



**AOSIS Opening Statement at the
First Session of the Intergovernmental Conference on an International
Legally Binding Instrument under UNCLOS for the Conservation and
Sustainable Use of Marine Biodiversity in Areas Beyond Natural
Jurisdiction**

4 September 2018

Madame President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States. Let me begin by aligning with the statement delivered by the Group of 77 and China, and join in congratulating the new members of the bureau for their election.

We would also like to thank you, Madame President, for providing us with the President's aid to discussion in order to guide us towards the draft text for an international legally binding instrument. We are pleased to note that this document was prepared in light of the discussions which took place in the Preparatory Committee prior to this Conference, as well as the relevant outcomes from that process.

Although this is the first meeting of the intergovernmental conference, we wish to reemphasize that our point of departure for these negotiations is where we left off in those preceding discussions. Therefore we believe that this tool is beneficial for guiding the present dialogue in that context. We assure you of our readiness to engage in this first session, taking into

account that our objective is reaching an international legally binding instrument as soon as possible.

According to the First Global Integrated Marine Assessment of the United Nations, areas beyond national jurisdiction cover an estimated forty-five per cent of the surface of the earth, sixty four per cent of the surface of the ocean and contain ninety-five per cent of its volume. Much is unknown about this area, as only an incredibly tiny fraction of it has been explored. However, we do know that the biodiversity of the deep-sea supports ecosystem processes without which the natural systems of Earth would not be able to function. Through this instrument, we can take a step towards ensuring that these resources will be conserved and sustainably used for future generations.

In this regard, we would also like to highlight the importance of aiming towards an instrument which is inclusive and universal. The burden of conservation and sustainable use of Marine Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction falls upon our shoulders collectively, and the objectives of this instrument cannot be fully realized without global support. Therefore we encourage all partners to contribute constructively to this conference, with this common objective in sight.

Given the urgency of the need for this instrument, we hope to emerge from this first session with a clearer idea of the way forward. We express our full confidence in your leadership, Madame President, in guiding us towards the completion of our mandate, and once again express our full support to you, in the road ahead.

Thank you.