



**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF LEGAL AFFAIRS**

**UN-Oceans' statement to the Seventeenth meeting of the United Nations
Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea**

Statement

by

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

**United Nations Headquarters
New York, 16 June 2016**

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In my capacity as UN-Oceans Focal Point, I am pleased to provide you with a brief statement on the work of UN-Oceans on behalf of its members, under this agenda item 4 entitled “Inter-agency cooperation and coordination”. I wish to recall that the revised terms of reference of UN-Oceans, approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 68/70, provide for UN-Oceans’ reporting to the Informal Consultative Process, upon request by the General Assembly.

In line with the terms of reference of UN-Oceans, which also provide for reporting to ensure transparency and accountability, this statement aims at presenting information on UN-Oceans’ activities since the sixteenth meeting of the Informal Consultative Process.

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last year UN-Oceans completed the identification of relevant mandates within the context of developing the inventory of the mandates of UN-Oceans members and priorities approved by the respective governing bodies of the participating organizations of UN-Oceans, with a view to identifying possible areas of collaboration and synergy.



I am pleased to inform you that UN-Oceans has launched today the inventory of mandates and activities of its members, which has been developed and generously funded by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). This inventory is available on the UN-Oceans' website as an online searchable platform, which can be accessed by all Member States and other users.

For illustrative purposes, my office through DOALOS and in collaboration with FAO has organized a short demonstration of the inventory immediately after this statement.

I would like to recall that the inventory was foreseen in the UN-Oceans 2014-2015 biennial work programme, which was brought to the attention of Member States at the 2014 meeting of the Informal Consultative Process. This undertaking is expected to assist in clarifying what are the various mandates and priorities set out by Member States on ocean related issues and which United Nations organizations or entities are entrusted with supporting their implementation.

The inventory will assist UN-Oceans members in identifying possible areas for collaboration and synergy and allow for a more effective and better coordinated response to the mandates and priorities approved by the respective governing bodies of UN-Oceans members. The inventory will assist Member States and relevant stakeholders in identifying opportunities for synergies and greater coherence.

From consulting the inventory, States would be in a position to determine the support available from UN-Oceans' members to assist them in the implementation of relevant instruments.

In this regard, it may also be anticipated that the inventory will become a useful tool in supporting, in an integrated manner, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 14 entitled "Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources" and the other oceans-related Sustainable Development Goals, including by fostering coordination and cooperation among relevant sectoral organizations.

The next steps will consist of identifying areas of possible collaboration and synergies, as well as continued updates on mandates and relevant activities by UN-Oceans members, as appropriate and necessary. I would like to note that such updates and fine-tuning of the inventory, including towards increasing its user-friendly operation will require sustainable funding.



In this regard, I would like to recall that the General Assembly had in its resolutions 69/245 of 29 December 2014 and 70/235 of 23 December 2015 on oceans and the law of the sea, as an interim measure, invited Member States and others in a position to do so to make financial earmarked contributions to the trust fund established by the Secretary-General for the Office of Legal Affairs to support the promotion of international law.

The Assembly has authorized the Secretary-General to disburse funds from such contributions for the purposes of the development and maintenance of an online searchable database for the inventory. I wish to inform you that, as at today, there have not been any UN-Oceans earmarked contributions to the trust fund referred to in General Assembly resolution 69/245. I would further add that the resolution provided for the possible disbursement of funds in relation to travel associated with the performance of the functions of the focal point.

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since my statement last year to the Informal Consultative Process, a number of opportunities arose for UN-Oceans to implement its mandate to strengthen and promote coordination and coherence of United Nations system activities related to oceans and coastal areas.

As provided in the UN-Oceans biennial Work Programme, this mandate has been carried out through, inter alia, the organization of joint statements or side events at major events of relevance to the work of UN-Oceans members.

In 2015, building up on the momentum on oceans and climate change, UN-Oceans focused its attention on highlighting the important role of oceans in regulating the climate as well as the impacts of climate change and ocean acidification on the marine environment.

In that regard, UN-Oceans prepared a number of joint statements and presentations, which were delivered at various events, such as the forty-second meeting of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technical Advice of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and at a side event entitled: “One Ocean, One Climate, One United Nations: Working together for a healthy and resilient ocean”. This event, organized by UN-Oceans and benefiting from contributions by a number of agencies, was held in the margins of the United Nations Paris Conference on Climate Change.



