



**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF LEGAL AFFAIRS**

**United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process
on Oceans and the Law of the Sea**

Opening statement

By

Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares
Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs
The United Nations Legal Counsel

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Conference Room 1

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Secretary-General, I have the pleasure of welcoming you to the sixteenth meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea. As you are aware, in its resolution 69/245 of 29 December 2014, the General Assembly renewed the mandate of the Informal Consultative Process for another two years. It also decided that this year's meeting would focus on "Oceans and sustainable development: integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, namely, environmental, social and economic". This topic is particularly timely, given the on-going discussions on the post-2015 development agenda.

At the outset, I wish to congratulate Ambassador Meza-Cuadra of Peru on his appointment as Co-Chair and Ambassador MacKay of New Zealand on his re-appointment as Co-Chair of the Informal Consultative Process. I am confident that their experience and leadership will steer this important meeting towards a productive conclusion.

Sustainable development is at the core of the Informal Consultative Process, which was established following decision 7/1 of the then Commission on Sustainable Development and General Assembly resolution 54/33. Over the past fifteen years, the Informal Consultative Process has served as an inclusive forum for discussions by a broad range of stakeholders on timely and important ocean issues from the perspective of the three pillars of sustainable development. As specifically mandated by the relevant General Assembly resolutions, the Process has also facilitated the annual review by the General Assembly, in an effective and constructive manner, of developments in ocean affairs and the law of the sea. I am hopeful that this year's meeting will continue in this successful tradition.

Distinguished delegates,

The advance and unedited reporting material on the topic of focus of the sixteenth meeting of the Informal Consultative Process outlines the contribution of oceans to the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainable development. This includes the manner in which the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea addresses these dimensions. It also presents information on how various conferences and summits on sustainable development have addressed the issue of integration. Most recently in "The future we want", States stressed the importance of the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and seas and of their resources for sustainable development.

The reporting material further highlights some challenges and opportunities in enhancing the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development in relation to oceans. A focus is placed on some of the main sectors and ocean uses, including shipping, exploitation of marine living and non-living resources, laying of submarine cables and pipelines, tourism and conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity. Climate change and ocean acidification are also addressed, as well as the special challenges facing the most vulnerable countries and vulnerable groups. In recognition of the importance of an enabling framework for the

enhanced integration of the three dimensions in relation to oceans, the following building-blocks are also highlighted in the reporting material:

- legal framework,
- integration at the policy, planning and management levels,
- marine science,
- infrastructure, including technology transfer,
- capacity-building and resource mobilization,
- cooperation and coordination, and
- systems for measuring progress in the integration of environmental, economic and social dimensions.

Distinguished delegates,

Fundamental to sustainable development are strong inter-linkages between its three dimensions. The effective functioning of each individual dimension depends on the effective functioning of the other two. In that regard, it can be noted that at the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), States acknowledged that, since 1992, there have been areas of insufficient progress and setbacks in the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development. These have been aggravated by multiple financial, economic, food and energy crises, which have threatened the ability of all countries, in particular developing countries, to achieve sustainable development.

They also acknowledged the need to further mainstream sustainable development at all levels, integrating economic, social and environmental aspects and recognizing their interlinkages, so as to achieve sustainable development in all its dimensions.

Sustainable development requires integrated approaches that ensure sustained and inclusive economic growth, social development and environmental protection – the so-called “triple wins”. This is also true for the oceans, bearing in mind the importance of the oceans and seas for the functioning of the Earth’s ecosystem, for providing vital resources for food security and for economic prosperity and the well-being of present and future generations. Indeed, as you may recall, the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda emphasized that oceans and seas should not be forgotten in the post-2015 development agenda.

However, there are a number of persistent challenges facing our oceans and the people whose livelihood depends thereon. These challenges demonstrate that we have to enhance our efforts to achieve an effective and balanced integration of the environmental, economic and social dimensions. It is clear that sustainable development is our shared responsibility.

As the Secretary-General has highlighted in his synthesis report on the post-2015 development agenda, a transformational approach accompanied by the mobilization of the necessary resources is essential in order to promote a balanced integration that promotes sustained and inclusive economic growth, social development and environmental protection – a balanced integration that thereby benefits all.

In addition to the necessary financing, developing an appropriate enabling framework is also critical. This includes:

- developing a supporting policy framework;
- implementing legal instruments;
- establishing the supporting institutional mechanisms for cross-sectoral cooperation and coordination;
- promoting technology development and transfer, as well as science to support sound decision-making;
- developing suitable indicators to measure progress in integration; and
- investing in capacity-building, including with a view to adapting to vulnerabilities to various global risks.

The presentations and discussions this week will likely delve into some of these aspects in greater detail from the global, regional and national perspectives.

At this juncture, I wish to highlight the opportunity that the effective implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea provides for addressing the closely interrelated problems of ocean space as a whole. The Convention constitutes an important instrument for achieving the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development. In that regard, stepping up efforts to develop the capacity to effectively implement the Convention, its implementing Agreements and other relevant instruments will be an essential building-block of successful integration.

I wish to emphasize that oceans and their resources play a critical role in the context of the Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015 development

agenda. Oceans and ocean activities, such as shipping, conservation and sustainable use of marine living resources and sustainable exploitation of non-living resources, contribute directly to the three dimensions of sustainable development.

They can also make a positive contribution to poverty alleviation, food security and nutrition, health, gender equality and empowerment of women, energy availability and sustainability, addressing climate change and its impacts, and infrastructure development and innovation, amongst others.

Therefore, your deliberations during this week are timely and important for achieving our common goal of effective integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development in relation to oceans. Allow me to convey my best wishes for informative and productive discussions this week.

Thank you.