
ADVANCE AND UNEDITED REPORTING MATERIAL

Seventy-eighth session

Item 77 (a) of the provisional agenda*

Oceans and the law of the sea

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Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, which covers the period from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023, is submitted pursuant to paragraph 389 of General Assembly resolution 77/248. It is also being submitted to States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, pursuant to article 319 of the Convention. The present report provides information on major developments relating to ocean affairs and the law of the sea, in particular, at the United Nations and its specialized agencies, funds and programmes, as well as within the bodies established by the Convention.

* A/78/150.

I. Introduction

1. The ocean remains under significant threat from human activities. Marine biodiversity is under attack from over-exploitation and ocean acidification, over one-third of fish stocks are being harvested at unsustainable levels and coastal waters are polluted with chemicals, plastics and human waste. In addition, human-induced climate change is warming the oceans, disrupting weather patterns and ocean currents and altering marine ecosystems and species.

2. Against this backdrop, the present report highlights key developments relating to ocean affairs and the law of the sea, including those undertaken by the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations pursuant to General Assembly resolution 77/248. It should be read together with other reports relevant to oceans and the law of the sea issued by the United Nations during the period under review,¹ as well as the detailed contributions provided by the United Nations specialized agencies, funds, programmes and bodies, and other intergovernmental organizations.²

¹ These include: (a) report of the Secretary-General on oceans and the law of the sea (A/78/67), which addressed the topic of focus of the twenty-third meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea; (b) report of the Secretary-General submitted to the resumed Review Conference in accordance with paragraph 60 of General Assembly resolution 74/18 to assist it in discharging its mandate under article 36 (2) of the Agreement (A/CONF.210/2023/1); (c) report on the work of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea at its twenty-third meeting (A/78/129); report of the resumed Review Conference on the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (A/CONF.210/2023/6); (d) report of the thirty-third meeting of the Meetings of States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (SPLOS/33/15); (d) report on the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects at its seventeenth meeting (A/77/596) and its eighteenth meeting (A/78/77); (e) report of the intergovernmental conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction at its fifth session (A/CONF.232/2023/5); (f) agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (A/CONF.232/2023/4); and (g) other relevant documents, such as the statements by the Chairperson of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf on the progress of work in the Commission (CLCS/56/1, CLCS/57/2 and CLCS/58/2).

² Inputs have been received from the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL), Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), International Court of Justice (ICJ), International Hydrographic Organization (IHO), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Maritime Organization (IMO), Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Oil Pollution Compensation Funds (IOPC Funds), International Seabed Authority (ISA), International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), International Whaling Commission (IWC), North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO), North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC), North Pacific Marine Science Organization (PICES), Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO), Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation – Permanent International Secretariat (BSEC PERMIS), OSPAR Commission, Permanent Commission for the South Pacific (Comisión Permanente del Pacífico Sur - CPPS), Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions (BRS), Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, South East Atlantic Fisheries Organization (SEAFO), South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

II. Legal and policy framework

3. The 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (Convention)³ sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out and is of strategic importance as the basis for national, regional and global action and cooperation in the marine sector.⁴

4. Following ratification by Rwanda on 18 May 2023, the number of parties to the Convention increased to 169.⁵ Rwanda thereby also became a party to the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 (Part XI Agreement), which now has 152 parties.⁶ Following the accession of Saudi Arabia to the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (Fish Stocks Agreement) on 22 June 2023, the number of parties increased to 93.⁷

5. The Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement) was adopted on 19 June 2023 at a further resumed fifth session of the Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ Intergovernmental Conference),⁸ which concluded its work on 20 June 2023. On the occasion of its adoption, the Secretary-General lauded the BBNJ Agreement as a historic achievement that was vital to addressing threats to the ocean and demonstrated the strength of multilateralism.⁹ The BBNJ Agreement will be open for signature by all States and regional economic integration organizations from 20 September 2023 to 20 September 2025, at United Nations Headquarters in New York. It will enter into force 120 days after the date of deposit of the sixtieth instrument of ratification, approval, acceptance or accession.¹⁰

6. The Council of the International Seabed Authority (Authority) continued to develop draft regulations on the exploitation of mineral resources in the Area and agreed on a roadmap to advance that work through July 2024.¹¹ The Council also adopted a decision setting out steps to be taken if an application for a plan of work

(UNFCCC), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). All contributions are available at: www.un.org/Depts/los/general_assembly/contributions78.htm.

³ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1833, p. 3.

⁴ A/RES/77/248, preamble.

⁵ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1833, p. 3 and C.N.134.2023.TREATIES-XXI.6 (Depositary Notification).

⁶ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1836, p. 3 and C.N.135.2023.TREATIES-XXI.6.a (Depositary Notification).

⁷ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2167, p. 3 and C.N.195.2023.TREATIES-XXI.7 (Depositary Notification).

⁸ A/CONF.232/2023/4 and A/CONF.232/2023/5.

⁹ Statement by the Secretary-General at the intergovernmental conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, 19 June 2023, at: www.un.org/bbnj/sites/www.un.org/bbnj/files/06-15-2023-final_bbnj_statement.pdf.

¹⁰ Depositary Notification, Opening for signature of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, C.N.203.2023.TREATIES-XXI.10; Also see Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, A/CONF.232/2023/4, articles 65 and 68.

¹¹ ISA contribution, para. 6; ISA, press release of 24 July 2023, at <https://www.isa.org.jm/news/isa-council-closes-part-ii-of-its-28th-session/>. Also see www.isa.org.jm/sessions/28th-session-2023.

for exploitation was submitted before the completion of those regulations.¹² The Assembly of the Authority included the periodic review of the international regime of the Area pursuant to article 154 of the Convention in the provisional agenda for the twenty-ninth session of the Assembly in 2024. The Assembly also extended the current Strategic Plan of the Authority 2019-2023 to 2025 and requested the Secretary-General of the Authority to review and update the High-Level Action Plan 2019-2023 as necessary for the same period. In addition, the Assembly agreed that an item on the role of the Assembly for the conservation and protection of the marine environment could be proposed for inclusion in the provisional agenda for the twenty-ninth session pursuant to rule 10(e) of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly.

7. At the thirty-third Meeting of States Parties in June 2023, several delegations welcomed progress in relation to the work of the Authority and called for the timely adoption of a robust and comprehensive regulatory framework. Several delegations called for a moratorium or “precautionary pause” on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area, citing concerns over potential impacts on the marine environment. Some delegations called for practical steps towards the full establishment of the Enterprise.¹³

8. This year marked the half-way point for achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 2023 SDG Summit will take place on 18-19 September in New York to seek high-level political guidance on transformative and accelerated actions leading up to 2030.¹⁴

III. Maritime spaces

9. International institutions, including the bodies established under the Convention, namely the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (Commission), the Authority and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (Tribunal), continued to contribute to the implementation of the law of the sea, including by enhancing legal certainty concerning maritime zones. States also continued to deposit charts and/or lists of geographical coordinates of points under the Convention.¹⁵

10. Among other developments, the Commission approved five sets of recommendations, bringing the total number of approved recommendations to 40 and commenced consideration of five submissions.¹⁶ The Commission also modified its working methods to advance the queue, limiting to three the number of revised submissions under active consideration at any one time.¹⁷ At the fifty-eighth session, 19 members of the Commission commenced their term of office.¹⁸

11. In addition to its work on the formulation of draft exploitation regulations, the Authority developed formulae for equitable sharing of financial and other economic benefits and initiated the preparation of draft proposals for the establishment of a

¹² Decision of the Council of the International Seabed Authority relating to the understanding and application of section 1, paragraph 15, of the Annex to the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, ISBA/28/C/25.

