



General Assembly

Seventy-fourth session

42nd plenary meeting
Tuesday, 10 December 2019, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Muhammad-Bande (Nigeria)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Fialho Rocha (Cabo Verde), Vice-President, took the Chair.

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

Agenda item 74

Oceans and the law of the sea

(a) Oceans and the law of the sea

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/74/70 and A/74/350)

Report on the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects (A/74/315)

Report on the work of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea at its twentieth meeting (A/74/119)

Draft resolution (A/74/L.22)

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

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

Draft resolution (A/74/L.21)

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Norway to introduce draft resolution A/74/L.21.

Ms. Juul (Norway): Norway has had the honour of coordinating the informal consultations on draft resolution A/74/L.21, on sustainable fisheries. Today, on behalf of the sponsors of the draft resolution, I am pleased to introduce its text in the General Assembly.

Fisheries provide a vital source of food, employment and economic well-being for people throughout the world. Achieving sustainable fisheries is essential if we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Next year will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement. The Agreement is a cornerstone of modern fisheries management. It sets out a comprehensive legal regime for the conservation and sustainable use of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks, with a strong emphasis on regional management. It promotes the sustainability of some of the world's most commercially important fish stocks.

Regional cooperation is crucial to ensure better coordination and policy coherence in the management of our oceans. The collective arrangement between the OSPAR Commission established by the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic and the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) is a good example of

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such cooperation, with its aim to become a multilateral forum comprising all relevant competent entities in the region. The experience gained by the NEAFC and OSPAR could serve as a model for other regions to strengthen a cross-sectoral approach. We are happy to see this cooperation recognized in the draft resolution.

In 2020, we will all mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the 1995 Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries adopted by the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Although the Code is voluntary, it is probably the most cited high-profile global fisheries instrument in the world, after the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Despite the progress seen since the adoption of the Code, we are far from seeing all fishing activities being conducted in a responsible manner.

Important work remains to be done in the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU). For this, we need global implementation of the FAO Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing, which was the first binding international agreement to specifically target IUU fishing. The Agreement is crucial for the effort to preserve the world's fish stocks. We call upon States that have not yet done so to become parties to the Agreement.

We are pleased to be able to adopt draft resolution A/74/L.21 by consensus today and would once again thank all Member States for their valuable input on the draft this year. Additionally, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Director Gabriele Goettsche-Wanli and the staff at the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for their expertise, professionalism and invaluable support before and during the consultations.

If I may, in its national capacity, Norway is also pleased to join others in co-sponsoring the draft resolution entitled "Oceans and the law of the sea" (A/74/L.22). We thank the delegation of Singapore for its dedicated and effective leadership during the two rounds of consultations. This year, we celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea — the constitution for the oceans. Draft resolution L.22 once again reaffirms the universal and unified character of the Convention, as well as the fact that it sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. Norway fully subscribes to

the view that the Convention provides clarity regarding the obligations and the rights of States.

Capacity-building is essential to ensure that all States are able to fully implement the Convention and benefit from the sustainable development of the ocean. Norway is therefore strengthening its development cooperation in the field of oceans management, and we welcome the draft's invitation to the Secretary-General to expand the capacity-building activities of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea.

We were proud to host the Our Ocean 2019 conference in Oslo in October. The conference highlighted the importance of knowledge as the basis of our efforts to protect our oceans. A total of 600 leaders from Government, business and civil society from over 100 countries participated — a more global participation than in previous years. The conference also highlighted the vital importance of involving the private sector. We hope to carry forward the partnership and sense of urgency created in Oslo in the many important high-level events that are coming up in 2020, particularly the United Nations Ocean Conference in Lisbon in June and the Our Ocean 2020 conference in Palau in August.

We must live up to our environmental responsibilities as well as our legal and moral obligations to future generations. The oceans have huge potential when it comes to meeting the world's growing need for resources and fostering economic and social development. The High-level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy, which was established last year, brings together world leaders who recognize that economic production and ocean protection must be mutually supportive if we are to produce, protect and prosper. The Panel has commissioned a series of blue papers from leading experts, exploring pressing challenges at the nexus of the ocean and the economy.

The obligation to protect the marine environment is clearly set out in the Convention. In this respect, Norway is playing a leading role in the global efforts to promote clean and healthy oceans. Our development programme to combat marine litter is a key tool in this regard. We continue to work proactively in such relevant international forums as the United Nations Environment Assembly and the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention. We especially welcome the decision to include mixed, unrecyclable and contaminated plastic into the Basel Convention's control regime.

The impacts of climate change are among the most pressing issues facing the international community. Small islands, including small island developing States, and low-lying coastal areas are particularly exposed. The findings in the most recent report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change gives grounds for serious concern, confirming that the global sea level continues to rise at an increasing rate. Extreme sea-level-related events will occur more frequently and have severe ramifications. The report also confirms that changes in the marine ecosystems have negative consequences for indigenous peoples and local communities. Science is pointing in a clear direction; we must all therefore raise our ambitions. If not, the goals set out in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change will be beyond our reach. A key task is to ensure increased support for developing States in the essential areas of finance, capacity-building and technology.

Norway is a strong supporter of the process of developing a new instrument for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. We see a need for a new regime governing marine genetic resources in these areas that is pragmatic, cost-effective and practical. It should also promote research and innovation and secure access to benefit-sharing. With regard to area-based management tools, the new instrument should initiate increased contributions from existing sectoral and regional mechanisms for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. By doing so, the instrument would add value to existing structures and contribute to strengthened implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Singapore to introduce draft resolution A/74/L.22.

Mr. Gafoor (Singapore): Today is a significant day for our oceans. On this day in 1982, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea was opened for signature in Montego Bay, Jamaica. On that day, the Convention was signed by 119 countries, which set a record for the highest number of signatories on the opening day for signature of any Convention. Today, there are 163 parties to the Convention and its universal and unified character is widely recognized. This year also marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention. As the General Assembly debates this agenda item on oceans and the law of the sea today, let us also take the time to commemorate

this milestone of a Convention that has withstood the test of time and continues to be the bedrock of oceans governance.

I turn now to draft resolution contained in document A/74/L.22. Singapore had the honour to coordinate the informal consultations on the draft resolution, and I am pleased to introduce it on behalf of my colleague, Ms. Natalie Morris-Sharma, Director of the International Legal Division of the Ministry of Law in Singapore, who coordinated the informal consultations. I wish to express my deep appreciation for the support and constructive engagement of all delegations, including the small group of facilitators that enabled consensus to be reached during the informal consultations on all of the paragraphs. I also thank the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for its outstanding support throughout the process.

This draft resolution remains one of the most important and comprehensive of the resolutions on oceans and law of the sea adopted annually by the General Assembly. It covers a broad spectrum of issues and activities. This year, informal consultations were held over nine days and in two parts, from 1 to 4 October and from 20 to 26 November. Negotiations were once again intense.

I will highlight, by way of example, eight issues that emerged from this year's negotiations, without any intention of being comprehensive or exhaustive. First, the draft resolution notes with satisfaction the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention and the commemorations by the Meeting of States Parties to the Convention and the International Seabed Authority.

Secondly, the draft resolution takes stock of the work of the Authority. Among other actions, the Authority approved the thirtieth plan of work for exploration for polymetallic nodules and launched the International Seabed Authority database. The draft resolution also welcomes the progress of the work of the Authority on draft regulations for the exploitation of mineral resources in the Area, and encourages the Authority to continue its work on draft regulations as a matter of priority.

Thirdly, the conditions of service of members of the Commission were discussed at great length once again. This year's draft resolution expresses, *inter alia*, the intention to continue to consider options for mechanisms to provide medical insurance coverage

to members of the Commission and authorizes the use of the trust fund to reimburse the costs of the medical insurance premium.

Fourthly, the draft resolution speaks to climate change and sea-level rise, which were issues subject to considerable deliberation during the informal consultations. The draft resolution notes with concern the impacts of climate change on the oceans and the cryosphere, to which low-lying islands, in particular small island developing States, and coasts and coastal communities are particularly exposed. It also notes with concern the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in its report, entitled *The Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*, as well as the summary for policymakers. In addition, the draft resolution takes note of the decision by the International Law Commission to include the topic, "Sea-level rise in relation to international law" in its programme of work. It also decides that the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea shall focus its discussions at its twenty-first meeting, in 2020, on the theme "Sea-level rise and its impacts".

Fifthly, the draft resolution welcomes the holding of the second and third sessions earlier this year of the Intergovernmental Conference on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction. The draft resolution takes note of the substantive discussions that addressed the topics identified in the package agreed in 2011. It further takes note that the President of the Conference will prepare, as part of the preparation for the fourth session of the Conference, a revised draft text of an agreement.

Sixthly, the draft resolution notes the discussions at the twentieth meeting of the Informal Consultative Process on the theme of ocean science and the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. The matter of the Decade will be taken up once again next year, as the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission is preparing the implementation plan for the Decade. The draft resolution welcomes steps taken by the Commission in this regard, and it requests that the Commission continues to provide information on the development plan and present it to the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session next year.

Seventhly, with regard to the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the

Marine Environment, the draft resolution touches on a number of aspects, including the decision to launch the third cycle of the Regular Process to cover five years, from 2021 to 2025.

Lastly, delegations will recall that, last year, we undertook efforts to streamline and improve the readability and overall effectiveness of the annual resolution. Building on last year's efforts, the capacity-building paragraphs of this year's draft resolution were reworked to improve its overall coherence. Work was also undertaken to improve on the readability of Part X of the draft resolution on marine biodiversity. Furthermore, delegations continued in their efforts to identify and retire language that was outdated or duplicative. Our intention next year is to continue to pursue the streamlining of the annual resolution.

Singapore attaches great importance to this endeavour, in line with the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. In this regard, we look forward to continue working with delegations to streamline the annual resolution further during next year's informal consultations.

Before I conclude, allow me to make an oral revision of paragraph 139 of the draft resolution. As agreed during the informal consultations on the draft resolution, the revision is intended to update two references to Security Council resolution 2442 (2018). Following the adoption of Security Council resolution 2500 (2019), on 4 December 2019, the relevant part of paragraph 139 should read as follows:

"notes the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 2500 (2019) of 4 December 2019, as well as the statements by the President of the Council of 25 August 2010 and of 19 November 2012, also notes that the authorization in resolution 2500 (2019) and relevant resolutions apply only with respect to the situation in Somalia".

The foregoing concludes my introduction of the draft resolution, and it gives me great pleasure to commend it to the Assembly for adoption. While the draft resolution is typically voted on every year, it remains my hope that it can be adopted by consensus.

If I may, I shall now make several remarks in my national capacity.

I will start by aligning my delegation with the statement to be delivered by Belize on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States.

As a small island nation whose survival and well-being are inextricably linked to the oceans and the seas, Singapore is heartened to see the growing attention devoted to oceans issues around the world, which is evidenced by the number of oceans-related processes, as well as the heightened level of awareness, interest and involvement of all relevant stakeholders. I wish to briefly mention three examples, which, in our view, are of particular importance.

First, Singapore welcomes the decision by this Assembly to convene in 2020 another United Nations Ocean Conference, and we express our appreciation to Kenya and Portugal for their generous offer to co-host the conference in Lisbon. The 2017 United Nations Ocean Conference proved a great success and has thus far generated more than 1,500 voluntary commitments by a wide array of stakeholders, including Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, civil society, academic institutions, the scientific community and philanthropic organizations. The upcoming Conference in 2020 promises to build on this momentum by generating even more interest, awareness and, most importantly, concrete action around the world. We need to continue to push for action to be taken on an urgent basis to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. The Conference in 2020 is an important step towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 14.

