

73rd Session of the UNGA

Agenda Item 77 (A) Oceans and the Law of the Sea

Statement

by

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Mr. President,

Oceans in many ways support life on earth. We rely on oceans for food, energy, navigation purposes and related employment opportunities.

2. Oceans are interconnected and need to be considered as a whole. The emergence of ocean governance assumes that challenges of the ocean space are closely interrelated and requires all nations to cooperate in the management of the oceans.

3. Since its adoption, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and affiliated institutions governing the law of the sea have played a pivotal role in ensuring the harmonious and judicious use of ocean resources for mankind.

4. The International Sea-bed Authority, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf established under the Convention hold the key to proper implementation of the provisions of the Convention and to the realization of desired benefits from the uses of the seas.

5. At the same time, we note that our understanding of oceans and their wide ranging impacts on life; as also the impact of human activities on oceans is

constantly evolving due to scientific and technical advances. Today we have access to some of the deepest parts of the oceans.

6. We thank the Secretary General for his Report A/73/368 on oceans and the law of the sea and other related issues.

Mr. President,

7. The States look to ocean resources as a means to economic growth and social advancement and development of an ocean-based economy is attracting more attention. Over two decades of its operation, the Convention has contributed preeminently to the sustainable development of the oceans and seas and to the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all countries of the world.

8. In this context, we commend the Group of Experts for preparing the draft Outline of the Second World Ocean Assessment as a single comprehensive assessment in compliance with the recommendations adopted by the 11th Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole held in August and endorsed by the General Assembly. We also welcome the Timetable and implementation plan prepared by the Group of experts.

9. The 19th meeting of the Informal Consultative Process in June this year provided a unique forum for comprehensive discussions on anthropogenic underwater noise, facilitating the exchange of views among multiple stakeholders and improving coordination and cooperation between States and competent agencies. We welcome the Report (A/73/373) of the Group. We support the continuation of this process.

10. While the 1982 UN Convention on Law of the Sea that was adopted after decades-long negotiations lays down the basic framework of International Law governing jurisdiction of coastal States over adjacent maritime areas, what happens to the governance of areas beyond such jurisdiction is becoming increasingly important, especially in view of the rapid advancement in technology and our scientific understanding.

11. In this context, we acknowledge the head start of the first 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 ‘Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction’ (BBNJ) convened under resolution 72/249. We take note of the substantive discussions which addressed the topics identified in the package agreed in 2011 and note that the President of the Conference will produce a paper as part of the preparations for the Second session of the Conference. The BBNJ is an important process that is expected to give shape to global governance of an aspect that is of importance to everyone.

Mr. President,

12. Being a country with a vast coastline of more than 7,500 km and over 1,000 islands whose one-third population lives along the coast, India has a longstanding maritime tradition and abiding interest in ocean affairs. India is the world’s third largest producer of fish and second largest producer of inland fish. India has 12 major ports besides close to 150 small ports.

13. We are acutely aware of the challenges and opportunities that oceans represent: from sustainable fisheries to prevention and control of marine litter and plastic pollution, from affordable renewable energy to eco-tourism and early warning systems for disaster risk reduction and management, building resilience and adaptation to climate change.

14. The need for ‘greening’ the ocean economy is also gaining importance. We must work towards innovative technologies for offshore renewable energy, aquaculture, deep seabed mining and marine biotechnology which provide new source of jobs.

15. India is concerned with the illegal fishing practices and those relating to maritime safety and security, including the acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea. We are happy to actively engage with the work of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) which has contributed significantly in controlling piracy in the Western Indian Ocean.

16. We seek a future for the Indian Ocean that lives up to the name of SAGAR — Security and Growth for All in the Region. This vision was outlined by Prime Minister Modi during his visit to Mauritius in 2015.

17. Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) is playing an important role in the region in promoting the importance of Blue Economy as a driver of inclusive and sustainable growth and development. India is a founding member of IORA. The first Summit meeting of IORA held last year and the recently held 18th IORA Meeting of the Council of Ministers (COM) in South Africa further emphasized the importance of Ocean Economy.

Mr. President,

18. India is an active participant in the multilateral efforts at developing a collective management of ocean affairs and one of the early parties to the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. In addition to UNCLOS, India is party to the Agreement relating to the implementation of Part XI of the Convention of 10 December 1982, Fish Stocks Convention 1995, MARPOL 73/78, the International Ballast Water Convention 2004 that protects invasive aquatic Alien species, the London Convention 1972 and other agreements that regulate various activities of the oceans, especially the conservation and sustainable use of ocean resources.

19. While the legal regime on the regulation of the oceans is fairly well developed, the challenges faced in effective implementation of UNCLOS obligations and other related agreements are an important focus area.

Mr. President,

20. Effective global partnership is necessary for capacity building and collaboration on technology; financial assistance; greater awareness and scientific knowledge of LDCs, developing countries and those with special vulnerabilities to help them meet their international obligations.

21. India cooperates with its partners in the region through its membership of the South Asian Seas Action Plan (SASAP) 1995, which is serviced by the secretariat of the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP). The main focus of the South Asian Seas Action Plan is on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), oil-spill contingency planning, human resource development and the environmental effects of land-based activities.

22. Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC) aims to enhance cooperation between India and 14 Pacific Islands on issues such as the blue economy, adaptation-mitigation practices for climate change, disaster

preparedness, health as well as finding practical solutions to Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) implementation.

23. Last year, on the World Oceans Day, India announced the establishment of the India-UN Development Partnership Fund, the first project under which focuses on climate resilience for Pacific Island states. India has also undertaken US \$ 2 million rehabilitation projects following Hurricane Irma in Antigua & Barbuda and Hurricane Maria in Dominica under this fund.

Mr. President,

24. Three decades ago, India was the first country to receive the status of a Pioneer Investor in the Indian Ocean. Indian scientists today collaborate in research stations on the Arctic Ocean studying its links with climate in our own region. Indian hydrographers partner in capacity building efforts with our maritime neighbours. Indian institutions work closely with regional partners in improving early warning systems for tsunamis and cyclones. Indian naval ships are deployed in delivery of humanitarian assistance and emergency evacuation as also in patrolling sea-lanes against pirates.

25. India is strongly committed to protect its coastal and marine environment and attaches special importance to prevent and significantly reduce marine debris and litter by 2025, through global action and collective efforts of all stakeholders. In this regard, India has launched a massive campaign called “Swacch Bharat/Clean India” to clean up cities and villages and to rejuvenate its rivers. India also decided to take up the challenge of eliminating all single use plastics by 2022. Since a major source of plastic debris is from land, these campaigns will immensely contribute to reduce the inflow of plastic onto the seas.

26. India is committed to the sustainable development of its Blue Economy partnership for the 2030 Agenda, including SDG 14 pertaining to conservation of oceans.

27. We hope that we can jointly protect and preserve oceans in our collective interest for sustainable development.

Thank you, Mr. President.
