



**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF LEGAL AFFAIRS**

Webinar on “Strengthening the science-policy interface for ocean sustainability”

Statement

by

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(virtual event)

Excellencies, Distinguished Panelists, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to all, and thank you for joining us today.

At the onset, I wish to thank the distinguished panelists for participating in this event, and for their important contributions in this field.

The topic and timing of this webinar could not be more appropriate as the Second World Ocean Assessment is about to be launched. It is the only global assessment of the state of the marine environment which integrates the three pillars of sustainable development: environmental, economic and social.



But this launch also coincides with the beginning of the third cycle of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects, which is the mechanism that produces these assessments.

In this regard, it is my honor to welcome to the panel Juliette Babb-Riley, Deputy Permanent Representative of Barbados, who is Co-Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole of the General Assembly on the Regular Process, and thank her for years of steadfast leadership throughout the second cycle. I also take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude to Gert Auvaart, Deputy Permanent Representative of Estonia, also Co-Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group for his leadership.

It is important to note that these significant developments also coincide with the beginning of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. In this regard, I warmly welcome to the panel my esteemed colleague Vladimir Ryabinin, Executive Secretary of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO which is coordinating the Decade, and with whom the Office of Legal Affairs collaborates closely on many issues.

Both the Regular Process and the Decade highlight the importance of science and the need to strengthen the science-policy interface at all levels so as to address one of the defining challenges of our times: how do we sustainably manage the ocean, and restore its ability to nurture humanity and to regulate the climate?





The World Ocean Assessments are an essential tool for achieving this. They provide crucial knowledge to decision-making and management processes. But through their preparation, they also foster global knowledge sharing and the building of capacity across many disciplines and with a special focus on developing States.

While the first WOA, completed in 2015, provided a baseline study on the state of the ocean, the second examines trends against this baseline, and identifies gaps in knowledge and in capacity.

It is also a truly global undertaking, led by a Group of Experts composed of 19 experts nominated by the five regional groups, and supported by writing teams composed of experts nominated from a Pool of Experts comprising nearly 800 experts from some 80 States.

Excellencies, Distinguished Panelists, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am sure we all agree that connecting science to policy is a pressing challenge worldwide if we are to achieve sustainability in our relations with the ocean.

It is thus critical that we make science understandable to the general public, and in particular to decision-makers at all levels. It is essential that decision-making





processes actively consider the best available knowledge, and ensure that policy decisions are firmly rooted in such knowledge, all the while remaining open and adaptive to new discoveries over time.

But I will stop here, as the objective of this event is to explore these very considerations.

I will however conclude on a note of some urgency, as the forthcoming WOA confirms without ambiguity that the trends are not positive, and that the many benefits that the ocean provides are at risk due to a general failure to achieve integrated management of human uses of the ocean.

But I strongly believe that working together, redoubling our efforts, we can reverse the cycle of decline. The Regular Process and the Decade will be critical in this regard. They allow for a coordinated and global mobilization in support of the science-policy interface which is necessary for countries to rebalance their relationship with the ocean.

I wish you success in today's event, and I assure you of my Office's continued unwavering support as we move forward together.

Thank you.