Secondly, we welcome the increasing attention being brought to the issue of sea-level rise. Sea-level rise poses an existential threat to many countries and is an issue of global concern. The recent special report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *The Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*, shows that the global mean sea-level rise has been accelerating in recent decades and that the sea level continues to rise at an increasing rate. This year, the International Law Commission established an open-ended study group on sea-level rise in relation to international law, which will focus in 2020 on the subject of the sea level in relation to the law of the sea. Delegations have also agreed during the informal consultations on the draft resolution before us today that the Informal Consultative Process shall focus its discussions at its next meeting on the theme "Sea-level rise and its impacts". We welcome such efforts to increase our knowledge and understanding of this important issue, which will inform the appropriate responses required at national, regional and global levels.

Thirdly, Member States are in the midst of negotiating a very important agreement under the Convention, concerning the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. This is arguably one of the most important treaty-making processes in recent times, and it is a golden opportunity for us to craft the international rules on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. The Conference held its second and third sessions this year and has been making steady progress. While the issues at hand are understandably complex and the negotiations are anything but easy, we are encouraged by the level of engagement and cooperation among delegations.

In many ways, the process relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction reminds us of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea. At the final plenary meeting of that Conference in 1982, which finalized the Convention, the then-President of the Conference, Ambassador Tommy Koh of Singapore, stated that the successful outcome of the Conference was important for the prestige and credibility of the United Nations. He also stated that it showed that the United Nations could be an effective forum for multilateral negotiations on issues of vital importance to all States and to the international community as a whole. We believe that this is true also for the process relating to marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, and we are confident that delegations will prove that multilateralism is very much alive and working today.

I wish to conclude by echoing the view expressed by the Secretary-General in his report contained in document A/74/350 that international cooperation is crucial for success in addressing the challenges facing the oceans. Indeed, challenges involving the global commons require international solutions. None of us can address these issues alone. I would even go one step further to say that we need not only international cooperation but also greater international coherence. With the increased attention on oceans issues and the corresponding number of processes around the world, the United Nations, as the only universal, inclusive and multilateral forum, is best placed to ensure coherence among these processes so that, collectively, we can be more coordinated and effective in our efforts.

Ms. McGuire (Grenada): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the 14 member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). I thank the Secretary-General for the reports that have been prepared for our deliberations and express our appreciation for the coordinators from Singapore and Norway, respectively, who have so ably guided the negotiations on the draft resolutions to be adopted by the General Assembly on oceans and the law of the sea (A/74/L.22) and on sustainable fisheries (A/74/L.21).

Each year we meet against an even more frightening and conclusive background that the ocean faces a clear and present danger. The threats are varied, multifaceted and require urgent and immediate action, with climate change being among the most visible manifestations of the cost of inaction. Our cause for heightened concern — indeed, serious alarm — comes in the face of the recent release of major reports that confirm that we, as an international community, must do more to ensure the protection of our global environment. As the Secretary-General said at the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change at its twenty-fifth session in Madrid, “the point of no return is no longer over the horizon. It is in sight and hurtling toward us”.

CARICOM welcomes the special report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), entitled *The Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*, which was approved on 24 September 2019 by the 195 member countries of the IPCC. We note with serious concern its findings relating to the adverse impacts of climate change on the oceans and the cryosphere. Of particular importance are the conclusions about the deleterious impact on low-lying islands, in particular small island developing States, coasts and communities, which will be exposed, inter alia, to declining polar sea ice, sea-level rise, more frequent extreme sea-level events, as well as an increasing rate of ocean warming and acidification with consequent impacts on marine ecosystems, including altered net primary production, a reduction in global biomass of marine animal communities and decreasing fisheries catch potential. For our countries, whose very social and economic development are tied to the marine environment, this report stands as a timely reminder of what needs to be done by us all, but especially by the developed countries, to address these adverse effects.

We are well aware of the tragic humanitarian and economic devastation that was visited upon the

Bahamas this year and in Dominica and Antigua and Barbuda in 2017 as a result of hurricanes that have grown in intensity due to rising ocean temperatures. The Assembly may also be aware of the massive blooms of sargassum seaweed that have been inundating our coastal and marine waters and beaches since 2011, causing economic, social and environmental harm and human health problems across the Caribbean region. This sobering reality was made more manifest with the recent release of the United Nations report confirming that the high levels of greenhouse-gas emissions are likely to exceed the expected targets, thereby compromising the prospects for maintaining global warming at the level of 1.5 to 2.0°C.

Against that backdrop, CARICOM is disappointed that the texts of both draft resolutions to be adopted by the General Assembly under this agenda item could have been more emphatic and ambitious in their treatment of these findings. We had hoped that there would be language symptomatic of the urgent action that needs to be taken to ensure that we are keeping pace with and tackling climate change by reducing the growing gap between emissions targets and reality.

For that reason, we are deeply appreciative of the Secretary-General’s personal commitment to confronting climate change, including through the recently concluded Climate Action Summit. The Summit created an important platform for many of our leaders from the Caribbean to speak to and be a part of creative, innovative solutions to the climate crisis. We have the same level of expectation and ambition for the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, so that real progress can be made in fulfilling the agreed targets. The eyes of the global community are on us — we cannot afford to fail.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. Consequently, the Convention remains as relevant now as it was over 40 years ago when it was first opened for signature in Montego Bay, Jamaica. With this in mind, CARICOM countries are active and committed participants in the discussions aimed at ensuring that the Convention and its implementing agreements are robust and comprehensive.

The current negotiations on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity

beyond areas of national jurisdiction are no exception. CARICOM remains a strong advocate for the important legally binding instrument that will create the framework to ensure the appropriate balance for the conservation, sustainable use and equitable sharing of benefits of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. We will continue to work, including with our civil society partners, for the successful conclusion of the negotiations in 2020.

The Convention's success is attributable in large measure to the invaluable work of the institutions created to ensure the effective implementation of its provisions. The Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and the International Seabed Authority (ISA) are to be commended for their sterling contribution to the development of the body of work that has defined and shaped our interpretation and understanding of the law of the sea.

This year, CARICOM would like to especially acknowledge and pay tribute to the ISA, headquartered in Kingston, Jamaica. The Authority has been central to the development of a comprehensive legal regime for deep-seabed mining beyond national jurisdiction with the development of draft regulations for the exploitation of mineral resources in the Area. As a region, we are proud of the steady progress being made in the work of the Authority as it celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary with a series of commemorative events, culminating in a just-concluded special conference held in Kingston from 14 to 16 November. We wish to publicly thank successive Secretaries-General and the staff of the Authority for their unswerving commitment to the Organization over the years.

With respect to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, we welcome ongoing efforts to ensure that members of the Commission are provided with adequate medical insurance while they are meeting in New York. In this regard, we share the serious concern of others that the chronic underfunding of the voluntary trust fund could impede the work of the Commission as a result of the potential lack of a quorum at upcoming sessions. We therefore encourage those who are in a position to resource the fund to do so. CARICOM also wishes to applaud the International Tribunal's continuing efforts to strengthen capacity in the region through the convening of regional workshops that are aimed at familiarizing participants with the

dispute-settlement mechanism and the applicable procedure for cases before the Tribunal.

Moreover, recognizing the need for adequate geographic and gender balance, CARICOM remains committed to putting forward candidates of the highest repute to maintain our contributions to jurisprudence globally. It is a source of pride that we have an expert from Trinidad and Tobago on the Commission, who was successfully elected to serve from 2017 to 2022. In addition, CARICOM has endorsed the candidature of Ms. Kathy-Ann Brown of Jamaica for the International Tribunal for the period 2020-2029, with elections to be held in June 2020. It is our firm belief that Ms. Brown, with her vast experience as an international lawyer, is suitably poised to advance the work of the Tribunal. We welcome the support of Member States in this regard.

As small island developing States, our inherent vulnerabilities, small size and limited resources compound the extent to which we can effectively respond to climate change, as well as the other challenges plaguing the ocean. As a region, we are taking a holistic, comprehensive approach to the preservation of the marine environment and the sustainable utilization of our marine resources. Greater emphasis, for example, is being placed on sustainably maximizing the blue economy. With the support of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Barbados and Belize are benefiting from a special project to assist participating developing States in formulating evidence-based and policy-coherent oceans-economy and trade strategies. This will support their realization of the economic benefits to be derived from the sustainable use of marine resources.

Jamaica and Saint Lucia are also currently benefiting from a project aimed at strengthening their capacities to develop and implement appropriate enabling legal, institutional and policy frameworks to grow sustainable ocean-based economies. There is also a Global Environment Facility-sponsored project involving Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Panama and Saint Lucia on promoting national blue-economy priorities through marine spatial planning in the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem. We welcome other opportunities for technical assistance, capacity-building and technological exchange that will further help our islands to fully harness the potential of our ocean economies. As Member States can see, we are

collectively working towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

CARICOM continues to be heavily vested in the full implementation of our common regional fisheries policy. Fisheries contribute significantly to livelihoods and poverty alleviation. In the CARICOM region, fisheries provide at least 117,000 persons with direct employment in small-scale fisheries and aquaculture and indirect employment for an estimated 400,000, including women, who are involved in fish processing, markets, boat construction, net repairs and other support services.

As we have stated in the past, several CARICOM member States have taken concrete measures to ban the use of single-use plastics and/or Styrofoam. These include Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Barbados and the Bahamas.

To respond to the growing challenge posed by sargassum, an interregional workshop was held in Kingston, Jamaica in November on the use of nuclear techniques to address sargassum blooms.

Creating climate-resilient societies is also a top priority. The passage this past summer of Hurricane Dorian, which brought death and devastation to the Bahamas, reminds us that this is an imperative, given the severity, frequency and increased intensity of storms, hurricanes and other extreme weather events. One area to which we are beginning to give increased attention is disaster-risk insurance. For example, Jamaica is developing a comprehensive public financial-disaster risk-management policy, with provisions for financing disaster-risk protection through various risk-retention and risk-transfer mechanisms, including through budgetary contingency funds, contingent-credit facilities and State contingent-debt instruments. The Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism has also been working with the World Bank, the United States and the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility to launch a parametric insurance scheme for the fisheries sector — the first of its kind globally.

While we have sought to ensure that we have the requisite measures in place, the support of partners at the national, regional, bilateral and multilateral levels will be critical. The importance of international cooperation and collaboration cannot be overemphasized.

CARICOM looks forward to the United Nations Ocean Conference to be jointly hosted by Kenya and Portugal in June 2020. We see the Conference as a much-needed platform to build on the successful Conference held in 2017 and an important medium through which to advance the commitments that have been made in support of our ocean. We expect that the Conference will significantly advance prospects towards the attainment of SDG 14.

The year 2020 will also witness the release of the highly anticipated second World Ocean Assessment report under the Regular Process so ably chaired by our colleagues from Barbados and Estonia. We look forward to the report and its conclusions, which we hope will inform the policy decisions taken by Governments and allow for the kind of science-policy interface that must guide our decision-making. In the same manner, we continue to support the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, chaired by Trinidad and Tobago and Monaco, whose theme this year was “Ocean Science and the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development”. CARICOM endorses the Decade and looks forward to working with others in pursuit of its objectives.

In closing, CARICOM places on record its deep appreciation for the work done by the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea. We are indebted to the Division and its Director, Ms. Gabriele Goettsche-Wanli, who has given unselfishly of her services for several decades. We wish her all the best in her new endeavours and, in doing so, continue to make the plea for the Division to be sufficiently resourced to undertake the duties assigned to it as the secretariat of the UNCLOS.

