

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

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Statement of Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares
Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs
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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 24 members, under this agenda item 4 entitled "Inter-agency cooperation and coordination".

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 seventeenth meeting of the Informal

Consultative Process. Furthermore, in the light of the forthcoming review of the terms of reference of UN-Oceans, which were approved by the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session, UN-Oceans members take this opportunity to share their views regarding these terms of reference in the light of their work experience.

Indeed, this statement is provided with the underlying premise of UN-Oceans, that is, that the needs of Member States can be better served through inter-agency collaboration. It assumes that the potential synergies are greater than the sum of the parts.

Distinguished delegates,

In addition to the recent face-to-face meeting, held at the International Seabed Authority in Jamaica from 10 to 11 April 2017, we, that is the UN-Oceans members, have continued to work throughout the year, communicating via emails and teleconferences.

Since my statement last year to the Informal Consultative Process, we have taken advantage of a number of opportunities

to implement our mandate to strengthen and promote coordination and coherence of United Nations system activities related to oceans and coastal areas, including with a view to improving our assistance to States. 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.

For example, I am pleased to inform you that, in November 2016, UN-Oceans organized a side event entitled: “Sustainable Development Goal 14: Oceans – Science-based solutions for achieving adaptation and mitigation goals”. This event benefiting from contributions by a number of agencies, was held in the margins of the twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol and the first session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement, in Marrakesh. The side event explored how the United Nations system can support Member States in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development related to climate and oceans.

Furthermore, UN-Oceans members are currently collaborating towards the organization of two side events to be held during 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, also known as "The Ocean Conference", which will take place in New York from 5 to 9 June 2017. The first side-event organized by UN-Oceans is entitled "*Ocean in the 2030 Agenda: UN-Oceans harbouring SDG 14*". It will take place on Monday, 5 June at 6:15 PM in Conference Room B. The second one, which is organized in collaboration with UN-Water, is entitled "*Joining hands to help achieve SDGs 6 and 14 - a win-win for freshwater and oceans*". It will take place on Wednesday, 7 June 2017, at 9:00 AM in Conference Room 6. I would like to note that additionally, a number of side events are also being organized individually by UN-Oceans members, including in partnership with multistakeholders. In addition, with a view to facilitating the visibility of World Oceans Day, UN-Oceans members have agreed to contribute to the development of a new global, multi-lingual web portal developed by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO and DOALOS which will be launched at the Ocean Conference on 8 June. The portal will aim to showcase celebrations of World Oceans Day by UN-Oceans members.

I also wish to note that respective UN-Oceans members collaborated to lead seven informal preparatory working groups and actively contributed to the review of draft concept papers on the themes in support of the implementation of goal 14, for the seven partnership dialogues to be held at the Ocean Conference. An advance and unedited version of those concept papers is available on the website of the Ocean Conference.

UN-Oceans is also considering registering a voluntary commitment in the context of the Ocean Conference that would focus on awareness-raising briefings by its members on the regulatory framework and the activities of UN-Oceans members, which could be provided in the margins of major intergovernmental meetings.

At its latest face-to-face meeting held on 10 and 11 April 2017, which was chaired by Mr. Michael Lodge, Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority, UN-Oceans members discussed, among other issues: further preparations for the Ocean Conference, including participation in and contributions to side events; participation in and contribution to the High-Level Political Forum to be held in July 2017, which will review, inter alia, SDG 14 under the theme "*Eradicating*

poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world"; preparations for this meeting of the Informal Consultative Process; progress in identifying possible areas for collaboration and synergy, including identification of areas of inter-agency cooperation as well as other substantive aspects relating to the achievement of the UN-Oceans' mandate; and a methodology for the indicator for target 14.c. Members also discussed the continued update of the inventory of mandates and the UN-Oceans website. UN-Oceans members agreed on a number of actions to be undertaken as a follow-up to that meeting.

The report of the April meeting is available on the website of UN-Oceans (www.unoceans.org).

Of particular note, in relation to the topic of focus of the eighteenth meeting of the Informal Consultative Process, UN-Oceans members recognized the need for enhanced cooperation and coordination among them to effectively address the impacts of climate change on the oceans.

In that regard, UN-Oceans members are undertaking a number of activities to promote better knowledge of the oceans, such as those aimed at increasing scientific understanding of climate variability and change and international cooperation in

respect of addressing its impacts. Respective UN-Oceans members are also carrying out other capacity-building activities to assist States to mitigate the causes and adapt to the impacts of climate change and ocean acidification.

