



**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF LEGAL
AFFAIRS**

**20th anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention and
World Oceans Day 2014
Reception**

Opening Remarks

by

Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares

Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs
and United Nations Legal Counsel

9 June 2014, 6:15 pm

Dag Hammarskjöld Library Penthouse

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to be with you here tonight at this commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the entry into force of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the sixth commemoration of World Oceans Day.

It is my hope that this commemoration helps us reflect on the importance of the Convention in international affairs. The Convention has proven to be one of the most successful international legal instruments ever negotiated at the United Nations. As stated by the Secretary-General this afternoon, during the past

twenty years the Convention has truly reaffirmed itself as the Constitution for our oceans.

We are fortunate to have among us some of the personalities that participated in the elaboration of the Convention. Among them, I recognize Ambassador Satya N. Nandan, Judge Helmut Türk, and others.

I also recognize among us the representatives of the bodies established by the Convention, in particular: Judge Shunji Yanai, President of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea; His Excellency, Nii Odunton, Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority; and the newly appointed President of the Meeting of States Parties, His Excellency, Jeremiah Nyamane Kingsley Mamabolo.

Also to be highlighted is the important role played by the United Nations system in the field of oceans and seas. On the occasion of this anniversary, I wish to specifically acknowledge the present and former staff of the Organization who, throughout the years, has tirelessly served Member States in all matters related to the Convention. Thank you for your dedication.

This commemoration also provides an excellent occasion to highlight the important role of the present generation of delegates gathered here in implementing the Convention.

In addition to the twentieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention, we are also celebrating this evening World Oceans Day. It takes place every year on 8 June and provides an important opportunity to raise awareness about the oceans among the public.

I am pleased to note that among the activities to mark this year's World Oceans Day, the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) is launching today an electronic publication entitled "How oceans- and seas-related measures contribute to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: Local and regional experiences". The Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea has contributed case studies prepared by some Alumni of the United Nations – The Nippon Foundation Fellowship Programme to this publication.

On that note, I would like to invite Mr. Nikhil Seth, Director of the Division for Sustainable Development, of DESA, to briefly speak about the electronic publication.

To celebrate World Oceans Day, this year the United Nations in collaboration with a number of partners has also launched the Annual World Oceans Day Photo Competition. This open and free photo competition seeks to inspire the creation and dissemination of positive images and messages that convey the beauty and importance of the ocean and humankind's relation to it.

I am pleased to present to you the winning images of the competition, which were selected from a pool of approximately 600 entries by a panel of 5 judges from around the world. The winning images under each of the 6 categories are as follows – kindly direct your attention to the screen:

- Above Water Seascapes
- Human Interaction
- Underwater Life
- Underwater Seascapes
- Youth Photographer and

- World Ocean Day Theme Category winner

I congratulate the winners and thank all entrants, as well as the judges and partners.

We are also pleased to announce that the winners and finalists of this competition will be exhibited throughout the world over the next 12 months. The inaugural exhibit will take place in October in Marseilles, France, on the occasion of the 41 annual World Festival of Underwater Images; and with the generous support of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the World Ocean Day Theme Category winner will be invited to the launch of this series.

In closing, I would like to reiterate my gratitude to our guests tonight who have played critical roles in developing the Convention over several decades. Last, but not least, I wish to express our deepest gratitude for the generous contributions which made this reception possible.

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I leave you now with a brief performance by the Quartet of the United Nations Orchestra who will accompany a slide show of all finalists of the First World Oceans Day Photo Competition.

Thank you all for coming here and for participating in this commemoration.