



UNITED NATIONS

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Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction

Fourth Session

Remarks

by Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares

Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and

United Nations Legal Counsel,

Secretary-General of the Conference

7 March 2022

(Conference Room 4)

Distinguished President of the Conference,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

It is with great pleasure that I address you today in person to welcome you to the fourth session of the Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, convened pursuant to resolution 72/249 and decision 75/570.



2020 was to be the super year for the ocean. However, the fourth session of the Conference was postponed along with other major ocean-related meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing restrictions.

Meanwhile, threats to the ocean, and the urgency to address them, continued to increase.

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Since the third session of the Conference, the Special Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate provided new evidence of the urgency of coordinated and ambitious action to address changes in the ocean and cryosphere.

Reinforcing the findings of the IPCC, the Second World Ocean Assessment, released in 2021, reports that, although many pressures from human activities continue to degrade the ocean, some responses for mitigating or reducing pressures and impacts on the ocean are improving. It further stresses that sustainable use of the ocean can be achieved only through improved coordination and cooperation.

Achieving the rallying cries in the IPCC Report and the Second World Ocean Assessment will only be possible if all stakeholders work together.

The long-awaited United Nations Ocean Conference will take place in June/July. Later, the 15th Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is expected to conclude negotiations on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, which will contain a new set of global goals and targets for biodiversity, including in marine and coastal areas.



These meetings, along with this Conference, can - and it is my hope that they will - play an important role in stepping up efforts to reverse the global decline in marine biodiversity.

The same year that we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the adoption and opening for signature of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, you are presented with a historic opportunity to conclude a new treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.

I encourage you to not let this opportunity pass by.

Distinguished delegates,

I am confident that the common interest in providing future generations with a healthy, resilient and productive ocean, will continue to guide delegations in their negotiations.

I am aware of the challenges for delegations due to venue capacity and other COVID-19 restrictions affecting the conduct of this session. Along with the President, we worked earnestly to minimize them as much as possible.

I trust, however, that over the next two weeks, all delegations will engage in the negotiations with the same spirit of collegiality and in the same constructive manner that has marked the previous three sessions.

All of you came here willing to negotiate with an ambitious goal in mind. Now, more than ever, negotiations should be guided by flexibility and the need to focus on developing concrete textual formulas. This is the time to show leadership in brokering mutually acceptable solutions.



This way, the Conference can send to the world a strong signal that multilateralism remains relevant and the only avenue to tackle the three planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

Thank you.