



UNITED NATIONS

OFFICE OF LEGAL AFFAIRS

**General Assembly Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group to
study issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of
marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction**

Opening remarks

by

Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares

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

**20 January 2015, 10:00am
(Conference Room 1)**

Distinguished Co-Chairs,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, I have the pleasure of welcoming you to this third meeting of the Working Group, convened within the process established by the General Assembly in resolution 68/70 of 9 December 2013, to prepare for the action set out in the Rio+20 outcome document entitled “The future we want”.

You will recall that States, in Rio+20, committed “to address, on an urgent basis, building on the work of the Working Group and before the end of the sixty-ninth session of the Assembly, the issue of the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, including by taking a decision on the development of an international instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.”

This meeting is a crucial one. The Working Group held two very successful meetings in April and June last year.

Following this, the General Assembly - in resolution 69/245 adopted last December - requested the Working Group, within its mandate established by resolution 66/231 and in the light of resolution 67/78, and in order to prepare for the decision to be taken at the sixty-ninth session of the Assembly, to make recommendations to the Assembly, at this meeting, on the scope, parameters and feasibility of an international instrument under the Convention.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

When I opened the first of this series of meetings, last April, I noted that these meetings present a clear opportunity to try and overcome remaining differences and to crystalize the areas of convergence into concrete action.

I understand that notable progress was made towards that end, facilitated by a frank, open and interactive exchange of views. You had rich discussions on the scope, parameters and feasibility of a possible international instrument under the Convention.

While the necessity and objective of conserving and sustainably using marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction are clearly shared by all, I am aware that differences of views continue to be held on the best way forward to that end. But last year's meetings provided an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the various delegations' views.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Time is of the essence. Cognizant of the continued deterioration of the oceans, but also aware of their opportunities for social and economic development that need to be preserved for our future and that of our children, you have collectively agreed upon a deadline for the General Assembly to make a decision at this session.

In fact, through your constructive and determined participation in this Working Group, you have also committed to leading it to a meaningful outcome. In that regard, the rich discussions you have had over the past ten years have given you a solid foundation to now chart the way forward.

I invite you to continue carrying forward the constructive and cooperative spirit that marked last year's meetings of the Working Group. You now have to enable the General Assembly to fulfil its mandate.

In closing, I wish to salute the unfailing dedication and skilful guidance of Ambassador Kohona of Sri Lanka and Ms. Lijnzaad of the Netherlands in steering this process towards successful outcomes over the past five years. I am fully confident that this meeting of the Working Group will be no exception.

I wish you every success in fulfilling the challenging mandate with which you have been entrusted and I assure you of the continued full support of my Office.

Thank you.