



Statement on behalf of the European Union and its Member States

By

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and the Law of the Sea**

“Ocean Observing”

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- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

Co-chairs,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. Since this is our first intervention at this meeting, we would like to congratulate you on your reappointment as co-chairs. We are happy that we are meeting physically in New York once again.

We wish to begin by reiterating our strong support for the Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea. This process allows us to come together and discuss key topics and issues in the area of oceans and the law of the sea in an open and inclusive forum. We would like to thank the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, for their continual support and effort, particularly as we emerge from such a challenging time, the COVID 19 pandemic having put the world on hold for over two years.

The European Union and its Member States want to stress that they remain true to the rules and principles of the UN Charter and to international law; and promote the peaceful resolution of disputes among States. In this regard, let me express our full solidarity with Ukraine and our condemnation of Russia's unprovoked and unjustified act of military aggression against a sovereign independent country, which grossly violates international law and the UN Charter, and undermines international security and stability. We stand firmly with Ukraine and its people in standing up against this cruel aggression.

Co-chairs,

The ocean covers roughly 70% of the Earth's surface and is home to nearly 80% of life on this planet. It is the main regulator of the planet's climate and is the primary resource for sustaining all life; it provides food, energy and also plays a central role in the world's economy and supporting sustainable development, as recognised in the UN 2030 Agenda. However, as highlighted in the Declaration for the forthcoming UN Ocean Conference, the Ocean and its ecosystems, as well as coastal and island communities are facing serious threats, particularly in relation to climate change. These include rising sea levels, ocean acidification, oxygen depletion and the warming of waters leading to increased extreme weather events; as well as other human pressures; such as overfishing and illegal fishing, pollution, biodiversity loss, the destruction of habitats or the over-extraction of resources.

In light of this, the EU and its Member States welcome the focus on ocean observation at this year's ICP and thank the US for bringing this to our attention.

We hold that ocean observation and furthering scientific innovation in the marine area are essential for monitoring the impacts of climate change as well as human activities. This will allow for better management of their impact, and for the restoration and preservation of ocean health and productivity, and the protection of communities and populations that depend on it. The UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) highlights the central role that different forms of ocean observation play in implementing the SDG 14.

Co-chairs,

The European Union and its member States consider that in line with the UNCLOS, international cooperation and collaboration should be strengthened to further develop international ocean research and data collection, including socio-economic aspects. This is even more important as many countries develop their ocean economies in support of their development aspirations, and particularly as we emerge from the crisis precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In parallel to numerous measures being taken at a national level by EU member States, the underlying need for reinforcing cooperation also emerges in a number of initiatives taken at a European level.

The EU's International Ocean Governance Agenda, adopted in 2016, emphasises the role of Ocean observation and related aspects in establishing the foundations of an International Ocean Governance¹ based on three primary pillars²; the strengthening of international framework governing the oceans, international ocean research and data and reducing the overall pressure on oceans and seas to create a truly sustainable blue economy.

In line with these priorities, the EU has invested in a number of projects to support enhanced ocean observation and data collection. These include:

- **The European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODnet):** which provides a platform for organisations, scientists, policy makers and others, to work together to observe the ocean, collect and process data, which is made freely available.
- **Copernicus:** the EU's Earth observation programme that provides satellite Earth observation and in situ data from, the latest scientific models, for multiple sectors including marine.
- **The European Ocean Observing System (EOOS),** a stakeholder driven framework that integrates Europe's ocean observing communities and facilitates coordinating the multiple organisations operating, supporting and maintaining ocean observing and monitoring infrastructures. It is supported by EuroGOOS, the European Marine Board and the Joint Programming Initiative for "Healthy and Sustainable Oceans".

More information is contained in our submission to this meeting, which can be found on the DOALOS website.

Co-chairs,

These platforms are merely a few examples of possible tools that are being used to improve cooperation, optimise resources, and share data and information. However, we acknowledge

¹ Managing the world's oceans and resources together to better ensure that they are healthy and productive for future and current generations. https://ec.europa.eu/oceans-and-fisheries/ocean/international-ocean-governance_en

² https://ec.europa.eu/oceans-and-fisheries/ocean/international-ocean-governance_en

that there are still many issues that need to be overcome and gaps that need to be bridged, for example:

- The lack of sufficient data which hampers our ability to effectively monitor impacts and the effectiveness of measures³.
- Insufficient transparency: meaning the lack of accessible information on what is **currently** being observed, what **needs** to be observed, what **will** be observed, **how** it will be observed
- Insufficient marine knowledge and its collection processes, both satellite and in situ
- The scarcity of biological observations and deep sea observation
- Improving connection and coordination among stakeholders across the ocean observing community in order to maximise its value and benefits.
- The lack of an integrated ecosystem approach to enable a transformation from platform-specific observing to multi-platform, integrated and thematic observing.
- And a need to develop better standardised measures to facilitate sharing or transfer of information and data at a global level

These problems must be addressed and solutions must be found whilst also preserving access for undertaking ocean observation in waters under jurisdiction or sovereignty, and respecting the applicable legal framework.

Co-chairs,

In this respect, we want to stress the overarching and fundamental role played by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas **must** be carried out, and whose 40th anniversary we are celebrating this year. The EU and its Member States reiterate as always, their complete commitment and support to the integrity and universality of UNCLOS, as the ‘Constitution of the Oceans’. We note that its Part XIII on marine scientific research not only promotes international cooperation for marine scientific research but also establishes the legal framework for the conduct and promotion of marine scientific research, and which is the applicable regime for ocean observation.

We look forward to further constructive discussions on ways in which we can further our knowledge and understanding and improve international cooperation in ocean observation so that we can improve the management of human activities in the ocean to ensure a truly sustainable blue economy that can support the needs of current and future generations.

³ OECD Issue Paper A preliminary assessment of indicators for SDG 14 on “Oceans”, November 2017