

30 January 2014

Input by DESA/DSD to

The advance version of Part I of the Secretary-General report on ocean affairs and the law of sea, on the topic of the fifteenth meeting of the Informal Consultative Process “The role of seafood in global food security”, to be made available to a preparatory meeting for the Informal Consultative Process in March 2014

In the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development held in 2012 (Rio+20), Member States reaffirmed their “commitments regarding the right of everyone to have access to safe, sufficient and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger”. They acknowledged “that food security and nutrition has become a pressing global challenge” and, in this regard, further reaffirmed their “commitment to enhancing food security and access to adequate, safe and nutritious food for present and future generations”. They stressed the “crucial role of healthy marine ecosystems, sustainable fisheries and sustainable aquaculture for food security and nutrition and in providing for the livelihoods of millions of people”.¹ In addition, they recognized that ‘farmers, including small-scale farmers and fisherfolk, pastoralists and foresters, can make important contributions to sustainable development through production activities that are environmentally sound, enhance food security and the livelihood of the poor and invigorate production and sustained economic growth’.²

Member States also reaffirmed “the necessity to promote, enhance and support more sustainable agriculture, including crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture, that improves food security, eradicates hunger and is economically viable, while conserving land, water, plant and animal genetic resources, biodiversity and ecosystems and enhancing resilience to climate change and natural disasters. They recognized “the need to maintain natural ecological processes that support food production systems.” They resolved to “improve access to information, technical knowledge and know-how, including through new information and communications technologies that empower farmers, fisherfolk and foresters to choose among diverse methods of achieving sustainable agricultural production”. Furthermore, Member States encouraged countries to give due consideration to implementing the Committee on World Food Security Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security”.³

Among the important outcomes of Rio+20 was the launch of a process to develop a set of sustainable development goals (SDGs) based on identified priority areas. The intergovernmental

¹A/RES/66/288 (2012): *The Future We Want – Outcome Document of the Rio+20 Conference; Chapter on Food Security; Paragraphs 108-118*

²A/RES/66/288 (2012): *The Future We Want – Outcome Document of the Rio+20 Conference; Paragraph 52*

³A/RES/66/288 (2012): *The Future We Want – Outcome Document of the Rio+20 Conference; Chapter on Food Security; Paragraphs 108-118*

Open Working Group established to make recommendations to that effect will consider the theme of oceans and seas in its eighth and final session (3-7 February 2014). This is in line with the “*Initial input of the Secretary-General to the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals*” (A/67/634), where several Member States noted that oceans should be among the priority areas to be taken into consideration while developing the new SDGs. As co-chairs of the UN System Technical Support Team (TST), which consists of over 40 UN entities and ensures all necessary input and support to the Open Working Group from the United Nations system, DESA and UNDP will continue to support this important process.

In “The Future We Want”, Member States stressed the importance of “the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and seas and of their resources for sustainable development, including through their contributions to poverty eradication, sustained economic growth, food security and creation of sustainable livelihoods and decent work, while at the same time protecting biodiversity and the marine environment and addressing the impacts of climate change”. Yet, there are increasing, complex challenges in preserving and maintaining healthy, resilient and productive oceans for the prosperity of present and future generations.

Coastal regions and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are particularly vulnerable to these challenges as the oceans play a central role in their culture, while at the same time being tightly linked to their economies. The topic of oceans is therefore expected to figure prominently at the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States in 2014. DESA serves as Secretariat of the Conference and continues to work closely with all relevant parts of the UN system and other entities in the preparations under the guidance of USG Wu as Secretary-General of the Conference. In preparation of the Conference, three regional preparatory meetings (Jamaica, Fiji and Seychelles in July 2013) as well as an interregional preparatory meeting (Barbados in August 2013) were held. In the outcome document of the inter-regional preparatory meeting, Member States underscored that the achievement of healthy, productive, and resilient oceans is crucial. They concluded that oceans should be prominently reflected in the SDGs and the post-2015 agenda, including through consideration of a thematic Sustainable Development Goal on Oceans. Going forward, two meetings of the Preparatory Committee (24-26 February 2014 and 23-27 June 2014) and one intersessional meeting (21-25 April 2014) are foreseen, which will be held in New York. The Conference itself will take place from 01-04 September 2014 in Apia, Samoa. The sustainable development of SIDS through genuine and durable partnerships will be the overarching theme of the Conference.