



**Twenty-third meeting of the United Nations Open-ended
Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the
Law of the Sea
UN-Oceans statement**

**Statement by Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares
Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs
and United Nations Legal Counsel, UN-Oceans Focal Point
New York, Thursday, 8 June 2022, 3 pm
Conference Room 3**

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Agenda item 4: Inter-agency cooperation and coordination

**Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and
Gentlemen,**

In my capacity as UN-Oceans Focal Point, I am pleased to address you again under this important agenda item. UN-Oceans is the inter-agency mechanism that seeks to enhance the coordination, coherence and effectiveness of United Nations system entities and the International Seabed Authority in the areas of ocean and coastal matters. Its aims include ensuring transparency and accountability.

It is in this context that I deliver this statement each year to highlight the main activities and achievements of UN-Oceans.

Since the last meeting of the Informal Consultative Process, and with the abatement of the consequences of the COVID-19 epidemic, UN-Oceans actively resumed the convening of side events showcasing the important contributions UN-Oceans members can and do make to ensuring the health and productivity of our ocean.

In June 2022, UN-Oceans held a high-level side event in the margins of the United Nations Ocean Conference under the theme: *“Scaling up ocean action through inter-agency cooperation and coordination: Case studies, challenges and opportunities”*. At this event, senior representatives of UN-Oceans members showcased successful instances of inter-agency cooperation and made concrete proposals for the scaling up of action in various areas including ocean science; climate change; harmful fisheries subsidies; the well-being of seafarers and capacity-building. While drawing attention to challenges, the presentations highlighted to States and other stakeholders how inter-agency cooperation and coordination is crucial to leveraging resources and expertise to address various ocean issues.

UN-Oceans also seized that opportunity to make a voluntary commitment relating to the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the opening for signature of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Led by my Office through DOALOS, UN-Oceans members collaborated on a publication entitled: “*The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea at 40: Successes and Future Prospects*”. It illustrates how the Convention has contributed to the sustainable use of the ocean and its resources in the economic, environmental, and social fields, including through the development of other ocean-related international instruments. This publication, which was also requested by the General Assembly in its 2021 resolution on oceans and the law of the sea, is now available in all official languages on the DOALOS website.

In November 2022, in the margins of the 27th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, a UN-Oceans side event focused on showcasing ambitious science-based initiatives for ocean-climate action that are accessible, replicable, scalable and sustainable. Under the theme “*The power of inter-agency cooperation to scale up ocean-climate action: Case studies, challenges and opportunities*”, the side event also provided an opportunity to engage policymakers to strengthen future action.

In December 2022, at the Conference of Parties to the Convention on the Biological Diversity, UN-Oceans organized a side event on “*Coordinated support from UN-Oceans for the implementation of the post 2020 global biodiversity framework*”.

The side event highlighted the critical synergistic role of UN-Oceans in assisting States and civil societies through joint

action and cooperation across diverse mandates in the implementation of the post-2020 framework.

In March this year, UN-Oceans collaborated closely with UN-Water on the organization of a joint side event at the **United Nations 2023 Water Conference** entitled: "*Stronger together: Building resilience and prosperity through integrated and evidence-based management of the Ocean–Water continuum*". As you may be aware, UN-Water is a sister mechanism that coordinates work on water and sanitation within the UN system. The side event was instrumental in calling attention to the importance of the ocean and seas in the water cycle, and the need for solutions to address the linkages between ecosystems from source to sea in a holistic, integrated, and cross-sectoral manner.

The common goal of these side events is to highlight that UN-Oceans, as a multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary partnership, is well placed, if sufficiently empowered and supported, to enhance ocean-related assistance to States and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

This year, as reflected in its Work Programme for 2023, UN-Oceans will continue to focus on sharing of information on ongoing and planned meetings, on strengthening and promoting the coordination of system activities relating to the ocean and coastal areas, including in respect of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, and on contributing to the efforts of the Secretary-General to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14.

