



**Twenty-eighth Meeting of States Parties
to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea,**

Opening remarks

By

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Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a privilege to join you on the occasion of the opening of the twenty-eighth Meeting of States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

It gives me great pleasure to congratulate you, Ambassador Jürgenson, on your election as President of the twenty-eighth Meeting of States Parties. Allow me, on behalf of the Secretary-General, to convey to you and to participating delegations best wishes for fruitful and productive deliberations.

Let me join you, Mr. President, in welcoming to this Meeting Mr. Jin-Hyan Paik, President of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea; Mr. Philippe Gautier, Registrar of the Tribunal; Mr. Michael Lodge, Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority; and Mr. Yong Ahn Park, Chairperson of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, who will provide this Meeting with information about their important work and activities since June 2017.

Distinguished delegates,

The Convention, as the ‘constitution for the oceans’, plays a vital role in strengthening international peace and security and ensuring sustainable development of the oceans and seas.

Thus, the goal of universal participation in the Convention and its effective implementation is of enduring importance. The number of parties to the Convention



now stands at 168, including the European Union. There are also currently 150 parties to the Agreement relating to the implementation of Part XI of the Convention. As you know, this Agreement forms an inseparable package with the Convention and I would like to recall in this regard that the General Assembly has called on all States Parties to the Convention that have not yet expressed their consent to be bound by this Agreement, to consider doing so as soon as possible.

I am also pleased to note the increased participation of Member States in the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the Convention relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, also known as the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement. Allow me, Mr. President, to welcome the recent accessions of Benin and Saint Kitts and Nevis and the ratification by Vanuatu, which brings the total number of parties to the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement to 89.

States Parties will know that, as a framework instrument, the Convention provides for the further development of specific areas of the law of the sea. The Convention and its Implementing Agreements, along with other instruments developed by other international bodies, thus provides the comprehensive international law regime applicable to the oceans.

A significant development in this regard has been the convening by the General Assembly of an Intergovernmental Conference, under the auspices of the United Nations, to consider the recommendations of the Preparatory Committee established by General Assembly in resolution 69/292, of 19 June 2015, on the elements and to elaborate the text of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, with a view to developing the instrument as soon as possible.

I commend the ongoing efforts of Member States participating in these proceedings. It is the first time in more than 20 years, since the adoption of the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement in 1995, that a conference was convened to negotiate a legally binding international instrument under the Convention.

I am pleased to note that the first substantive session of the Intergovernmental Conference will be convened from 4 to 17 September 2018, and I convey my best wishes for a productive first session.

The continuing significance of the Convention in providing the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out cannot be understated. As you are aware, target 14c of Sustainable Development Goal 14 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development specifically calls for the enhancement of the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in the Convention. It specifically recognizes that the Convention provides the legal framework for the conservation



and sustainable use of oceans and their resources, as recalled in paragraph 158 of “The Future We Want”.

The Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea is currently assisting me as Focal Point for UN-Oceans in coordinating the development by UN-Oceans of a methodology for the indicator for target 14c.

Distinguished delegates,

Let me also take this opportunity to recall that the Office of Legal Affairs, through its Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, provides services to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. Following the election of the members of the Commission at the twenty-seventh Meeting of States Parties in June 2017, the Commission held three productive sessions.

There are some continuing challenges, however, including the significant workload of the Commission, as recognized in previous Meetings of States Parties as well as by the General Assembly. In this regard, I wish to emphasize the need to fill the remaining seat in the Commission, which is allocated to the Group of Eastern European States. The effective functioning of the Commission depends on the full membership in the Commission and on the full attendance of its members at the sessions. I would recall in this regard that, in accordance with article 2, paragraph 3, of annex II to the Convention, not less than three members of the Commission shall be elected from each geographical region. The critical importance of ensuring full membership, full participation and equitable geographical representation in the Commission cannot be overemphasized.

I wish to encourage States Parties concerned to devote to this matter the attention that it deserves and to ensure that soon the Commission will return to operate with 21 members.

I would also like to raise another matter of continuing concern, notably the need for medical and dental insurance coverage for members of the Commission while fulfilling their duties at Headquarters.

In keeping with the decision taken at the twenty-seventh Meeting of States Parties, the Secretariat circulated a questionnaire among the members of the Commission to assess the working conditions of the Commission in its present composition with a view to identifying appropriate solutions to pending issues. These findings were reviewed by the Commission and the Chair of the Commission shared them with States Parties in advance of this Meeting with a view to facilitating deliberations in the context of the Working Group on the conditions of service of the members of the Commission.



In light of the importance of the work of the Commission for coastal States and for the international community, I encourage States Parties to remain engaged in discussions with respect to these issues with a view to finding practical solutions.

Distinguished delegates,

I wish to assure the continuous commitment of the Division, and the Office of Legal Affairs as a whole, in providing high quality services to States Parties to the Convention, to this Meeting, and the Commission, as well as in continuing fruitful cooperation and coordination with the Tribunal and the Authority.

I trust that in the busy months ahead, the States will continue to advance the goals of the Convention, including the peaceful uses of the oceans, equitable and efficient utilization of their resources, conservation of their living resources, and the study, protection and preservation of the marine environment.

Mr. President, in concluding, allow me to express my best wishes to you and to delegations present for fruitful deliberations and a successful outcome for this Meeting of States Parties.

Thank you very much.