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

We align ourselves with the statements to be delivered by the representatives of Belize and Vanuatu on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States and the Pacific Islands Forum, respectively.

At the outset, the PSIDS would like to thank Ms. Natalie Morris-Sharma of Singapore and

Mr. Andreas Kravik of Norway for once again taking up the coordinator role and for bringing the negotiations on the oceans omnibus draft resolution (A/74/L.22) and the sustainable fisheries draft resolution (A/74/L.21) to their successful conclusions.

We attach particular importance to this agenda item. As we have often said, we consider the ocean the lifeblood of our economies and societies. The special report on *The Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate* issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) earlier this year highlights the declining health of our oceans owing to the adverse impacts of climate change and such related natural phenomena as ocean acidification. In this respect, we are disappointed that it was not possible to find consensus to strengthen the references drawn from the special report in both draft resolutions. It is not enough to simply note the special report with concern. The General Assembly must also specifically cite the findings on the impact of climate change on the ocean and cryosphere and the actions that must be undertaken by the international community to address that impact. Anything less is a disservice to the critical work of the IPCC and an inaccurate reflection of the importance that a vast majority of Member States attaches to such work.

Unchecked human activities such as overfishing, illegal unreported and unregulated fishing, marine pollution, including from microplastics, the destruction of marine habitats and other threats to marine biodiversity are throttling the health and resilience of our shared ocean. The future will be bleak unless global efforts are mobilized. As large ocean States, the sustainable development of our ocean and blue economies will be the means to achieving the goals and targets set forth in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Healthy, productive and resilient oceans and seas are critical for, inter alia, poverty eradication, access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food, economic development and essential ecosystem services.

The adoption of the political declaration during the high-level midterm review of the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway reiterates the importance of oceans, seas and marine resources to small island developing States, including the PSIDS, and acknowledges the efforts that we are continuously undertaking to develop and implement strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and their resources,

despite our special vulnerabilities. We acknowledge that both draft resolutions on which we will take action today make reference to the political declaration that States Members in this Hall worked hard to negotiate. We also note that the draft resolutions further establish the SAMOA Pathway as a key guiding development framework for the small island developing States (SIDS).

The year 2020 marks a very important year for the ocean on the United Nations agenda. The fourth session of the Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction is critical for us, and we hope, with the cooperation of all Member States, to see the successful conclusion in 2020 of an extensive negotiation process with a fair and equitable treaty for the conservation and sustainable management of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. We further underscore the importance of ensuring that we have a legal instrument that is equitable, recognizes the special case of SIDS, ensures respect for an incorporation of relevant traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities, and assures a healthy ocean for our future generations.

Next year we will also see the convening of the second United Nations Ocean Conference, to be jointly hosted by Kenya and Portugal. The second Ocean Conference will provide an opportunity for all of us to gauge our progress in the full realization of Sustainable Development Goal 14. The Pacific SIDS also look forward to the official launch of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. There is no doubt on the key role ocean science plays in informing decision makers. That role emphasizes the need for the best available science to inform the adoption of effective conservation and management measures for our oceans. However, in connection with that, we continue to emphasize the important role of traditional knowledge. We believe that traditional knowledge systems are a complement to science.

With regard to fisheries, we would like to note that fisheries are the backbone of many of our economies and a conduit for sustainable development in the region. We therefore continue to call on our partners in 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 the maximum sustainable yield. It is critical to 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 sufficiently high levels 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 most distant-water nations and the atoll countries are in double jeopardy. Economic overfishing of tuna has the potential to wipe us out even quicker than the adverse effects of climate change do. We acknowledge the existing efforts in the region through the Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Pacific Fisheries. However, we must still call on our partners to help establish more equitable and sustainable partnerships that do not place an unwarranted burden on the small economies of the Pacific.

We would like to stress the importance of effective coordination and cooperation across the board among the various entities working on ocean issues, as well as the need to strengthen the ocean mechanisms of the United Nations. In our view, UN-Oceans has not been able to realize its full potential, and we therefore welcome the review of its terms of reference aimed at strengthening this important mechanism.

Finally, we support today's adoption of the omnibus oceans and sustainable fisheries draft resolutions (A/74/L.22 and A/74/L.21). We look forward to working with the President of the Assembly and other delegations in the coming year to take the steps needed to ensure that we can leave a healthy, productive and resilient ocean to future generations of humankind.

Ms. Lindo (Belize): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). Let me begin by welcoming the reports of the Secretary-General (A/74/70 and A/74/350) that have been prepared under this agenda item and by thanking Singapore and Norway for leading the consultations on draft resolutions A/74/L.21 and A/74/L.22.

By virtue of being small island States, we are also large-ocean States, with close economic and social ties to the oceans and their resources. Fishing, tourism and other maritime activities are crucial to sustaining our economies. The conservation and sustainable use of marine resources are essential to our culture and

our people's livelihoods. That is why small island developing States (SIDS) are the stewards of the ocean, ensuring that our present and future generations can continue to benefit from the wealth that the ocean has to offer.

With our oceans in a more precarious state than ever before, we have made some important strides this year in ocean science that should guide policymaking as we move forward. The *Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate* of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has made it clear that the future of our oceans is at serious risk. Increases in surface temperatures have deoxygenated large swathes of the oceans and led to coral bleaching. Rising carbon-dioxide emissions continue to worsen ocean acidification. Such changes have already had devastating effects on marine biodiversity, exacerbating the impact of overfishing and marine pollution. Additionally, rising sea levels pose numerous challenges to the future of the world as we know it.

Recognizing the important role of science, the General Assembly has already operationalized the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. We note the progress that has been made in the preparatory phase for the Decade and continue to advocate for the importance of developing the capacity of small island developing States through this process. We intend to engage constructively in the activities that are planned for the year ahead. Alongside this, AOSIS is also eagerly anticipating the United Nations Ocean Conference to be held in Portugal in June 2020, under the overarching theme of scaling up ocean action based on science and innovation for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14. The targets enshrined in this Goal on the conservation and sustainable use of the world's oceans are vital to the protection of our global ecosystem. It is through multi-stakeholder international cooperation in forums such as this one that we can accelerate action aimed at achieving these targets by 2030.

AOSIS also welcomes the progress made this year at the Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, with discussions commencing on a possible treaty text. But our journey towards the completion of that monumental instrument

is still ongoing, and we look forward to accelerating the work at the Intergovernmental Conference in March of next year. AOSIS firmly emphasizes the importance of concluding an agreement on marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction as quickly as possible. It will play an integral role in conservation and the equitable and sustainable sharing of resources on the high seas. In line with other international treaties, we believe that this instrument should also adequately capture the special circumstances of SIDS in this context.

The two draft resolutions considered under this agenda item, on oceans and the law of the sea and sustainable fisheries, attempt to comprehensively cover a wide array of issues in those broad areas. Both draft resolutions acknowledge the vulnerabilities of SIDS in different respects and both note the impact of the current climate crisis on the oceans and the resources within them. However, we underscore the need to spur more ambitious action through the draft resolutions as we move ahead. Climate change will not be solved by simply noting the findings of the IPCC's reports. Ocean biodiversity will not be preserved by merely acknowledging that rising temperatures have an impact on marine ecosystems. We must use these draft resolutions as a vehicle to spur ambitious global action that counters the effects of climate change on oceans and on the coastal communities in SIDS who rely on them.

The world's oceans belong to all of us, so we all must rise to the challenge of protecting them. While the effects of a warming world and diminished biodiversity will be felt by the most vulnerable States first, the consequences will soon be felt by all countries alike. Let us utilize all possible avenues to take lasting action before it is too late.

Mr. Tevi (Vanuatu): I am pleased to deliver this statement on behalf of the 14 Pacific Islands Forum member States with Permanent Missions to the United Nations.

At the outset, I would like to express the group's gratitude to Mr. Andreas Kravik of Norway and Ms. Natalie Morris Sharma of Singapore for their able leadership in bringing the negotiations on the draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea (A/74/L.22) and sustainable fisheries (A/74/L.21) to a successful conclusion. We support the adoption of both draft resolutions.

The ocean is at the heart of our Blue Pacific narrative and is critical to our future. Gathered at the fiftieth Pacific Islands Forum Leaders meeting, held in Tuvalu in August, our leaders recognized our role as joint custodians of the world's largest ocean and carbon sink. They called for immediate action to support clean, healthy and productive oceans, the sustainable management, use and conservation of marine resources, growth in the blue economy and for addressing the impact of climate change on ocean health. It is therefore no surprise that we are particularly interested in this agenda item.

For an ocean region like ours, 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 oceans and the legal framework under which all ocean activities are to be carried out. We also commend the General Assembly for reaffirming its commitment to the full implementation of the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway and ensuring its success. We are pleased that the draft resolution A/74/L.22 welcomes the dissemination of new, enhanced tsunami products for the Pacific Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System, which will assist countries in the Pacific in better assessing tsunami threats and issue warnings, thereby contributing to the safety of our communities. We further appreciate the Assembly's continued attention to sustainable fisheries, an important sector in our region. Pacific Islands Forum leaders have reaffirmed their commitment to working collectively to harness, secure, protect and sustainably manage, use and conserve the living resources of the blue Pacific. We are pleased that draft resolution A/74/L.21 reaffirms the importance of the management of sustainable fisheries of highly migratory stocks, and we call for continued efforts in that area. We would also like to take this opportunity to highlight the following issues.

First, our Pacific Islands Forum leaders reaffirmed earlier this year in Tuvalu that climate change represents the single greatest threat to the livelihood, security and well-being of Pacific peoples. The fact is that climate change is affecting us through rising and warming seas, as well as more intense and frequent extreme events such as cyclones and typhoons, floods, drought and king tides. The multifaceted effects felt around the world are particularly acute in our region, especially

in vulnerable atoll nations. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's recently released *Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate* is yet another alarm bell ringing to wake all of us up in order to urgently address climate change and improve the health of our oceans. In that respect, we are disappointed that it was not possible to reach a consensus on strengthening the references to the *Special Report* in both draft resolutions, including in terms of citing specific findings about impacts on the ocean and cryosphere, as well as actions that the international community should take to address them.

A related issue is sea-level rise, which has significant and complex effects on the sustainable development of our Pacific communities and countries, particularly people's livelihoods, food security and health and safety. It also creates legal and political challenges, including with regard to our maritime zones. Pacific Islands Forum leaders noted with concern the threat posed by sea-level rise to securing the blue Pacific and acknowledged the urgency and importance of securing the region's maritime boundaries. Action is being prioritized on maritime boundary delimitation, including outstanding maritime boundary claims. Our group is pleased that the General Assembly decided to focus the discussions of the twenty-first meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea on the theme of sea-level rise and its impacts. We look forward to sharing our region's experience in addressing the impacts of sea-level rise, including our efforts to preserve members' existing entitlements derived from maritime zones delineated in accordance with UNCLOS.

The third issue is the process of developing 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, undertaken through an Intergovernmental Conference. We take the mandate of the General Assembly seriously and understand that with only one session left, we must strengthen our efforts to successfully deliver a robust and high-quality agreement in 2020.

The year 2020 will be critical to further addressing these issues and making progress on the commitments we have made to improving the health, productivity and resilience of our oceans. We welcome the convening of the high-level 2020 United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, which will take place in Lisbon from 2 to 6 June. The Pacific Islands Forum leaders are committed to the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the achievement of SDG 14. We also welcome the theme of the Conference, which is most timely as we enter the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, which begins in January 2021. The Pacific Islands Forum region has actively contributed to the preparations for the Decade, and we will endeavour to make further progress in Lisbon in June.