¹³ Report of the thirty-third Meeting of States Parties to the Convention, SPLOS/33/15, paras. 46-48.

¹⁴ See <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/SDGSummit2023>.

¹⁵ See information concerning deposits made under the Convention at: <https://www.un.org/Depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/depositpublicity.htm>.

¹⁶ Statements by the Chair on the progress of work in the Commission: CLCS/57/2, paras. 14, 24, 31 and 74; CLCS/58/2, paras. [21 and 58].

¹⁷ Statements by the Chair on the progress of work in the Commission, CLCS/57/2, para. 72.

¹⁸ Statement by the Chair on the progress of work in the Commission, CLCS/58/2, para. 7.

seabed sustainability fund.¹⁹ The Authority also made progress on a study on options for the distribution of funds received under article 82(4) of the Convention.²⁰

12. The Tribunal issued initial orders in the proceedings concerning a *Request for an Advisory Opinion submitted by the Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law (Case No. 31)*.²¹ The special chamber constituted to hear the *Dispute concerning delimitation of the maritime boundary between Mauritius and Maldives in the Indian Ocean (Mauritius/Maldives) (Case No. 28)* delivered a judgment, and after discontinuance of the prompt release proceedings in *The M/T "Heroic Idun" Case (Marshall Islands v. Equatorial Guinea), Prompt Release (Case No. 30)*, a special chamber is currently hearing *The M/T "Heroic Idun" (No. 2) Case (Marshall Islands/Equatorial Guinea) (Case No. 32)*.²²

13. The International Court of Justice delivered a judgment in the case concerning the *Question of the Delimitation of the Continental Shelf between Nicaragua and Colombia beyond 200 nautical miles from the Nicaraguan Coast (Nicaragua v. Colombia)*.²³ The Permanent Court of Arbitration continued to administer two arbitrations brought under the Convention, namely, the *Dispute Concerning Coastal State Rights in the Black Sea, Sea of Azov, and Kerch Strait (Ukraine v. the Russian Federation)* and the *Dispute Concerning the Detention of Ukrainian Naval Vessels and Servicemen (Ukraine v. the Russian Federation)*.²⁴ The Court is also administering a *Review Panel established under the Convention on the Conservation and Management of High Seas Fishery Resources in the South Pacific Ocean, PCA Case No. 2023-33*.²⁵

IV. Importance of the human dimension

14. Millions of people depend on the ocean for their lives, nutrition and livelihoods, including coastal communities, fishers and seafarers and other people working in ocean sectors. The COVID-19 pandemic and the armed conflict in Ukraine continued to hold back labour markets, with negative impacts on incomes and livelihoods, especially in developing countries.²⁶ The pandemic has negatively affected the safety and wellbeing of fishers and seafarers and inequalities have been exacerbated for migrant workers and women and girls.²⁷ Vulnerable populations, in particular those in small island developing States (SIDS) and least developed countries (LDCs) with low adaptive capacities, are facing severe threats from climate change, including from sea-level rise and extreme weather events.²⁸ The existential threat for some low-lying coastal States drove migration and led to forced displacement.²⁹ People-centered, inclusive responses to both the pandemic and the triple planetary crisis are essential to build fairer, sustainable and resilient societies.³⁰

¹⁹ ISA contribution, p. 2. For updates on the twenty-eighth session of the Authority, see <https://www.isa.org.jm/sessions/28th-session-2023/>.

²⁰ ISA contribution, p. 2. For updates on the twenty-eighth session of the Authority, see <https://www.isa.org.jm/sessions/28th-session-2023/>.

²¹ ITLOS contribution, p. 1. By Order of 30 June 2023, the Tribunal fixed 11 September 2023 as the date for the opening of the hearing at which oral statements may be made to the Tribunal.

²² ITLOS contribution, p. 1.

²³ See <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/154>.

²⁴ PCA contribution, p. 1.

²⁵ PCA contribution, pp. 8-9.

²⁶ ILO contribution, p. 26.

²⁷ ILO contribution, p. 26; IOM contribution, p. 2.

²⁸ IOM contribution, p. 2; UNCTAD contribution, at 7.

²⁹ IOM contribution, p. 2. See also *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, Felipe González Morales*, UN Doc. A/77/189, 19 July 2022, paras. 32-40.

³⁰ ILO contribution, pp. 7, 17 and 27; UNCTAD contribution, p. 6; UNFCCC contribution, p. 4.

Gender equality and ocean issues

15. Despite their vital presence in many ocean sectors, including fisheries, aquaculture and shipping, women continue to experience unstable employment, low pay and under-recognition of their contributions.³¹ Efforts to identify needs and improve access to employment by women included the development by FAO of capacity and information materials regarding small-scale fishery organizations for women³² and an ILO report on gender equality and women's empowerment in the fishing and seafood processing sectors in South-East Asia.³³ Amendments to the Code of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, will help to ensure that an increasing number of women seafarers have appropriately sized personal protective equipment.³⁴

16. The importance of gender equality in ocean sectors was recognized as a cross-cutting issue in some ocean strategies and projects.³⁵ IOC-UNESCO, in cooperation with Sweden, implemented case studies on gender and poverty perspectives in marine spatial planning in Kenya, Madagascar and the United Republic of Tanzania.³⁶ In commemoration of the "International Day for Women in Maritime" 2023, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) developed a global strategy to improve gender balance in the shipping industry.³⁷ The United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia helped strengthen maritime capacity in Somalia, including through the Women in Maritime Sector Initiative.³⁸ Initiatives taken to promote the empowerment of women in ocean science³⁹ included the Women in Deep-Sea Research project of the Authority⁴⁰ and a joint project of Canada and the International Hydrography Organization, "Empowering Women in Hydrography".⁴¹

A. Labour at sea

17. While efforts to address difficult working conditions faced by seafarers continued,⁴² including by ensuring protection during public health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic, contributing organizations also reported on their work to tackle other priorities, such as forced fishing labour, safety at sea, bullying and harassment, seafarer abandonment and the fair treatment of detained seafarers, as well as adaptation to the effects of climate change and natural hazards.

18. A joint action group, including ILO, WHO and IMO, adopted a set of recommendations for intergovernmental organizations and governments to address challenges faced by transport workers resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and

³¹ ILO contribution, pp. 12 and 23.

³² FAO contribution, p. 6. See H. Smith, 2022. A methodological guide for mapping women's small-scale fishery organizations to assess their capacities and needs – A handbook in support of the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, available at: www.fao.org/voluntary-guidelines-small-scale-fisheries/resources/detail/en/c/1469695.

³³ ILO contribution, p. 20. See https://ilo.org/asia/publications/WCMS_847927/lang--en/index.html.

³⁴ ILO contribution, p. 9.

³⁵ FAO contribution, p. 6 ; DPPA contribution, p. 2; UNEP contribution, p. 3.

³⁶ IOC-UNESCO contribution, paras. 180 and 249.

³⁷ IMO contribution, p. 11.

³⁸ DPPA contribution, p. 1.

³⁹ ICES contribution, p. 2, referring to the approval of the Gender Equality Plan and Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.

⁴⁰ ISA contribution, para. 27.

⁴¹ IHO contribution, p. 7. See <https://iho.int/en/basic-cbssc-ewh>.

