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UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**STATEMENT AT 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**

New York, 19 June 2023

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The ocean is the lifeblood of our planet.

And today, you have pumped new life and hope to give the ocean a fighting chance.

You have delivered.

And you have done so at a critical time.

Around the world, the ocean is under threat on multiple fronts.

Climate change is heating our planet, disrupting weather patterns and ocean currents, and altering marine ecosystems and the species living there.

Sea surface temperatures in the North Atlantic have recently risen so high that they are literally off the charts. The axis of a long-standing graph tracking those temperatures had to be redrawn to reflect unprecedented temperature increases.

Marine biodiversity is under attack from overfishing, over-exploitation and ocean acidification.

Over one-third of fish stocks are being harvested at unsustainable levels.

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And we are polluting our coastal waters with chemicals, plastics and human waste.

The historic achievement we celebrate today is vital to address these threats, and ensure the sustainability of those areas not covered under national jurisdiction — over two-thirds of the ocean.

Two decades in the making, the adoption of this agreement demonstrates the strength of multilateralism, building on the legacy of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

By acting to counter threats to our planet that go beyond national boundaries, you are demonstrating that global threats deserve global action.

That countries can come together, in unity, for the common good.

That the spirit of multilateral cooperation that infuses this chamber is alive and well.

But my friends, your work is not yet over.

I urge you to spare no effort to ensure that this agreement enters into force.

I call on all States to act without delay to sign and ratify this agreement as soon as possible.

This is critical to addressing the threats facing the ocean, and to the success of ocean-related goals and targets — including the 2030 Agenda and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

For my part, I stand ready to help States make this happen.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I commend Ambassador Rena Lee for her remarkable leadership and dedication in presiding over the negotiations.

And I recognize the unwavering support of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, civil society, academic institutions and the scientific community.

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I look forward to continuing to work with all of you to secure a healthier, more resilient, and more productive ocean, benefiting current and future generations.

Once again — congratulations on this historic achievement.
