

#### **Agenda Item 4: General remarks**

Mr. Co-chairman,

My delegation wants to join others in congratulating you and your Co-Chair on your appointment to thank the Secretary-General and DOALAS for the excellent report that was prepared.

Much new and useful information has been developed at meetings here in the United Nations in recent years. It is time now to focus on – and agree to – steps that we can take collectively to ensure the conservation and sustainable and equitable use of this biodiversity for all peoples today and for future generations.

A series of recent scientific reports have shown that the environmental impact of anthropogenic activities on marine biodiversity is real, is growing and is severe.

Unsustainable fishing practices have diminished marine biodiversity. We have taken too many of species that filter ocean water, thus increasing water turbidity. We have taken too many of the ocean's top predators, thus unbalancing ocean ecosystems.

Increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere will raise ocean temperatures and change pH levels of ocean waters (ocean acidification). These changes affect the world's climate, weather patterns, ocean currents, marine biodiversity. Already, certain fish stocks appear to be migrating. The ability of microorganisms, corals and shellfish to fix calcium and other minerals is being hindered. It is projected that climate change will seriously affect food sources and will contribute to increasing spread of harmful invasive species.

Emerging or intensifying uses of the oceans, including those involving iron and urea fertilization; seabed mining; and anthropogenic under-water noise also threaten marine biodiversity.

At UNICPOLOS last year a panelist explained how marine micro-organisms play a central role in the global cycling of matter and energy and function as gatekeepers of the world's biogeochemical cycles. We need to protect the ocean processes that support them. We risk losing forms of life even before we have an opportunity to discover that they exist.

It is time to focus on solutions. We need to move towards an integrated approach to management based on precautionary and ecosystem approaches.

We need to promote science to help us to understand and respond in a timely fashion to the compounding affects of human activities on the marine environment. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species published in 2007 for the first time assessed coral species and several were added to the Red List.

Marine protected areas, including marine reserves, represent another tool to help better protect the oceans and their biodiversity. Such area-based management tools already exist for areas beyond national jurisdiction, for example through IMO rules, RFMO restrictions and other areas where entry is restricted to protect science.

We need to better integrate and implement these tools and to make progress towards the establishment of representative networks of MPAs. We urge States to endorse in appropriate fora the scientific criteria and guidance for establishing representative networks of marine protected areas developed at a workshop in the Azores under the auspices of the Convention on Biological Diversity. We urge States to welcome and encourage further work in developing biogeographic classification systems and bioregionalizations, identifying potential sites for consideration as protected areas and establishing pilot MPAs.

IUCN through the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas – Marine is also working to identify sites to serve as a basis for networks of marine protected areas

working with scientists and through coordinators for eighteen regions, most of which incorporate areas beyond national jurisdiction.

We urge States to put into practice decisive steps to improve our understanding of the oceans, their health, their value and vulnerability. States should take immediate measures to regulate the actions of their nationals on the high seas and to monitor their compliance with applicable laws and regulations. States have a duty to do so in order to ensure that the actions of those subject to their jurisdiction respect the rights of other legitimate users of the sea.

States should require of their nationals advance notification of all activities in the high seas that may harm biodiversity, together with the application of a prior environmental impact assessment procedure for all major activities, and all emerging and intensifying uses, of the oceans. Such assessments should be made publicly available and include require follow-up monitoring, as appropriate.

Consideration should be given to ways to protect the interests of all States, including those that do not as yet have the full capacity to conduct research and to benefit from marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction.

My delegation urges a continuation of this United Nations General Assembly Working Group to allow for continued discussion on how to better protect marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction and to consider ways to address and close governance, regulatory, implementation and enforcement weaknesses and gaps to this end.

In the interest of time, this statement includes highlights from a longer statement that we have made available.

Thank you, Mr. Co-Chair