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

Mr. Gonzato (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries North 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.

On 16 November we marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which establishes the overarching legal framework within which all activities in oceans and seas must be carried out. With its 168 States parties, as well as the European Union, UNCLOS is rightly recognized as the constitution of the oceans, whose provisions generally reflect customary international law. By establishing the legal order for the seas and oceans, the Convention contributes to sustainable development and to peace, security, cooperation and friendly relations among all nations. To that end, it is imperative that the sovereignty and sovereign rights over the maritime zones of all States, including those generated by islands, are respected. The European Union and its member States remain committed parties to UNCLOS and its implementing agreements, including 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. We sincerely hope that the goal of universal participation in the Convention will one day be met.

However, we also continue to acknowledge that the Convention should remain relevant and able to meet the challenges of today as well as those of the future. For this reason, the EU and its member States recognize the progress achieved in this year's two sessions of the Intergovernmental Conference established to negotiate an international legally binding instrument under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. Concluding an ambitious implementing agreement in this area in 2020 remains a political priority for the EU and its member States. In that regard, we continue to support Ambassador Rena Lee, the President of the Conference, in advancing the negotiations on the text of a draft agreement, and we remain committed to engaging with all delegations to conclude the negotiations next year.

Despite our commitments, the status and health of the oceans are not improving. The challenges facing our oceans include the effects of climate change and pollution, including from microplastics, excessive nutrients and anthropogenic underwater noise, as well as overfishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and the continued loss of biodiversity. That has been highlighted in a number of eye-opening reports issued this year, including by the United Nations Environment Programme, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). These ubiquitous threats will require our firm collective political commitment and effective action in line with the precautionary principle and the ecosystem approach if we are to be successful in achieving and maintaining oceans that are clean, healthy and productive. We believe that to be ever more necessary in view of the growing importance of sustainable ocean economies — the blue economy — in helping many different countries meet their development aspirations. We want to assure the General Assembly of the commitment of the EU and its member States in that regard, in order to ensure that the oceans can continue to support sustainable development for the good of all humankind.

We would like to reiterate that the science clearly shows that climate change represents an existential threat to life on Earth. Greenhouse gas emissions have continued to increase, taking us further from being able to achieve the 2°C target, let alone the 1.5°C target. The impacts of climate change on the oceans are increasing

and include ocean acidification, the warming of the oceans, with diminishing productivity leading to reduced catch potential for fisheries, rising sea levels and extreme weather events, which have hit different parts of the world in recent months. As also made clear in the IPCC's *Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*, while ambitious mitigation and effective adaptation will be beneficial for sustainable development, conversely, delaying action will only escalate costs and increase risks of irreversible changes.

We would like to thank Spain and Chile for the ongoing Blue Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which is raising the visibility of the ocean-climate nexus. We also look forward to next year's ocean conferences in Lisbon and Palau and hope that they will continue to mobilize action, including by the private sector, to conserve and sustainably use the oceans.

The EU and its member States 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 Sustainable Development Agenda. We continue to hold that harmful subsidies that contribute to overcapacity, overfishing and illegal, unreported and unreported fishing are among the main impediments to achieving sustainable fisheries. While we are pleased to see the increasing number of parties to the Agreement on Port State Measures of the Food and Agriculture Organization, we take the opportunity to reiterate our call on more States to become parties to the agreement.

Turning to issues relating to the social and human dimension of sustainable development, the EU and its member States would like to reiterate the importance of ensuring decent working conditions on board fishing vessels. For that reason, we encourage States to become parties to the relevant conventions, particularly the Cape Town Agreement of 2012 on the Implementation of the Provisions of the Torremolinos Protocol of 1993 relating to the Torremolinos International Convention for the Safety of Fishing Vessels, 1977 and the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188), of the International Labour Organization. We also want to stress that we would like to see the long-standing issue concerning the medical insurance coverage of the members of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf

resolved as soon as possible, so that they can have access to adequate medical coverage while in New York.

In conclusion, we recognize that both draft resolutions we will be adopting today are important instruments that should not only serve to reflect the latest significant developments and challenges in the areas of the oceans and the law of the sea and sustainable fisheries, but also provide all States Members of the United Nations with regular political stocktaking opportunities and guidance in that regard. That is why the EU and its member States participated actively in the consultations on the preparation of those resolutions.

We would nevertheless like to express our disappointment that it was not possible to include in the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries (A/74/L.21) any substantive language in relation to the findings of the IPCC special report on the impacts of climate change on the oceans and only very weak references in the omnibus draft resolution (A/74/L.22). We maintain that the United Nations and those draft resolutions are the appropriate forums for discussing and reflecting relevant substantive issues relating to the impacts of climate change on the oceans, their biodiversity and fisheries. We consider that not including such issues sends a negative message about the importance that the General Assembly and most Member States accord to climate change and its impacts.

It is solely for that reason that, unlike in previous years, we have chosen not to co-sponsor the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries, despite the otherwise excellent results achieved. In no way should our decision be interpreted as a reproach of the work of the coordinators of the draft resolution. In fact, we would like to express our appreciation for the excellent stewardship demonstrated by the coordinators of both resolutions, Ms. Natalie Morris Sharma and Mr. Andreas Kravik.

We would also like to thank the Chairs of the different United Nations meetings on the oceans and the law of the sea, whose able leadership has guided the work of delegations throughout the year. The EU and its member States would like to express their gratitude to the Secretariat and the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for their excellent work and constant support. We also take this opportunity to thank the Director, Ms. Goettsche-Wanli, for her sterling work leading the Division over the past few years and to wish her a happy retirement.

Mrs. Heusgen (Germany): Germany aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union and its member States.

We welcome the fact that the text of this year's omnibus draft resolution (A/74/L.22) continues to reaffirm the universal and unified character of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the need to preserve the integrity of the Convention. In that regard, as a State party to UNCLOS, we remain concerned about increasing assertions of legal claims with respect to maritime areas in the South China Sea and would like to make the following points.

Germany emphasizes its commitment to the provisions laid down by UNCLOS on the freedom of the high seas, the rights of innocent passage and obligations regarding bilateral, regional and international cooperation, including for the conservation and management of living resources, the protection and preservation of the maritime environment and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

With respect to claims to maritime zones in the South China Sea, we also recall the specific conditions set forth in UNCLOS on the application of straight and archipelagic baselines and on the application of the regime of islands and rocks to naturally formed land features. We consider that any claim to historic rights to living and non-living resources and/or to historic titles to waters of the South China Sea is incompatible with UNCLOS to the extent that it exceeds the limits of the maritime zones as exclusively and comprehensively provided for by UNCLOS and as confirmed in the award rendered by the Arbitral Tribunal under annex VII to UNCLOS on 12 July 2016. Germany has expressed that position persistently in the past, bilaterally and together with other parties to UNCLOS, without prejudice to and without taking any position regarding competing territorial sovereignty claims to disputed features in the South China Sea.

We will continue to uphold our freedoms and rights as a State party to UNCLOS and to contribute to promoting cooperation in the region as set out in the Convention.

Mr. Marani (Argentina) (spoke in Spanish): Allow me to begin by thanking Singapore and Norway for leading the negotiations on draft resolutions A/74/L.21 and A/74/L.22, which the General Assembly has before it today.

Like every year, my delegation would like to reiterate that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is one of the clearest contributions to the reinforcement of peace, security, cooperation and friendly relations among nations. The Convention is one of the most wide-reaching international instruments in terms of economic, strategic and political impact.

The objective of the negotiators of the Convention was to resolve all issues pertaining to the law of the sea in one instrument. Its provisions therefore make up a delicate balance of States' rights and obligations. That balance must be maintained, even when addressing new challenges in the area of the law of the sea, in the processes established under the auspices of the General Assembly.

Marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction is one of the most pressing current issues concerning the law of the sea. Argentina supports the regulation of the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction through the development of a multilateral agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the work of the intergovernmental conference convened to that end. The atmosphere at the three sessions held in 2018 and 2019 was constructive. Argentina therefore hopes that a binding instrument on this topic can be adopted at the fourth session, thereby advancing towards the effective regulation of biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction.

Argentina reiterates that the illicit trafficking of endangered species of wild flora and fauna, including by sea, calls for the implementation of the norms of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora and the cooperation of States to stop such illicit trade.

Argentina wishes to reiterate its gratitude for the contributions of 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.

Argentina also reiterates its gratitude for the continued work of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf and would like to express once again its concern regarding conditions of service in the Commission. Notwithstanding the provisional measures in place, the issues raised, including that of medical coverage, still require a permanent solution. We must ensure that the Commission has adequate resources to

that end and conditions of service commensurate with the importance of its work.

The conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and their resources are of crucial importance to my country. Argentina is working continuously to improve understanding of the sea, strengthen fisheries regulation, combat illegal fishing, eliminate subsidies in order to prevent illegal fishing and overfishing, revive stocks and protect biodiversity. Our country is also working actively to meet the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 14.

With a view to protecting and conserving marine spaces representative of habitats and ecosystems, Argentina established through Law 27,037 the National System of Marine Protected Areas. In addition to the Namuncurá-Burdwood Bank Protected Marine Area, 2018 saw the creation, through Law 27,490, of the Marine Protected Areas of Namuncurá-Burdwood Bank II, covering a total area of 32,000 square kilometres, and Yaganes, with a total surface area of 68,000 square kilometres.

Maritime debris is found in all seas the world over, touching all latitudes and depths. Consequently, the pollution of marine-coastal ecosystems and their interactions with biodiversity are a complex and multisectoral problem, with economic, social and environmental implications on a global scale. We stress the important need to address this issue under the auspices of the General Assembly. UNCLOS dedicates a section, Part XII, to the protection and preservation of the marine environment, and contains specific provisions on the use of the sea and its resources, as well as on the conservation of resources, in particular living resources, and the preservation of the marine environment. In this regard, the Argentine Federal Environment Council has approved the National Action Plan for the Conservation of Sea Turtles and, as part thereof, the National Action Programme to Reduce the Interaction of Sea Turtles with Marine Debris.

Sustainable production is the first step towards sustainable development. It is therefore crucial to promote innovation and new technologies for the production, reuse, recycling and disposal of plastic products. Waste must be managed comprehensively to ensure that it does not end up in bodies of water; when that cannot be avoided, the necessary steps must be taken to mitigate contamination in areas affected. Argentina has established guidelines for the sound

environmental management of plastics throughout their life cycle with a view to, among other things, ensuring the sustainable production of plastics, the promotion of responsible use and consumption, comprehensive waste management and the prevention of contamination resulting from the use of plastics.

Among the range of new challenges we face, climate change takes centre stage. The twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is currently taking place. Argentina welcomes the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's *Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*, released in September, which details the effects of increasing average global temperature on our oceans, including ice melt, sea-level rise, the increased frequency of extreme weather events on the high seas and ocean acidification. Argentina is firmly committed to making strides on global climate action, focusing primarily on crafting our nationally determined contribution, through more than 170 specific climate change mitigation and adaptation measures.

In conclusion, my country wishes to reiterate its concern regarding the trend of seeking through General Assembly resolutions to legitimize attempts by regional fisheries management organizations to adopt measures that overstep the spatial, material and personnel bounds of their areas of work. Argentina objects to the idea that General Assembly resolutions may be interpreted in this way, especially with regard to measures whereby those organizations seek to claim some kind of authority with respect to flag vessels of countries that are not members of such organizations.

