Fourthly, the draft resolution notes the discussions at the nineteenth meeting of the Informal Consultative Process on the theme of anthropogenic underwater noise, and calls on States to consider appropriate cost-effective measures and approaches to assess and address the potential socioeconomic and environmental impact of anthropogenic underwater noise. Such consideration would take into account the precautionary and ecosystem approaches and the best available scientific information, as appropriate. The draft resolution goes on to decide that the next meeting will focus its discussions on the theme of ocean science and the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

Fifthly, with regard to the Regular Process, the draft resolution welcomes the meetings and endorses the recommendations 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. Among other things, it notes the Ad Hoc Working Group's approval of the outline for the second World Ocean Assessment and its preliminary timetable and implementation plan.

Sixthly, action was taken this year to address the growing length and improve the readability of the draft resolution. The existing resolution, resolution 72/73, stands at 56 preambular and 370 operative paragraphs. It has been said that this undermines its readability and effectiveness. Delegations have discussed this for some time, and this year we finally took steps to address the issue, resulting in the retirement of language that is outdated or duplicative. Part IX of the draft resolution was also reordered to improve coherence. Delegations intend to continue these efforts to streamline the draft resolution next year.

I want to convey our deep appreciation to the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for its outstanding support throughout the process. I would also like to express sincere thanks to all the delegations that participated so actively and constructively during the negotiations. While a number of issues were

particularly challenging, delegations were eventually able to achieve consensus on every proposal and paragraph. It therefore gives me great pleasure to submit the draft resolution to the Assembly for its adoption. It is my hope that the same spirit of cooperation and understanding that characterized the negotiations will be demonstrated by delegations today and that the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus.

I would now like to speak briefly in my national capacity to make three points. First, I want to emphasize how critically important a rules-based international order is for our oceans and seas. That has become ever more significant at a time when multilateralism is increasingly under siege. We need more mutual understanding, cooperation and respect for international law, not less. In that regard, we reaffirm the central role of the Convention on the Law of the Sea, which sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. We also underscore the importance of the work undertaken by the ISA to develop the draft regulations on exploitation and by the Intergovernmental Conference on marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction to elaborate the text of an international legally binding instrument under the Convention. The development of those instruments clarifies and adds to the body of law and the regulations that are fundamental to ocean governance. We therefore look forward to working closely with other delegations at the upcoming sessions of the ISA and the Intergovernmental Conference.

That brings me to my second point, which is the importance of building the capacity of States on oceans and the law of the sea. It is not enough to have good instruments, institutions and processes at the international level. We also need to ensure that countries have the necessary human resources and capability to implement those instruments and engage in the work of the relevant institutions and processes. As a small island State with no natural resources, Singapore believes that the development of human resources is key to a country's sustainable development and progress. In 1992 we therefore established the Singapore Cooperation Programme, our primary platform for assisting fellow developing countries and enhancing South-South cooperation. In July of this year, we organized a course entitled "Sustainable marine resources: enhancing biodiversity in coastal waterways", which introduced various approaches to managing and enhancing marine biodiversity in coastal

waterways. In January of next year we will organize a course on the international law of the sea that will focus on the Convention, cover issues of maritime boundary delimitation and examine the role of the relevant international organizations.

My third and final point relates to the ongoing implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14. Last year the United Nations held the Ocean Conference, which has garnered more than 1,400 voluntary commitments to date. Despite its success, we cannot afford to rest on our laurels but must rather continue to sustain the momentum that has been generated, respond to the call for action by the Ocean Conference and by the Assembly and implement our respective voluntary commitments.

In conclusion, I want to say that we cannot overstate the importance of our oceans and seas. They provide livelihoods for millions of people, enable food security and maritime trade, regulate the climate and are an important source of renewable energy. As a small island State that depends on the oceans and seas for its survival, Singapore is deeply committed to the law of the sea and strongly believes that a multilateral rules-based system is key to securing the sustainability of our oceans, seas and their resources for future generations. I would therefore like to end by stressing the importance of respecting the rule of law at the international level and adhering to the principles, rights and duties outlined in the Convention.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Norway to introduce draft resolution A/73/L.41.

Ms. Skåre (Norway): Norway had the honour of coordinating the informal consultations on draft resolution A/73/L.41, on sustainable fisheries. Today I am pleased to introduce that text on behalf of all its sponsors. On behalf of the coordinator, Andreas Kravik, and Norway, I 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, professionalism and invaluable support before and during the consultations. This year's draft resolution is a further step forward in the conservation and management of fish stocks, which are an essential resource for sustainable development in much of the world and for our common future.

Sustainable food from aquatic ecosystems is playing an increasingly critical role in global food

and nutrition security. Fisheries are immensely important to employment, trade and economic well-being throughout the world. The draft resolution before us addresses vital issues such as securing sustainable small-scale fisheries, combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, addressing fishing overcapacity, further improving subregional and regional cooperation to achieve sustainable fisheries management and promoting the use of scientific advice in developing, adopting and implementing conservation and management measures. It also addresses relevant issues dealt with in other United Nations forums. They include environmental concerns such as marine pollution and marine litter — particularly plastics and microplastics — anthropogenic underwater noise and the impact of global climate change. Another important issue that it addresses is the need to ensure decent working conditions in fisheries and other maritime sectors.

I would now like to speak in my national capacity. Norway is pleased to join many others in sponsoring draft resolution A/73/L.35, entitled “Oceans and the law of the sea”, as introduced by Ambassador Gafoor of Singapore. We thank Singapore and Ms. Morris-Sharma for her careful stewardship and effective leadership during the two rounds of consultations. The draft resolution addresses important issues related to the implementation of the law of the sea. We fully support it and the parameters it outlines for ocean activities. Its preamble reaffirms that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out, and Norway fully supports that view. The Convention provides clarity with regard to both the obligations and the rights of States. That framework is indispensable for the sustainable use of marine resources, the protection of the marine environment, the safety and security of shipping, international and regional cooperation and marine scientific research.

The oceans have huge potential when it comes to meeting the world’s needs for resources, creating jobs and fostering economic and social development. But we will not be able to realize that potential without sustainable growth in ocean-based industries. This year, Norway’s Prime Minister, Erna Solberg, together with Heads of State and Government of coastal States around the world, established the High-level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy. The Panel will harness leading scientific expertise from around the globe and

consider evidence-based proposals for dealing with the global ocean crisis, including on sustainable fisheries, ocean-based energy solutions, tourism, new approaches to marine protected areas, and the ocean economy. The Panel is committed to catalysing bold, pragmatic solutions for ocean health and wealth that support the Sustainable Development Goals and build a better future for the planet and its people.

The obligation to protect and preserve the marine environment is clearly set out in the Convention, and States are required to take measures needed to prevent, reduce and control pollution of the marine environment. Marine litter is one of the biggest environmental problems of our time. Around 8 million tons of plastics end up in the oceans every year. Most of that litter comes from land-based sources, because many countries have inadequate waste-management systems. It is therefore vital to improve waste management in developing countries, increase awareness of the issue of marine litter and facilitate effective clean-up programmes. Norway is playing a leading role in global efforts to promote clean and healthy oceans. The development programme to combat marine litter is a key element of my Government’s ocean efforts and Norway has substantially increased funding aimed at dealing with the problem. Norway has worked to ensure that the prevention of marine pollution, including marine plastic litter, is a key theme for the PROBLUE trust fund recently established by the World Bank. Norway provided 125 million kroner to the fund this year.

Promoting and facilitating marine scientific research is an essential element of the Convention and vital to achieving the sustainable use and conservation of the oceans. Norway strongly supports the decision to focus next year’s discussion in the Informal Consultative Process on the theme of ocean science and the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

Norway is a steadfast supporter of the process of developing a new instrument for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. We are fully aware of the challenges that lie ahead, as the Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction will have to resolve highly complex and sensitive issues. However, we remain hopeful that we will be able to

reach an agreed outcome through constructive and flexible negotiations among States under the effective and flexible leadership of Rena Lee of Singapore.

I would like to conclude by expressing Norway's appreciation for the hard work and cooperation of all the delegations involved in the informal consultations on these two draft resolutions. We hope that this constructive approach can be maintained as we continue to tackle the many complex issues relating to oceans and fisheries.

Mrs. Mills (Jamaica): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 14 member countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) on sub-items (a) and (b) of agenda item 78, on oceans and the law of the sea.

CARICOM welcomes the opportunity to participate in today's debate, as the issues under consideration are of seminal importance to its members as small island developing States whose fortunes are integrally linked to the ocean. We therefore thank the Secretary-General for the various reports that have been prepared to guide our deliberations as we take stock of what we have been able to achieve since we last met to discuss these issues during the seventy-second session of the General Assembly (see A/72/PV.63 *et seq.*).

It is obvious that our efforts as an international community to confront the challenges that plague our marine resources have yielded mixed results. We can be proud of the fact that awareness about the risks confronting our oceans and seas has increased and that it has been underpinned by a greater sense of urgency regarding immediate and concrete action to effect meaningful change. The situation is made patently clear in the Secretary-General's report contained in document A/73/368, notably paragraphs 3 and 4, which describe the state of the oceans as being perilous and a global emergency. Equally unnerving are the findings of a recent study, to which the report also refers, that Goal 14 ranks last in significance among all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. CARICOM therefore looks forward to the outcome of ongoing efforts to develop the methodology for indicators for SDG 14, with the expectation that that could improve prospects for increasing awareness about the Goal.

The two draft resolutions to be adopted today — the omnibus draft resolution on oceans and law of the sea (A/73/L.35) and the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries (A/73/L.41) — are the results of long and

intense negotiations, with delegations showing flexibility and a desire to advance the objectives of the draft resolutions. We wish to thank the respective co-facilitators, Ms. Natalie Morris-Sharma of Singapore and Mr. Andreas Kravik of Norway, under whose able guidance and leadership we were able to successfully conclude our consultations. Together, those draft resolutions provide important steps towards strengthening the implementation of existing instruments on oceans at the global and regional levels. Consequently, CARICOM will lend its traditional support to both texts.

The convening in September of the first session of the Intergovernmental Conference on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction was a milestone in the efforts to fill the legal gap with respect to the protection and use of the resources of the high seas. CARICOM would like to congratulate the President of the Conference, Ambassador Rena Lee of Singapore, on the efficient manner in which she presided over our work, and looks forward to the remaining sessions to be held over the next two years. CARICOM stands ready to play its part in achieving a successful outcome in 2020.

CARICOM also fully supports 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, which is so ably co-chaired by our expert colleagues from Barbados and Estonia. As work for the preparation of the second World Ocean Assessment report intensifies, the members of the Assembly can rest assured that CARICOM will continue to be engaged in the process.

CARICOM countries have been playing their part in supporting the adoption of plans, programmes and policies aimed at ensuring the health and preservation of our oceans and seas. While currently protecting more than 10 per cent of its coastal marine territory, the Bahamas has launched its next 10 per cent of designated marine protected areas, as part of its commitment to reach its goal of having 20 per cent of its waters protected by 2020.

As we noted last year, several CARICOM countries have put in place measures to ban the use of single-use plastics: Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia and Grenada. Jamaica recently announced that it will impose a similar ban in January 2019, to be complemented by a ban, effective

for the same period, on the importation of expanded polystyrene foam, as well as on the importation and manufacture of plastic drinking straws. Barbados has also announced that it will ban single-use plastics and styrofoam beginning 1 April 2019. In April 2018, the Bahamas also signed a memorandum of understanding on banning single-use plastics and styrofoam containers by 2020.

CARICOM countries have also become parties to several instruments over the past year. In February, Saint Kitts and Nevis acceded to the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. Grenada also signed the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments in July.