In particular, capacity-building activities are carried out by UN-Oceans members to increase the resilience of marine and coastal ecosystems and of coastal infrastructures to the effects of climate change and ocean acidification. In addition, the broader activities of UN-Oceans members aimed at assisting States in the conservation and sustainable use of living marine resources and in the protection and preservation of the marine environment are essential tools to achieve adaptation and mitigation goals. Also to be noted are the activities of UN-Oceans members aimed at addressing the wider impacts of climate change.

Distinguished delegates,

As you may recall, in its resolution 68/70, the General Assembly decided to review the terms of reference of UN-Oceans at its seventy-second session in the light of the work of UN-Oceans. In light of that forthcoming review, UN-Oceans members took stock of the activities of UN-Oceans since the approval of the revised terms of reference in 2013, and

considered the challenges and opportunities for inter-agency cooperation and coordination through UN-Oceans under these terms of reference.

UN-Oceans members are pleased to note the achievements to date under the revised terms of reference. In this regard, successful experiences of UN-Oceans towards fulfilling its mandate as outlined in the revised terms of reference include: the launch of the UN-Oceans inventory of mandates and activities hosted on the UN-Oceans website developed and generously funded by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; effective cooperation and coordination amongst all relevant agencies, including the identification of areas for potential synergies; and increased visibility for ocean-related issues. Satisfaction was also expressed by UN-Oceans members with the support provided by the focal point.

UN-Oceans members have noted with appreciation that the General Assembly continues to recognize the work undertaken by UN-Oceans under the revised terms of reference, in particular the inventory of mandates and activities of UN-Oceans members, which was launched last year. As indicated in the UN-Oceans 2016-2017 biennial work programme, such inventory supports UN-Oceans members in the identification of possible areas for

collaboration and synergy. Importantly, the inventory provides an excellent opportunity for supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular SDG 14 and other ocean-related SDGs.

This brings me to future opportunities for the effective functioning of UN-Oceans. UN-Oceans members recognize the importance of encouraging the active involvement of all current members, but also the need to better engage key organizations, such as the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, for example, by inviting those organizations to consider becoming members of UN-Oceans. Other suggestions include encouraging a higher-level representation at UN-Oceans meetings, preferably at the level of head of agency.

Distinguished delegates,

UN-Oceans members wish to underline that they are willing to expand their activities to deliver as “one UN”, in particular through the development of joint programmes and projects.

With the necessary support, UN-Oceans members consider that they could make further distinct contributions in the areas of capacity-building and awareness-raising on issues related to the oceans.

In particular, UN-Oceans members consider that they can, through joint projects and products, deliver effective assistance to support States in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and relevant SDGs.

UN-Oceans members have also noted the need to enhance coordination in addressing pressing issues, such as the nexus between oceans, on the one hand, and climate change and variability, ocean acidification and disaster risk reduction, on the other.

At the same time, UN-Oceans members wish to note that an enhanced role for UN-Oceans would not only be dependent on a revision of its terms of reference to provide a clear mandate to develop joint projects, but would also benefit from other support, including financial.

In that regard, UN-Oceans wishes to note the successful example of UN-Water. Its modalities of work include for example, innovative funding arrangements and a wider scope of engagement with other entities, such as non-governmental organizations. In the context of UN-Oceans, consideration could be given to including such entities in ad hoc task teams for project activities.

UN-Oceans members have noted that the lack of sustainable funding constitutes an impediment to the effective full implementation of its mandate.

In this regard, I would like to recall that, the General Assembly in its resolution 71/257 of 23 December 2016 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 for the purposes of the development and maintenance of an online searchable database for the UN-Oceans inventory, with a view to identifying possible areas of collaboration and synergy, as well as for travel associated with the performance of the functions of the focal

point. However, as at today, there have not been any UN-Oceans earmarked contributions to that trust fund.

Therefore, going forward, options could be explored to enhance the effectiveness of UN-Oceans. Depending on the scope of activities to be carried out, options could include for example: allocation of a budget within participating organizations, targeted fund-raising activities for potential donors and an innovative approach to promoting contributions to a trust fund dedicated to UN-Oceans with general terms of reference. The experience of UN-Water and UN-Energy could be explored for guidance to address funding issues. UN-Oceans stands ready to share its views on how to enhance its effectiveness in the context of the review of its terms of reference.

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. Within the context of the preparations for the Ocean Conference, I also would like to thank all members of UN-Oceans for their exceptional spirit of cooperation and team work.

I thank you for your attention.