Finally, Argentina wishes to express its appreciation to all the staff of the Division of Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for their professionalism, seriousness and dedication, as well as for the assistance they independently provide to Member States, and we reiterate the need that the Division has as its disposal the resources necessary to discharge its mandates.

Mr. Zaki (Maldives): The Maldives aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Belize as Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States.

My delegation welcomes the reports of the Secretary-General submitted under this agenda item. The resolutions adopted under this item represent important developments related to oceans and the law of the sea. We also thank Singapore and Norway for

their able leadership in the consultations on the draft resolutions under this agenda item.

Although the ocean may seem remote to many people, its influence is far-reaching. We depend on it for food and water; for energy access, transport, trade and tourism; for health and well-being; for culture and identity; and for protection and survival. Today, as we strive for economic growth, this vast, intergenerational resource is facing multifaceted threats, including climate change, population growth, the over-exploitation of marine resources, and pollution.

Climate change, this century's defining threat, will continue to aggravate the health of the ocean, causing irreversible damage to the livelihoods of people and ecosystems. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change *Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*, approved in September 2019, warns of the impacts of climate change on the oceans and cryosphere, including declining polar sea ice, rising sea levels and an increasing rate of ocean warming and acidification, with consequent impacts on marine ecosystems. Due to their dependency on the ocean and its resources, small island States, low-lying coastal areas and coastal communities are disproportionately affected by these changes, threatening their very existence.

For these reasons, the Maldives, while appreciating the fact that the General Assembly is able to produce a consensus document, is disappointed that the texts of the draft resolutions relating to oceans and law of the sea fail to reflect the urgency of the crisis we face. It is our hope that, as the most important multilateral forum in the world, the General Assembly will continue to deliberate on these topics and urge strong, collective action to reverse the negative impacts of climate change.

For the Maldives, preserving the ocean ensures our very existence. Although we are referred to as a small island developing State, we consider ourselves to be a large ocean State. Approximately 99 per cent of our territory is ocean, which is inextricably linked to our culture, economy and national security. We are committed to transitioning to a blue economy by adopting ocean-friendly practices.

Ocean pollution not only threatens our two major industries, tourism and fisheries, but also threatens to destroy the coral reefs that form and protect our islands. Due to negligence and irresponsibility, trillions of pieces of plastic, which neither disappear nor biodegrade, float around the world, threatening natural

equilibriums and ecosystems. Since taking the oath of office in November 2018, President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih has prioritized preserving the health of the ocean. We have an ambitious plan to phase out single-use plastics by the year 2023 — the most comprehensive plastics phase-out plan announced by any country. That forms a part of the Maldives Climate Smart Resilient Islands initiative, announced by President Solih during the 2019 Climate Action Summit.

However, our efforts alone will not be enough. We need the help of not only like-minded Governments but also the private sector. During the high-level segment of the General Assembly, we were proud to announce two private-sector partnerships with the aim of tackling plastic pollution, protecting our waters from illegal fishing and harnessing clean energy sources. We are confident that those partnerships will be an important milestone in the achievement of multiple Sustainable Development Goals, contributing to the preservation of marine areas and ocean resources for future generations.

Our efforts to protect the ocean rely on its effective regulation. This year, we commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The Convention represents a major advancement in the governing of all activities in the sea and in the promotion and regulation of ocean science. To that end, the Maldives looks forward to the upcoming decade, during which the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will mandate international community to conserve and ensure the sustainable use of the ocean and its resources through the implementation of international law under UNCLOS.

The Maldives also welcomes the conclusion of the third session 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 (BBNJ). We thank the President of the intergovernmental conference for the revised draft text of an agreement and look forward to an outcome-oriented fourth session of the intergovernmental conference on BBNJ, with the objective of reaching a mutually beneficial agreement in line with the aspirations of UNCLOS, with strengthened political will and in the spirit of cooperation.

We further welcome the decision of the International Law Commission to include the topic of sea-level rise in

relation to international law in its programme of work, which has implications for the security and sovereignty of many countries, in particular small island developing States. We look forward to playing a constructive role in those discussions, representing a significant milestone in the governance of the ocean.

The Maldives believes that the upcoming United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) will present a unique opportunity to strengthen evidence-based policymaking in the effective management of the ocean. The Maldives stands ready to support the work of the United Nations Decade framework and looks forward to the global and interdisciplinary dialogues that will take place as part of the Decade.

The protection and effective governance of the ocean require a concerted effort on the part of all. Trust, mutual respect, internationally agreed norms and policies informed by science must form the basis of our deliberations. From the highest point of the planet to the lowest-lying island, our shared future is tied to the health of the ocean. I call upon the international community to join us in exercising our shared responsibility to preserve the ocean and ensure a prosperous future for our planet.

Mr. Arrocha Olabuenaga (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): One of the great challenges facing the international community today is reducing the negative impacts of human activity on the oceans. The protection of the marine environment and the sustainable use of its resources must be part of joint efforts to make a more responsible future possible.

Mexico underlines the importance of the progressive development of international law in that area, especially the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea as a pillar of the international legal framework within which all activities in the oceans are carried out at the national, regional and global levels, always with a comprehensive approach through cooperation and joint commitment.

Mexico reaffirms its commitment to preserving marine ecosystems and, specifically, to fulfilling Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 of the Convention on Biological Diversity. My country continues to strive not only to maintain more than 22 per cent of its marine protected area, but also to continue developing instruments and coordination mechanisms that generate synergies with

other relevant actors that allow us to achieve better results in that regard.

It is also necessary to continue working together to facilitate the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In accordance with Sustainable Development Goal 14, Mexico reiterates its commitment to the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, and in particular stresses the promotion of their use for peaceful purposes, the equitable and efficient use of marine resources, the conservation of living resources and the study, protection and preservation of the marine environment and its biodiversity. That includes effective fishery management processes that provide a basis for the scientific assessment of fish stocks and the application of ecosystem approaches to food security and poverty eradication. In that regard, we welcome the second United Nations Ocean Conference, to be held in Portugal.

Despite strides made in the technical-scientific field, there is still a long road ahead to learn about and understand our seas and their biodiversity. We believe that it is necessary that States and international organizations alike, alongside the active participation of civil society, work closely in the dissemination of information and coordination of research efforts.

The development and promotion of marine scientific research are key to attaining sound knowledge of the various problems related to the sea and develop solutions. Mexico reiterates its support for the UNESCO declaration on the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), in order to increase research capacities and resources to meet those objectives.

We must also redouble efforts to address pollution from land-based sources, particularly plastics and microplastics, as well as to counter the negative effects of anthropogenic noise on marine ecosystems. Another pressing need is attending to the problems of climate change and sea-level rise and the threat that they pose to so many countries. We eagerly await the study to be published by the International Law Commission on that important topic.

Every microorganism present in marine ecosystems is essential to maintaining the balance of the oceans. That requires effective action on the part of all States to improve their scientific activity with a view to better understanding the effects of climate change and ocean acidification on the marine environment and

marine biodiversity, in order to seek effective means of adaptation.

Unfortunately, pollution is not the only threat to our seas and oceans. We must do our utmost to tackle threats to maritime security, relief efforts, safety, well-being and human life at sea, including by ensuring the safety of navigation through cooperation, coordination and response for search and rescue and the prosecution and investigation of crimes committed aboard ships. We once again condemn piracy and the illegal trade in species across the oceans, including endangered marine species. We reaffirm our commitment to curbing activities that affect both species and economies, the safety of local populations and safe navigation.

On the occasion of International Human Rights Day, today we strongly condemn the smuggling of persons and the trafficking of migrants by sea. We urge States to address that phenomenon from a humanitarian, relief and assistance perspective, and to use the protection and preservation of life as the basis of all State action.

Mexico recognizes the interest, efforts and participation of the international community within the framework of the intergovernmental conference on a legally binding international 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 our view, the third session of the conference, held from 19 to 30 August, represents a positive transition towards negotiations, based on an initial draft text.

Mexico also acknowledges the work of the President of the conference, Ms. Rena Lee, and appreciates the issuance, just a couple of weeks ago, of the new draft, which includes the comments made during the discussions held at the third session. We would have preferred that this document had been issued earlier, but we appreciate that it seeks to harmonize the proposals made in the discussions during the negotiations, with a view to the adoption of a final text.

In advance of the fourth session of the conference in March, Mexico calls on all States, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and the international community in general to redouble efforts to ensure the culmination next year of more than a decade of work in the form of a shared commitment to the establishment of an international and universal legal framework to regulate the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas

beyond national jurisdiction. The culmination of that work, if done well, will benefit all humankind and our blue planet. That is why we must work responsibly, consistently guided by the principles of the common heritage of humankind and intergenerationality.

The richness of our oceans has no equal on Earth. The seas and oceans, and the activities within them, have a direct effect on the economic and social development of peoples and are vital to humankind's survival. But our seas and oceans are also critical to maintaining environmental harmony and ecological balance of our only home. Without detracting from the importance of individual action, the only real way to overcome the challenges facing our seas and oceans today is through joint cooperation and commitment. The seas and oceans are a common heritage of humankind; given our great responsibility of protecting the planet for current and future generations, caring for and preserving them is a responsibility shared by all.

Ms. Picco (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, my delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General and the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for their reports on the oceans and the law of the sea (A/74/70 and A/74/350), which provide an excellent summary of the issues.

Allow me to pay special tribute to Director Gabriele Goettsche-Wanli, for her recognized and much appreciated expertise and for her dedication as head of the Division.

Since this agenda item was last considered by the General Assembly (see A/73/PV.80), political attention on the links between the oceans, climate and biodiversity has increased. According to the report of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, “[b]iodiversity... is declining faster than at any time in human history”. That alarming observation is compounded by those of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the World Meteorological Organization on the impacts of climate change. The IPCC *Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*, issued in September in Monaco, irrefutably lays out the observed and anticipated disastrous effects of climate change on the oceans and seas.

In that respect, we regret that the conclusions of the reports are not better reflected in the draft resolutions, even though those conclusions are irrefutable and reflect the latest scientific findings. In fact, the

physical and chemical changes affecting the ocean entail a chain of consequences for marine ecosystems, marine biodiversity and human populations, especially the most vulnerable — those living along the coast in developing countries and in small island developing States, in particular.

We must ask ourselves the following questions. How will we cope with the reduction of the global cryosphere and the melting of the icecaps, which will threaten access to drinking water for almost 2 billion people, representing one-quarter of the world's population. How will we address the acidification and deoxygenation of the oceans or with changes in the distribution of marine species and their impact on global marine biomass? The cost of inaction will be felt all the more acutely as we refuse to assess those consequences, although we know that a viable future is not achievable without setting ambitious goals for national contributions and greenhouse gas emission reductions.

Even in a scenario of a rise in temperature of 1.5°C, 80 per cent of corals are at risk. Very serious socioeconomic consequences, particularly for local and artisanal fisheries and for sustainable tourism, seem inevitable. In addition, 680 million people now live at low altitudes. The rising sea level, which is accelerating, will require huge infrastructure investments and generate very real security issues in the coming decades.

Every year, we witness extreme weather events and natural disasters that threaten the resilience of coastal areas. The time to say that these phenomena are alarming is over. The time to say that there is an urgent need for action is over. Now is the time for action, if it is not already too late. Honouring the commitments made years ago, in particular the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway is the only available solution.

Against that backdrop, in June 2020 we will convene the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, for which four target dates are approaching. It will occur just before the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030). The theme of the Lisbon Conference urges us to pay the utmost attention to intensifying action based on science and innovation. We therefore support the efforts of

the UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission in preparation for the Decade.