Despite our increasing knowledge of what lies beneath our oceans and seas, our real level of understanding of the state and nature of the ocean environment, including the resources of the ocean floor, is still limited. For that reason, CARICOM welcomes the designation of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development for 2021-2030 and looks forward to the work that will inform the various activities and programmes undertaken over the period. It is our hope that in addition to improving our knowledge of the ocean, it will inspire the kind of science, technological innovations and policy interface needed to ensure that meaningful action is taken in support of the ocean.

We look forward, in that regard, to the twentieth meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea next year, which will have as its theme the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. We believe that will be an important complement to the work done by the nineteenth session of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea in June on anthropogenic underwater noise, under the stewardship of the Permanent Representatives of Trinidad and Tobago and Cyprus.

The impacts of climate change and the acidification of oceans and seas remain central to our ongoing deliberations. We have witnessed a worsening and deepening trend where action to combat climate change

and ocean acidification has not kept pace with what is really required to reverse current trends. Nowhere is that more evident than in the provision of resources for climate financing. CARICOM is therefore pleased that the Secretary-General has sought to confront the issue with the recent appointment of the Prime Minister of Jamaica and the President of France as champions of climate financing, to maximize opportunities for the unpacking of much-needed funds. We believe that will be an important way to draw attention to the issue, while also preparing for the Secretary-General's special climate summit in 2019.

CARICOM welcomes the fact that the International Law Commission has agreed to include the issue of sea-level rise in its long-term programme of work. There are several important legal questions of relevance to CARICOM States, such as the legal implication of sea-level rise on baselines, which in turn influences the limits of maritime zones and boundaries extending from those baselines. The decision to consider sea-level rise is both timely and relevant, and could not have been more opportune. We reaffirm our call made in the Sixth Committee for the topic to be moved to the active work programme of the Commission and look forward to the future work of the Commission in that regard.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) remains the centrepiece of the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. The universal and unified character of the Convention underscores its strategic importance as the basis for national, regional and global action and cooperation in the marine sector. As the constitution of the ocean, UNCLOS remains central to the sustainable management and use of marine resources.

The work of the International Seabed Authority, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf remain indispensable for the effective implementation of UNCLOS. We therefore welcome the positive reports of the work of all three bodies in fulfilling their respective mandates.

We are especially pleased to note the progress made on the review of article 154 and the Authority's development of its Strategic Plan. We also welcome the efforts to ensure consistency and a linkage with the SDGs, as well as to put in place robust environmental regulations and management plans. We believe that

augurs well for the Authority's leadership role in that regard, especially in the context of the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Also noteworthy is the fact that the recently concluded twenty-fourth session of the Authority was subject to a revised schedule of meetings, which saw record attendance at both its Council and Assembly sessions, in which 77 countries, 75 of them member States and two observers, presented credentials for the Assembly session, while 60 countries, of which 32 are Council and 28 non-Council members, presented for the Council.

The work of the United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS) cannot be overemphasized. CARICOM applauds the Division for its professionalism and dedication in fulfilling its duties despite its limited resources, and joins the call for the provision of the resources it needs to enable it to continue to execute its functions.

The work of the United Nations University, particularly the Fisheries Training Programme in Iceland and the International Ocean Institute, in capacity-building and facilitating knowledge and technology transfer in ocean governance and the use of marine resources, should be recognized and commended.

Our efforts to halt the challenges that confront our marine environment will not reap success if we do not seize the opportunities to work together to improve coordination and cooperation. For example, illegal fishing poses a great challenge, with the limited capacity of small States to properly police their waters, thereby requiring greater cooperation and compliance. There is scope for that and other issues to be addressed, given the many initiatives being pursued at the national, regional and multilateral levels.

We recognize, for example, the recently concluded Sustainable Blue Economy Conference, held in Nairobi and co-hosted by the Governments of Canada and Japan; the High-level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy, co-chaired by the Prime Ministers of Norway and Palau, in which several other Heads of Government, including Jamaica, are also involved; and the 2020 Ocean Conference being jointly organized by the Governments of Portugal and Kenya.

As small island developing States, the members of CARICOM have an intimate relationship with the

marine environment, on which we are deeply reliant for our economic survival. We have therefore read with great interest the observations made by the Secretary-General in chapter VI of his previously referenced report on balancing economic growth with environmental protection. We support the importance of considering both issues along a broader continuum that also seeks to strengthen regional and international cooperation and coordination, including through integrated and cross-sectoral approaches. That augurs well for the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources, while simultaneously addressing the various pressures on the marine environment.

Cooperation and coordination should also extend to the United Nations system's activities related to the ocean. Capacity-building and the creation of partnerships will without any doubt remain critical. To that end, we want to thank our bilateral partners and the United Nations system for the support provided to date and look forward to the strengthening of those relationships in the coming years. For example, as noted in the Secretary-General's report, in 2018 CARICOM nationals from Guyana, Saint Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago were awarded fellowships under the United Nations-Nippon Foundation Fellowship Programme. Similarly, Barbados and Belize were among the countries benefiting from a project jointly undertaken by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and DOALOS to develop evidence-based and policy-coherent ocean economy and trade strategies.

Participation in discussions on the oceans and the law of the sea is key to finding solutions. The voluntary trust funds that exist as part of the United Nations support system to advance that objective play an indispensable role in that. We therefore express our appreciation for the contributions that have been made, but remain concerned about the sustainability and predictability of funding. We urge for continued support to that end. We would also like to acknowledge the work done by the Special Envoy for the Oceans, Mr. Peter Thomson, who has been using his portfolio to build greater awareness and advocacy in support of the voluntary commitments made at the 2017 Ocean Conference. The launch of the Communities of Ocean Action to implement the voluntary commitments, generate new commitments and facilitate collaboration and networking in support of SDG 14 is welcome.

CARICOM is at the forefront of regional efforts to develop and implement fisheries management plans, establish and strengthen partnerships among key stakeholders within the ocean sector and combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and overfishing, which pose a threat to the sustainability of local and regional fisheries. We will therefore continue to implement our common fisheries policy and ensure regular engagement through regional workshops, public education campaigns and multi-stakeholder consultations coordinated by the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism, in partnership with organizations within and outside the region. We acknowledge the important work being done by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to support sustainable fisheries in the CARICOM region and globally.

There is no denying that urgent action must be taken. The conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and their resources is critical to sustainable development. We must act now, and decisively.

Mr. Tealei (Tuvalu): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 12 members of the Pacific small island developing States (SIDS), the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu and my own country, Tuvalu.

At the outset, the Pacific SIDS would like to thank Ms. Natalie Morris-Sharma of Singapore and Mr. Andreas Kravik of Norway for bringing the negotiations on the oceans omnibus draft resolution (A/73/L.35) and the sustainable fisheries draft resolution (A/73/L.41) to a successful conclusion.

We attach particular importance to this agenda item. As we have often said, we consider the ocean the lifeblood of our economies and societies. We are therefore keenly attuned to the mounting negative effects on its health 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, including climate change-driven impacts, such as ocean acidification, are among a number of serious threats to the health and resilience of our shared ocean. They are not merely threats to our oceans; they constitute a serious challenge to our sustainable development and ability to meet the aspirations embodied in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Among other

things, healthy, productive, and resilient oceans and seas are critical to poverty eradication, access to adequate, safe and nutritious food, economic development and essential ecosystem services.

We are pleased that we have begun the work of the Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. We underscore the importance of a legal instrument that is equitable, recognizes the special case of small island developing States, ensures respect for traditional knowledge and will contribute to a healthy ocean for future generations.

Concerning the issue of fisheries, we want to point out that they are the lifeblood of sustainable development for many of our States. We therefore urge our partners in the upcoming meeting of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission to support measures that will enable our tropical tuna stocks to continue to stay at levels that can produce at least the maximum sustainable yield. It is critical for our economies that we not relax the controls that have enabled us to move those stocks into the green zone. For Pacific SIDS, keeping central and western Pacific tuna stocks sustainable — not just biologically sustainable, but at a sufficiently elevated level to support unsubsidized fisheries — is a matter of national economic survival. Most Pacific SIDS are 100 to 1,000 times more economically dependent on tuna fisheries than other distant-water nations, and the atoll countries are in double jeopardy. As we go to this year's meeting of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, with our eyes wide open, we hope that our friends at the United Nations — the delegations of developed States that are so generous with development advice and support — will be able to persuade their fisheries negotiators back home to stop undermining their work. There are two paths to development. One involves handouts. The other involves creating an enabling environment for sustainable economic activity. Only one of them can succeed.

We would like to note that the oceans are a deeply interconnected space and that it is important to address fragmentation in that regard. We see a role for UN-Oceans to enable better coordination and cohesion of United Nations work in this area. Finally, we commend the General Assembly for reaffirming its commitment to the full implementation of the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA)

Pathway and ensuring its success in convening, in September 2019, a one-day high-level review of the progress made. We look forward to working with the General Assembly and with delegations in the coming year to take the steps necessary to ensure that we can bequeath a healthy, productive and resilient ocean to future generations.

Mrs. Deiyé (Nauru): I am pleased to deliver this statement on behalf of the 14 States members of the Pacific Islands Forum with Permanent Missions at the United Nations in New York.

First, I want to thank the co-facilitators, Ms. Natalie Morris-Sharma of Singapore and Mr. Andreas Kravik of Norway, for bringing the negotiations on the oceans omnibus draft resolution on the law of the sea (A/73/L.35) and the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries (A/73/L.41) to a successful conclusion. We look forward to their adoption.

The members of the Pacific Islands Forum share a strong and united interest in the oceans and their resources. We have long recognized the increasing threats to the long-term health of the oceans, and we share the common objectives of harnessing the value of the marine resources in our region and, as joint custodians, ensuring their conservation and sustainable use, which have underpinned the work of the Forum around the theme “The blue Pacific — our sea of islands”.

The leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum met in Nauru in September with a focus on the theme of “Building a strong Pacific: our people, our islands, our will”, in recognition of the opportunity that the theme presents to strengthen the region’s collective will to overcome the persistent development challenges faced by the people of the Pacific face. Our leaders took a number of significant decisions to advance regional cooperation on a range of issues directly relevant both to the work of the General Assembly on oceans and fisheries matters and to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly Sustainable Development Goal 14. Most notably, the Forum leaders concluded a new regional security agreement, the Boe Declaration on Regional Security. That important initiative commits Pacific countries to greater cooperation on combating illegal fishing, drug trafficking and other transnational crimes.

The Pacific Islands Forum leaders also acknowledged the urgency and importance of securing

the region’s maritime boundaries as a key issue for the development and security of the Pacific region. We are therefore prioritizing action on maritime boundary delimitation and the resolution of outstanding maritime boundary claims. The leaders further agreed to take action on important environmental initiatives. For example, they committed to eliminating marine litter, in alignment with the Pacific Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter for the period from 2018 to 2025.

A healthy, productive and resilient ocean is critically important to our oceanic region. We welcome the continued emphasis on the universal and unified character of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which is the recognized and accepted constitution of the ocean and the legal framework under which all activities in the oceans and seas should be carried out. We also appreciate the General Assembly’s continued attention to sustainable fisheries, which are an important resource for millions of people in our region and essential to the long-term health of the oceans and our economic development. We are pleased that the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries reaffirms the importance of sustainable fisheries management, including for highly migratory fish stocks, and that it calls for continued efforts in that area.

We further commend the General Assembly for reaffirming its commitment to the full implementation of the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and for ensuring its success in convening a one-day high-level review in September 2019 of the progress made so far. We are pleased that the oceans omnibus draft resolution takes note of the multinational partnership of the Phoenix Islands Protected Area and encourages States to consider implementing the International Maritime Organization guidelines on ships’ biofouling in order to minimize the transfer of invasive aquatic species.

We would also like to take this opportunity to highlight two particular issues of interest. The first is the ongoing process that we have undertaken through the Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding Instrument under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. Our Forum leaders underscored the importance of the creation of a legal instrument that introduces international management mechanisms that allow for the comprehensive and effective management of areas

beyond national jurisdiction and marine biodiversity, without undermining existing efforts and mechanisms.

