

**World Oceans Day
8 June 2012**

**Roundtable Panel Discussion on the theme
"UNCLOS at 30"
(Conference Room 1, NLB 2.30-4 p.m.)**

**Opening remarks by Ms. Patricia O'Brien,
Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs,
The Legal Counsel**

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you to this roundtable panel discussion convened to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on World Oceans Day.

The Secretary-General will make some remarks on this very important day.

Secretary-General, you have the floor.

[Secretary-General's remarks]

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to thank the Secretary-General, for his remarks.

As you all know, in 2008, the General Assembly, by resolution 63/111, decided that, as from 2009, the United Nations would designate 8 June as “World Oceans Day”. With this designation, the United Nations joined many countries and civil society in celebrating World Oceans Day annually.

Oceans play a key role in our lives. They offer opportunities because of their role in food security, sustainable development and scientific progress. They also present a number of difficult challenges. These range from depleted fishery resources, the impacts of climate change and the deterioration of the marine environment. And they include issues of maritime safety and security, labour conditions for seafarers and the increasingly important issue of migration by sea.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea provides a flexible and evolving framework for adapting to new challenges. This complex and flexible architecture provides for sustainable development of the oceans and seas as well as the strengthening of international peace and security, and includes the equitable and efficient utilization of ocean resources, and the protection and preservation of the marine environment.

As the Secretary-General mentioned in his message today, UNCLOS acts as the current global legal framework. It is also our major source of inspiration in the path towards ensuring the sustainable development of oceans and seas.

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The official designation of World Oceans Day by the United Nations is an opportunity to raise global awareness of the current opportunities and

challenges faced by the international community in sustainable ocean management and governance. Particularly this year at the forthcoming Rio + 20 Conference on Sustainable Development, where oceans and coasts will be at the center of the discussions.

I now wish to give the floor to Dr. Sasakawa, Chairperson of The Nippon Foundation of Japan.

Dr. Sasakawa, you have the floor.

[Dr. Sasakawa's statement]

I thank Dr. Sasakawa for his statement and for his continuing support for our capacity-building activities, especially through the United Nations-Nippon Fellowship Programme.

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Panel Discussion is an occasion for us to address a broad range of issues.

I am pleased to note that, this year the Panel will be moderated by H. E. Ambassador Wolfe of Jamaica.

Ambassador Wolfe will be joined by three eminent figures in the field of ocean affairs and the law of the sea. I wish to acknowledge H.E. Mr. Shunji Yanai, H.E. Mr. Nii Odunton, and Mr. Galo Carrera. The panellists will be introduced by Ambassador Wolfe shortly.

Before concluding, I should mention that the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs has organized, in cooperation with the Empire State Building, the lighting of the Building tonight to mark the occasion of World Oceans Day 2012 in the colours white, blue and purple.

Thank you for joining us today. I wish the Panel a thought-provoking discussion.

Before handing to Ambassador Wolfe, I would like to present the Secretary-General with a commemorative mug, poster and pin to celebrate this auspicious occasion.