In addition, the elaboration of an agreement for the implementation of 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 is also particularly important for the international law of the sea. We reiterate our commitment to making progress towards the conclusion of an ambitious agreement as soon as possible.

Like many others, we are firmly convinced that the oceans must be an integral part of our response at all levels in the context of climate action. The Principality of Monaco has therefore undertaken to redouble its efforts to achieve the objective of reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 50 per cent by 2030 compared to 1990, with a view to achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

Increasing the proportion of energy generated by renewable resources is one of the pillars of our energy transition mission. The development of ocean thermal energy conversion makes it possible to recover energy from the sea to heat and cool many buildings. In addition, a prototype developed by a Monegasque company to harness wave energy will be deployed in 2021 for a test period.

The Principality of Monaco also intends to continue to assume its responsibilities at the local, regional and international levels. An example of that spirit of cooperation is the Pelagos Agreement, concluded between France, Italy and Monaco 20 years ago, on the establishment of a marine mammal sanctuary.

Monaco attaches great importance to achieving a better understanding of our immediate environment, the Mediterranean Sea. For example, Monaco supports the Sphyrna Odyssey mission, which is currently studying the behaviour of cetaceans capable of deep diving, including sperm whales, Cuvier's beaked whales and Risso's dolphins, using autonomous laboratory vessels. The mission focuses in particular on the movements of those species and noise pollution caused by human activities. Surface drones are scheduled to overfly the coast of Monaco in mid-December.

Internationally, the Principality supports science and cooperation through the Monaco Explorations programme. Through scientific missions in all regions of the world, these explorations promote research, megafauna protection, coral protection,

new exploration technologies and the development of marine protected areas.

The commitment to reconciling humankind and the sea, assumed by His Serene Highness Prince Albert II and supported by all Monegasque entities, is more important than ever.

Mr. Valtýsson (Iceland): Surrounded by the sea, throughout their history Icelanders have based their existence, to a great extent, on ocean-related activities. The sustainable use of living marine resources is the basis of our prosperity. Robust and healthy marine ecosystems are central to our foreign policy, and this past year we have prioritized ocean affairs in Iceland's chairmanships in the Arctic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Iceland places great emphasis on and is pleased to co-sponsor the two annual oceans draft resolutions under discussion here today (A/74/L.21 and A/74/L.22). As always, they deal with pertinent issues that are of importance to all nations. My Government welcomes the decision to address sea-level rise at next year's meeting of the Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea. This issue is of great concern and a matter of emergency, especially to many small island States that are particularly exposed to the consequences of climate change. We therefore deeply regret that we were not able to reach consensus on stronger language on climate change in the draft resolutions. The impacts of climate change are less visible in the ocean than on land, but they are no less profound. Indeed, climate change is also ocean change.

In that regard, we welcome the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change *Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*. The report outlines present and future climate-related risks and challenges. Sea ice is receding rapidly in the North. This has resulted in shifts in species composition, abundance and biomass production of ecosystems, affecting fisheries and livelihoods. Ocean acidification is a real and serious threat to marine life. Science tells us that we must act quickly to halt current trends. It is critical to incorporate climate considerations into the ocean agenda.

Iceland is committed to doing its part and is working to reach the Paris Agreement on Climate Change goals by 2030. We also seek carbon neutrality by 2040. We intend to further support low-income countries, including through increased funding for the

Green Climate Fund. In addition, Iceland participated actively in the preparation and the execution of the Climate Action Summit in September, with a particular focus on nature-based solutions.

During Iceland's chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the Arctic marine environment will be one of three main priority areas. In April 2020, we will be organizing an international symposium on the threat of plastics to Arctic marine ecosystems, and we hope to agree on a regional action plan on marine litter during our chairmanship. We are also planning a ministerial meeting on the Arctic Ocean and will be running numerous ocean-related projects, for example on the blue bioeconomy and Arctic marine tourism.

Our work on the oceans during our chairmanship of the Arctic Council is leveraged by our priorities during Iceland's presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2019. We prioritized the ocean and blue growth in the North and focused, *inter alia*, on blue innovation and innovation ecosystems, energy transformation in ships and plastics in the marine environment.

Further, Iceland is strongly committed to the World Trade Organization negotiations on the prohibition of certain forms of fisheries subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, in line with our commitments under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We are disappointed that the 2019 deadline was not achieved and remain hopeful that the matter may be brought to a satisfactory conclusion by mid-2020.

Oceans are of fundamental importance to all States. Without a clean, healthy, productive ocean, the 2030 Agenda will be impossible to achieve. In that regard, the effective implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and its implementing agreements will have a critical impact on progress. It is Iceland's firm position that UNCLOS sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. The management of high seas fisheries through a regional approach, in line with 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, has proven to be a firm basis for sustainable management.

Iceland is an active participant in the ongoing negotiations of a new implementing agreement under

UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. We are cognizant of the importance, complexity and sensitivity of that endeavour and thank Ambassador Rena Lee of Singapore and her outstanding colleagues in her national team and in the United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for their able leadership.

This is important work, as we are negotiating a convention which will last for decades to come. The new institutional structure on marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) needs to be adapted to the existing regional and sectoral bodies in a careful and dedicated manner, so that those bodies are not undermined in their respective fields of expertise and decision-making. We should focus on the quality of the BBNJ instrument rather than speed in the negotiations. We also reiterate our view that consensus is both a prerequisite for developing the BBNJ instrument and for universal participation in it.

Ocean science must take centre stage in the debate on oceans and sustainable development. All policies for the conservation and sustainable management of the oceans should be based on sound scientific research. This year's Informal Consultative Process shed light on this important cross-cutting topic, which will feed into the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030). We welcome the fact that this theme will also feature prominently at the 2020 United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, to be held in Lisbon next year, which will provide good opportunities to build partnerships and share best practices.

Turning to a particular issue dealt with in the omnibus oceans draft resolution (A/74/L.22), we welcome the positive steps taken regarding the ongoing issue of medical insurance coverage of members of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. The importance of the work of the Commission cannot be overstated and Iceland wishes to ensure that the needs of its members are met to the greatest extent possible. We are therefore extremely concerned about the chronic underfunding of the voluntary trust fund for the purpose of defraying the cost of participation of Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf members from developing States in meetings of the Commission. Iceland will continue to contribute to

the trust fund, and we encourage other Member States to do so as well.

Before I conclude, I would like to express our gratitude to the two skilled facilitators who sailed the draft resolutions to a safe harbour, Mr. Andreas Kravik of Norway and Ms. Natalie Morris-Sharma of Singapore. We would also like to thank the Director of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, Ms. Gabriele Goettsche-Wanli, for her steadfast stewardship and wish her all the best in her retirement.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate our unwavering commitment to the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans. Iceland looks forward to another active year of ocean affairs in 2020.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation actively participated in the consultations on draft resolutions A/74/L.22, on oceans and the law of the sea, and A/74/L.21, on sustainable fisheries. The texts of the two draft resolutions are a comprehensive compilation of the international community's major efforts in the areas of oceans and fisheries over the past year. They provide important guidance on furthering global ocean governance. I would like to thank the two facilitators and the United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for their efforts in the negotiations, development and finalization of the draft resolutions.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has pointed out that oceans provide the breeding ground for life, connect the world and promote development. The blue planet that humans inhabit is not divided into islands by the oceans, but is connected by the oceans to form a community with a shared future where people of all countries share in weal and woe. In that context, China underscores the following.

We must remain committed to multilateralism and actively promote global ocean governance. It is necessary to espouse the spirit of extensive consultations, joint contributions and mutual benefits to improve the internationalization of the oceans and seas and the ocean governance regime. The 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) should be interpreted and applied accurately and in good faith, and its integrity should be maintained. Matters not regulated by the Convention shall continue to be governed by the rules and principles of general international law.

We should broaden the avenues of development and actively implement sustainable development measures related to the oceans and the seas. It is necessary to maintain a balance between the protection and the sustainable use of the oceans and the seas to achieve an orderly exploitation and use of marine resources. We should develop the blue economy, promote maritime connectivity and practical cooperation in various areas and jointly build the twenty-first century maritime Silk Road.

We should join hands in meeting the new challenges and leave a legacy of unpolluted seas and skies for future generations. Joint efforts should be made to protect marine ecological civilization, further strengthen the prevention and control of marine environmental pollution, protect marine biodiversity and promote the conservation and restoration of marine ecosystems. We should work hand in hand to address challenges such as illegal fishing and marine pollution, and actively study and reach appropriate solutions to emerging oceans-related issues, including the impact of climate change on sea-level rise, marine litter and microplastics.

The Chinese Government has been responsibly and constructively participating in negotiations to establish an international legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) and the development of regulations for the exploitation of mineral resources in the Area. China believes that the BBNJ instrument should position itself appropriately in relation to the existing legal framework, strive for balance between conservation and sustainable use, take the interests and concerns of all parties into account and move forward decisively and gradually. The regulations should continue to adhere strictly to UNCLOS and its 1994 Implementation Agreement in letter and spirit, ensure a balance between the rights and obligations of both the International Seabed Authority and contractors, and take an integrated approach to such issues as the distribution of benefits derived from deep-sea mining activities.

China commends the efforts of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, the International Seabed Authority (ISA) and the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) in fulfilling their respective UNCLOS mandates. At the same time, we reaffirm our position that strict adherence to the principle of State consent is central to the work of the Tribunal, as is full respect for the rights of States parties to settle disputes

among themselves by any means of their own choice. The Authority should continue to resolutely develop regulations and effectively implement the principle of the common heritage of humankind. The CLCS should continue to act prudently when handling submissions concerning the outer limits of the extended continental shelf involving land and maritime disputes and perform its functions in strict accordance with UNCLOS and its own rules of procedure, in particular the rule that any submission that involves an unresolved dispute shall not be considered.

China is committed to strengthening international cooperation and promoting capacity-building in the area of the oceans and the seas. In October 2019, the Chinese Ministry of Natural Resources and the Authority signed in China a memorandum of understanding on the establishment of a joint training and research centre representing a positive contribution to deep-sea, scientific and technological capacity-building in developing countries and international cooperation in marine scientific research. In May 2020, the relevant Chinese agencies will host the seventh International Symposium on Scientific and Legal Aspects of the Regimes of the Continental Shelf and the Area. China will also contribute to the voluntary trust funds of the CLCS and ISA to support the participation of developing countries in their work.

China is committed to the sustainable development of fisheries and is actively participating in international fisheries governance. In that regard, I would like to share our positions and experiences.

First, we are guided by a policy that prioritizes aquaculture and strengthens green development. China is vigorously developing healthy and sustainable aquaculture by relying primarily on the latter pursuant to its policy. The yield from aquaculture in 2018 accounted for 77 per cent of China's total aquatic products and nearly 70 per cent of the world's total aquaculture output. At the same time, the Chinese Government is vigorously promoting ecologically sound aquaculture models, such as integrated rice and fish farming, engineering pond and recirculating aquaculture systems, integrated multitrophic aquaculture and industrial recirculating aquaculture systems, to promote the green development of aquaculture.

Secondly, we are promoting greater levels of conservation and restoration of living aquatic resources. The Chinese Government has launched a plan of

action on the conservation of living aquatic resources. It has carried out activities to protect aquatic life by consistently controlling the total number of propellers and power of fishing vessels and maintaining its 20-year summer moratorium on fishing. We have carried out large-scale stock enhancement and release activities, while building marine ranches, developing protection zones for aquatic life and stepping up the creation of a marine ecological culture.