The second issue is the effects of climate change, such as rising sea levels. Earlier this year, our Forum leaders reaffirmed that climate change presents the single greatest threat to the livelihood, security and well-being of Pacific people. The recently released special report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on what can be expected with global warming of 2°C as compared to 1.5°C, sends a stark message to many of our States. It states that increasing warming amplifies the exposure of small islands, low-lying coastal areas and deltas to the risks associated with sea-level rise for many human and ecological systems, including increased saltwater intrusion, flooding and damage to infrastructure. For our region, it is an existential threat.

It is therefore not surprising that the subject is one of utmost importance, particularly for low-lying small island States in the Pacific. The impact on Pacific communities is more varied and complex than is often assumed. We are concerned about the possibility that salinization will threaten crops and livelihoods and coastal erosion will result in more destructive storm surges and natural disasters. We are also concerned about the potential impact of sea-level rise on our maritime zones, from which we generate significant revenue and with which we have a close cultural connection. The rights of archipelagic States under the law of the sea should also be taken into account in that regard. We call on the General Assembly to remain focused and to take action on this important matter.

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

Ms. Gauci (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 Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

We are meeting today to adopt two important draft resolutions, on oceans and the law of the sea (A/73/L.35) and sustainable fisheries (A/73/L.41). As committed parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and its implementing agreements, including the 1995 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, the EU and its member States have participated actively in the consultations to prepare these draft resolutions.

The EU and its member States are satisfied that both draft resolutions continue to reflect significant developments in important processes related to the oceans and the law of the sea and fisheries. In view of the recognition accorded to the central role of oceans and seas in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we continue to believe that these draft resolutions should serve to focus the attention of the Assembly and the general public on important issues in the marine domain, including fisheries and marine environment.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, with its 168 parties, including the European Union, is rightly recognized, including by the EU and its member States, as the constitution of the oceans, as well as a reflection of international customary law. UNCLOS establishes the overarching legal framework within which all activities in oceans and seas must be carried out. By establishing the legal order for seas and oceans, it continues to contribute to peace, security, cooperation and friendly relations among all nations as well as to sustainable development. We sincerely hope that the goal of universal participation in the Convention will one day be met. We nevertheless acknowledge the necessity of ensuring that the Convention remains relevant and able to meet today's challenges as well as those of the future.

The European Union and its member States are therefore pleased to recognize the good progress achieved in the first substantive session of the Intergovernmental Conference established to negotiate an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. The successful conclusion of that first session constituted an important step towards a new implementing agreement, which remains a political priority for the EU and its member States. We would like to thank the President of the Conference, Ambassador Rena Lee, for her excellent work and leadership in that regard, as well all delegations for their constructive participation. We look forward to continuing this important work at the

two upcoming sessions of the Conference in 2019, as well as in between sessions.

In line with the commitments undertaken in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and elsewhere, the EU and its member States remain committed to achieving healthy and productive oceans and seas so that they can continue to support sustainable development for the good of all humankind. Nevertheless, we remain concerned that despite our shared efforts, our oceans continue to face significant threats and challenges, including climate change and increasing atmospheric carbon dioxide levels, resulting in oceans that are warmer and more acidic, rising sea levels and extreme weather events; pollution such as plastics and microplastics, excessive nutrients and increasing levels of sound and anthropogenic underwater noise, as amply demonstrated at this year's nineteenth meeting of the Informal Consultative Process; overfishing and illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing, with a large percentage of assessed stocks classified as overfished, according to the report of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) entitled *State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2018*.

If we are to succeed in ensuring that the oceans are clean, healthy and productive, and keeping them that way, those global threats require enhanced cooperation and coordination and our firm collective political commitment and effective action in line with the precautionary principle and the ecosystem approach. We believe that is ever more necessary in view of the growing importance of sustainable ocean economies, also known as the blue economy, to many countries around the world.

The EU and its member States want to take this opportunity to reiterate their strong commitment to concluding the negotiations on multilateral disciplines on fisheries subsidies in the context of the World Trade Organization, in line with commitments under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We continue to maintain that harmful subsidies that contribute to overcapacity, overfishing and illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing are one of the main impediments to achieving sustainable fisheries. While we are pleased to see the growing number of parties to the FAO Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing, we nonetheless reiterate the call to more States to become parties to that Agreement.

The EU and its member States would also like to touch on two social and human issues. First, we reiterate the importance of ensuring decent working conditions on board fishing vessels. We therefore encourage States to become parties to the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188), of the International Labour Organization. Secondly, we want to highlight the importance of resolving as soon as possible the long-standing issue of medical insurance coverage for the members of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf so that they can proceed with their important work in the knowledge that they have access to adequate medical coverage while in New York.

In conclusion, we would like to express our appreciation for the excellent stewardship demonstrated by both coordinators of the two draft resolutions, Ms. Natalie Morris-Sharma and Mr. Andreas Kravik. We also recognize the constructive participation of other delegations in these negotiations, which ensured the inclusion of numerous important topical issues in the draft resolutions. In that spirit, we also appreciate our common endeavours to make the draft resolutions more effective and relevant, including through the ongoing streamlining efforts.

We would also like to thank the Chairs of the different United Nations meetings throughout the year, whose able leadership guided the work of delegations. We look forward to continuing that work at the various events throughout 2019, as well as the negotiations on marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. The EU and its member States would like to express their gratitude to the Secretariat and to the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for their excellent work and constant support throughout the year.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Oceans are an important arena for global cooperation and development. All States should jointly promote the maritime rule of law and the sustainable development of the oceans. In that connection, I would like to share China's position and views.

First, in order to strengthen global ocean governance and contribute to humankind's shared future, China is ready to join with other countries under the principles of extensive consultation, joint contributions and shared benefits in order to work actively to build a twenty-first-century maritime Silk Road and establish a multidimensional, multilevel and broad-based blue

partnership, thereby moving closer to achieving a community with a shared future in ocean affairs.

Secondly, in order to develop the blue economy and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, China is committed to striking the appropriate balance between the protection of the oceans on the one hand, and their sustainable use on the other, and is actively implementing Sustainable Development Goal 14. We welcome the convening of the United Nations Ocean Conference and the Sustainable Blue Economy Conference. We hope that all States will work together to turn political will into concrete action.

Thirdly, in order to promote the international rule of law in the field of ocean affairs and uphold a fair and reasonable maritime order, the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea provides a general legal framework for maritime activities and serves as their fundamental basis. Meanwhile, matters not regulated by the Convention continue to be governed by the rules and principles of general international law. All parties must take an objective and impartial approach to interpreting and applying the rules of international maritime law, including the Convention, in good faith.

In the past year, good progress was made in the work of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf and the International Seabed Authority, contributing to efforts to settle maritime disputes peacefully, define the outer limits of the continental shelf of a coastal State beyond 200 nautical miles and apply the principle of the common heritage of humankind. China hopes that these three bodies will remain committed to effectively discharging their responsibilities in earnest, as mandated by the Convention.

As for the formulation of an international instrument on the biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, the Intergovernmental Conference on the issue was formally launched last September. Negotiations on that instrument should follow the principle of consensus and advance gradually on the basis of that consensus so as to arrive at a regime that is rational, balanced, pragmatic, feasible and conducive to the common interests of member States and the overall interests of the international community as a whole.

As for the formulation of international regulations on seabed exploitation, China submitted its comments on the updated draft regulations last September. They should follow the Convention and its 1994

Implementation Agreement in letter and in spirit, and aim at encouraging and facilitating the exploitation of resources in the Area as well as effectively protecting the marine environment. The regulations should be formulated step by step on a basis of hard facts, solid scientific evidence and learning from national experience.

China is committed to strengthening international cooperation and capacity-building in ocean affairs. This year we hosted conferences that included the sixth International Symposium on Scientific and Legal Aspects of the Regimes of the Continental Shelf and the Area, an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation workshop on innovative marine debris solutions, an international symposium on biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, and the United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress, all with fruitful results. China has consistently made financial contributions to the voluntary trust fund of the International Seabed Authority and the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, with a view to facilitating developing countries' participation in relevant efforts.

Global fisheries are closely linked to food and nutrition security, marine pollution control and eco-environmental protection, and that calls for close cooperation among all parties. China is committed to the sustainable development of fisheries, and I would like to share some of our positions and proposals with the Assembly.

First, with regard to adhering to the Sustainable Development Goals and promoting the rational development of fisheries resources, China has been actively developing healthy and sustainable aquaculture. We attach great importance to the application of ecosystem approaches and preventive methods in fisheries management, as well as greater interaction between scientific assessments and fisheries policies.

Secondly, with regard to improving our national legal framework for fisheries and strengthening relevant law enforcement, China has established a complete framework of laws, regulations and management regimes governing fisheries, and has introduced measures such as licences for building fishing vessels and fishing permits to strengthen the supervision and management of access to fisheries. China has also enhanced its maritime law enforcement and port

inspections, effectively implementing its domestic law and fulfilling the relevant international obligations.

Thirdly, China has participated extensively in international cooperation to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, has been actively engaged in bilateral and multilateral fisheries management cooperation, is deeply involved in the work of the relevant regional fisheries management organizations and strictly complies with their conservation and management measures. China has followed a zero-tolerance approach to all types of illegal fishing to make sure that every reported case is investigated and that, once proven guilty, every perpetrator is convicted.

Regional fisheries management organizations are important frameworks identified in 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. China supports the holding in 2019 of the fourteenth round of informal consultations of States Parties to the Agreement to exchange views on the topic of “Performance reviews of regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements”.

China notes that draft resolution A/73/L.41 requests the Secretary-General to invite the relevant parties, including regional fisheries management organizations, to submit their views on the topic, and requests the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea to post them on its website. In that regard, China urges the Division to fulfil its duties and responsibilities on the basis of past practice, properly address the concerns of all parties and facilitate the informal consultation process so that it plays a positive role in promoting sustainable fisheries.

In our efforts to contribute to the shared future of our oceans and seas, promote the sustainable development of marine resources and uphold the international law of the sea, China stands ready to continue to work with other countries in a concerted effort to facilitate the development of the law of the sea and the international fisheries-management regime and make a greater contribution to building a beautiful blue home.

Ms. Palau-Hernandez (United States of America): The United States is pleased to be a sponsor of draft resolution A/73/L.35, entitled “Oceans and the law of the sea”.

The United States underscores the central importance of international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, whose universal and unified character is emphasized in the draft resolution. As we witness attempts to impede the lawful exercise of navigational rights and freedoms under international law, it is more important than ever to remain steadfast in our resolve to uphold those rights and freedoms. In that regard, we call on all States to formulate their maritime claims and conduct their activities in the maritime domain in accordance with international law, as reflected in the Convention, to respect the freedoms of navigation and overflight and other lawful uses of the sea that all users of the maritime domain enjoy, and to peacefully settle disputes in accordance with international law.

The United States values the platform that the General Assembly provides to elevate these important issues. The annual adoption of a resolution on oceans and the law of the sea serves as an invaluable opportunity for the global community to identify key ocean issues and develop constructive ways to address them.

We are particularly pleased that this year’s draft resolution gives further support to the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, by deciding on the theme of ocean science for the 2019 Informal Consultative Process on oceans and the law of the sea. The 2019 meeting of the Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea will be an excellent venue for soliciting ideas and feedback from the international community on critical gaps in our knowledge that the Decade of Ocean Science can fill, allowing us to seek science-based solutions for sustaining benefits from the ocean.

We are also pleased that this year’s draft resolution recognizes many of the significant global and regional efforts to reduce plastic in the ocean. Marine debris, largely composed of plastic waste from land-based sources, imposes significant social and economic costs, threatening human well-being, food security and marine ecosystems. We support the draft resolution’s continued encouragement of all stakeholders to cooperate on environmentally sound and pragmatic measures to prevent and reduce marine debris.

