

**High-Level Political Forum
Session 12
Review of implementation: SDG 14
Thursday, 13 July 2017, 11:00-13:00
Conference Room 4**

**Statement of Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares
Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs
and United Nations Legal Counsel
UN-Oceans Focal Point**

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its Goal 14, and the holding of the Ocean Conference in June marked an important step in promoting the sustainable development of the oceans and their resources. The responsibility is now with the members of the international community, individually and collectively, to fulfil the commitments undertaken in the 2030 Agenda and the Call for Action of the Ocean Conference, as well as the voluntary commitments announced at the Ocean Conference.

UN-Oceans, the inter-agency coordination mechanism on ocean and coastal issues within the United Nations system which also includes the International Seabed Authority, can play an important role in facilitating this process.

It is broadly acknowledged that the problems of ocean space are closely interrelated and need to be considered as a whole. Indeed, the Call for Action of the Ocean Conference stresses the need for an integrated, interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral approach, as well as enhanced cooperation, coordination and policy coherence, at all levels in the implementation of the ocean-related Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda.

Such an integrated, cross-sectoral approach is already reflected in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which sets out the legal framework within which all activities on the oceans and seas must be carried out. It is also evidenced through the consideration of oceans issues by the General Assembly, which every year engages in a review of developments in oceans and the law of the sea as the global institution having the competence to undertake such a review.

However, the approach followed thus far in the implementation of UNCLOS and other ocean-related instruments at the global, regional and national levels has been primarily sectoral, thereby limiting its effectiveness.

For this reason, the Ocean Conference strongly called upon the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to support the implementation of Goal 14 in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in particular by enhancing interagency coordination and coherence throughout the United Nations system on ocean issues, taking into consideration the work of UN-Oceans. UN-Oceans is unique in its role as the only inter-agency coordination mechanism which brings together entities from around the United Nations system with direct mandates on oceans issues.

The 24 members of UN-Oceans are already undertaking, each within their areas of competence, a broad-range of policy-making, capacity-building, informational and awareness-raising activities on oceans. Through UN-Oceans, they have undertaken specific activities to strengthen and promote coordination and coherence of United Nations system activities related to oceans and coastal areas. In particular, UN-Oceans members have developed an inventory of mandates and activities to help identify further areas for collaboration and synergy. In addition, at the Oceans Conference, UN-Oceans registered a voluntary commitment that focuses on awareness-raising of relevant regulatory and policy frameworks as well as its members' activities in support of their implementation, through joint statements and presentations at major ocean-related meetings.

In the future, UN-Oceans has a great potential to further develop and become an engine for the enhanced implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As a multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary partnership, if sufficiently empowered and supported, UN-Oceans is well-placed to enhance in a cohesive, coordinated and integrated manner the required assistance to States in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and relevant SDGs, in particular through joint programmes and projects. Such an enhanced role for UN Oceans, however, would rely on the strengthening of its terms of reference, which are scheduled to be reviewed by the General Assembly, as well as sustainable funding.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The road towards the full and effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda may appear long, but in reality, the deadlines the international community has set for itself in Goal 14 will require swift and decisive action, by all stakeholders and at all levels. The United Nations, through its Secretariat, Specialized Agencies and funds and programmes will have a key role in assisting States in this process. If clearly mandated, they will be able to build on the tools they have in UN-Oceans to “deliver as one” in supporting the implementation of Goal 14 and the 2030 Agenda ocean-related goals.

I thank you for your attention and wish you a productive meeting.