Thirdly, we are steadfastly combating illegal fishing and regulating the development of pelagic fishing. We have a zero-tolerance policy vis-à-vis irregular fishing activities and investigate and punish such activities in accordance with the relevant laws. We have improved our black-list system for the fishing industry. China will continue to actively participate in international fisheries governance and the work of regional fisheries management organizations. Currently, China is carefully considering its accession to the Agreement on Port State Measures of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

The representative of Germany just mentioned the issue of the South China Sea in her statement, which China resolutely opposes. We would like once again to clarify our position. China's claims of sovereignty in the South China Sea and related marine rights and interests are consistent with relevant international law and international practices. China has always respected and supported the rights of countries to the freedom of navigation and overflight based on international law. Such freedoms have never been an issue before.

The handling *ultra vires* of the case of concerning the South China Sea by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) and the arbitration judgment awarded run counter to international law and had a serious negative impact on the international rule of law, as well as the integrity and authority of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. China's position on this issue has been clear and consistent — the Chinese Government does not accept or participate in the arbitration and will never recognize or accept the so-called ruling or accept any related claims or actions. We have only endeavoured to safeguard our own rights and interests according to international law, thereby safeguarding the integrity and authority of UNCLOS and the rule of law at the international level.

The Chinese position on the issue of the South China Sea has been consistent. We believe that the countries directly involved should, through negotiations and consultations on the basis of respect for historic facts and international law, properly solve the issues relating to terrestrial and maritime boundary delimitation. Currently, thanks to the efforts by China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the situation in the South China Sea has eased and consultations on a code of conduct for the South China Sea are making progress. China, together with members of ASEAN, will continue to implement the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea and promote consultations on the code of conduct, thereby complementing our efforts to maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea.

Building a maritime community with a shared future will require both persistent effort and a shared vision. As a key player in the field of international marine governance and a supporter of sustainable development and fair order in the oceans and seas, China will continue to work with other countries to advance ocean affairs globally in order to provide a joint response to related challenges and enhance the sustainable development of our oceans and seas.

Mrs. Al-Hefeiti (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased to participate in this important debate on oceans and the law of the Sea. I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his reports (A/74/70 and A/74/350) that address a number of important issues, such as the impact of climate change on the oceans and the importance of maritime security. I would like to touch briefly on my country's priorities in that regard, especially in relation to support for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

First, the impacts of climate change on the oceans are multifaceted. It is not just an issue of rising sea levels and the consequent changes in the terrestrial and maritime borders of coastal countries and islands, but it also exacerbates the problem of ocean acidification and its negative effects on marine ecosystems, especially given that current projections show that ocean acidity could increase by 150 per cent by the year 2050 as a result of increased carbon dioxide emissions. Therefore, my country believes that addressing these challenges lies not only in reducing greenhouse gas emissions but also in the use of renewable energy.

For example, the United Arab Emirates is working tirelessly to reduce the severity of climate change on the oceans through a range of measures that focus on reducing emissions and anthropogenic pollutants and enhancing the resilience and sustainability of the marine ecosystem. We have adopted a number of policies and strategies to that end, the most important of which being our national green growth strategy, which aims to transform the country's economy into a low-carbon green economy. We have also adopted an energy strategy through which the country aims to increase the proportion of clean energy to 50 per cent by the year 2050, as well as our national climate change plan for the period 2017 to 2050. The plan constitutes a comprehensive national framework for managing the causes of climate change and mitigating its impacts and is aimed at transforming the country into a green economy that is able to adapt to climate change and improve quality of life. We are also working to clean up marine areas that have already been affected by climatic phenomena by developing and cultivating strains of coral resistant to climate change. We are also expanding the cultivation of mangroves, in addition to protecting our salt marshes and sea-grass beds as part of the National Blue Carbon Project.

Secondly, proceeding from my country's belief in the importance of exchanging dialogue on innovation, financing and governance best practices for a sustainable blue economy, we hosted the World Ocean Summit in Abu Dhabi in March. We discussed the importance of increasing international support for the operation of marine protected areas in developing countries, which is fully in line with the concept of the blue economy. In order to ensure economic recovery and maintain the interests of local communities, we must enable women and men, as well as young people, to act as the defenders of protected areas. In that regard, we are pleased with the progress made in the development of the international instrument within the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Thirdly, environmental degradation of the oceans might undermine the security of maritime navigation. The United Nations must devote part of its efforts and resources at the local and international levels to ensuring the safety of the oceans, particularly in fragile societies, in order to prevent them from sliding into a state of insecurity. In that connection, we wish to

highlight the importance of international cooperation in addressing threats to maritime security, such as piracy and other crimes at sea. The United Arab Emirates has contributed positively to the fight against piracy by participating in the anti-piracy coalition and the Djibouti Code of Conduct and its amendments, having undertaken an active role in outlining plans and measures to help combat this scourge. My country has already convened six conferences in the United Arab Emirates with the aim of confronting maritime threats, including piracy.

Fourthly, any incident that threatens the safety and security of maritime navigation requires teamwork, cooperation and the exchange of information. When maritime security and navigation in the Arabian Gulf region came under threat this year due to attacks against four oil tankers in United Arab Emirates waters, we worked in close coordination with partners to address them, as such attacks pose a serious threat to international maritime navigation and global energy supplies.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates is honoured to hold the presidency of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for the period 2019 to 2021. We are keen and committed to listen to all participants during discussions and take note of all relevant reports in order to integrate them into the concrete work that that intergovernmental organization is doing, with the aim of promoting regional cooperation and sustainable development in the Indian Ocean. The organization is focusing on the areas of maritime security, trade and investment, women's economic empowerment and the blue economy. Furthermore, my country looks forward to its membership of the Council of the International Maritime Organization and to working in cooperation with member States to continue contributing to the development of international systems, laws and standards that will enhance global trade and international maritime transport in a safe, protected and sustainable manner in clean oceans and seas.

Mr. Fintakpa Lamega (Togo) (*spoke in French*): First of all, under sub-item (b) of agenda item 74, we have the honour to inform the Assembly that on 31 July, the Government of Togo adopted in the Council of Ministers the draft law authorizing my country's accession 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, adopted in New York on 4 August 1995. That decision thereby paved the way for completing the required internal formalities, which will enable Togo to become a party to the Agreement as soon as possible.

For my country, the promotion of the blue economy implies effectively combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and implementing a number of guiding principles to promote the sustainable management of fisheries resources and ensure responsible fishing.

Therefore, even before acceding to the aforementioned Agreement, we had already incorporated the provisions of that instrument into law on 11 October 2016, regulating fisheries and aquaculture in Togo, which stipulates the rules applicable to fishing and aquaculture in continental waters and maritime waters under its national jurisdiction, as well as those governing Togolese fishing vessels operating beyond Togolese maritime waters.

Turning to sub-item (a), entitled "Oceans and the law of the sea", we take note of the four substantive reports submitted to the Assembly by the Secretary-General, in accordance with the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), of 10 December 1982, and resolution 73/124, of 11 December 2018.

Togo sponsored draft resolution A/74/L.22 submitted by the delegation of Singapore and will vote in favour of its adoption. My delegation notes that, in paragraph 127 of the draft resolution, the Assembly reiterates its appreciation for the adoption, in Lomé on 15 October 2016, by the African Union Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government on Maritime Security and Safety and Development in Africa of the African Charter on Maritime Security and Safety and Development in Africa (Lomé Charter), and encourages African Member States of the United Nations that have not yet done so to consider ratifying this Charter to facilitate its entry into force.

As my country already ratified this instrument, on 16 January 2017, my delegation would like to support such encouragement by the General Assembly, which comes at a time when maritime piracy is now a major concern for the entire international community, especially since acts of piracy are increasingly being committed in all maritime areas and adversely affect,

to varying degrees, the interests of all States, including African countries, whether coastal or landlocked.

Since our last debate on this important item (see A/73/PV.49 and A/73/PV.50), Benin and Togo submitted to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, on 7 February, a joint request that the two coastal States had submitted to the Secretary-General on 21 September 2018, in accordance with part VI, article 76, paragraph 8 of UNCLOS. It is expected that the Commission will establish, from among its members, a subcommission to examine this joint request.

In addition, Togo is honoured to host the headquarters of the Maritime Cluster of Francophone Africa and to assume its presidency. Established on 20 March, the unit seeks to provide Francophone maritime actors with a forum for exchange and coordination to promote a responsible blue economy in the region that generates jobs and sustainable development opportunities. To date, it has brought together maritime professionals from 21 African countries.

The Assembly may also note that on 12 April, pursuant to part XV, section 2, article 287, paragraph 1 of UNCLOS, the Republic of Togo declared that it had chosen the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and the International Court of Justice for the settlement of disputes concerning its interpretation or application, without, however, establishing precedence between those two judicial bodies.

On the same date, my country declared that it does not accept any of the procedures provided for in part XV, section 2, with regard to the categories of disputes referred to in part XV, section 3, article 298, paragraphs 1 (b) and (c) of that Convention relating, respectively, to military activities and to disputes in respect of which the Security Council exercises its functions.

In addition, the Assembly recalls that, under the terms of paragraph 5 of the aforementioned resolution 73/124, it had requested States parties that had not yet done so to deposit their charts and lists of geographical coordinates with the Secretary-General.

In response to that call, on 5 November, and in accordance with the relevant provisions of part II, section 2, article 16, paragraph 2 and part V, article 75, paragraph 2 of the Convention, Togo deposited with the latter the official chart of the Togolese Republic as well as the lists of geographical coordinates relating thereto.

Before concluding, Togo notes the effective holding of three substantive sessions of the Intergovernmental Conference to develop an international legally binding instrument to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

My country actively participated in the sessions and intends to maintain its commitment during the fourth session, to be held from 23 March to 3 April 2020, in order to ensure, in the context of negotiations on the basis of the draft agreement prepared by the President of the Conference, that an ambitious instrument is adopted at the end of that important process.

Having taken part in the first Intergovernmental Conference in June 2017, Togo notes and welcomes the decision of the Assembly to organize in Lisbon, from 2 to 6 June 2020, the second United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 under the overall theme “Scaling up ocean action based on science and innovation for the implementation of Goal 14: stocktaking, partnerships and solutions”. We hope that the Conference will provide an opportunity for participants to find new ways to support the achievement of that Goal and to share experiences regarding its implementation at the national, regional and international levels.

For its part, Togo volunteered for the pilot phase of data and information collection on aspects of SDG indicator 14.c.1 by responding to the questionnaire submitted to it by the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs. We will continue our efforts for the implementation of this Goal and the Convention on the Law of the Sea, to which it has been a party since 16 April 1985.

With a view to ensuring its universal application, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to encourage Member States that have not yet done so to become parties to this important instrument, which the President of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea, Ambassador Tommy Koh, rightly described as the “Constitution of the Oceans” when it was adopted in Montego Bay, Jamaica, on 10 December 1982.

Mr. Blanchard (Canada): As we are reminded today, our oceans represent a vital resource for humankind that is essential to our collective well-being and survival on this planet. At the same time, our

oceans are facing huge global challenges that require coordinated action. By finding common ground and working together to implement effective solutions, we can ensure that our oceans will stay healthy, that our coastal communities will be resilient and that economic growth will be sustainable for generations to come.

Canada is pleased to note the momentum and diversity of ocean efforts that have taken place during the last year. Despite all the progress achieved, we cannot ignore the fact that much remains to be done. Building on the work of past years, efforts must intensify during the years ahead, with more attention and interest granted to our oceans. Canada is committed to continuing to be an active and collaborative partner in those efforts. Let me take this opportunity to speak briefly about some of the critical areas of work being advanced to address our oceans' challenges and highlight how Canada intends to play its part.