One of the most important aspects of this year’s draft resolution is related not to text that was added but to text that was updated, reorganized or, in some cases, removed. We thank all delegations for the concerted

and serious effort to make this lengthy draft resolution more accessible and more relevant. We look forward to continuing those efforts next year.

We would like to congratulate the Government of Indonesia on hosting another highly successful Our Ocean Conference, providing an unparalleled opportunity for all stakeholders — the business community, the science and technology community, Governments, non-governmental organizations and funders — to address a common goal, the collaborative management and sustainable use of our ocean and its resources. Building on the success of the previous Conferences, hosted by Chile, the European Union and the United States, the participants at this year's Conference in Bali announced commitments of more than \$10 billion to address key issues facing the oceans, including combating marine debris, advancing maritime security and promoting sustainable fisheries. We look forward to the 2019 Conference in Norway, as well as the Conferences in Palau in 2020 and Panama in 2021.

We would also like to express our appreciation for the important leadership of Ms. Rena Lee of Singapore in her role as President of the Intergovernmental Conference on an international instrument regarding the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. We look forward to working with delegations as the Intergovernmental Conference continues and hope to have a broadly supported result that takes into account the views of all delegations.

I now turn to draft resolution A/73/L.41, on sustainable fisheries. We greatly value the important work being done throughout the world on sustainable fisheries management, which helps to support economic activity and healthy marine ecosystems around the world. The draft resolution plays an important role in highlighting achievements and priorities for future progress, including with regard to achieving sustainable fisheries, implementing international fisheries agreements, combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and strengthening fisheries governance.

This year's draft resolution includes several important additions, including in relation to the recent conclusion of the Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean and the work being done to support implementation of the

Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing. We would also like to note the paragraphs related to the thirteenth round of informal consultations of States parties, which focused on the science-policy interface, and to thank Mr. Fábio Hazin of Brazil for his leadership and for once again chairing the informal consultations of States parties. We think that the new approach to the informal consultations of States parties, whereby we focus the agenda on a specific issue arising from the implementation of the 1995 Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, should facilitate more substantive and constructive discussions. We look forward to the informal consultations to be convened under a similar format next year, and encourage robust participation in that meeting.

While we strongly support a great deal of the draft resolution, the United States continues to have significant concerns about certain paragraphs in it, in particular those pertaining to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and trade negotiations occurring outside the mandate of the United Nations. Language in General Assembly texts on matters of trade policy has no standing for the United States, including for its work at the WTO. In particular, the United States notes that paragraph 124 contains outdated references to the Doha Development Agenda. At the tenth Ministerial Conference of the WTO in December 2015, WTO members did not reaffirm the Doha Development Agenda. WTO members are no longer negotiating under that framework, and the reference to Doha therefore has no standing here. The United States has also made clear its opposition to paragraph 125, as well as other paragraphs that mention the WTO and market access.

It is our view that the United Nations must respect the independent mandates of other processes and institutions, including trade negotiations, and that it must not involve itself in decisions and actions under way in other forums, including the WTO. The United Nations is not the appropriate venue for those discussions, and there should be no expectation or misconception that the United States would heed language negotiated at the General Assembly on such issues. That includes calls that undermine incentives for innovation, such as technology transfer that is not

voluntary and on mutually agreed terms, including in the preamble and in paragraphs 222 and 229.

We regret that consensus could not be reached on the need to change those trade-related paragraphs to ensure that the draft resolution remains relevant and focused on sustainable fisheries priorities under the mandate of the United Nations. We would like to request that Member States work constructively with us to address concerns about trade-related language in any such draft resolution next year.

Our decision to join the consensus on this draft resolution is based on our strong support for the vast majority of the non-trade-related language that it contains. It also reflects the importance that the United States, as an effective steward of the nation's marine resources, a responsible flag State and a leader in regional fisheries management organizations and other international forums, places on sustainable fisheries.

The United States looks forward to continuing to work with other nations to address overfishing, combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, promote a level playing field and advance the key issues in sustainable fisheries management highlighted in the draft resolution.

With regard to references to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in both draft resolutions, on sustainable fisheries and on oceans, we addressed our concerns about such references in a general explanation of position delivered in the Second Committee on 8 November and in an explanation of position regarding resolution 73/24, entitled "Sport as an enabler of sustainable development", under agenda item 12, adopted on 3 December (see A/73/PV.44).

With regard to references to the Paris Climate Change Agreement and to the subject of climate change in the draft resolutions, we addressed our concerns about such references in our general explanation of position delivered in the Second Committee on 8 November. We note that the United States Administration announced its intention to withdraw from the Paris Agreement as soon as it is eligible to do so, consistent with the terms of the Agreement, unless suitable terms for re-engagement are identified.

In conclusion, we would like to thank Ms. Natalie Morris-Sharma of Singapore for her outstanding coordination of the draft resolution on the oceans, and in particular for her encouragement of efforts to update

and reorganize it. We also greatly appreciate the tireless efforts of the coordinator of the informal consultations on the sustainable fisheries draft resolution, Mr. Andreas Kravik of Norway, in effectively guiding Member States through the challenging negotiations.

We would also like to thank the Director and staff of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, and the interpreters, for their expertise, hard work and patience throughout the consultations on both draft resolutions. Finally, we would like to express our appreciation to delegations for their hard work and cooperation in negotiating 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.

Ms. Ellertsdottir (Iceland): The two draft resolutions under discussion today, on sustainable fisheries (A/73/L.41) and oceans and the law of the sea (A/73/L.35), relate to issues that are at the core of Iceland's economy, history and identity, indeed its very existence. It is therefore difficult to overstate the importance of this topic for Iceland since the issues addressed in these draft resolutions touch on central issues for Iceland's foreign, economic and trade policies.

Iceland participated actively in the negotiations on the two draft resolutions and we are happy to be among their sponsors. We would like to take this opportunity to express our thanks to the two coordinators who ably guided our discussions, Mr. Andreas Kravik of Norway, on sustainable fisheries, and Ms. Natalie Morris-Sharma of Singapore, on oceans and the law of the sea. In keeping with established practice, that work was guided by the principle of consensus, which may not always appear to be the fastest way forward but remains the only safe way to reach our destination. It is therefore a demanding job to coordinate the negotiations and both Ms. Morris-Sharma and Mr. Kravik demonstrated admirable tact, diplomacy and wisdom in steering us towards a successful outcome.

We would like to note in particular that this year we started the important work of streamlining the draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea. Given the importance of the topics addressed in this draft resolution, we welcome this effort to make it more readable, concise and relevant, and we look forward to continuing our work in this regard.

I also want to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his reports on

oceans and the law of the sea (A/73/68 and A/73/368) and to the Secretariat in general, and the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea in particular, for their valuable work and contributions.

The mandate of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf continues to be extremely important and it remains essential to ensure that the Commission's work is based on thorough deliberations and respect for its procedures, and that its conclusions are founded on sound arguments. In this regard, my delegation would like to express its gratitude for the hard work and dedication of the members of the Commission. Two important developments related to the work of the Commission in this year's draft resolutions are worth highlighting.

First, the members of the Commission have the option to join the Headquarters medical insurance scheme, as has already been mentioned here. The working conditions of the Commission have been under discussion for a long time and it is our hope that this new option will be a positive contribution to that debate.

Secondly, the draft resolution contains the revised terms of reference of the trust fund established for the purpose of facilitating the preparation of submissions to the Commission. The changes to the terms of reference will hopefully enable developing States, in particular least developed countries and small island developing States, to make better use of the trust fund during the consideration of their submissions to the Commission. We welcome both of these developments, as each in its own way represents an important contribution to the further strengthening of Commission's work.

Over the years the General Assembly has consistently highlighted the universal and unified character of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, its strategic importance and the contribution it makes to peace, security and friendly relations among all nations. It is worth emphasizing that this robust legal framework already regulates all activities in the oceans. It is complemented by 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 its provisions on high seas fisheries and the regulatory framework for the work of regional fisheries management organizations.

We have now embarked on a new, complementary 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 of areas beyond national jurisdiction. Iceland welcomes the formal start of these negotiations and we will continue to participate in them actively and constructively. In particular, we would like to stress that this process and its result should not undermine but rather build on existing legal instruments and frameworks, especially the Convention and the 1995 Agreement on Fish Stocks. The negotiations on the biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction are not the appropriate forum for reopening issues that have already been already settled. My delegation would also like to stress that while the issues under discussion are complex and views differ on the appropriate legal framework in which to address them, it is imperative to ensure that this work continues to be guided by consensus, as it is the only way we can achieve universal application of this instrument.

Without a clean, healthy and productive ocean, the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development will be nearly impossible to attain. The sustainable management of natural resources is fundamental to our success, and where the seas and oceans are concerned, there is great potential for innovation and growth in a number of sectors that could contribute to poverty eradication and sustained economic growth.

Climate change and its effects are among the most pressing concerns of our times. Addressing climate change is a prerequisite for healthy and sustainable oceans. Iceland has already witnessed the consequences of climate change — rising ocean temperatures have influenced the migration patterns of our fish stocks — and it has therefore had a direct impact on our policies and our cooperation with other States.

There are few places in which the impact of climate change is more evident than the Arctic, where the sea ice is continuing to recede. Earlier this year, Iceland and nine other parties signed the Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean. The Agreement is an example of States adopting the precautionary approach in practice, as the parties to the Agreement have committed to refraining from any commercial fishing in the high-seas portion of the central Arctic Ocean until a scientific framework and proper management measures and procedures are in place. Through that commitment, the parties want to

ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of fish stocks in an area where fishing has to date been impossible but which is undergoing rapid change.

Ocean science must take centre stage in the debate on oceans and sustainable development. Iceland would therefore like to welcome the General Assembly's decision last year to proclaim the next decade the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. We also welcome the proposal in this year's draft resolution to focus the discussions in next year's meeting of the Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea on the theme "Ocean science and the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development". We find it particularly apt that the Informal Consultative Process will devote its twentieth session to this important cross-cutting theme relating to all aspects of our work.

My delegation looks forward to participating in next year's Informal Consultative Process and all the other important meetings, events and processes relating to oceans and the law of the sea scheduled for next year.

Mr. Namazu (Japan): I would like to join other speakers in thanking the coordinators for their dedicated work on the two draft resolutions (A/73/L.35 and A/73/L.41) under agenda item 78, "Oceans and the law of the sea". Japan would also like to express its appreciation for the contributions of our fellow Member States and the assistance of the Secretariat.

Japan underscores the importance of open seas and the rule of law as part of the foundations of peace and security. We support the universality of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which regulates freedom of navigation and freedom on the high seas, the entitlement to the oceans, the peaceful settlement of disputes and the protection and preservation of the marine environment. We believe that it is the responsibility of the international community, which would benefit from it, to promote and develop an ever more predictable maritime order under the Convention. This year's draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea (A/73/L.35) confirms our commitment to a rules-based maritime order and covers a wide range of oceanic issues, and Japan has therefore sponsored it once again.

Japan has been contributing actively to international organizations established under the Convention, providing them with both human and financial

resources. We appreciate the role of the International Seabed Authority. A key part of sustainable seabed management is the sharing of skills and knowledge, and Japan remains active in that area. To take one example, earlier this year a Japanese contractor, the Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation, invited four trainees from outside Japan to participate for more than a month in a programme that included training at sea. Another contractor, Deep Ocean Resources Development, plans to offer a similar programme for five trainees next year. Japan hopes that these overseas trainees will take full advantage of this opportunity and play active roles in maritime affairs in their home countries.

Japan recognizes the importance of conserving the marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. We support the development of a well-balanced, effective, universal and legally binding instrument under the Convention on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, and have actively contributed to discussions to that end, including at the ongoing Intergovernmental Conference. In October Japan submitted measures at the fifth Ocean Conference on improving marine law-enforcement capacity and furthering international cooperation and research on oceanic litter and debris in Asia, among other things. Also in October, Japan hosted the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization's annual session, where we discussed the progress and future development of the law of the sea and marine order based on the Convention, and made a presentation on deep-seabed-resource development technology developed by Japan.