As an innovation in its working methods, UN-Oceans has agreed to keep an up-to-date extensive calendar of ocean-related meetings to maximize opportunities for in-person events and meetings to share experiences, best practices, tools and lessons learned. UN-Oceans now has a regular schedule of virtual meetings every six weeks, including thematic meetings to raise awareness about current issues and processes and provide an opportunity for brainstorming how and in which areas inter-agency coordination can be enhanced. Such regular meetings are already contributing to revitalizing UN-Oceans as a mechanism for inter-agency cooperation and providing greater opportunities to identify synergies for providing effective assistance to States.

However, I would like to call your attention to one issue that is hampering the work of UN-Oceans, namely its website. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has, since 2003, kindly and generously hosted and maintained the UN-Oceans website at no cost to members.

However, like many organizations, FAO is in the process of redesigning its website using latest user-friendly technologies. This year, I was informed that FAO has moved its website to a new platform and is no longer in a position to host the UN-Oceans website. This leaves UN-Oceans facing the prospect of being without its mirror to the world, and its main tool for communicating with you and other stakeholders. It also risks losing the highly valuable information on the UN-Oceans inventory of mandates and activities, continuously recognized by the General Assembly and which was expected to assist Member States in their implementation of relevant instruments in an integrated manner through fostering coordination and cooperation among relevant sectoral organizations.

It is my intention to discuss possible solutions to this website question with UN-Oceans members as well as States, including with respect to the trust fund established by the General Assembly to receive earmarked voluntary contributions for purposes linked to the maintenance of the inventory of mandates.

Turning to the theme of this twenty-third meeting of the Informal Consultative Process, you will by now have heard many informative presentations and had fruitful discussions on the important topic of "*New maritime technologies: challenges and opportunities*". Technology and its transfer are critical to sustainable development, including the sustainable use of the ocean and its resources. Indeed, this is increasingly recognized in international instruments, including the newly finalized text of the

draft BBNJ agreement. The draft includes a whole part dedicated to capacity-building and the transfer of marine technology as an essential means of implementing the agreement as a whole. It is also a topic central to the mandates and processes of several UN-Oceans members, as is evident from their contributions to the report of the Secretary-General on the topic of focus. The report notes that increased international cooperation and coordination is necessary to address the various gaps relating to the development and access to maritime technologies. UN-Oceans remains an available forum to discuss and identify opportunities for assisting States in accessing maritime technologies and promoting the necessary frameworks for sustainable investments.

[IN FRENCH]

Excellences, Distingués délégués, Mesdames et Messieurs

Le « Momentum » pour l'océan mis en évidence l'année dernière s'est poursuivi cette année avec la tenue de réunions régulières sur les questions relatives aux océans. Je donne pour exemple, la Conférence sur l'eau 2023 des Nations Unies tenue au mois de mars, la reprise de la Conférence d'examen de l'Accord de 1995 sur les stocks de poissons chevauchants et migrateurs, la deuxième réunion du Comité de négociation intergouvernemental sur un traité sur la pollution plastique, tenues au mois de mai, et la reprise très attendue de la

cinquième session de la Conférence intergouvernementale BBNJ pour l'adoption de l'Accord BBNJ ce mois-ci.

En outre, les dialogues sur les changements climatiques et les océans qui sont maintenant récurrents, ainsi que le Montréal-Kunming Cadre mondial pour la biodiversité comprenant des objectifs côtiers et marins, ouvrent tous de nouveaux domaines et des possibilités de coopération et de coordination élargies pour les membres d'ONU-Océans.

Comme je l'ai mentionné l'année dernière, il est gratifiant de voir qu'une telle attention est accordée à l'océan et à sa santé. ONU-Océans est bien placé pour continuer à contribuer au renforcement de la cohérence et l'efficacité des activités pertinentes du système des Nations Unies, cette année et à l'avenir.

Pour terminer, je voudrais remercier les membres d'ONU-Océans pour leurs contributions et participation continues aux ateliers, et publications, ainsi que leurs contributions instructives aux rapports annuels du Secrétaire général sur les océans et le droit de la mer, notamment en ce qui concerne le thème central de la présente réunion.

Je vous remercie.