In addition, in my capacity as UN-Oceans Focal Point, I had the opportunity to deliver a statement on behalf of UN-Oceans members during the celebration by UNESCO of World Oceans Day.

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Apart from the face-to-face meetings, held in the margins of the meeting of the Informal Consultative Process, UN-Oceans also continued to work through teleconferences on 7 August, 24 September and 4 November 2015, as well as 10 February, 24 March and 19 May 2016 and discussed regular items on its agenda relating in particular to exchange of information and the inventory.

In addition, in keeping with the focus on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals therein, members of UN-Oceans assisted in particular with the identification of an encompassing indicator to assess the implementation of target 14.c, which reads as follows: “Enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which 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 agreed upon indicator reflects the fact that implementation of target 14.c could not be advanced without cooperation and coordination among all relevant sectoral organizations and bodies of the UN system and the International Seabed Authority.

UN-Oceans also held in the margins of this meeting of the Informal Consultative Process, face-to-face meetings from 13 to 15 June 2016. Some members of UN-Oceans participated in the meeting through teleconference. In accordance with the revised terms of reference of UN-Oceans, Ms. Irena Zubcevic of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations was elected as Chair.

At the meetings, UN-Oceans discussed, among other issues, the draft statement of UN-Oceans at this meeting, the metadata for target 14.c of the 2030 Agenda, the draft UN-Oceans biennial Work Programme 2016-2017, World Oceans Day, the



launch of the UN-Oceans inventory of mandates and activities, and the identification of synergies and areas of collaboration.

As regards the latter, UN-Oceans agreed to further discuss how to increase awareness of ongoing and future areas of collaboration, including through the inventory. In the meantime, UN-Oceans members agreed to highlight UN-Oceans activities including the inventory of mandates and activities, in their reports to their respective governing bodies.

UN-Oceans agreed on its biennial Work Programme 2016-2017, which is attached to this statement.

Some of the highlights of the 2016-2017 biennial Work Programme include: the continued identification of possible areas for collaboration and synergy, using the inventory of mandates and activities; sharing of information on current and upcoming major events and processes; the development of a new World Oceans Day portal; and supporting the development of a metadata for the indicator for target 14.c of the 2030 Agenda.

The importance of sharing of information on activities in preparation for, and during, the second cycle of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects, was underscored.

Furthermore, UN-Oceans discussed possible UN-Oceans activities in relation to current and upcoming major events, such as the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, which will take place in Fiji from 5 to 9 June 2017. UN-Oceans members expressed their readiness to provide assistance to Member States in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 and other ocean-related Goals, as mandated.

In relation to the exchange of information and case studies on experiences, best practices, tools and methodologies and lessons learned, UN-Oceans considered the benefit of using various mechanisms and knowledge sharing platforms such as “LME-LEARN”, a new project led by the United Nations Development Programme and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization with funding from the Global Environment Facility.



UN-Oceans members interested in participating in the initiative were invited to collaborate with the IOC; a link to the platform - once established - will be added to the UN-Oceans website. UN-Oceans members also agreed to continue supporting and providing guidance for the development and update of the UN Atlas of the Oceans.

With a view to facilitating the visibility of celebrations of World Ocean Day by UN-Oceans and its members, UN-Oceans agreed to contribute to the development of a new global, multi-lingual web portal to be developed by IOC and DOALOS, to be tentatively launched at the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, in June 2017.

The platform will be open to Member States, UN bodies, civil society organizations to register their respective events and share relevant ocean awareness raising materials.

Finally, UN-Oceans also discussed the topic of focus of the seventeenth meeting of the Informal Consultative Process.

UN-Oceans recognized that marine debris, plastics and microplastics constituted a pervasive issue of global concern affecting all the oceans of the world. It also highlighted the challenges of increasing cross-sectoral cooperation and coordination as well as integrated management to enable all stakeholders to address the cumulative impacts of pollution.

UN-Oceans reiterated its readiness to continue conducting capacity development activities. The report of the June meeting will be made available on the website of UN-Oceans (www.unoceans.org), as soon as possible.

Before ending my remarks, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of UN-Oceans in particular for their inputs to the annual reports of the Secretary-General on oceans and the law of the sea including with regard to the topic of focus of this meeting of the Informal Consultative Process.

I thank you for your attention.