Finally, Japan attaches great importance to measures against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, which threatens the sustainable use of living marine resources. Last year we acceded to the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing, and we encourage countries that have not yet done so to follow suit. Japan is determined to reinforce efforts to eradicate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in cooperation with other countries, including through regional fisheries-management organizations.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate Japan's desire to see the draft resolutions before us, which are the result of intensive and cooperative work by Member States, duly adopted by the General Assembly.

Ms. Shareef (Maldives): My delegation welcomes the reports of the Secretary-General (A/73/68 and A/73/368) submitted under this agenda item, as well as the two draft resolutions (A/73/L.35 and A/73/L.41), which represent important developments related to oceans and the law of the sea. We also thank Singapore and Norway for their able leadership of the consultations that led to these texts.

The oceans are under threat. Pollution, overfishing, warming temperatures and acidification are threatening their health and wealth. Scientists have repeatedly warned us that unless there is a dramatic shift in human behaviour, we may alter oceanographic processes that moderate the global climate. We need to take action now to save the oceans, and action against marine plastic pollution is a good starting point. Owing to recent shifts in production and consumption patterns, plastic pollution has become a key challenge for our generation. For a country like the Maldives, with hundreds of islands and thousands of kilometres of coastline, marine plastic pollution threatens the coral reefs, fish stocks and beaches that are the lifeblood of our two main industries, tourism and fishing. That is why President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih of the Maldives launched a campaign against plastic pollution within weeks of taking office. The President's Office, the Foreign Ministry and several other Government agencies have now banned single-use plastics in their offices. The President's initiative has received support from the private sector, especially the tourism industry, that we believe is vital to reducing plastic pollution in our country. But the ocean is too vast for a single country, especially a small State such as the Maldives, to make a dramatic change in marine plastic pollution. That requires global cooperation to ensure that every country, every region and every community in every corner of the globe takes action to stop the menace of plastic pollution.

Marine plastic pollution is just one dimension of the constellation of threats facing the oceans. The most serious threat of all is global warming and sea-level rise. *Global Warming of 1.5°C*, the October 2018 special report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), suggests there is catastrophic trouble ahead for marine ecosystems if we fail to take dramatic action immediately to limit global warming to 1.5°C. If we can stay below that critical temperature threshold, small island developing States (SIDS) will have more space for adaptation, but we still face the potential of

irreversible losses of marine and coastal ecosystems at 1.5°C. In fact, between 70 and 90 per cent of coral reefs will be severely degraded at 1.5°C of warming, and that increases to 99 per cent at 2°C. We look forward to the findings next year of an extension of the IPCC report directly related to ocean systems.

Global warming poses an existential threat for the Maldives, which is one of the lowest-lying countries in the world. That is why since 1989 the Maldives has persisted in its advocacy for stronger action against sea-level rise. In November 1989 we hosted the first-ever Small States Conference on Sea Level Rise and charted a way forward for mitigating this threat. But today, almost 30 years later, the world has failed to act. We are now in a position where we need to seriously evaluate the possible legal implications of sea-level rise. It has implications for maritime boundaries and internal and external migration and, most important, it poses an existential threat to low-lying countries like ours. My delegation therefore welcomes this topic's inclusion in the programme of work of the International Law Commission, and we encourage the Commission to take it up with urgency.

We can protect and promote the health of the ocean only if we are able to regulate the large swathes of deep blue ocean waters that are currently ungoverned. The Maldives welcomed the convening of the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, which represents a significant milestone in ocean governance and the culmination of decades of groundwork. The Maldives engaged constructively in those discussions with a view to finalizing the instrument as soon as possible, and we are confident that we can reach that goal. We want to reiterate the importance of ensuring that it reflects the special circumstances of SIDS, as other instruments under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea have done.

Our work related to the oceans and the law of the sea is only as good as the best available science we have. In that regard, it is crucial to promote research in the area and to facilitate capacity-building and the transfer of marine technology so that developing countries can engage in and supplement ongoing efforts effectively. The Maldives has been a strong advocate for the International Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable

Development for the period from 2021 to 2030. We take note of the progress that has been made in engaging stakeholders to formulate plans and encourage all Member States to engage constructively in tailoring a framework that will deliver country-driven results.

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

Mr. Sandoval Mendiola (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to thank the facilitators of the draft resolutions on sustainable fisheries (A/73/L.41) and oceans and the law of the sea (A/73/L.35) for their work during the rounds of negotiations. Mexico has a particular interest in developments in several of the issues addressed in the omnibus draft resolution, of which I will highlight some specific aspects.

As a matter of principle, we affirm that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) constitutes the international regulatory framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas are conducted and which is central to cooperation in the marine sector at the national, regional and international levels. Its integrity must therefore always be maintained. We want to take this opportunity to reiterate Mexico's full commitment to the sustainable development of the oceans and seas, in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal 14. To that end, we are working at the national level to encourage the use of the oceans and seas for peaceful purposes, ensure the equitable and efficient use of their resources and the conservation of their living resources and further the study, protection and preservation of the marine environment, thereby promoting the economic and social advancement of my own country and the entire international community.

With regard to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity, Mexico would like to thank Ms. Rena Lee for the successful holding of the first session of the Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. My delegation eagerly awaits the working document that the President of the Conference will present to advance

the negotiations based on a text that will include treaty language during the Conference's second session, to be held next year.

I would also like to emphasize the international community's commitment to the preservation of marine ecosystems, as reflected in Aichi Biodiversity Target 11. I am pleased to highlight the fact that more than 22 per cent of Mexico's marine area is protected, far exceeding the parameters in Target 11. We nevertheless remain firmly committed to developing instruments and coordination mechanisms for creating synergies with other relevant actors and achieving even better results in this area.

With regard to marine scientific research, my delegation reiterates the importance of ramping up our capacities and resources to conduct research in accordance with the provisions of UNCLOS with a view to achieving a vast and high-quality body of knowledge on the various problems related to the oceans and the seas. We urge that the relevant international organizations improve their cooperation in sharing and disseminating information with a view to coordinating research efforts.

Mexico condemns the illegal trade in species via the oceans and seas and affirms its commitment to preventing and halting such activities. My country has already adopted legislation to counter illicit trafficking in species in accordance with its international obligations, and we have criminalized it under our penal code in order to ensure that we have more tools available to combat that reprehensible practice effectively. In accordance with our international obligations under a number of instruments, such as those of UNESCO, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora and the Convention on Biological Diversity, we have ramped up our efforts to preserve marine species, including the vaquita porpoise. Mexico has taken a number of steps to halt activities affecting that species, and we continue to work to find tools that will enable us to preserve it, in ongoing cooperation with the relevant international organizations.

We should not fail to mention some of the major challenges currently confronting our oceans. Above all, we must redouble our efforts to address the issue of pollution from land-based sources, especially plastics and microplastics. We must also confront the negative effects of anthropogenic underwater noise on marine

ecosystems. Lastly, we want to once again reiterate how urgent it is that we deal with the effects of climate change and ocean acidification on the marine environment and marine biodiversity through measures that encourage States to improve their scientific activities so as to have a better understanding of those effects and find effective ways to adapt.

The oceans are our planet's richest and largest ecosystem. They are unquestionably humankind's most precious shared heritage. We hope that we can live up to the enormous responsibility of caring for them and preserving them for the sake of future generations.

Ms. Alnaser (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my delegation would like to express its appreciation for the report of the Secretary-General under agenda item 78 entitled "Oceans and the law of the sea" (A/73/68), which we have read carefully. It stresses that the preservation of the seas, the oceans and their resources is crucial to promoting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly Sustainable Development Goal 14. It also includes information on the latest and most important developments in that regard, as well as on the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea at its nineteenth meeting (see A/73/124), which discussed the topic of anthropogenic underwater noise.

The State of Kuwait emphasizes the importance of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which my country has been a party to since 1994. We also participated in the amendment of the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of UNCLOS and have been a party to the Agreement on the Privileges and Immunities of International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea since 2002, as well as many other international instruments that govern maritime relations among States and establish the optimal legal framework in that area. In addition, my country has participated in many United Nations meetings and activities related to the seas and the oceans, as well as in the periodic meetings of the International Maritime Organization.

Accordingly, the State of Kuwait calls on all States that are not party to UNCLOS to accede to it and to other relevant instruments, especially given the important role of the Convention in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in strengthening international peace and security.

Maritime shipping is one of the oldest and most important transport sectors in the world. Threats posed

to it by illegitimate and criminal activities are a source of major concern to States and the global business community alike. The promotion of international and regional efforts to confront threats to maritime security, including piracy and armed robbery at sea, represents the commitment of Member States to protect international shipping from such threats. My country firmly condemns all illegitimate actions and practices that threaten the safety of maritime navigation.

The current relatively low incidence of piracy and armed robbery at sea, after a prolonged period of continuous attacks, is a positive indication of growing stability, especially in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Only two attacks were reported this year off the Somali coast. This drop in the number of attacks compared to previous years is the result of outcomes agreed on in July by the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia and the implementation of its broad mandate, which have actively contributed to reducing the attacks and the threat that they pose to international peace and security at sea.

Mr. Islam (Bangladesh): Bangladesh joins other delegations in thanking the coordinators of the two draft resolutions (A/73/L.35 and A/73/L.41) under agenda item 78 for their excellent work.

Healthy oceans are critical to sustaining life, eliminating poverty and promoting prosperity on the planet. Thanks to the peaceful settlement in 2014 of maritime border disputes with its neighbours Myanmar and India, the Government of Bangladesh has embarked on a path to unlocking the potential of better access to sea and ocean resources. The blue economy is now considered a new development space in Bangladesh. Shipping, seaports, shipbuilding, ship recycling, marine fisheries, production of sea salt, coastal tourism, ocean energy, land reclamation, maritime safety and surveillance and human resources development and governance have been identified as key priority areas for the development of the blue economy. Those issues have been addressed in our Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100, recently established under the visionary leadership of our Prime Minister. We will touch on a number of issues from our national point of view.

First, we recall the outcome of the United Nations Ocean Conference, which identified ways and means to implement Sustainable Development Goal 14 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Of the 10 targets under Goal 14, six are time-specific and require

robust and sustained global partnerships to facilitate their implementation. In that regard, we stress the importance of completing the World Trade Organization negotiations to address fisheries subsidies that could contribute directly or indirectly to overcapacity and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

Secondly, it is evident from research that climate-induced sea-level rise may have severe socioeconomic and environmental impacts on coastal States, including their maritime boundary delimitation. We thank the International Law Commission for its recent decision to include the issue of sea-level rise in relation to international law in its long-term programme of work.

Thirdly, we remain particularly concerned about large movements of refugees and migrants at sea, mostly in perilous situations. We urge States to comply with their search-and-rescue obligations at sea and to work to address the push and pull factors underlying such irregular movements. With regard to the continuing aftermath of the Rohingya humanitarian crisis in Rakhine state that began in August 2017, we want to draw the attention of all the countries of the region concerned to the need to strengthen maritime surveillance and interception in coastal areas. We take full note of the Secretary-General's observation in that regard in his report on oceans and the law of the sea (see A/73/368, paras. 37-42).

Fourthly, we urge the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf to expedite its work in order to enable it to dispose of its pending submissions. Bangladesh submitted its claims on the continental shelf in 2011 and later deposited updated baseline information with the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea pursuant to the relevant provision of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). We appreciate the amendment of the terms of reference of the trust fund created for facilitating the preparation of submissions to the Commission by developing countries.

