



**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF LEGAL AFFAIRS**

**General Assembly Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group to
study issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine
biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction**

Opening Remarks

by

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

16 June 2014, 10:00am
(Conference Room 1)

Distinguished Co-Chair,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, I have the pleasure of welcoming you to this meeting of the Working Group, convened pursuant to General Assembly resolution 68/70 of 9 December 2013.

It is also a pleasure and an honour to share the podium, once again, with Ms. Lisbeth Lijnzaad of the Netherlands, who – with Ambassador Kohona - has consistently led this Working Group to successful outcomes.

You will recall that this meeting of the Working Group is the second meeting within the process established by the General Assembly to prepare for the action set out in the outcome document of the Rio+20 Conference, entitled “The future we want”. In that regard, you will also recall that States committed “to address, on an urgent basis, building on the work of the Working Group and before the end of the sixty-ninth session of the Assembly, the issue of the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, including by taking a decision on the development of an international instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.”

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Responding to this sense of urgency, the General Assembly requested the Working Group, within its mandate established by resolution 66/231 and in the light of resolution 67/78, and in order to prepare for the decision to be taken at the sixty-ninth session of the Assembly, to make recommendations to the Assembly on the scope, parameters and feasibility of an international instrument under the Convention.

At this meeting, you will have the opportunity to discuss further the ways in which the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction can effectively address these issues. In that regard, your discussions at the meeting of the Working Group in April benefitted from the input of a wide range of participants. That meeting provided a very valuable opportunity to identify areas of convergence and to determine where further clarifications might be needed. I am told that that meeting of the Working Group was generally recognized as one of its most successful meetings to date. I congratulate you on this achievement.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year is filled with ocean-related events and celebrations. In particular, last week, during the twenty-fourth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention, we celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention. Ocean issues have also featured prominently in the discussions in the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. In September, the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States will provide an opportunity to showcase the role of oceans in the sustainable development of some of the most vulnerable nations.

I invite you to continue carrying forward this year's momentum. I also encourage you to crystalize the areas of convergence into tangible outcomes that will enable the General Assembly to fulfil the objective of addressing, on an urgent basis and before the end of its sixty-ninth session, the issue of the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.

I am conscious that the task in front of you will not be easy. I am aware that a number of differences are still to be transformed into common understandings. I am confident that your perseverance and the common objective of ensuring healthy and productive oceans for both present and future generations will prevail.

I wish you every success in fulfilling the challenging mandate with which you have been entrusted and I assure you of the continued full support of my Office.

Thank you.