⁴² A/77/331, paras. 26-30; A/76/311, paras. 31-35; and A/75/340, paras. 31-34.

protect them during future public health emergencies,⁴³ including on the sharing of information and coordination of actions.⁴⁴

19. ILO continued to deliver online training courses on labour condition inspection systems on board fishing vessels and the training of inspectors.⁴⁵ ILO also addressed unacceptable forms of work in regional fishing and seafood processing sectors⁴⁶ and collaborated with regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements (RFMO/As) on the intersection of overfishing and forced labour.⁴⁷ Following up on recommendations adopted by an FAO, ILO and IMO ad hoc joint working group on illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and related matters, efforts to tackle forced labour in fishing were being redoubled.⁴⁸

20. To promote a culture of safety at sea, the IMO Maritime Safety Committee considered a proposal for the comprehensive review of the International Safety Management Code and its related guidelines.⁴⁹ It also approved a comprehensive review of the 1978 International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, giving priority to provisions addressing bullying and harassment in the maritime sector, including sexual assault and sexual harassment.⁵⁰

21. At its first meeting, the Joint ILO-IMO Tripartite Working Group (JTWG) on seafarers' issues and the human element adopted guidelines for States on seafarer abandonment.⁵¹ The ILO-IMO database recorded 119 such cases in 2022, more than in any previous year.⁵² The IMO Legal Committee prepared guidelines on the fair treatment of seafarers detained on suspicion of committing maritime crimes, for consideration by JTWG in 2024.⁵³ A database to record detention of seafarers and designating contact points for coordination in such cases remains under consideration.⁵⁴

22. FAO continued to advance social protections in the fisheries sector, including through capacity-building initiatives, for example, to address the effects of climate change and natural hazards in the fisheries sector.⁵⁵ FAO also implemented capacity-building activities on safety at sea, including technical assistance to promote insurance services for small-scale fishers.⁵⁶

B. Migration by sea

23. Thousands of migrants and refugees resorted to perilous journeys by sea in many parts of the world.⁵⁷ In addition to the danger of being lost at sea, these individuals

⁴³ IMO contribution, p. 6; See the recommendations adopted by the Joint Action Group to review the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the world's transport workers and the global supply chain (JAG-TSC), at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---sector/documents/publication/wcms_866753.pdf.

⁴⁴ See recommendations adopted by the Joint Action Group to review the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the world's transport workers and the global supply chain (JAG-TSC), at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---sector/documents/publication/wcms_866753.pdf.

⁴⁵ ILO contribution, pp. 14-15.

⁴⁶ ILO contribution, pp. 17-18.

⁴⁷ ILO contribution, pp. 21-23.

⁴⁸ ILO contribution, p. 15.

⁴⁹ IMO contribution, p. 6.

⁵⁰ IMO contribution, p. 6.

⁵¹ ILO contribution, p. 11 and IMO contribution, p. 5; see https://www.ilo.org/sector/Resources/codes-of-practice-and-guidelines/WCMS_860595/lang--en/index.htm.

⁵² ILO contribution, p. 11; see <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/seafarers/seafarersbrowse.home>.

⁵³ IMO contribution, p. 5.

⁵⁴ IMO contribution, p. 5.

⁵⁵ FAO contribution, p. 8.

⁵⁶ FAO contribution, pp. 8-9.

⁵⁷ See UNHCR contribution, pp. 1-6, for further information on irregular movements by sea. See also IOM contribution, p. 1.

also risked being trafficked, kidnapped or subjected to inhuman and degrading treatment.⁵⁸ In some regions, lack of State-led search and rescue exacerbated the dangers, with non-governmental organizations and merchant vessels taking on this responsibility, when possible.⁵⁹ Safe disembarkation of persons rescued at sea continued to be ad hoc and unpredictable due to lengthy delays or non-responses from States approached with disembarking requests.⁶⁰ Following the capsizing of a boat in the Mediterranean Sea in June 2023, in which approximately 500 people, including 100 children, were presumed drowned, the United Nations Committee on Migrant Workers and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights called on States and regional organizations to establish safe and regular migration routes and ensure the rescue and safe disembarkation of all people in distress at sea.⁶¹

24. Initiatives to increase engagement and build capacity for the protection of life at sea continued at national and regional levels. UNHCR promoted effective, cooperative and protection-sensitive approaches to search and rescue and disembarkation with relevant coastal States and organizations, including through regional forums such as the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime.⁶² IOM worked at national and regional levels to strengthen mechanisms and institutional frameworks relating to migration by sea, including through capacity development and technical assistance initiatives.⁶³ UNODC implemented projects to counter migrant smuggling across multiple migration routes, including the Strengthening Transregional Action and Responses Against the Smuggling of Migrants initiative⁶⁴ and the Global Action against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants, in respect of the Andaman Sea.⁶⁵ UNODC also supported coastal States in the Western Indian Ocean region in the prosecution of migrant smugglers.

25. Efforts were taken to promote the effective implementation of relevant international instruments and strengthen international cooperation on the provision of assistance to persons in distress at sea. UNHCR released guidelines on legal considerations regarding the roles and responsibilities of States in relation to rescue at sea, non-refoulement and access to asylum, underlining that persons rescued at sea must be disembarked to a place of safety.⁶⁶ The UNHCR-led inter-agency group on protection of refugees and migrants moving by sea continued to advance protection of life at sea, consistent with international law,⁶⁷ including by analysing search and rescue practices and identifying gaps in existing responses to protection concerns in movements by sea in different regional settings.⁶⁸ The United Nations Network on Migration prepared actionable recommendations on strengthening cooperation on missing migrants and providing humanitarian assistance to migrants in distress, as mandated by the Progress Declaration of the International Migration Review Forum,⁶⁹ including in respect of migrants rescued at sea.⁷⁰

⁵⁸ UNHCR contribution, p. 1.

⁵⁹ UNHCR contribution, p. 3.

⁶⁰ UNHCR contribution, p. 3.

⁶¹ See www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2023/06/greece-shipwreck-un-committee-dismayed-rising-death-toll-calls-international. See also www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2023/06/loss-life-mediterranean-horrific-tragedy-turk.

⁶² UNHCR contribution, p. 2.

⁶³ IOM contribution, p. 1.

⁶⁴ UNODC contribution, p. 5; See www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/migrant-smuggling/starsom.html.

⁶⁵ UNODC contribution, p. 5; See www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/glo-act3/index.html

⁶⁶ UNHCR contribution, p. 1; UNHCR, *Legal considerations on the roles and responsibilities of States in relation to rescue at sea, non-refoulement, and access to asylum*, 1 December 2022, available at: www.refworld.org/docid/6389bfc84.html.

⁶⁷ UNHCR contribution, p. 1; IOM contribution, p. 1; UNODC contribution, p. 7.

⁶⁸ UNHCR contribution, p. 1.

⁶⁹ Progress Declaration of the International Migration Review Forum, para. 76, annexed to General Assembly resolution 76/266.

⁷⁰ IOM contribution, p. 1.