Fifthly, we welcome the holding of the first session of intergovernmental negotiations to discuss and explore ways and means to reach our goal to elaborate, adopt and implement an international legally binding instrument under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. We look forward to commencing work on text-based negotiations to bring

our work dating back to 2006 to its logical conclusion. We thank the Nippon Foundation and the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for organizing training for representatives of developing countries.

Finally, capacity-building and the transfer of marine technology are of the utmost importance for developing States, in particular the least developed countries (LDCs). Among other issues, we draw the attention of our development partners to the appropriate utilization for that purpose of the United Nations Technology Bank for LDCs.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate our commitment to UNCLOS as the constitution of the oceans, establishing the overarching legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas should be carried out. We urge all remaining States that have not yet done so to join the Convention in order to help achieve its universality.

Mr. Umasankar (India): In many ways, the oceans support life on Earth. We rely on them for food, energy, navigation purposes and employment opportunities. The oceans are interconnected and must be considered as a whole. The emergence of ocean governance assumes that the challenges of the ocean space are closely interrelated and requires all nations to cooperate in the management of the oceans. Since its adoption, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the affiliated institutions governing the law of the sea have played a pivotal role in ensuring the harmonious and judicious use of ocean resources for humankind.

The International Seabed Authority, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf established under the Convention are key to the proper implementation of the Convention's provisions and to the realization of the benefits we want from the use of the oceans and seas. At the same time, we note that our understanding of the oceans and their wide-ranging effects on life, as well as the impact of human activities on the oceans, are constantly evolving owing to scientific and technical advances. Today we have access to some of the deepest parts of the oceans. We thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/73/368) on oceans and the law of the sea, and other related issues.

States look to ocean resources as a means of fostering economic growth and social advancement, and the development of an ocean-based economy

is attracting increased attention. Over the past two decades of its operation, the Convention has made a significant contribution to the sustainable development of the oceans and seas and to the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all countries of the world. In that regard, we commend the Group of Experts of the Regular Process for preparing the draft outline of the second world ocean assessment as a single comprehensive assessment, in accordance with the recommendations adopted in August by the eleventh Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole and endorsed by the General Assembly. We also welcome the timetable and implementation plan prepared by the Group of Experts.

The nineteenth meeting of the Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea in June provided a unique forum for comprehensive discussions on anthropogenic underwater noise, facilitating an exchange of views among multiple stakeholders and improving coordination and cooperation among States and the competent agencies. We welcome the report (see A/73/373) 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 of the Group. We support the continuation of that process.

While the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which was adopted following decades-long negotiations, lays down the basic framework for international law governing the jurisdiction of coastal States over adjacent maritime areas, the governance of areas beyond such jurisdiction is becoming increasingly important, especially in view of the rapid advancements in technology and scientific understanding. In that regard, we acknowledge the convening of the first session of the Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction convened pursuant to resolution 72/249. We take note of the substantive discussions that addressed the topics identified in the package agreed in 2011 and note that the President of the Conference will produce a paper as part of the preparations for the second session of the conference. The Intergovernmental Conference is an important process that is expected to give shape to the global governance of an aspect that is of importance to everyone.

As a country with a vast coastline of more than 7,500 kilometres, which is home to one third of its population, and with more than 1,000 islands, India has a long-standing maritime tradition and an abiding interest in ocean affairs. India is the world's third-largest producer of fish and second-largest producer of freshwater fish. We have 12 major ports and about 150 smaller ones. We are acutely aware of the challenges and opportunities that oceans represent, from sustainable fisheries to the prevention and control of marine litter and plastic pollution, from affordable renewable energy to ecotourism, and as early-warning systems for disaster risk reduction and management that build resilience and adaptation to climate change.

The need for greening the ocean economy is also increasing in importance. We must work to develop innovative technologies for offshore renewable energy, aquaculture, deep-seabed mining and marine technology, which provide new jobs. India is concerned about illegal fishing practices and crimes relating to maritime safety and security, including acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea. We are happy to actively engage with the work of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia, which has contributed significantly to controlling piracy in the Western Indian Ocean.

We seek a future for the Indian Ocean that lives up to the theme of "Security and growth for all in the region". That vision was outlined by Prime Minister Modi during his visit to Mauritius in 2015. The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) is playing an important role in the region in promoting the importance of the blue economy as a driver of inclusive and sustainable growth and development. India is a founding member of IORA, whose first summit meeting, organized last year, and recent eighteenth meeting of the Council of Ministers, held in South Africa, further emphasized the importance of the ocean economy.

India is an active participant in multilateral efforts aimed at developing the collective management of ocean affairs, and was an early party to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. In addition to UNCLOS, India is a party to the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the Convention of 10 December 1982; 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; the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, of 1973, as modified by the Protocol of 1978; the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments of 2004, which protects the seas from invasive aquatic alien species; the 1972 London Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter; and other agreements that regulate various activities of the oceans, especially the conservation and sustainable use of ocean resources. While the legal regime on the regulation of the oceans is fairly well developed, the challenges faced in the effective implementation of UNCLOS obligations and other related agreements are an important area of focus.

Effective global partnership is essential if we are to enhance capacity-building, collaboration on technology, financial assistance and greater awareness and scientific knowledge for the benefit of least developed countries, developing countries and those with special vulnerabilities in order to help them meet their international obligations. India cooperates with its partners in the region through its membership of the South Asian Seas Action Plan of 1995, which is serviced by the secretariat of the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme. The main focus of the South Asian Seas Action Plan is on integrated coastal-zone management, oil-spill contingency planning, human resource development and the environmental effects of land-based activities.

The Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation aims to enhance cooperation between India and 14 Pacific islands on issues such as the blue economy, adaptation and mitigation practices for climate change, disaster preparedness and health, and finding practical solutions for the nationally determined implementation of contributions. Last year, on World Oceans Day, India announced the establishment of the India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund, whose first project focuses on climate resilience for Pacific island nations. India has also earmarked \$2 million from that fund for rehabilitation projects following Hurricane Irma in Antigua and Barbuda and Hurricane Maria in Dominica.

Three decades ago, India was the first country to receive the status of a pioneer investor in the Indian Ocean. Indian scientists today collaborate in research stations on the Arctic Ocean, studying its links with the climate in our own region. Indian hydrographers partner in capacity-building efforts with our maritime

neighbours. Indian institutions work closely with regional partners in improving early-warning systems for tsunamis and cyclones. Indian naval ships are deployed in the delivery of humanitarian assistance and emergency evacuation, as well as in patrolling sea lanes against pirates. India is firmly committed to protecting its coastal and marine environment, and attaches special importance to preventing and significantly reducing marine debris and litter by 2025 through the global action and collective efforts of all stakeholders.

In that regard, India has launched a massive campaign, known as *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan* or Clean India, to clean up cities and villages and rejuvenate its rivers. We have also decided to take on the challenge of eliminating all single-use plastics by 2022. As a major source of plastic debris comes from land, those campaigns will immensely contribute to reducing the flow of plastic into the sea. India is committed to the sustainable development of its blue economy partnership in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including Sustainable Development Goal 14, pertaining to the conservation of the oceans. We hope that we can jointly protect and preserve the oceans in our collective interest of achieving sustainable development.

Mr. Botto (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, my delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his reports (A/73/68 and A/73/368) and the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for the superlative support it provides to Member States in the many complex and important processes related to the oceans and seas. We also express our sincere thanks to the facilitators of the draft resolutions on sustainable fisheries (A/73/L.41) and on the oceans and the law of the sea (A/73/L.35), which we are about to adopt today and of which Monaco is once again a sponsor.

Guided by the vision of His Serene Highness Prince Albert II and the conviction that life on Earth depends largely on the health of the world's oceans, we reaffirm the Principality of Monaco's commitment to protecting them and to supporting the marine sciences.

Under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the protection and preservation of the marine environment and the prevention, reduction and control of pollution are obligations that apply to all. Plastic pollution is a real global scourge, given the large amount of plastic waste in the ocean and the way in which microplastics affect the marine environment

and the entire food chain, including humans. Citizen involvement and partnerships among policymakers, including at the local level and in the private sector, must be encouraged and developed.

In Monaco, the selective sorting and banning of single-use plastic bags and plastic utensils have already been in place for several years. At the Our Ocean Conference in Bali, half a million dollars was pledged in support of the Beyond Plastic Med initiative through the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, which launched it with other partners in 2015.

We must consider all kinds of pollution, including oil pollution. In the context of the Mediterranean, a semi-enclosed sea of modest size, we must be particularly vigilant to prevent and respond to any disaster. Under the RAMOGE agreement between France, Italy and Monaco, joint anti-pollution training exercises are regularly conducted to improve the coordination and speed of action of all the relevant actors. The RAMOGEPOL Plan was also activated during a recent accident.

While 80 per cent of marine pollution comes from land-based sources, some ocean activities also have a significant impact on marine life. For example, anthropogenic underwater noise, which can be generated by commercial shipping, sonar, the use of seismic airguns, or industrial activities, particularly affects certain species such as marine mammals, fish and migratory species. Underwater noise can change their behaviour, interfere with their communication, disorient them and cause them stress and physical harm. It is also responsible for the unfortunately frequent stranding of cetaceans. The work of the nineteenth meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea has been useful in providing more information on that issue and we hope that it will lead to greater caution and measures to address it.

My delegation would also like to emphasize that climate change and the health of the oceans are directly interconnected. A warming of only 1.5°C or 2°C would have significant negative effects on the marine environment. The full and speedy implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the adoption of mitigation measures are therefore vital.

Sea-level rise, which puts at risk the very survival of certain populations and the territorial integrity of some States, also raises purely legal issues that must

be addressed, including within the International Law Commission.

Coral reefs, which represent 0.2 per cent of the ocean surface, are home to up to 30 per cent of all known marine species and provide socioeconomic benefits to 500 million people. However, studies show that 30 per cent of reefs have already been destroyed and that others are threatened all over the world by ocean acidification and bleaching, both of which are caused by increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. That is particularly worrying, since 2018 is the International Year of the Reef.

The International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) General Meeting was held in Monaco from 5 to 7 December. The ICRI, chaired by Australia, Indonesia and Monaco since July, brings together Governments, international organizations, scientific bodies and non-governmental organizations. The ICRI Plan of Action 2018-2020 aims to understand coral reef trends, help reduce anthropogenic threats and promote effective and adaptable solutions to improve their protection.

In the context of that meeting and following the visit of His Serene Highness Prince Albert II to Bali in October, the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of Indonesia and the Scientific Centre of Monaco signed a letter of intent to establish cooperation on studying the impact of acidification and marine pollution, using corals as indicators. That collaboration also seeks to identify, monitor and rehabilitate bleached or damaged coral reefs, and to build the capacity of researchers and experts in that domain. In addition, I would also like to mention the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which will present a special report on the ocean and cryosphere in a changing climate in Monaco in September 2019.

Strengthening the role of science, which must guide all political decisions, is Monaco's other priority in the area of oceans and the law of the sea. In the context of the International Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030, my delegation welcomes the theme that has been chosen for the next meeting of the informal consultative process, in June 2019. We welcome the efforts undertaken by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, which is coordinating the preparatory phase of the Decade. The Commission has already identified several challenges, such as the lack of internationally recognized methods for estimating the economic

value of ocean services, the difficulty of assessing the cumulative impacts of climate change and marine pollution, and our lack of knowledge with regard to marine biodiversity.

My delegation would also like to acknowledge the role of the International Hydrographic Organization, as only 5 per cent of the seabed has been mapped. Hydrography must be supported because it benefits navigation and the use of marine resources, as well as the development and management of coastal areas.

Science will play a crucial role in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 for the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources. The same is true of the human sciences. The Institute for the Economic Law of the Sea, established in Monaco in 1985, organizes symposiums and publishes many works. Its *Yearbook of the Law of the Sea* contains both substantive articles and chronicles, updated annually, on legal instruments, facts and events concerning maritime affairs and the law of the sea. It is the only work of its kind in the French language.