Annex I

UN-Oceans Work Programme

(January 2016 – December 2017)

I. UN-Oceans mandate

1. UN-Oceans is an inter-agency mechanism that seeks to enhance the coordination, coherence and effectiveness of competent organizations of the United Nations system and the International Seabed Authority, within existing resources, in conformity with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the respective competences of each of its participating organizations and the mandates and priorities approved by their respective governing bodies.

2. Pursuant to its terms of reference,¹ UN-Oceans is mandated to:

(a) Strengthen and promote coordination and coherence of United Nations system activities related to ocean and coastal areas;

(b) Regularly share ongoing and planned activities of participating organizations within the framework of relevant United Nations and other mandates with a view to identifying possible areas for collaboration and synergy;

(c) Facilitate, as appropriate, inputs by its participating organizations to the annual reports of the Secretary-General on oceans and the law of the sea and on sustainable fisheries to be submitted to the Secretariat;

(d) Facilitate inter-agency information exchange, including sharing of experiences, best practices, tools and methodologies and lessons learned in ocean-related matters.

¹ General Assembly resolution 68/70, Annex.



II. Activities in 2016-2017

A. Sharing of information on ongoing and planned activities of participating organizations within the framework of relevant United Nations and other mandates with a view to identifying possible areas for collaboration and synergy

1. Updating of the inventory of mandates and activities approved by the respective governing bodies of UN-Oceans participating organizations with a view to identifying on-going and planned activities in respect of those mandates and activities, and continued development of the online platform to enhance its user friendliness *[ongoing]*

2. Maintenance of the calendar of intergovernmental meetings, conferences and expert workshops related to oceans and coastal issues, and sharing of information on planned activities, for example in relation to the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and Sustainably Use the Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources for Sustainable Development, Nadi, Fiji, 5 -9 June 2017 *[ongoing]*

3. Sharing of information on activities in preparation for, and during, the second cycle of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects *[ongoing]*

4. Development of a World Oceans Day portal for sharing of information on planned events to mark World Oceans Day 2017



B. Strengthening and promotion of coordination and coherence of United Nations system activities related to ocean and coastal areas

1. Supported by the inventory of mandates, priorities and on-going and planned activities, continued identification, by UN-Oceans members, of possible areas for collaboration and synergy [*December 2016*]

2. Organization of joint activities, where appropriate and feasible, to mark World Oceans Day 2016 and World Oceans Day 2017, including at the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, Conserve and Sustainably Use the Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources for Sustainable Development, Nadi, Fiji, 5 -9 June 2017 [*8 June*]

3. Organization of UN-Oceans side events at relevant ocean-related meetings, including HLPF meetings and other high-level events in relation to Sustainable Development Goal 14 and other relevant SDGs

4. Contributing to the follow-up and review process of the HLPF as regards Sustainable Development Goal 14 targets and indicators

5. Supporting the preparation of metadata for the indicator for target 14.c and related data collection²

6. Providing other inputs, as mandated, to assist in the implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including Sustainable Development Goal 14 and other relevant Goals

² The indicator for target 14.c is found in the Final list of proposed Sustainable Development Goal indicators, as Annex IV of the Report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, E/CN.3/2016/2/Rev.1, available at <<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/47th-session/documents/2016-2-SDGs-Rev1-E.pdf>>. Other relevant information concerning Sustainable Development Goal indicators is also found on the website of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators <<http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/>>.



C. Facilitation of inputs by UN-Oceans participating organizations to the annual reports of the Secretary-General on oceans and the law of the sea and on sustainable fisheries

1. Contributing to the preparation of the annual report of the Secretary-General on the topics of focus of the meetings of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea
2. Contributing to the second part of the annual report of the Secretary-General on developments in ocean affairs and the law of the sea during the period 31 August 2015 to 31 August 2016 and 31 August 2016 to 31 August 2017
3. Consideration of ways to contribute to the review of the terms of reference of UN-Oceans by the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, including through, as appropriate, the preparation of a document on lessons learned

D. Facilitation of inter-agency information exchange, including sharing of experiences, best practices, tools and methodologies and lessons learned in ocean-related matters

1. Exchange of information and case studies on experiences, best practices, tools and methodologies and lessons learned utilizing different mechanisms, such as the “LME:LEARN” Platform
2. Continually supporting and providing guidance for the development and update of the UN Atlas of the Oceans