



**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF LEGAL AFFAIRS**

**Resumed Review Conference on the Agreement for the Implementation
of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the
Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management
of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks**

Address

by

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

**United Nations Headquarters
New York, 23 May 2016**

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Secretary-General, I have the honour to address the resumed Review Conference on the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (the Agreement). I also wish to congratulate Mr. Hazin on his election as the President of the Review Conference.

As we all know, the Agreement established a comprehensive legal regime for the long-term conservation and sustainable use of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks through the implementation of the relevant provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Now, after more than twenty years since the opening for signature of the Agreement, participation in the Agreement is regarded as an important way for countries to commit themselves to responsible fisheries. I am pleased to note that, since the resumed Review Conference was convened in 2010, six



more States have become parties to the Agreement, bringing the total number of States Parties to 83, including the European Union. However, I would like to echo the call of the General Assembly on all States to become parties to the Agreement, in order to achieve the goal of universal participation.

Distinguished delegates,

Fisheries continue to provide many wide-ranging benefits, and are critically important to food security, economic prosperity, poverty alleviation, livelihoods and the sustainable development of many States, particularly developing States, including small island developing States.

However, as described in the report of the Secretary-General to the resumed Review Conference, the overall status of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks has not improved since 2006 and 2010. The status of a significant number of stocks has deteriorated although it has improved for a smaller number of stocks. The First Global Integrated Marine Assessment makes clear that, as a result of cumulative impacts of major pressures on the world's ocean, notably overfishing, the limits of its carrying capacity are being or, in some cases, have been reached. Furthermore, fish stocks are expected to face increased pressures in the near future, including from factors such as climate change, ocean acidification, marine pollution, as well as continued overfishing.

In that regard, I wish to recall that the restoration of fish stocks to levels that can produce the maximum sustainable yield was included as a key objective in the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and reiterated in "The future we want", the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012.

In addition, last year, the international community, in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular in Goal 14 agreed on a number of important targets which relate to fisheries. Other Goals and targets, such as those related to achieving food security, are also relevant to fisheries.

Distinguished delegates,



It is clear that, now more than ever, effective measures through the cooperation of States to enhance conservation and sustainable use of living marine resources are required, in order for the international community to continue benefitting from such resources.

Effective conservation and management measures and other actions to fully implement the Agreement and the recommendations of the Review Conference are key to the achievement of Goal 14 and other ocean-related Goals of the 2030 Agenda, as well as the other commitments made.

This resumed Review Conference is therefore particularly important and timely.

As you will recall, the Conference has the important mandate to review and assess the adequacy of the provisions of the Agreement and, if necessary, propose means of strengthening the substance and methods of implementation of those provisions. The recommendations adopted in 2006 and 2010 had a considerable impact on the practice of States and regional fisheries management organizations, and provided the impetus for many international efforts. Many of the 2006 and 2010 recommendations were also endorsed by the General Assembly and included in its annual resolution on sustainable fisheries.

Subsequently, a number of follow-up actions have been taken by States and regional fisheries management organizations. In this regard, I am pleased to note that the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing, negotiations for which were initiated as a follow-up to the recommendations of the Review Conference in 2006, will enter into force on 5 June 2016.

Distinguished delegates,

The report of the Secretary General highlights the actions that are being undertaken by States and regional fisheries management organizations to improve the status of the fish stocks, in line with the recommendations of the Review Conference.

The Secretary-General in his report notes that the overall level of implementation of the Agreement and the recommendations of the Review Conference has improved, albeit unevenly. The implementation of some



recommendations has progressed more swiftly than others, and some States and regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements have proceeded more expeditiously than others. I urge the resumed Review Conference to address these implementation gaps.

In that regard, I would like to underscore the critical importance of the enhanced and consistent support for the Assistance Fund established under Part VII of the Agreement. The Assistance Fund is a key tool to facilitate the implementation of the Agreement by developing States Parties to it.

Contributing to the Assistance Fund is therefore one way in which States Parties to the Agreement can give effect to the duty to cooperate with developing States in the implementation of the Agreement, as set out in Part VII, as well as promote increased participation in the Agreement. Echoing the call by the General Assembly, I would therefore invite States to make contributions so that the Fund can continue to play its important role in assisting developing States parties.

Distinguished delegates,

This is a pivotal time for the future health of the world's fishery resources and the ecosystems of which they form an integral part. Under the experienced and able stewardship of the new President of the Review Conference you have just elected, you have an opportunity to advance on issues that are of great concern to us all. Please accept my best wishes for a productive meeting.