

STATEMENT BY DR. VISHNU DUTT SHARMA, COUNSELLOR ON AGENDA ITEM 75[A] & [B]
- 'OCEANS AND THE LAW OF THE SEA' AT THE 67TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON DECEMBER 11, 2012

Mr. President

I take this opportunity to thank you for convening this meeting for the consideration of the agenda item “Oceans and the Law of the Sea”, which holds great significance for the international community as a whole.

This year, the subject of oceans occupies a special place as the United Nations is commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the Convention on the Law of the Sea. I congratulate the international community in this occasion.



Mr. President

Oceans play a vital role in supporting life on Earth. The outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June 2012 entitled “The Future we Want” recognized oceans and seas as an integrated and essential component of the Earth’s ecosystem that are critical to sustaining it.

This, however, is possible only through the proper management and use of ocean resources and the preservation and protection of marine environment. The oceans are facing a number of challenges including from the illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, deterioration of the marine environment, biodiversity loss, climate change, and those relating to the maritime safety and security including the acts of piracy.

Mr. President

We would like to express our serious concern over piracy and armed robbery at sea, particularly off the coast of Somalia. Piracy is a grave threat to the freedom of the seas, maritime trade and the security of maritime shipping. It endangers lives of seafarers, affects national security, territorial integrity and hampers economic development of nations. India is actively cooperating in international efforts to combat piracy and armed robbery at sea. We support the joint and concerted efforts by the international community to tackle this menace.

In this regard, we express our deep appreciations for the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS), which since its establishment in January 2009 is serving as an excellent forum for international cooperation and coordination in fight against piracy off the coast of Somalia.

Mr. President

The Law of the Sea Convention, 1982 is the key international instrument governing the ocean affairs. It sets out the legal framework for activities in oceans and seas and is of strategic importance as the basis for national, regional and global action in the marine sector. The Convention enjoys near universal acceptance with 114 Parties, Swaziland and Ecuador being the latest States joining the Convention on 24 September of this year.

Mr. President

We thank the Secretary-General for his Report A/67/79 and Addendum 1&2 on issues concerning oceans and the law of the sea.

We welcome the report A/67/120 of Co-Chairs of the thirteenth Meeting of the United Nations open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (ICP), wherein the deliberations were held on the topic of “marine renewable energies”. Oceans have significant potential to contribute to energy needs, to

improve economic well-being and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. However, while the marine renewable energies offer opportunities, also poses environmental and economic challenges, especially to developing countries, including with regard to undertaking scientific research and acquiring technological knowledge, which could only be met through effective international cooperation and coordination.

Mr. President,

We welcome the report A/67/87 of Co-Chairs of the meeting of the Ad-hoc Working Group of the Whole on the Regular Process for the global reporting and assessment of the state of marine environment, including socio-economic aspects. We commend the efforts of the working group toward materializing the first global integrated assessment of the state of the marine environment and look forward for its completion by 2014.

We also welcome the report A/67/95 of Co-Chairs of the meeting of the Ad-hoc Informal Working Group to study issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. The meeting revealed a number of gaps in the regulation, implementation, governance, coordination and information sharing in the current regime for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. We are confident that the work of the Working Group would lead to finding ways and means for filling these gaps including through developing a legal framework.

Mr. President

The effective and unhindered functioning of the institutions established under the Convention namely the International Sea-bed Authority, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf are the key in achieving the goal of fair and equitable uses of oceans and their resources including through the effective implementation of the provisions of the Convention. We note with satisfaction the progress made by these institutions in their respective areas and support all efforts towards ensuring the smooth functioning thereof.

While we are fully aware and concerned about the heavy workload of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf due to a great number of claim submissions, we are hopeful that the increased number of weeks of work of the Commission would help manage its workload.

Mr. President

In addition to the initiatives/processes under the Law of the Sea Convention for the implementation of its provisions, and the studies being undertaken in various working groups mandated by the General Assembly, this year we have noted the launch of the Secretary-General's initiative "Oceans Compact-Healthy oceans for Prosperity." It is important that the requirement of the initiative and its objectives are carved out in an open and regular consultation with the member States. We would also like to stress that any duplication with the work of the ongoing initiatives and processes be avoided.

Mr. President

I thank Ambassador Eden Charles, the Deputy Permanent Representative of Trinidad & Tobago, who has very ably coordinated this year's consultations for the draft omnibus resolution on Oceans and the Law of the Sea. It addresses a wide range of issues including those concerning the implementation of the Convention and related agreements; capacity building; maritime safety and security; marine scientific research; marine environment; and marine resources.

We would also like to thank Ms. Alice Revell of New Zealand for successfully coordinating the consultations on the draft resolution on Sustainable Fisheries. The fisheries sector occupies an important place in the socio-economic development of a great number of countries including India. We support the concerted efforts of international community towards achieving sustainable fisheries *inter-alia* by adopting measures to prevent and combat the illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, by effectively implementing the Fish Stocks Agreement and the relevant instruments at the regional level, and by preventing over-fishing. We consider the role of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations as crucial in the conservation of fisheries resources and the management and development of fisheries.

Our thanks also go to the whole staff of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS) for all arrangements for the meetings and constructive cooperation.

Mr. President,

India, given its geography as a country with a vast coastline and numerous islands, has a traditional and abiding interest in the maritime and ocean affairs. India is a party to the Convention, the Implementing Agreement, and the Fish Stocks

Agreement. It takes keen interest in all matters pertaining to the oceans affairs. We believe that it is in the interest of the international community as a whole to continue to extend full cooperation in efforts toward ensuring the proper management and sustainable use of the oceans and seas.

I thank you Mr. President.

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