

**BBNJ Intergovernmental Conference
First Substantive Session
(September 4-17, 2018)**

Statement by Canada

Thank you, Madame President,

Canada greatly appreciates this opportunity to make an opening statement at this first substantive session of the BBNJ Intergovernmental Conference. This is a pivotal moment in our common endeavour to develop a legally binding agreement on biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ).

Let me begin by highlighting the global nature of the task that brings us all here. We, together, are here to tackle some of the main challenges currently facing the oceans. We are all aware of the value provided by our oceans, and we are all conscious of the issues confronting them. We should all be motivated to be part of a collective response to this situation. It will be through taking a global perspective, one that maximizes synergies, coordination, and cooperation, that we will achieve positive outcomes for the oceans, and for those of us who most depend on them.

We believe the health of our oceans and seas is critical to the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the planet. And that we must act together. Canada is proud to be partnering with Kenya to co-host the Blue Economy Conference in November, where we anticipate a global conversation on productive and sustainable oceans. Canada is equally proud to hold the 2018 G7 Presidency, and to use this opportunity to mobilize action on healthy and sustainable oceans, and greater coastal resilience. G7 Environment, Energy and Oceans Ministers will meet in Halifax, Nova Scotia, from September 19 to 21, 2018, to further discussions held by leaders in June.

Turning now to the task at hand here, which is a moment many of us have long been waiting for. It is a privilege to be a part of this historic process, and Canada is coming today firmly resolved to contribute actively, and constructively, in our work. Let me take this opportunity to thank colleagues for Canada's election to the Bureau of our IGC: Canada welcomes the opportunity to

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contribute actively in this capacity, and we will do our utmost to put this show of confidence to good use.

And let me reiterate, once again, Madame President, how pleased Canada is to see our work taking place under your very competent leadership. We are highly confident in your ability to steer us through this process, and stand ready to assist you to the very best of our ability.

Madame President,

As we begin our session, we recognize the challenges before us. We have complex issues to tackle, and multifaceted responses to elaborate, in order to build an effective and practical regime for the conservation and sustainable use of BBNJ resources. We now need to shift away from Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) dynamics, where general positions were exchanged, and transition into an actual negotiation mode. One major objective to reach, during this first substantive session, is to complete that transition – and set the stage for the production of a zero draft from which we can progress further. We risk, otherwise, rapidly reaching a point where it will be difficult to make solid headway, without the support of specific language on which to focus our attention.

With this in mind, we wish to commend you on your thoughtful and detailed *President's Aid to Discussions* document. This comprehensive set of questions to be addressed should assist greatly in structuring our discussion, and identifying the best way forward. Your document recognizes, as we do, the high value of the BBNJ work accomplished so far, and in particular the recommendations found in Chapter III of the PrepCom report to the General Assembly. We welcome your repeated calls for taking a practical view when addressing these questions, so as to produce a BBNJ instrument that is workable and effective. And we support your approach of addressing some of the cross-cutting issues in the context of the four main themes, while leaving others aside for future discussions.

We look forward to addressing these matters in detail, over the coming days, and do not intend to dwell long on them at this time. Let me stress, nevertheless:

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- 1) On Marine Genetic Resources, the importance of finding a practical and workable approach for the appropriate sharing of benefits - while respecting our existing rights and obligations under international law;
- 2) On Area-Based Management Tools, the importance of finding the right formula for effective action at the global level - while taking advantage of the expertise, and respecting the mandate, of other relevant entities;
- 3) On Environmental Impact Assessments, the importance of injecting added value and coherence to efforts already taking place, while retaining an effective approach;
- 4) And on Capacity-Building and the Transfer of Marine Technology, the importance of being sensitive to the special needs of states with greater needs in developing their ability to contribute to our common objectives, and finding appropriate means to assist those states in doing so. Canada recognizes the significance of providing assistance in this regard, and looks forward to constructive discussions.

As we work together to achieve these objectives, we must remain mindful of the importance of elaborating an instrument that is fully consistent with the provisions of UNCLOS. We must also bear in mind that our efforts, and their outcomes, should not undermine existing relevant legal instruments and frameworks, and the work of relevant global, regional, and sectoral bodies.

Madame President,

The conservation and proper management of our oceans must be a priority for us all. The importance of protecting the oceans cannot be understated, nor can the importance of a collective effort to do so. We are being called on, together, to assist in protecting the health and productivity of our oceans, and to actively conserve and sustain their biological diversity.

Bordered by three oceans, Canada is in many respects a maritime nation, and many aspects of our daily lives are inextricably linked to oceans and their resources. We understand the challenges ahead, but firmly believe that, together,

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we can succeed in better protecting and managing our oceans, and keep them healthy and productive for present and future generations, not only for Canada, but for the global community as a whole.

Canada is ready to proceed, and committed to actively contributing with an open and constructive spirit.

Thank you, Madame President.