V. Maritime safety and security

26. Efforts to address challenges faced by seafarers as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic continued, including through the adoption of recommendations to review the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the world's transport workers and the global supply chain.⁷¹

27. The IMO Maritime Safety Committee urged the humanitarian efforts to evacuate stranded ships and seafarers in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov to continue.⁷² The IMO Maritime Safety Committee also adopted a resolution on the obligations of IMO member States in connection with search and rescue services under the 1974 International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS Convention) and the 1979 International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR Convention) in the context of armed conflicts.⁷³

28. IMO continued to consider how maritime autonomous surface ships (MASS) operations should be addressed in IMO's regulatory framework and began development of a non-mandatory goal-based code to take effect in 2025, which will form the basis for a mandatory goal-based code expected to enter into force in 2028.⁷⁴ The IMO Facilitation Committee approved a roadmap on addressing MASS issues related to the 1965 Convention on International Maritime Traffic.⁷⁵

29. IMO adopted a first set of amendments to the Polar Code, together with associated amendments to the SOLAS Convention, to incorporate new requirements for certain non-SOLAS ships concerning safety of navigation and voyage planning. IMO also approved revised interim guidelines on life-saving appliances and arrangements for ships operating in polar waters.⁷⁶

30. Work continued on measures to prevent unlawful practices associated with the fraudulent registration and registries of ships. A correspondence group was established to define and develop the elements of "due diligence" to be exercised in the process of registration of ships under the flag of a State in the IMO Unique Company and Registered Owner Identification Number Schemes.⁷⁷

31. The International Hydrographic Organization continued to develop standards and guidance on hydrographic information and to encourage full implementation of "e-navigation", in support of the work of IMO.⁷⁸ The International Whaling Commission (IWC) continued to develop a global database of ship strikes, including by adding historic and new records to the database.⁷⁹ UNODC continued to aid individual States in the Indian Ocean region with their national submarine cables protection and resilience plans.⁸⁰

32. In the fisheries sector, IMO completed the revision of the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel 1995, and developed a new associated code.⁸¹ IMO also continued

⁷¹ IMO contribution, p. 6; ILO contribution, p. 27; see also ILO Doc. JAG-TSC/2023. The work of this joint action group was integrated into the work of the Ad hoc virtual UN inter-agency Task Force on the impact of COVID-19 on seafarers.

⁷² IMO contribution p. 1.

⁷³ IMO contribution p. 1; see also IMO resolution MSC.519(106).

⁷⁴ IMO contribution, p. 2.

⁷⁵ IMO contribution, p. 2.

⁷⁶ IMO contribution, pp. 2-3; see also IMO Doc. MSC.1/Circ.1614/Rev.1.

⁷⁷ IMO contribution, p. 4.

⁷⁸ IHO contribution, p. 3.

⁷⁹ IWC contribution, p. 2.

⁸⁰ contribution of UNODC.

⁸¹ IMO contribution, p. 2.

to take steps to promote the entry into force of the 2012 Cape Town Agreement on fishing vessel safety and assisted individual Member States in the acceptance process.⁸²

33. Global efforts continued to tackle a wide range of crimes at sea, including piracy and armed robbery against ships;⁸³ human trafficking;⁸⁴ drug and weapon smuggling, including nuclear materials and firearms;⁸⁵ terrorism;⁸⁶ illegal traffic in hazardous wastes and other wastes and illegal traffic in hazardous chemicals;⁸⁷ fisheries offences, including IUU fishing;⁸⁸ and intentional damage to submarine cables.⁸⁹

34. Piracy and armed robbery against ships continued to decrease globally in 2022.⁹⁰ In the first quarter of 2023, the International Maritime Bureau received the lowest number of reported first-quarter incidents since 1993.⁹¹ Southeast Asia saw a decline compared to the same period in 2022,⁹² including in the Singapore Straits.⁹³ The Gulf of Guinea also witnessed a steady decline in incidents,⁹⁴ and no reports were made of piracy attacks off the coast of Somalia.⁹⁵ The International Law Commission (ILC) published the first report of the Special Rapporteur on prevention and repression of piracy and armed robbery at sea.⁹⁶ The first draft articles on this topic were provisionally adopted by the ILC Drafting Committee.⁹⁷

35. International cooperation to address maritime crimes also continued. UNODC provided training, capacity-building and technical assistance globally in relation to the prevention of the threats to maritime safety and security.⁹⁸ DPPA supported maritime safety and security efforts in various regions, such as Somalia and East Africa, and the Gulf of Guinea and West Africa, including through capacity building.⁹⁹ The Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate contributed to the Counter Maritime Terrorism and Enhance Maritime Security initiatives under the Global Counterterrorism Forum.¹⁰⁰ In the context of the tenth anniversary of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct, efforts were undertaken to further its operationalization,¹⁰¹ including an assessment expected to be conducted by the Inter-regional Coordination Centre.¹⁰² The United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel jointly developed an interregional

⁸² IMO contribution, p.2.

⁸³ IMO contribution, p. 3

⁸⁴ UNODC contribution, pp. 5, 7; IOM contribution, p. 1.

⁸⁵ UNODC contribution, p. 2, 3, 4, 6; DPPA contribution, p. 4.

⁸⁶ CTED contribution.

⁸⁷ BRS contribution, p. 2; IAEA contribution, p. 1.

⁸⁸ FAO contribution, pp. 3-4, 8, 12, 13; UNODC contribution, pp. 7-8; DPPA contribution, pp. 3, 5. See also NAFO contribution, p. 2; NEAFC contribution, p. 7; and SPRFMO contribution, p. 2.

⁸⁹ UNODC contribution, p. 7.

⁹⁰ IMO contribution, p. 3.

⁹¹ See IMB news, IMB records lowest level of Q1 piracy since 1993 in 2023 report. 13 April 2023: <https://www.icc-ccs.org/index.php/1329-imb-records-lowest-level-of-q1-piracy-since-1993-in-2023-report>.

⁹² IMB, Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships for the Period 1 January-31 March 2023, p. 6.

⁹³ IMB, Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships for the Period 1 January-31 March 2023, p. 6.

⁹⁴ IMB, Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships for the Period 1 January-31 March 2023, p. 23; DPPA contribution, p. 3.

⁹⁵ IMB, Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships for the Period 1 January-31 March 2023, p. 20-21.

⁹⁶ ILC, First report on prevention and repression of piracy and armed robbery at sea, by Yacouba Cissé, Special Rapporteur, UN Doc. A/CN.4/758, 22 March 2023.

⁹⁷ ILC, Prevention and repression of piracy and armed robbery at sea - Titles and texts of draft articles 1 to 3 provisionally adopted by the Drafting Committee, UN Doc. A/CN.4/L.984, 26 May 2023

⁹⁸ UNODC contribution, pp. 2-9.

⁹⁹ DPPA contribution.

¹⁰⁰ CTED contribution.

¹⁰¹ DPPA contribution, pp. 5-6.

¹⁰² DPPA contribution, p. 6.

project in support of regional stakeholders to carry out the review, in close collaboration with UNODC.¹⁰³

VI. Climate change and the ocean

36. The past eight years have been the warmest on record. As concentrations of greenhouse gases continued to increase, ocean heat content and sea levels reached record highs and ocean acidification reached unprecedented levels.¹⁰⁴

37. In its 2023 Synthesis Report,¹⁰⁵ the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concluded that climate change had already caused substantial damages and increasingly irreversible losses to coastal and ocean ecosystems.¹⁰⁶ Hundreds of local losses of species have been driven by increases in the magnitude of heat extremes, with mass mortality events recorded in the ocean.¹⁰⁷ Ocean warming and ocean acidification adversely affected food production from fisheries and shellfish aquaculture in some regions.¹⁰⁸ Increased impacts were projected, including water borne diseases, flooding in coastal and other low-lying cities and regions, biodiversity loss, and loss of ecosystems and their services, with long-term impacts on people, in particular indigenous peoples and local communities directly dependent on those ecosystems.¹⁰⁹ As warming levels continue to increase, the risks of species extinction or irreversible loss of biodiversity, including in coral reefs and Arctic regions, will escalate.¹¹⁰

38. The important links between climate change and the ocean continued to be recognized in multilateral processes. The twenty-seventh meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP-27) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) encouraged ocean-based actions to be integrated into national climate goals and in the implementation of those goals.¹¹¹ The 2023 UNFCCC Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue highlighted the need to build resilience and cut emissions, focusing on coastal ecosystem restoration, blue carbon ecosystems, fisheries and food security.¹¹²

39. In terms of mitigation, an increasing number of parties to the Paris Agreement targeted ocean-based climate actions, targets, policies and measures.¹¹³ Scientific advancements were made on nature-based solutions to improve the carbon sequestration capacity of coastal ecosystems, such as mangroves, saltmarshes and seagrasses.¹¹⁴ Following the launch of the Blue Ambition Loop report, the Marrakesh Partnership for Global Climate Action on Ocean and Coastal Zones focused on identifying breakthroughs in marine conservation, ocean-based transport, marine

¹⁰³ DPPA contribution, p. 6.

