



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF LEGAL AFFAIRS

UN-Oceans side event “Ocean in the 2030 Agenda: UN-Oceans harbouring SDG 14”

Statement

Of

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

United Nations Headquarters, New York
5 June 2017, 6:30-7:45 pm

Excellencies, Madame moderator, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, and in my capacity as focal point for UN-Oceans, I have the pleasure of welcoming you all to this side event, which, among others, was facilitated by the generous support from the United Nations Environment Programme.

I also wish to acknowledge the support provided by the International Seabed Authority and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in the production of the leaflet about UN-Oceans.

As you may be aware, UN-Oceans is the inter-agency coordination mechanism on ocean and coastal issues within the United Nations system and includes the International Seabed Authority.

On the occasion of the Ocean Conference, we, the members of UN-Oceans, are pleased to explore with you how the work of UN-Oceans can be built upon with a view to supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Goal 14, bearing in mind also the forthcoming review of the terms of reference of UN-Oceans by the General Assembly at its 72nd session in 2017.

To facilitate a fruitful exchange of views, I have chosen to focus my remarks, albeit briefly, around three questions identified as key by UN-Oceans members.

[1. What are the main achievements and impact of UN-Oceans as an inter-agency coordinating mechanism towards healthy and sustainable oceans?]



Let me begin by highlighting one of UN-Oceans' main achievements, namely the development of an inventory of mandates and activities of participating members, available at the UN-Oceans website, as illustrated on the screen now. Its impact is two-fold. Firstly, the inventory assists UN-Oceans members in identifying possible areas for collaboration and synergy, allowing for coordinated responses to their mandates and priorities. Secondly, the inventory is expected to assist States and relevant stakeholders in identifying the support available from UN-Oceans members towards the implementation of relevant instruments, including the 2030 Agenda. I wish to also take this opportunity to thank the

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, which hosts the website of UN-Oceans at its expense.

Also noteworthy are the awareness-raising activities carried out by UN-Oceans members, for example, through joint side events and joint statements, in order to call attention to emerging and pressing issues, such as the impacts of climate change on oceans and ocean acidification. These efforts stem from the recognition of the need for enhanced cooperation and coordination to effectively address these issues.

I am pleased to inform you that future awareness-raising activities of UN-Oceans, also registered as a voluntary commitment for this Conference, will focus on the regulatory framework for oceans and the activities of UN-Oceans members.

[2. How can UN-Oceans most effectively facilitate and integrate inter-agency contributions to achieving the ocean-related targets in the 2030 Agenda, including through the use of SDG indicators?]

This brings me to the question of how UN-Oceans can strengthen its effective contribution to achieving the ocean-related targets in the 2030 Agenda. Let me first stress that UN-Oceans members are committed to the vision of expanding their activities to deliver as “one UN”, in particular through the development of joint projects and products to assist States in the implementation of the ocean-related targets. However, such an enhanced role for UN-Oceans would rely on the strengthening, by the General Assembly, of its terms of reference as well as on sustainable funding in order to allow UN-Oceans to fully deliver on the expectations of States. The experience of the other inter-agency coordination mechanisms,



namely UN-Water and UN-Energy, could be explored for guidance in addressing funding and other issues.

Secondly, the effective functioning of UN-Oceans also depends on the active involvement therein of all key organizations and bodies in the UN System and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, as well as on close collaboration with UN-Water and UN-Energy. To this end, it will be important for current non-members to join UN-Oceans.

[3. Which elements of the UN Ocean Conference “Call for Action” could benefit from enhanced inter-agency cooperation, and how could this be achieved?]

As regards the elements of the draft “Call for Action” that could benefit from enhanced inter-agency cooperation, I would like to underline the request to the Secretary-General to enhance inter-agency coordination and coherence throughout the UN system on ocean issues, taking into consideration the work of UN-Oceans. This provision embodies, I believe, the increasing expectations from Member States placed on UN-Oceans, including the expectation for prompt and effective action.

UN-Oceans has even a greater potential, beyond the coordination of activities. The UN-Oceans members acting together, acting “as one”, could deliver effective assistance to support States, in particular developing States, in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and relevant Sustainable Development Goals in an integrated and efficient manner through joint projects and products, if sufficiently empowered by States to do so. In that regard, one noteworthy area that could further benefit from enhanced inter-agency action is capacity-building.

In closing, I wish to underline the readiness of UN-Oceans to play a more prominent role in advancing the cause of oceans and sustainable development of ocean resources, including through enhancing cooperation and coordination among the activities of its members and by supporting States to build capacity and exchange knowledge regarding the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources.

Thank you for your attention.