Here at United Nations Headquarters, we continue to work diligently towards finalizing 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 (BBNJ). The BBNJ is a perfect example of the international community's capacity to set aside its differences and work together to address a set of global challenges. Canada looks forward to continuing to make solid progress towards an agreement that effectively supports the objective of conservation and sustainable management of our oceans' resources, while taking advantage of, and coordinating with, the many actors and experts already active in the field.

Next year, in 2020, we will gather in Portugal for the second United Nations Ocean Conference to exchange on and explore how to scale up ocean action based on science and innovation for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14. Canada is eager to share its ongoing efforts, successes and challenges on ocean-related initiatives with a view to building on existing successful collaborations and to stimulating innovative and concrete new partnerships to advance the implementation of Goal 14. The Ocean Conference will also be a great opportunity to leverage the momentum built at the first global Sustainable Blue Economy Conference, co-hosted by Kenya, Japan and Canada, in Nairobi in 2018. That conference was all about innovative and concrete new partnerships. Approximately 19,000 people from more than 125 countries were in attendance, most of whom were

young entrepreneurs who wanted to develop their ocean-related initiatives in a sustainable way.

Canada is proud of its engagement in many oceans-related organizations and initiatives, including as a member of the High-level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy and as a convening country of the Global Commission on Adaptation. Canada has also co-developed the Ocean Risk and Resilience Action Alliance to advance innovative financial instruments to build coastal resilience in climate-vulnerable countries and will invest \$2.5 million to help launch the Alliance. Canada also announced \$2.7 million over the next four years for the Commonwealth Blue Charter action group on ocean observations, which champions ocean science to support the sustainable use of coastal and ocean resources in order to protect and preserve our world's oceans.

The findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's *Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate* are clear. The fundamental link between climate change and our oceans means that our efforts to counter the adverse effects of climate change are essential and must continue.

Moreover, while sea-level rise and the warming and acidification of our oceans affect us all, coastal communities, especially communities located in the Arctic and in small islands developing States, are the most vulnerable to those changes. That is why Canada is taking action to address the needs of those communities. Canada is working towards delivering on its \$2.65 billion climate finance commitment by 2020 and has already announced \$1.7 billion worth of initiatives to date. As part of its commitment, Canada is supporting Caribbean States and other small island States to address climate change by supporting ambitious mitigation action, reducing vulnerability and building resilience. For example, Canada is working with the world's biggest climate funds, including the Green Climate Fund and the Global Environment Facility, to support concrete and impactful actions on the ground. Canada is also proud to be working bilaterally with 32 small island developing States through the delivery of 57 different climate projects.

As we are speaking, the international community is gathered in Madrid, at the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement (COP25). Canada is pleased to note that COP25 is a "blue COP". To address

climate change, we need to highlight ocean issues and galvanize ocean-related climate action. Canada looks forward to engaging further with other ocean leaders, at COP25 and beyond, to build the required impetus for ocean efforts in those forums.

(spoke in French)

With the longest coastline in the world, Canada is well aware of the role healthy oceans play in supporting the livelihoods, food security and economic prosperity of Canadians and billions of people worldwide. As an ocean nation, in addition to our international efforts, Canada is also taking robust action at home.

In May, Canada presented its Arctic Ocean submission to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. We are also happy to announce that, this year again, Canada will contribute CAD \$100,000 to the United Nations trust fund to defray the participation costs for the developing country members of the Commission in 2020. We sincerely hope that contribution will prove instrumental in assisting the Commission to continue to carry out its outstanding work.

After redoubling our efforts, we are proud to note that Canada has surpassed its target under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to protect 10 per cent of its marine and coastal areas. To date, Canada has protected and conserved 13.8 per cent of its marine and coastal areas and is initiating marine spatial planning to help identify additional areas for protection alongside areas for sustainable use.

Finally, as a strong believer in the value of partnerships with a wide array of actors, Canada has pledged up to \$153 million in an ocean supercluster to enable the development of innovative practices and cutting-edge technologies. That initiative, among others, will also assist Canada to significantly contribute to the development of the knowledge-based ocean economy. In developing its leadership and expertise on oceans, Canada is looking to support other States to develop their own capacities. Building on its commitment on oceans made during its 2018 presidency of the Group of Seven, Canada is delivering \$262 million to developing countries to help build knowledge and resilience in the face of increasing ocean-related challenges, support nature-based solutions and address marine pollution.

Canada's commitment to the oceans is long-standing. In the 1970s and early 1980s, Canada was

heavily involved in the development of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Our commitment remains unwavering today as Canada continues to work both domestically and internationally to address our shared oceans challenges. We believe that dialogue, partnership and maintaining a rules-based maritime order based on international law are among our best tools to achieve positive outcomes for all. With that in mind, we stress the need for all States to commit to the peaceful management and settlement of disputes, without using the threat of force or coercion, in accordance with international law. Canada is confident that combining international cooperation and strong political will with scientific knowledge and innovative technologies can keep our oceans healthy and productive and ensure that they continue to be a reliable source of food, economic growth, employment and enjoyment for people the world over.

To deliver results, multilateralism must be more inclusive and innovative than ever. Silos must be broken — not simply because our challenges are common, but also because the potential solutions and gains are collective. To realize them, we need to work together.

Canada's candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the period 2021 to 2022 is fully aligned with that vision. We are gathered here to reflect upon the path we ought to pursue. We are determined to act now and to act together.

Mr. Fifield (Australia): Australia fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Vanuatu on behalf of the members of the Pacific Islands Forum.

We thank the facilitators from Singapore and Norway for their excellent work in facilitating the negotiations on the oceans and sustainable fisheries draft resolutions this year. Australia is pleased to co-sponsor draft resolutions A/74/L.21 and A/74/L.22. As a Pacific Islands Forum member and a significant coastal State, we have a strong interest in the General Assembly's deliberations on oceans issues.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is critically important for Australia. It provides an important legal framework governing Australia's management of its maritime zones. UNCLOS also provides a comprehensive legal framework governing States' interaction and cooperation in the oceans — from navigation to conservation.

Australia's support for UNCLOS reflects also our broader commitment to an international rules-based order as the basis for a stable and prosperous future. That remains as important today as it has ever been, including in the Indo-Pacific region. We are committed to the freedoms of navigation and overflight, which are critical for international trade and security. We value the legal architecture that gives all States a voice. And we believe strongly that all States have an obligation to resolve disputes peacefully, in accordance with international law.

That is particularly vital in the South China Sea. We do not take sides on competing territorial claims in the South China Sea, but we have a strong stake in its stability and the rules and norms that govern it. We urge all claimants to take meaningful steps to ease tensions and build trust, and cease actions that could undermine stability or lead to escalation.

We welcome also the General Assembly's continued affirmation that UNCLOS provides the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. UNCLOS is the constitution for the oceans. It is of fundamental importance as the basis for national, regional and global action and cooperation on oceans matters.

Australia is pleased that this year's sustainable fisheries draft resolution includes even stronger language on stateless vessels. Fishing by such vessels is, by definition, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. We welcome that the Assembly has called on States to take action to prevent such vessels from fishing, including by enacting domestic enforcement legislation and prohibiting trans-shipment.

We also commend the close attention the Assembly continues to give to the issue of sea-level rise, which will affect many States globally. The Pacific, however, is home to the majority of the world's low-lying atoll States and States dependent on coral islands and cays. That region will be particularly vulnerable. We are pleased that the International Law Commission is actively considering the legal aspects of this important subject.

We recognize that a key purpose of UNCLOS is to provide a stable, predictable and durable maritime order in which the interests of all States are balanced. We look forward to engaging with the International Law Commission as it undertakes that work.

Ms. Rodríguez Abascal (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba attaches fundamental importance to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea for the maintenance and strengthening of peace, order and sustainable development in the oceans and seas. The Convention is a critical milestone in the codification of international law and has been ratified by an overwhelming majority of States. It establishes the appropriate and universally recognized legal framework that governs all activities relating to oceans and seas. It is important to preserve the integrity of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the implementation of its provisions as a whole. Oceans and the law of the sea affairs should be monitored by the General Assembly so as to ensure greater coherence in the conduct of such matters for the benefit of all Member States.

Cuba stresses the important role of the United Nations in continuing to spur joint action to mitigate the environmental, social and economic effects of climate change on the oceans in order to address the vulnerabilities of developing countries, especially the least developed countries, small island developing States and low-lying coastal countries. The effects of climate change on the oceans pose a significant risk to their economies, biodiversity, food security and human health. In that regard, it is imperative to continue to enhance cooperation and coordination to mitigate those effects, for the benefit of humankind, the oceans and the Earth. To that end, it is essential that developed countries honour their commitments to provide official development assistance to developing countries, especially the least developed countries and small island developing States, and that they transfer technologies to them and contribute to building their capacities.

The two draft resolutions to be adopted today — the omnibus draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea (A/74/L.22) and the draft resolution on sustainable fisheries (A/74/L.21) — are the result of long and intense negotiations. We are grateful to the delegations that demonstrated flexibility and a desire to promote the objectives of the texts. We are also grateful to their respective 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. Both texts provide important steps to strengthen the implementation of existing ocean instruments at the global and regional levels.

Cuba has been making great efforts to implement national strategies for the sustainable development and protection of the marine environment in order to achieve a consistent, progressive and effective implementation of the provisions of the Convention. That is exemplified in the Constitution adopted by the Cuban people in a referendum on 24 February 2019, which establishes the rights and duties of the State and its citizens with regard to the protection of the environment, including the marine environment, and the fight against climate change.

The Cuban State has in place robust institutions and national legislation in the area of the law of the sea and takes all the measures it can to successfully tackle crimes at sea, such as the illicit trafficking in narcotics and psychotropic substances, illegal human trafficking and piracy.

Cuba reiterates the importance of strengthening international cooperation in managing marine resources and caring for the oceans and their biodiversity, in accordance with the principles of international law, while respecting the sovereignty of States over their territorial waters and their right to the resources found in their exclusive economic zones and continental shelves.

We strongly support the meritorious work of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf and urge all Member States to lend their support so that the work of the Commission has all the resources it needs. We must recognize the heavy workload of the Commissioners and their willingness to consider each case thoroughly and expeditiously. That is why it is important for the Commission to be able to carry out its work quickly and effectively, while complying with the legal requirements established for that purpose.

Preserving marine biodiversity resources is of vital importance for future generations. The regime governing the use of those resources will have a direct impact on many developing countries, most of them

small island States. Cuba supports efforts to develop an implementing agreement on marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. We urge all members of the international community to work together at the fourth session of the intergovernmental conference, so that we can arrive at concrete results that will lead to the conclusion of a binding international instrument on the issue.

The continuous rise in sea level and the increasingly adverse effects of climate change resulting from humankind's predatory action against nature threaten the territorial integrity of many States, some of which are destined to disappear unless immediate action is taken. The interconnection of ocean systems and their close relationship with the tragic climate change facing humankind compels us to urgently comply with the commitments made in both areas. Cuba reiterates its commitment to protect the environment and respect the law of the sea.

We welcome the timely decision of the International Law Commission to include the issue of sea-level rise in its long-term programme of work in order to study the legal consequences of the phenomenon on baselines, which in turn influence the outer limits of maritime zones and maritime borders that extend from those baselines, as well as the legal effects on sovereign rights in those maritime zones of national jurisdiction, among other important issues.

Before we conclude, we wish to thank the United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for its painstaking work in promoting the law of the sea and ocean affairs.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 74 and its sub-items (a) and (b) for this meeting. We shall continue the debate this afternoon at 3 p.m. here in the Hall.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.