



**General Statement of the European Union and its Member States
at the Intergovernmental Conference on an internationally binding
instrument under the United Nations Convention of the Law of the
Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological
diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction**

Third Session

New York, 19 August, 2019

Madam President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the EU and its Member States. We are once again very delighted to see you back at the podium and guiding us towards what we trust will be a successful outcome of the IGC.

We would like to start by congratulating you, your team and DOALOS for the very timely distribution of the documentation for this session of the IGC. This task has not been a simple one, but you have managed to deliver on our expectations.

As supported by all delegations in April, we now have a draft text for a future Implementing Agreement in front of us, which marks the transition to the very crucial phase in this process – text based negotiations. We also welcome the provisional Programme of Work. Together these two documents provide an excellent basis for making further progress in our deliberations. The EU and its MS are fully prepared to contribute to this common goal.

Madam President,

We appreciate, in particular, the Programme of Work's focus on central provisions for the functioning of the future Implementing Agreement. In this respect, the EU and its MS continue to support the approach consistently applied by you, Madam President, in all the IGC sessions – the need to concentrate on actors, processes and mechanisms that can deliver on agreed objectives and functions of the new Agreement. As discussions to date have shown, there is a need to find agreement on these key functions of the Implementing Agreement first, before being able to settle questions on definitions, principles, institutional set-up and funding. In this vein, the Programme of Work together with the draft treaty text enable us to establish a clear focus and priorities for this third session of the IGC.

We also welcome the introduction of the new format of Informal informals in the Programme of Work. This format will offer us an opportunity to work on concrete text proposals and possible alternative formulations. It is however important that all formats of the IGC will ensure for delegations and observers transparency, inclusiveness, efficient time management, and that they will contribute to building overall confidence and convergence across all delegations.

In terms of time-management and if necessary, the EU and its Member States remain open to considering also parallel scheduling of Informal informals. However, it is crucial that all UN Member States, to the fullest extent possible, have access to the discussions in any format in the official Programme of Work, including the Informal informals. Also, in order to ensure full transparency, the outcome of Informal informals must be duly referred back to the level of the Informal Working Groups and the Plenary.

As for the Informal Working Groups, we believe that they continue to have a major role in facilitating gradual build-up of convergence on the treaty text. They offer an opportunity to provide all delegations with inclusive feed-back on the overall course of negotiations across the entire "package", to consider cross-cutting aspects and the overall structure of the Implementing Agreement and its provisions and to confirm areas where provisional agreement is emerging.

Madam President,

Lastly, let me recall that the UN General Assembly, in its resolution 72/249, has tasked us to elaborate by 2020 the text of an UNCLOS Implementing Agreement that is consistent with the Convention. Furthermore, the EU and its Member States continue to call for a dedicated, effective, practicable and future-proofed Implementing Agreement

for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. The Implementing Agreement should also foster cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation between competent international and regional organisations and relevant instruments.

The EU and its Member States have shared again our overall vision on “Key Deliverables” of the future Implementing Agreement in writing to all UN delegations. We continue to be ready to engage actively with other delegations in order to achieve concrete progress on the draft text and to thereby fulfill the mandate given to us by the GA. At the end of this IGC, we look forward to a well developed draft text that could form the basis of agreement for all delegations at IGC-4 next year.

We believe that intersessional periods are also key to advance the issues that are under negotiations, therefore we have organized on the 21st and 22nd of May in Brussels the workshop on “Marine Genetic Resources in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction: bridging policy, law, science and research and development”; and we are organizing a Workshop on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment in the second half of January 2020 in Brussels.

In this spirit, we look forward to working closely with you, Madam President, the Secretariat, the Facilitators as well as with all delegations and observers during the next two weeks.