¹⁰⁴ World Meteorological Organization State of the Global Climate 2022: <https://public.wmo.int/en/our-mandate/climate/wmo-statement-state-of-global-climate>. The rate of global mean sea level rise doubled between the first decade of the record (1993–2002) and the last decade (2013–2022). The acceleration is estimated to be 0.12 ± 0.05 mm yr⁻² over the 30-year period.

¹⁰⁵ IPCC. 2023. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Summary for Policymakers. In: Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report. A Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Core Writing Team, H. Lee and J. Romero (ed.). Geneva, Geneva: IPCC. Available at <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/>.

¹⁰⁶ IPCC 2023 Synthesis Report.

¹⁰⁷ UNFCC contribution; International Organization for Migration contribution; IPCC 2023 Synthesis Report.

¹⁰⁸ UNFCC contribution; IPCC 2023 Synthesis Report.

¹⁰⁹ UNFCC contribution; IPCC 2023 Synthesis Report.

¹¹⁰ UNFCC contribution; IPCC 2023 Synthesis Report.

¹¹¹ UNFCCC contribution.

¹¹² UNFCCC contribution.

¹¹³ UNFCCC contribution. 2022 Nationally Determined Contributions Synthesis Report

¹¹⁴ IAEA contribution.

renewable energy, aquatic food and coastal tourism.¹¹⁵ Work also continued on potential mitigation interventions, including on the challenges and possibilities of marine geoengineering.¹¹⁶

40. With respect to adaptation, the UNFCCC Nairobi Work Programme expert group on the ocean produced reports on coastal adaptation, including a policy brief on innovative approaches for strengthening coastal and ocean adaptation.¹¹⁷ UNCTAD worked on the impacts of climate change and extreme weather events on coastal transport infrastructure, in particular to assist SIDS with adaptation measures.¹¹⁸ UN-Habitat addressed the vulnerability of SIDS to climate change and launched its global programme for integrated urban resilience in SIDS and coastal cities.¹¹⁹ Actions were taken by FAO, UNEP and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization to strengthen resilience, including through restoration of coral reefs, the use of integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) and addressing the climate change and poverty nexus.¹²⁰ RFMO/As reported on incorporating climate change and ocean acidification in their work.¹²¹

41. Regarding financing, historic decisions were taken at COP-27 highlighting the need to transform the global financial system and establish a fund to assist developing countries, particularly those vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, in responding to loss and damage.¹²² With estimated adaptation costs for developing countries far greater than current finance flows, major collaborative efforts by policymakers and development partners and shifts in focus were still required.¹²³

42. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) continued to organize capacity-building activities on ocean acidification.¹²⁴ Research was also ongoing under the Ocean Decade endorsed Programme on ocean acidification research for sustainability.¹²⁵

43. The Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law requested an advisory opinion from the Tribunal on the obligations of States Parties under the Convention on the effects of climate change.¹²⁶ The General Assembly requested an advisory opinion from the ICJ on the obligations of States in respect of climate change, including under the law of the sea.¹²⁷

44. The Climate Ambition Summit in September 2023¹²⁸ and the first global stocktake (GST) of progress under the Paris Agreement, scheduled to conclude at the twenty-eighth meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP-28) to the UNFCCC, to be held in the United Arab Emirates from 30 November to 12 December 2023, will provide opportunities to accelerate action, including in maritime spaces, to avoid the worst consequences of climate change.

45. The fifteenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP-15), adopted four goals and 23 targets as part of the Kunming-

¹¹⁵ UNFCCC contribution.

¹¹⁶ IOC-UNESCO contributions, see GESAMP Working Group 41: <http://www.gesamp.org/work/groups/41>.

¹¹⁷ UNFCCC contribution.

¹¹⁸ UNCTAD contribution.

¹¹⁹ UN-Habitat contribution.

¹²⁰ FAO contribution, UNEP contribution, BSEC contribution.

¹²¹ NEAFC contribution; OSPAR contribution.

¹²² UNFCCC decision 2/CP.27.

¹²³ UNCTAD contribution.

¹²⁴ IAEA contribution.

¹²⁵ IOC-UNESCO contribution.

¹²⁶ ITLOS contribution. See Request for Advisory Opinion:

https://www.itlos.org/fileadmin/itlos/documents/cases/31/Request_for_Advisory_Opinion_COSIS_12.12.22.pdf. Also see paragraph 12 above.

¹²⁷ General Assembly resolution 77/276.

¹²⁸ <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/press-encounter/2022-12-19/secretary-generals-end-of-year-press-conference>.

Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGB Framework), including a target to minimize the impact of climate change and ocean acidification on biodiversity and increase its resilience through mitigation, adaptation, and disaster risk reduction actions, including through nature-based solutions and/or ecosystem-based approaches, while minimizing negative and fostering positive impacts of climate action on biodiversity.

VII. Ocean sustainability

46. Significant social, economic and environmental benefits to humanity and the planet are provided by the ocean, which sustains economic activities with an estimated value between \$3 trillion to \$6 trillion and at least 150 million direct jobs, and provides habitats for species and invaluable ecosystem services, such as absorption of significant amounts of heat and carbon dioxide.¹²⁹ Destructive trends in ocean health have not abated, however.¹³⁰ The cumulative impacts of ocean warming and acidification,¹³¹ eutrophication,¹³² deoxygenation,¹³³ unsustainable practices such as subsidies for harmful ocean-based economic activities,¹³⁴ and plastic pollution,¹³⁵ among others, continue to threaten the capacity of the ocean to provide essential services, including mitigation of climate change.¹³⁶ Unsustainable use of marine resources poses an imminent threat to communities that are heavily dependent on the ocean, in particular SIDS.¹³⁷

47. Ocean sustainability remained a focus in global efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14), with some progress made in limited areas, including expanding marine protected areas (MPAs) and combatting IUU fishing.¹³⁸ On indicator 14.c.1,¹³⁹ the vast majority of reporting States indicated high levels of implementation of the Convention and its Implementing Agreements.¹⁴⁰ More concerted efforts and acceleration were urgently

¹²⁹ UNCTAD, Trade and Environment Review 2023: Building a sustainable and resilient ocean economy beyond 2030 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.23.II.D.10), available at: https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ditcted2023d1_en.pdf.

¹³⁰ Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet, Report of the Secretary-General (Special Edition), Advance, Unedited Version, June 2023: <https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/SDG%20Progress%20Report%20Special%20Edition.pdf>.

¹³¹ UNFCCC contribution; Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet, Report of the Secretary-General (Special Edition), Advance, Unedited Version, June 2023.

¹³² Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet, Report of the Secretary-General (Special Edition), Advance, Unedited Version, June 2023: <https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/SDG%20Progress%20Report%20Special%20Edition.pdf>.

¹³³ IOC-UNESCO contribution.

¹³⁴ Global Sustainable Development Report 2023 Advance, Unedited Version, 14 June 2023:

<https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/Advance%20unedited%20GSDR%2014June2023.pdf>.

¹³⁵ Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet, Report of the Secretary-General (Special Edition), Advance, Unedited Version, June 2023: <https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/SDG%20Progress%20Report%20Special%20Edition.pdf>; Marcus Eriksen et al.; *A growing plastic smog, now estimated to be over 170 trillion plastic particles afloat in the world's oceans—Urgent solutions required*; 8 March 2023: <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0281596>.

