



**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF LEGAL AFFAIRS**

General Assembly Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole

Opening Remarks

by

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The Legal Counsel

Conference Room 2, Conference Building
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Co-Chairpersons,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

Good morning. On behalf of the Secretary-General, it is my pleasure to welcome you to UN Headquarters for the fifth meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole. I am particularly pleased to be here with you today as this is the first time I have the opportunity to address this meeting since my appointment as United Nations Legal Counsel.

The Working Group has an important role in assisting the General Assembly in guiding the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects.

At the outset, I wish to congratulate Ms. Fernanda Millicay of Argentina and Mr. João Madureira of Portugal on their appointment by the President of the General Assembly as Co-Chairs. I am confident that their experience and leadership will contribute to the success of this very important meeting. At the same time, I wish to thank the former Co-Chair, Mr. Camillo Gonsalves, former Ambassador of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, as well as Mr. Madureira, for their leadership in the last meeting of the Working Group. I also wish to thank both current Co-Chairs for steering the work of the intersessional Bureau, as well as all the members of the Bureau for their invaluable contribution to the advancement of the Regular Process since the last meeting of the Working Group.

Distinguished delegates,

In its resolution 68/70 of 9 December 2013, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole at its fourth meeting in April last year. The General Assembly emphasized that the second phase of the first cycle of the Regular Process has begun, and that the deadline for the first global integrated marine assessment is this year, 2014. This is the last meeting of the Working Group before this deadline. At its next meeting in 2015, the Working Group is expected to consider the first global integrated marine assessment.

It is therefore of utmost importance for this meeting of the Working Group to ensure that the second phase of the first cycle of the Regular Process continues to move forward during this critical period and culminates in the preparation of the first global integrated marine assessment.

Clearly, this task cannot be achieved without the commitment, professionalism and good will of the members of the Group of Experts. In that regard, I am very pleased to note the presence of the Joint Coordinators of the Group of Experts, Mr. Alan Simcock and Ms. Lorna Inniss. I would like to thank them for being here today and for their guidance and substantial contributions to the Regular Process. I would also like to wholeheartedly thank all members of the Group of Experts for their dedication and significant contribution to the Process.

Furthermore, I also wish to acknowledge the contribution of those experts from the pool of experts who are actively contributing to the preparation of the first global integrated marine assessment. Clearly, the legitimacy, relevance and credibility of the Regular Process will ultimately depend on the involvement of a sufficient number of scientists and experts from relevant disciplines from around the globe. To date, the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, as the secretariat of the Regular Process, has received the appointments of around 500 individual experts. The Group of Experts is still in the process of finding additional experts needed for the various chapters in the assessment. Member States are thus urged, once again, to appoint individuals with the appropriate expertise, in particular where the need for experts has already been identified by the Group of Experts. Experts are needed not only for this first assessment but also for future assessments. We are only in the first cycle of the Regular Process.

Distinguished delegates,

Also critical to the preparation of the first global integrated marine assessment, is the information that has been gathered during the Workshops in support of the Regular Process. These Workshops have facilitated dialogue among members of the Group of Experts and representatives and experts from States and relevant intergovernmental organizations in the regions. They have proven to be a great source of information with respect to the assessments already undertaken and the availability of capacity-building at the national and regional levels. The Workshops are also a key mechanism by which States can enhance their assessment capacity.

A number of Workshops have been held to date in support of the Regular Process and I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Governments of Côte d'Ivoire and India for their recent hosting of

Workshops in Grand Bassam and Chennai, respectively. I would also like to acknowledge, in this context and more generally, the significant scientific, technical and financial assistance to the Regular Process provided by the United Nations Environment Programme, the International Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO and other relevant intergovernmental organizations.

Distinguished delegates,

The activities under the Regular Process cannot be carried out without predictable and sustainable financing of its operations.

I note that the source of funding for the summary of the first global integrated marine assessment is an item on the agenda of this meeting of the Working Group. It will be critical to ensure that funding is secured for the preparation of the summary of the report.

While on the subject of funding, there is also an immediate need for funds to support the meetings of the Group of Experts planned for this year. As you know, the Trust Fund provides financial assistance to members of the Group of Experts from developing countries who may otherwise be unable to attend meetings.

The current balance in the Voluntary Trust Fund is approximately \$46,000. That amount is estimated to suffice to cover the participation of 14 members of the Group of Experts from developing countries for one four-day meeting in New York.

In this regard, I wish to acknowledge with appreciation the most recent financial contributions received by the Trust Fund from China and the Republic of Korea.

Distinguished delegates,

I would like to urge States which are in a position to do so to make contributions to the Regular Process Trust Fund. Even relatively small contributions, if made by a large number of States, will help toward effective support of the activities of the Regular Process.

To offer a comparison, I can mention that when States adopted the initial work programme for the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, and associated budget, at the second plenary session in December 2013, they pledged \$4.5 million - more than a quarter, of the required funds for the budget for 2014-2015, as well as in-kind contributions. A further \$4.2 million has been pledged for the period 2016-2018.

The activities of the Regular Process are currently being carried out at a fraction of such a budget. However, it will be difficult to complete the draft first global integrated marine assessment without adequate support.

Distinguished delegates,

We cannot emphasize enough how oceans are essential to the long-term survival and prosperity of humankind. Ensuring their health and capacity to support life on earth is critical.

Assessing the state of the marine environment and related socioeconomic aspects in a global and integrated manner is needed if we are to take decisions to preserve the health and productivity of our oceans. As you embark on your important discussions, I would like to wish you a very successful meeting. As always, the Secretariat is committed to providing the meeting with its full assistance and support.

Thank you.