The Ocean Conference on the implementation of SDG 14 in 2017 and the Sustainable Blue Economy Conference in November provided opportunities to develop ambitious partnerships and to strengthen cooperation. We welcome the many activities of the Special Envoy for the Ocean. The establishment of the nine Communities of Ocean Action and the follow-up of the voluntary commitments made at the 2017 Conference are essential to guiding our collective action and keeping all stakeholders engaged.

In addition to the obligation to preserve the marine environment, on the one hand, and the importance of science, on the other, my delegation would also like to highlight the need to establish effective and specific partnerships. Combining those three elements, in 2018, the Monaco Explorations scientific campaign focused on the study of certain marine species and coral reef health, the promotion of marine protected areas and the fight against pollution and drift nets in Colombia, Hawaii, Norway, Martinique and Australia, under the motto “reconciling humankind and the sea”.

Marine protected areas are crucial tools for preserving biodiversity and the marine environment. In particular, they help to protect important environmental habitats and potentially endangered or vulnerable species, and to increase resilience to the effects of climate change. We should achieve target 14.5 of

SDG 14 by 2020. The establishment of a coherent global network of ecologically representative, well-connected and effectively managed marine protected areas is also a way to meet our objectives.

In addition, I am pleased to report that the third Meeting of the Signatories to the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Sharks, under the auspices of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, is being held as we speak, from 10 to 14 December, at the Oceanographic Museum of Monaco. Its work, in particular on species-specific conservation measures and the management of the areas where they live, as well as cooperation, will undoubtedly be interesting and productive.

Finally, I cannot conclude without reiterating my delegation’s great interest in the process of drafting an international legally binding instrument under the auspices of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. The President of the Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, which opened in September, can count on the full support of the Principality of Monaco in this complex but very important task.

Mr. García Moritán (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): First, let me thank Singapore and Norway for leading the negotiations on the two draft resolutions before the General Assembly today, A/73/L.35 and A/73/L.41.

I will now present an abridged version of the Argentine Republic’s statement, the full text of which will be uploaded to the PaperSmart portal.

As it does every year, my delegation reiterates that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea has made one of the world’s clearest contributions to strengthening peace, security, cooperation and friendly relations among nations. The Convention is one of our international instruments with the greatest economic, strategic and political impact. The objective of its negotiators was to cover all issues relating to the law of the sea through a single instrument. Accordingly, its provisions represent a delicate balance of rights and obligations on the part of States. That balance must be

maintained, including in addressing new challenges to the law of the sea through the processes established within the General Assembly.

The marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction is currently one of the most important issues relating to the law of the sea. The General Assembly decided to initiate a process to regulate the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction by developing a multilateral agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. To that end, it has convened an Intergovernmental Conference to be held over four sessions.

The first session, which took place in September in a constructive atmosphere, was a positive step that paved the way for the development of an initial draft of the agreement, which will help to advance negotiations during the second round, scheduled for 2019. With regard to that process, my delegation reiterates that developing a binding instrument on that issue should not be an end in itself but rather a means to effectively regulate the biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Argentina reiterates that the problem of the illicit trade in endangered species of wild flora and fauna, including by sea, requires that States comply and cooperate with the rules of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora in order to suppress such trade.

Argentina also appreciates the ongoing work of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf and would like to once again express its concern about its conditions of service. Despite the provisional measures, the issues raised, including medical coverage, still require a permanent solution. We must ensure that the Commission has adequate resources for that and conditions of service commensurate with the importance of its work.

Argentina also wishes to reiterate its appreciation for the contributions made by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea to the development of international law in general, and to the law of the sea in particular, as well as to the peaceful settlement of disputes.

The conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and their resources is a critical issue for my country. Argentina works constantly to foster knowledge of

the sea, strengthen fisheries regulations, combat illegal fishing, eliminate subsidies in order to prevent illegal fishing and overfishing, rebuild fish stocks and protect biodiversity.

Our country is actively working towards the goal of conserving at least 10 per cent of its coastal and marine areas by 2020, in line with our commitment under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goal 14. In order to protect and conserve representative marine habitats and ecosystems, we have set up a national system of marine protected areas. In addition, Law No. 26875 established the Namuncurá-Banco Burdwood Marine Protected Area as the only open-sea marine protected area located within the Argentine exclusive economic zone. Since 2016, a broad intersectoral and participative dialogue has sought the necessary consensus for a State policy of conservation and the prudent use of marine ecosystems.

Marine debris is found in all the world's seas, at all latitudes and depths. As a result, the pollution of coastal marine ecosystems and their interactions with biodiversity are a complex multisectoral problem with global economic, social and environmental implications. It is critical to ensure that this problem is addressed within the General Assembly. Part XII of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea is devoted to the protection and preservation of the marine environment and includes specific provisions for the use of the sea and its resources, as well as for the conservation of resources, particularly living ones, and the preservation of the marine environment. In that context, the Federal Environmental Council adopted a national action plan for the conservation of sea turtles in the Argentine Republic and, within that, a national action programme to reduce the interaction of sea turtles with marine debris.

My country reiterates its concern about the trend of using General Assembly resolutions to legitimize efforts by regional fisheries management organizations to adopt measures that exceed their geographic, material and individual scope. Argentina objects to such interpretations of Assembly resolutions, particularly with regard to measures whereby those organizations assume any kind of authority over vessels flying the flags of countries that are not members of such organizations.

Finally, Argentina would like to express its appreciation to the entire staff of the Division for Ocean

Affairs and the Law of the Sea for their professionalism, seriousness and dedication, as well as the unsolicited assistance that they provide to Member States. We reiterate the importance of ensuring that its resources are adequate to fulfilling its mandate.

Mr. Blanchard (Canada) (*spoke in French*): I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ms. Natalie Morris-Sharma and Mr. Andreas Kravik, who ably coordinated the informal consultations on the draft resolutions on the oceans and the law of the sea (A/73/L.35) and on sustainable fisheries (A/73/L.41), respectively.

Canada is committed to championing both national and international efforts regarding the oceans and the law of the sea. We are pleased to see that major steps have been taken over the past year in addressing the challenges facing the oceans.

(*spoke in English*)

Let me start by highlighting a few areas where States are working together. Here at the United Nations we are working hard to reach our common objective of developing an agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. That is an excellent example of the international community working together to develop a multilateral tool to better address a truly global set of challenges. We look forward to continuing those discussions under the able leadership of Ambassador Rena Lee, the President of the Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Just a few weeks ago, in November, together with Kenya and Japan, Canada was proud to host the Sustainable Blue Economy Conference, held in Nairobi. It was the first global conference on this topic, with more than 18,000 registered participants from around the world joining in. That number, and the incredible success of the Conference, speaks to the growing global desire to build an economy that harnesses the potential of our oceans, seas, lakes and rivers to improve the lives of all, particularly people in developing States, women, youth and indigenous peoples.

I was in Nairobi for the Conference and saw it with my own eyes. It was wonderful to see young entrepreneurs

from small island States exchanging knowledge and best practices with people from countries in Africa, Asia and the Americas. It brought people from all over the world together on the issue of the blue economy, and it was done in such a positive way because everyone was talking about the sustainable use of our oceans for the economy. Everybody was focused on what we can do with the oceans from an economic point of view, while at the same time being just as concerned about the importance of the sustainability of the oceans. All of us at the United Nations should be proud of that event, because it really was multilateralism at its best, working to deal with concrete issues that we are all facing together.

Let me now turn to the nineteenth meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, at which we discussed anthropogenic underwater noise. Scientific evidence continues to show that anthropogenic underwater noise can be a stressor for many marine species. Commercial shipping is one of its sources. In addition to the efforts being undertaken in the Marine Environment Protection Committee of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), in January Canada will be partnering with the IMO to host a technical workshop to spur innovation for quiet ship design in order to reduce noise and ultimately improve the marine environment.

At the regional level, Canada signed the Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean. As an Arctic Ocean coastal State, we are proud to have signed that historic, legally binding agreement and to be serving as its future depositary. It is the first time an international agreement of that magnitude has been reached before any commercial fishing has taken place in an area of the high seas. The Agreement will also establish a joint programme of scientific research and monitoring to improve understanding of the area's ecosystems and determine whether fish can be harvested on a sustainable basis.

Canada's commitment to the oceans has been reflected in the importance given to ocean issues during its Group of Seven (G-7) presidency. Under our presidency, small island States and African and South-East Asian coastal States joined the G-7 member countries to discuss key challenges and common objectives. Advancing gender equality, engaging young people and promoting innovation have also played an important part in Canada's G-7 focus on the oceans.

One noteworthy result of our conversations is the Charlevoix Blueprint for Healthy Oceans, Seas and Resilient Coastal Communities. It includes the Ocean Plastics Charter, which speaks to our common resolve to eradicate plastic pollution, a significant threat to our oceans.

I want all who are taking notes today and listening to me to give me their attention for 10 seconds. If they take only one thing back to their capitals from my statement, it is to ask their countries to sign and adhere to the Ocean Plastics Charter, as many countries have already done. I encourage them to do because it represents a commitment by Member States to genuinely abiding by principles regarding plastics in our oceans, and it is by showing that kind of commitment that together, through our multilateralism, we can influence the behaviour of our peoples worldwide and actually take the plastic out of our oceans. It is very important, so if there is only one thing to remember from my statement, that is it. I ask people to go back to their capitals and ask them to consider joining the Ocean Plastics Charter, which benefits the entire world. Some island States, such as the Marshall Islands, recently signed up to it, as have many other countries in the past few weeks.

Let me briefly touch on two domestic initiatives to address ocean challenges in Canada. With regard to marine conservation targets, Canada continues to make steady progress towards achieving its commitment of conserving 10 per cent of its marine and coastal areas by 2020, as agreed at the international level. Canada has also exceeded its self-imposed 5 per cent target for 2017. Considering that Canada has the world's longest coastline, that is no small endeavour. More importantly, we have learned many vital lessons along the way, which we hope can help the efforts of others.

Canada is also implementing an ocean protection plan, designed to improve marine safety and responsible shipping, protect our marine environment and offer new possibilities for indigenous and coastal communities. And we have introduced a whale initiative, which includes substantive measures to protect endangered whale species such as the southern resident killer whale, a vital component of the local marine ecosystem off the British Columbia coast.

(spoke in French)

Despite all the progress that has been made at the international level and in Canada, there is still work to be done to overcome the complex challenges facing

our oceans, some of which are the result of climate change. No one country has all the answers, and we firmly believe that only by working together will we succeed in finding solutions. Canada can be relied on as an active partner in collaborating to deliver meaningful results on oceans with a view to building a peaceful, more inclusive and more prosperous world, while Canada's candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for a term from 2021 to 2022 is another demonstration of our commitment to working to achieve those objectives together.

Mr. Fernández de Soto Valderrama (Colombia) *(spoke in Spanish)*: The Colombian delegation would like to express sincere thanks to Ms. Natalie Morris-Sharma of Singapore and Mr. Andreas Motzfeldt Kravik of Norway for their exemplary work as facilitators for the draft resolutions on oceans and the law of the sea (A/73/L.35) and sustainable fishing (A/73/L.41), respectively. Since they took on that role they have led the discussions with dignity and transparency and in a constructive spirit that is reflected in the texts we have before us today.

Colombia is a nation with coastlines on the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans whose biological and geographical conditions make for broadly diverse marine and coastal ecosystems. The health of those ecosystems depends not only on consistent and responsible national management, but also on the way that other countries that have an effect on the oceans conduct their own management. As a very diverse country, Colombia is committed to the conservation, protection and sustainable development of those ecosystems through the implementation of policies, plans and programmes that attest to the issue's national, regional and global importance. In addition, we have major institutions for marine and coastal issues, guided by a comprehensive vision in which the sea, the coast and their resources constitute essential elements of our actions. My delegation therefore reaffirms its commitment to the development and sustainable management of its fisheries resources in order to build not only a sustainable country but also sustainable fisheries at the global level, thereby guaranteeing access to fishing resources for future generations.