¹³⁶ Global Sustainable Development Report 2023 Advance, Unedited Version, 14 June 2023:

<https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/Advance%20unedited%20GSDR%2014June2023.pdf>.

¹³⁷ IOM contribution.

¹³⁸ Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet, Report of the Secretary-General (Special Edition), Advance, Unedited Version, June 2023: <https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/SDG%20Progress%20Report%20Special%20Edition.pdf>.

¹³⁹ Indicator 14.c.1: Number of countries making progress in ratifying, accepting and implementing through legal, policy and institutional frameworks, ocean-related instruments that implement international law, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and their resources; see: <https://sdg.data.gov/14-c-1/>.

¹⁴⁰ See SDGs Indicator Database: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/database>.

needed.¹⁴¹ At the halfway point to the 2030 Agenda, the path for achieving the SDGs remained far off track.¹⁴² Funding in support of SDG 14 remained lower than for any other SDGs.¹⁴³ Corresponding indicators on SDG 14 targets that matured in 2020 indicated that most States had made very little progress, due to a lack of capacity, funding and commitment.¹⁴⁴

48. Further commitments to ocean sustainability provide a reason for optimism, however.¹⁴⁵ The central role of ocean sustainability in climate change mitigation and adaptation was further recognized, with the Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan noting the importance of ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems, including the ocean.¹⁴⁶ The KMGB Framework¹⁴⁷ adopted at the CBD COP-15 and the BBNJ Agreement are positioned to make critical contributions to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity. Progress was also made on the entry into force of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, with 40 members of WTO submitting instruments of acceptance in 2023.¹⁴⁸ In June 2023, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Council recommended to the GEF Assembly an amendment to the *Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured Global Environmental Facility* for preparing the GEF to serve as part of the financial mechanism of the BBNJ Agreement, which is expected to be approved by the seventh GEF Assembly, taking place on 24 and 25 August in Vancouver. Furthermore, the GEF Council authorized the use of up to \$34 million for the funding of ratification support and early action activities for the BBNJ Agreement during the current GEF-8 funding cycle.

49. The GEF Council also approved a work program providing \$1.4 billion to support efforts of developing countries to tackle the triple planetary crisis, with a significant focus on actions to address the loss of biodiversity, including marine biodiversity, in line with the KMGB Framework. In addition, in response to a request by CBD COP-15, the GEF Council decided to establish a new trust fund to support the KMGB Framework and invited the World Bank to act as its Trustee. This decision is expected to be endorsed by the seventh GEF Assembly in August.

50. Relatedly, the SDG Summit in September 2023 will be a pivotal point to renew commitment and accelerate progress towards achieving the SDGs, including SDG 14. The Secretary-General's SDG Stimulus to Deliver Agenda 2030 aims to put the world back on track towards achieving the 2030 Agenda by offsetting challenging financial conditions faced by developing countries.¹⁴⁹ In addition to other major ocean-related events and preparatory meetings taking place in 2024, the high-level United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, (2025 UN Oceans Conference) to be held in France in June 2025,¹⁵⁰

¹⁴¹ Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet, Report of the Secretary-General (Special Edition), Advance, Unedited Version, June 2023: <https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/SDG%20Progress%20Report%20Special%20Edition.pdf>.

¹⁴² Jeffrey D. Sachs, Guillaume Lafortune, Grayson Fuller and Eamon Drumm, 2023; Implementing the SDG Stimulus. Sustainable Development Report 2023, pp. vi, 23: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/sustainabledevelopment.report/2023/2023-sustainable-development-report.pdf>.

¹⁴³ Global Sustainable Development Report 2023 Advance, Unedited Version, 14 June 2023:

<https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/Advance%20unedited%20GSDR%2014June2023.pdf>.

¹⁴⁴ Global Sustainable Development Report 2023 Advance, Unedited Version, 14 June 2023:

<https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/Advance%20unedited%20GSDR%2014June2023.pdf>.

¹⁴⁵ Global Sustainable Development Report 2023 Advance, Unedited Version, 14 June 2023:

<https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/Advance%20unedited%20GSDR%2014June2023.pdf>.

¹⁴⁶ FCCC/PA/CMA/2022/10/Add.1, p. 2: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma2022_10_a01E.pdf?download.

¹⁴⁷ CBD/COP/DEC/15/4: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-15/cop-15-dec-04-en.pdf>.

¹⁴⁸ See: https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/rulesneg_e/fish_e/fish_acceptances_e.htm.

¹⁴⁹ United Nations Secretary-General's SDG Stimulus to Deliver Agenda 2030; February 2023: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4005810?ln=en>.

¹⁵⁰ A/RES/77/242: <https://undocs.org/A/res/77/242>.

offers another important opportunity to advance actions towards achieving ocean sustainability, and evaluate progress since the 2022 UN Ocean Conference, held in Lisbon, Portugal.

51. In other developments, efforts continued at all levels to support sustainable ocean-based economies, highlighting the importance of effective underlying ocean governance frameworks. Such efforts included development and implementation of initiatives, strategies, policies and action plans,¹⁵¹ promoting sustainable trade in ocean-related goods and services,¹⁵² facilitating the sharing of data and knowledge,¹⁵³ building capacity and providing technical assistance,¹⁵⁴ catalysing investment,¹⁵⁵ as well as mainstreaming gender perspective.¹⁵⁶ Critical tools such as marine spatial planning,¹⁵⁷ ecosystem-based management¹⁵⁸ and a circular economy approach¹⁵⁹ received particular attention. Focus was also given to the role of specific economic sectors, such as coastal and marine tourism,¹⁶⁰ fisheries and aquaculture,¹⁶¹ shipping,¹⁶² marine renewable energy¹⁶³ and plastic substitutes.¹⁶⁴ In the latter regard, the trade value of plastic substitutes in 2020 was reported to be \$388 billion, representing one third of total global plastics exports, with potential for more growth.¹⁶⁵

52. UNCTAD launched a flagship report entitled “Trade and Environment Review 2023: Building a sustainable and resilient ocean economy beyond 2023”,¹⁶⁶ which examined challenges and opportunities facing the development of sustainable ocean-based economies. The report called for diversifying ocean-based exports to build resilience, highlighted the opportunities offered by emerging sectors, such as seaweed farming and plastic substitutes, and stressed the urgency to further reform fisheries subsidies. Furthermore, the report highlighted the need to bridge the ocean funding gap, boost investment in emerging sectors and promote blended finance to enhance

¹⁵¹ BSEC, DPPA, ILO, FAO, UNCTAD and UNEP contributions. See also Blue Future Conference: Ministerial Conference on the Blue Economy and Climate Action in Africa: Island and Coastal States at the Forefront, “Moroni Declaration for Ocean and Climate Action in Africa”, 14 June 2023, available at <https://www.uneca.org/eca-events/sites/default/files/resources/documents/sro-ca/blue-future-conference-2023/Declaration%20English.pdf>.

¹⁵² UNCTAD and UNEP contributions.

¹⁵³ BSEC, IHO, IOC-UNESCO, UNCTAD, UNEP and UN-Habitat contributions. See also UNDP, Action Brief: An Ocean of Opportunities – How the Blue Economy Can Transform Sustainable Development in Small Island Developing States, 7 February 2023, available at: <https://www.undp.org/publications/action-brief-ocean-opportunities-how-blue-economy-can-transform-sustainable-development-small-islands-developing-states>.

¹⁵⁴ FAO, ILO, IOC-UNESCO, UNCTAD, UNEP and UN-Habitat contributions.

