



**UNITED NATIONS  
OFFICE OF LEGAL AFFAIRS**

**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**

**First Session**

**Remarks**

**by**

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**Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and  
United Nations Legal Counsel,  
Secretary-General of the Conference**

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**(Conference Room 3)**

Distinguished President of the Conference,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. António Guterres, wishes to be here with all of you at the opening of this important session of the Conference on the development of 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 (“the Conference”). Unfortunately, because of conflicting appointments almost on the eve of the 73<sup>rd</sup> session of the General Assembly, he cannot be with us this morning.



Distinguished delegates,

The path to this day has been long but fruitful. It took us through extensive discussions within various processes established by the General Assembly on issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. These deliberations delved into related scientific, technical, economic, legal, environmental, socioeconomic and other aspects. They provided a rich and substantive ground on which to develop, under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, a legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Distinguished delegates,

Twenty-five years ago, another United Nations negotiating conference on oceans issues was convened. That Conference, which began its work in 1993 concluded successfully two years later in 1995, with the adoption of the United Nations Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (the “Agreement”).

I am confident that this Conference will be equally fruitful, and lead to the development, as soon as possible, of an instrument that all delegations can agree to, one that makes a strong contribution to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction and to the health of our oceans.

Distinguished delegates,

Oceans and the essential ecosystems they provide are vital to life on this planet. There is ample evidence of increasing pressures on this crucial part of the Earth biosphere. Scientists through various assessments of the marine environment, including the First Global Integrated Marine Assessment, have told us so. If these pressures and their impacts are not addressed, their cumulative effect will lead to a destructive cycle in which the oceans would no longer be able to provide many of these services that humans and other life on this planet depend on.





The importance of the sustainable use and conservation of the oceans and seas and marine resources for sustainable development is not in doubt. Sustainable oceans and seas can contribute to poverty eradication, sustained economic growth, food security and creation of sustainable livelihoods and decent work. At the same time protecting the marine environment, including marine biodiversity, will help build resilience to the impacts of climate change.

Distinguished delegates,

At this first substantive session, we are set to begin negotiations in earnest with the view to reaching a common ground on the difficult questions before you.

I witnessed the collegial environment that prevailed at the Organizational Meeting held in April, at which you reached agreement on important organizational matters. I have no doubt that your negotiations at this session will be conducted in a spirit of cooperation in recognition of the vital importance of the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.

I wish you, Madam President, every success with the cooperation and collaboration of all Conference participants, in achieving the important and ambitious instrument that “We the people” and our planet need.

You can be assured of my continued collaboration and that of my colleagues in the Office of Legal Affairs, in particular the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, who all stand ready to provide you the support needed in the important task ahead.

Thank you.