It is in keeping with that commitment that Colombia recognizes the valuable contribution represented by the draft resolutions on the oceans and the law of the sea and sustainable fisheries. However, we note that they both contain wording that the Colombian Government does not share with regard to the 1982 United Nations

Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), such as the opinion that the Convention is the sole normative framework for regulating activities carried out in the oceans.

Colombia conducts its activities in the marine environment in strict compliance with the various international commitments that it has expressly adopted or accepted, and takes this opportunity to reiterate that it has not ratified UNCLOS, which is why none of its provisions, except those that Colombia has expressly accepted, are enforceable or opposable. Colombia therefore understands that today's draft resolution and our participation in its adoption process cannot be considered or interpreted in a manner that implies the express or tacit acceptance by the Colombian State of the provisions contained in UNCLOS. The constructive spirit that guides our country on the issues of oceans and the law of the sea is based on the firm belief that all nations have a commitment to the protection of the sea and its resources and that the sustainable future of the world largely depends on that fact. Colombia is prepared to work in cooperation with other nations to confront the challenges of maintaining the health of the oceans. For those reasons, Colombia expresses its reservations about any mention of the Convention in the relevant draft resolution, and reiterates that it does not consider itself bound by its content.

Mr. Kpayedo (Togo) (*spoke in French*): Togo notes and welcomes the high quality of the various substantive reports (A/73/68 and A/73/368) submitted to the Assembly by the Secretary-General under sub-item (a) of agenda item 78, on oceans and the law of the sea, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and General Assembly resolution 72/73.

As the report contained in document A/73/368 rightly emphasizes, the oceans, the lungs of the world and the providers of most of the Earth's oxygen, play an essential role in daily life, as they are critical to many key areas such as food security, livelihoods, tourism, transport and climate regulation. As a result, coastal communities, particularly in the least developed countries and small island States, are highly dependent on them, since the oceans help to eliminate poverty and contribute to local development, and form the foundations of a sustainable marine economy.

Togo, which is party to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982

and the Agreement relating to the implementation of Part XI of the Convention, among other instruments, has always attached particular importance to ocean issues, which the Government addresses in an integrated, interdisciplinary and intersectoral manner in the context of the implementation of the Convention. That is why, taking into account the challenges related to the preservation and sustainable use of marine resources under its national jurisdiction, my country created by presidential decree a national authority for State action at sea, whose mission is to strengthen the action of public institutions and coordinate all intersectoral efforts with the aim of preserving Togo's maritime interests. That body includes our High Council for the Sea, an excellent framework that defines the guidelines for our country's maritime policy under the authority of the President of the Republic and whose strategic decisions are implemented by our Maritime Prefecture.

Togo welcomes the successful holding, from 4 to 17 September, of the first session of the Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. My country, which took an active part in the session, intends to maintain its commitment during the two sessions scheduled for 2019 in order to ensure the development and finalization of an ambitious instrument in 2020 as the outcome of that important process.

While already engaged in the first cycle, my country is also committed to the second cycle of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects. As a result, in May, in response to the Assembly's invitation in paragraphs 312 and 315 of resolution 72/73, Togo, which has a national focal point, appointed five experts to the Pool of Experts, some of whom participated in the regional workshops held in 2018 in Palau and Ghana. In that regard, my delegation would like to acknowledge and commend the contribution of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs during those and many other ongoing processes, as well as its multifaceted assistance to Member States, especially in the area of capacity-building in the organization and management of various fellowships that have benefited several officials from our national Administration.

Togo would also like to take this opportunity during the consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 78 to commend and support the International Seabed Authority and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea for the work they have accomplished within their respective mandates.

Believing as we do that the conservation and sustainable use of our oceans, seas and marine resources are crucial to sustainable development, Togo sponsored this year's draft resolution on the oceans and the law of the sea (A/73/L.35), which has just been eloquently introduced by the representative of Singapore, and as in the past, will naturally vote in favour of it. In particular, we welcome the draft's continued inclusion of paragraph 120, in which the General Assembly welcomes the adoption in Lomé, on 15 October 2016, of the Charter on Maritime Security and Safety and Development in Africa by the African Union's Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government on Maritime Security and Safety and Development in Africa. Togo has ratified the Charter and invites the other member States in our region to accede to this important legal instrument, whose entry into force within a reasonable time frame will enable the African continent, among other things, to prevent and punish national and transnational crime, including piracy, armed robbery against ships, the smuggling of migrants, trafficking in persons and related illegal trafficking of all kinds at sea.

In addition, on 21 September, in accordance with part VI, article 76, paragraph 8 of UNCLOS, Togo and Benin submitted to the Secretary-General a joint request to extend their respective continental shelves beyond 200 nautical miles. In that regard, my delegation is pleased to note that the draft resolution for the seventy-third session now provides that coastal States, especially developing ones, can request financial and technical assistance from the trust fund in the context of the submission of new or revised requests, and welcomes the improvement whereby the draft resolution makes it possible for members of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf to join the United Nations health insurance plan on an exceptional basis.

In conclusion, my country continues to believe that the implementation of the Convention is essential to the sustainable and peaceful development of the oceans and their resources, as well as for meeting the Sustainable Development Goals set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly Goal 14, whose

eventual achievement will help to end poverty and ensure sustained economic growth and food security while creating sustainable livelihoods and decent jobs.

Mrs. Horbachova (Ukraine): The delegation of Ukraine aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union. We would also like to make a statement in our national capacity.

Today Ukraine is pleased to join many others in sponsoring draft resolutions A/73/L.35 and A/73/L.41, on oceans and the law of the sea and sustainable fisheries, respectively. We commend the facilitators' exemplary leadership throughout the process.

The marine environment continues to be a matter of serious concern due to climate change, marine- and land-based human activities, marine debris, overfishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, all of which burden marine ecosystems and lead to their gradual degradation. It is therefore vital to ensure that the international community pays more attention to those problems and takes concrete steps to address them. In that regard, we would like to echo the Secretary-General's latest report (A/73/368) on oceans and the law of the sea, which emphasizes that Member States must greatly intensify their efforts if we are to achieve the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 14, including through enhanced international cooperation and coordination, as well as increased capacity-building and transfers of technology to developing States. For such efforts to be cohesive, effective and long-lasting, they must be undertaken within the context of the legal framework of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

We acknowledge the need for enhancing ocean governance as a cornerstone in the preservation and protection of the marine environment and biodiversity, as well as in ensuring peaceful relations among States. Ukraine is committed to achieving healthy and productive oceans and seas so that they can continue to support sustainable development for the good of all humankind. We fully respect all of UNCLOS's provisions and are implementing them in good faith. Under the Convention, Ukraine has exclusive rights to the living resources within its territorial sea and exclusive economic zone. Since 2014, the Russian Federation has deliberately and blatantly violated those rights in the Black Sea, the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait.

The Convention requires its States parties to use peaceful means to settle any dispute between them concerning its interpretation or application. Consistent with Article 33 of the Charter of the United Nations and article 279 of UNCLOS, Ukraine has sought to resolve its dispute with Russia peacefully. In that connection, I would like to update the Assembly on the arbitration proceedings instituted by Ukraine against the Russian Federation. On 16 September 2016, Ukraine served on the Russian Federation a notification and statement of claim under annex VII to UNCLOS referring to a dispute concerning coastal State rights in the Black Sea, the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait.

On 19 February of this year, Ukraine filed a memorial through the Permanent Court of Arbitration with the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea establishing that Russia violated Ukraine's sovereign rights in the Black Sea, the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait. The memorial asserts that since 2014, Russia has unlawfully prevented Ukraine from exercising its maritime rights, exploited Ukraine's sovereign resources for its own ends and usurped Ukraine's right to regulate its own maritime areas. Through these violations of international law, Russia is stealing Ukraine's energy and fisheries resources, harming the livelihoods of Ukrainian fishermen and blocking traffic to Ukrainian ports with its illegal bridge over the Kerch Strait, among other serious violations.

On 31 August, the Tribunal hearing Ukraine's case against the Russian Federation under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea published a procedural order determining that it would rule on certain jurisdictional objections raised by the Russian Federation in a preliminary phase of the proceedings. Ukraine does not believe that the Russian Federation's jurisdictional objections are plausible or that they will be accepted by the Court. On 27 November, Ukraine filed its written observations on Russia's preliminary objections.

Unfortunately, the reality today is that Russia has continued its unlawful actions in the Black Sea, the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait, and has escalated its dispute with Ukraine. Through its illegal construction of a bridge across the Strait, Russia violated numerous provisions of UNCLOS, including those pertaining to Ukraine's rights in its territorial sea and to Russia's obligations to protect the marine environment and not to impede transit passage through the Kerch Strait, a narrow, busy stretch of water connecting the Black Sea

to the Sea of Azov and to Ukraine's ports at Mariupol and Berdyansk. Moreover, since 29 April, Russia has engaged in a new campaign to interfere with Ukraine's rights in the Sea of Azov by stopping vessels in the Kerch Strait and the Sea of Azov. In the relatively short period since then, more than 200 vessels have been discriminatorily stopped by Russia, in violation of its fundamental obligation under UNCLOS not to hamper or impede transit passage through an international strait. The Russian Federation has not ceased its activities and instead has engaged in new and flagrant violations of UNCLOS. Just two weeks ago, it attacked, seized and detained Ukrainian naval vessels in Ukraine's exclusive economic zone.

On 27 November, in a letter submitted to the Tribunal, Ukraine described Russia's ongoing pattern of harassment against Ukrainian and international vessels seeking passage through the Kerch Strait to Mariupol, Berdyansk and other Ukrainian ports. Russia's actions actively closed the Kerch Strait to all vessels, resulting in protests not only from Ukraine but also from authorities representing other Black Sea littoral States. The European Union and Turkey both insist on their right to free passage through the Strait. Ukraine believes that Russia must and will be held accountable for its serious breaches of the international law of the sea.

The Russian Federation is pursuing a policy of legitimizing its attempted annexation of Crimea by using various subversive tactics and strategies. One of them is through the International Maritime Organization (IMO). Russia's claim that it has responsibility for the implementation of International Maritime Organization instruments in the maritime areas adjacent to the Crimean peninsula cannot be regarded as constituting a basis for a proper implementation of IMO instruments, and can have no legal consequences. Furthermore, Russia's reckless unilateral actions, such as unlawful practices regarding the certification of seafarers and the registration of ships in occupied Crimea, and its attempts to assert control over Ukraine's search-and-rescue assets in the occupied Crimea, have turned the northern part of the Black Sea into a grey zone for international shipping.

Ukraine has provided detailed reports on a semi-annual basis since 1 January 2017 on threats to the safety and security of navigation in the maritime areas adjacent to the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine,

which have been circulated by the IMO Secretariat in accordance with a decision of the Maritime Safety Committee. Given the significant uncertainty of the situation and its considerable implications for the safety and security of navigation, Ukraine strongly urges all States to ensure that ships entitled to fly their flag take those reports into account when operating in the northern part of the Black Sea. Ukraine further calls on all States and international organizations to refrain from any action or dealings that might be interpreted as recognizing the unilateral actions of the Russian Federation that have precluded Ukraine from carrying out its international obligations under applicable treaties and conventional instruments.

The ability of States to maximize the benefits of the oceans and seas and develop a sustainable ocean-

based economy depends on maintaining and enhancing the security of maritime spaces. We therefore condemn piracy and armed robbery at sea, transnational organized crime and terrorism in the maritime domain, trafficking in persons, the smuggling of migrants, and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and other maritime activities that threaten global stability, security and prosperity. In that regard, we strongly believe that a coordinated and integrated approach to all ocean-related issues at the global, regional and national level is imperative.

In conclusion, we would like to express our 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.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.