¹⁵⁵ BSEC, UNCTAD and UNEP contributions. See also “BlueInvest: new investor report features an ocean of investment opportunities in the sustainable blue economy”, European Commission, 9 March 2023, available at https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/news/blueinvest-new-investor-report-features-ocean-investment-opportunities-sustainable-blue-economy-2023-03-09_en, and “InvestEU: €28 million for the first Blue Economy instrument in Portugal”, European Commission, 27 March 2023, available at https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/news/investeu-eu28-million-first-blue-economy-instrument-portugal-2023-03-27_en.

¹⁵⁶ DPPA and UNEP contributions.

¹⁵⁷ IOC-UNESCO, UNCTAD, UNEP and UN-Habitat contributions.

¹⁵⁸ FAO, UNEP and UN-Habitat contributions.

¹⁵⁹ UNEP contribution.

¹⁶⁰ IWC, UNCTAD, UNEP and UN-Habitat contributions. See also High Level Panel for A Sustainable Ocean Economy, “Joint Leaders Statement on Sustainable Coastal and Marine Tourism: Supporting Climate, Biodiversity and Sustainable Ocean Economies”, 3 March 2023, at <https://oceanpanel.org/joint-leaders-statement-on-sustainable-coastal-and-marine-tourism-supporting-climate-biodiversity-and-sustainable-ocean-economies/>.

¹⁶¹ FAO, UNEP and UNCTAD contributions.

¹⁶² UNCTAD contribution.

¹⁶³ UNCTAD contribution.

¹⁶⁴ UNCTAD contribution.

¹⁶⁵ UNCTAD contribution. See also UNCTAD, Plastic Pollution: The pressing case for natural and environmentally friendly substitutes to plastics (UNCTAD/DITC/TED/2023/2), available at https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ditcted2023d2_en.pdf.

¹⁶⁶ UNCTAD contribution. See also UNCTAD, “Trade and Environment Review 2023: Building a sustainable and resilient ocean economy beyond 2023”, available at <https://unctad.org/ter2023>.

cooperation between public and private actors. Work was ongoing to develop a multidimensional vulnerability index, which would help address challenges faced by SIDS in gaining access to concessional financing.¹⁶⁷

A. Promoting marine science and technology

53. Building on commitments made at the 2022 United Nations Ocean Conference, efforts intensified at all levels to further marine science, develop research capacity and promote the development and transfer of marine technology. These efforts included actions to advance scientific understanding of marine biodiversity¹⁶⁸ and marine ecosystems, including the deep sea,¹⁶⁹ seamount,¹⁷⁰ coral reef,¹⁷¹ upwelling,¹⁷² and coastal vegetated ecosystems,¹⁷³ and the impacts of human activities and other stressors,¹⁷⁴ including climate change,¹⁷⁵ ocean acidification,¹⁷⁶ pollution, including marine litter,¹⁷⁷ eutrophication and deoxygenation,¹⁷⁸ and to further research on bathymetry, oceanography and marine meteorology.¹⁷⁹ Efforts also continued to promote women's leadership and gender mainstreaming in marine science,¹⁸⁰ increase ocean literacy¹⁸¹ and to empower early-career scientists,¹⁸² integrate indigenous and local knowledge into scientific decision-making,¹⁸³ and mobilize funding for ocean science.¹⁸⁴

54. Significant progress was made in implementing the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (Ocean Decade), with 48 programmes, 276 projects and 84 contributions endorsed as Decade Actions.¹⁸⁵ Geographic gaps remained in the Decade Actions, however, with very low engagement in SIDS and LDCs due to insufficient resources and capacity.¹⁸⁶ Institutional support was provided through ten Decade Coordination Offices or Collaborative Centers assisting the Decade Coordination Unit, regular meetings of the Decade Advisory Board, and 37 National Decade Committees, among others.¹⁸⁷ A "Vision 2030" process was launched to identify collective and measurable ambitions for Ocean Decade challenges and will be presented at the 2024 Ocean Decade Conference, to be held in Barcelona from 8 to 12 April 2024.¹⁸⁸ Regionally, the Africa Ocean Decade Taskforce

¹⁶⁷ See <https://www.un.org/ohrills/mvi>.

¹⁶⁸ IOC-UNESCO, ISA, NAFO, NEAFC, PICES, SCBD and IWC contributions.

¹⁶⁹ NAFO and ISA contributions.

¹⁷⁰ ISA and PICES contributions.

¹⁷¹ IOC-UNESCO and UNEP contribution.

¹⁷² IOC-UNESCO contribution.

¹⁷³ IAEA, IOC-UNESCO and UNEP contributions

¹⁷⁴ IAEA, IOC-UNESCO and UNEP contributions.

¹⁷⁵ IAEA, IOC-UNESCO, PICES and UNEP contributions.

¹⁷⁶ IAEA and IOC-UNESCO contributions.

¹⁷⁷ BRS, FAO, IAEA, IMO, IOC-UNESCO, IWC and UNEP contributions.

¹⁷⁸ IOC-UNESCO and UNEP contributions.

¹⁷⁹ IHO and IOC-UNESCO contributions.

¹⁸⁰ PICES, ICES, IOC-UNESCO and ISA contributions.

¹⁸¹ IOC-UNESCO contribution.

¹⁸² PICES, IAEA, ICES, IOC-UNESCO and ISA contributions.

¹⁸³ IOC-UNESCO and UNEP contributions.

¹⁸⁴ ICES, IOC-UNESCO, ISA and UNEP contributions.

¹⁸⁵ IOC-UNESCO contribution. See also ICES contribution.

¹⁸⁶ IOC-UNESCO contribution.

¹⁸⁷ IOC-UNESCO and ISA contributions.

¹⁸⁸ IOC-UNESCO contribution. See also "Vision 2030: Ocean Decade launches new global process to set a clear and common ambition for the Ocean Decade Challenges", 20 June 2023, available at: <https://oceandecade.org/news/vision-2030-ocean-decade-launches-new-global-ambition-setting-process/#:~:text=Proclaimed%20in%202017%20by%20the,catalyse%20new%20opportunities%20for%20sustainable>.

was established and new coordination structures were planned, including in the Southern Ocean, South Pacific, Arctic and Caribbean regions.¹⁸⁹

55. Guided by its 2030 strategy,¹⁹⁰ the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS), now consisting of over 8,600 platforms across 13 global networks, continued to coordinate sustained ocean observing activities and information delivery to support decision-making.¹⁹¹ Particular efforts were made to operationalize new essential ocean variables, including regarding marine debris, ocean sound and bottom pressure,¹⁹² promote public-private partnerships,¹⁹³ and strengthen GOOS regional systems and national focal points.¹⁹⁴ The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) Assembly considered feedback from GOOS and States on ocean observations in areas under national jurisdiction¹⁹⁵ and established an intersessional working group to review relevant information and identify problems, best practices and potential actions.¹⁹⁶ Progress was also made in strengthening early warning as well as mitigation and adaptation capacities regarding tsunami events and other ocean-related hazards, including harmful algal blooms.¹⁹⁷

56. Activities continued to improve the collection, management and sharing of data and information,¹⁹⁸ with various networks, platforms and systems being strengthened.¹⁹⁹ The IOC Assembly endorsed the IOC Strategic Plan for Ocean Data and Information Management (2023-2029)²⁰⁰ and adopted a new IOC Data Policy and Terms of Use.²⁰¹

57. Further progress was made in collecting new data relating to indicators 14.3.1 and 14.a.1. of SDG 14.²⁰² The ocean acidification data portal received increased reporting, however, the current global coverage of ocean acidification observations remained inadequate.²⁰³ Efforts were also ongoing to improve data collection and develop an automated exchange of data among relevant databases.²⁰⁴ The Global Ocean Science Report Tracker questionnaire will collect information on current ocean science capacity and provide a basis for reporting on indicator 14.a.1 of SDG 14 in

¹⁸⁹ IOC-UNESCO contribution.

¹⁹⁰ IOC-UNESCO contribution. See also IOC-UNESCO, Global Ocean Observing System: 2030 Strategy, available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000368020.locale=en>.

¹⁹¹ IOC-UNESCO contribution.

¹⁹² IOC-UNESCO contribution. See also GOOS, Ocean bottom Pressure EOVS Specification Sheet, available at: https://www.goosoocean.org/index.php?option=com_oe&task=viewDocumentRecord&docID=32488.

¹⁹³ IOC-UNESCO contribution. See also GOOS, Dialogues with Industry, available at: https://www.goosoocean.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=400&Itemid=448.

¹⁹⁴ IOC-UNESCO contribution.

¹⁹⁵ IOC-UNESCO contribution. See also Summary Report on the Consultation on Ocean Observations in Areas under National Jurisdiction, IOC-32/4.8.2.Doc(1), available at <https://oceanexpert.org/document/32584> and Details on the results from the 2023 survey to global ocean observing networks on ocean observations in areas under national jurisdiction, IOC/INF-1431, available at: <https://oceanexpert.org/document/32591>.

¹⁹⁶ Summary Report on the Consultation on Ocean Observations in Areas under National Jurisdiction, IOC Decision A-32/4.8.2, available at: <https://oceanexpert.org/document/32845>.

¹⁹⁷ CPPS, IOC-UNESCO and UNEP contributions.

¹⁹⁸ IAEA, IOC-UNESCO and ISA contributions.

¹⁹⁹ IOC-UNESCO contribution, with reference to the International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange (IODE), the IODE/GOOS Ocean Best Practices System (OBPS), the Ocean Biodiversity Information System (OBIS), the Ocean Data and Information System (ODIS) and Ocean InfoHub (OIH).

²⁰⁰ IOC-UNESCO contribution. See also International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange, IOC Decision A-32/3.4.2, available at: <https://oceanexpert.org/document/32845>.

²⁰¹ IOC-UNESCO contribution. See also IOC Data Policy and Terms of Use (2023), IOC Decision A-32/4.4, available at: <https://oceanexpert.org/document/32845>.

²⁰² IOC-UNESCO contribution.

²⁰³ IOC-UNESCO contribution.

²⁰⁴ IOC-UNESCO contribution.

2023.²⁰⁵ Work continued to develop an index for coastal eutrophication potentials under indicator 14.1.1 of SDG 14.²⁰⁶

58. During the twenty-third meeting of the Informal Consultative Process, dedicated to “New maritime technologies: challenges and opportunities”, participants shared knowledge, experiences and views concerning new maritime technologies, including uses and contributions to sustainable development, the importance of international cooperation and coordination and associated challenges and opportunities.²⁰⁷

59. Efforts also continued at all levels to strengthen the ocean science-policy interface.²⁰⁸ The third cycle (2021–2025) of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects (Regular Process) began its second round of regional workshops to support development of the third World Ocean Assessment, with the scope and annotated outlines approved by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole in March 2023.²⁰⁹ Regional workshops aimed at building capacity to strengthen the ocean science-policy interface also began. Four brief documents for policymakers based on the second World Ocean Assessment were produced, focusing on climate change, Sustainable Development Goal 14, the Ocean Decade and the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, and marine biodiversity, respectively.²¹⁰

B. Conservation and sustainable use of living marine resources

60. A wide range of actions were taken at global and regional levels to improve fisheries management and the fisheries sector.²¹¹ At the global level, the General Assembly conducted a review of the impacts of bottom fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks, which was preceded by a two-day multi-stakeholder workshop held on 2 and 3 August 2022.²¹²

61. The Review Conference on the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks resumed from 22 to 26 May 2023 to assess the effectiveness of the Fish Stocks Agreement in securing the conservation and management of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks by reviewing the adequacy of its provisions and, if necessary, proposing means of strengthening the substance and methods of implementation of those provisions. The resumed Review Conference reaffirmed and built on the recommendations adopted in 2006, 2010 and 2016, by incorporating references to new developments, strengthening existing recommendations and developing recommendations on new issues, such as conservation of seabird by-catch and improving administration in RFMO/As.

62. The thirty-fifth session of the Committee on Fisheries of FAO established a new sub-committee on fisheries management, as a forum for consultation and

²⁰⁵ IOC-UNESCO contribution. See also Invitation to contribute information for the compilation of the first edition of the IOC Ocean Science Tracker and inputs to the IOC Capacity development Needs Assessment Survey, IOC/VR/KI/HE/JD/PP, available at <https://oceanexpert.org/document/31473>.

²⁰⁶ IOC-UNESCO contribution.

²⁰⁷ Report on the work of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea at its twenty-third meeting (Advance, unedited version), available at: https://www.un.org/Depts/los/consultative_process/icp23/ICP23SummaryAdvancedUnedited.pdf.

²⁰⁸ IOC-UNESCO, ISA, IWC, OSPAR, PICES and UNEP contributions.

²⁰⁹ <https://www.un.org/regularprocess/woa3>.

²¹⁰ <https://www.un.org/regularprocess/>.

²¹¹ CBD, DPPA, FAO, ICES, IHO, ILO, IMO, IOC UNESCO, IOM, IWC, NAFO, NASCO, NEAFC, OSPAR, SEAFO, SPRFMO, UNCTAD, UNEP, UNFCCC and UNODC contributions.

²¹² See General Assembly resolution 77/118 of 9 December 2022.

discussion.²¹³ The Voluntary Guidelines for Transshipment were also endorsed as a new instrument within the framework of the 1995 Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and the meeting called for implementation of the guidelines, including through RFMO/As.²¹⁴ FAO organized a series of regional workshops throughout 2023 to support promotion of the guidelines and provide guidance on concerns over transshipment.²¹⁵ FAO launched a legal and policy database on small-scale fisheries that will contribute to the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication.²¹⁶

63. The conclusion of the FAO 2022 International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture, during which 260 events took place at global, regional and national levels, focusing on small-scale fisheries in a specific region or on specific topics,²¹⁷ resulted in recommendations covering environmental, economic and social sustainability, governance, gender equality and equity, food security and nutrition, resilience and strengthened integration of youth in small scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture.²¹⁸

64. At the regional level, RFMO/As took important steps to manage fisheries,²¹⁹ including through adoption of ecosystem reference points to complement stock assessments and inform management decisions,²²⁰ non-setting of quotas for specific stocks,²²¹ banning of discards in regulatory areas,²²² expansion of vulnerable marine ecosystem closures,²²³ tagging protocols for specific stocks,²²⁴ adoption and amendment of conservation and management measures²²⁵ and decisions to prioritize climate change as a standing item in the work of the organization.²²⁶

C. Protection and preservation of the marine environment and conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity

65. Besides the adoption of the BBNJ Agreement, important developments took place during the reporting period with a view to halting and reversing marine biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation and restoring ocean health.

66. The CBD COP-15 adopted the KMGB Framework containing a new set of global goals and targets for biodiversity, including marine and coastal biodiversity,²²⁷ in particular targets to effectively conserve and manage at least 30 per cent of the world's marine and coastal areas, with emphasis on areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, and to ensure effective restoration of at least 30 per cent of areas of degraded terrestrial, inland water, and coastal and marine ecosystems. The Conference also included new entries in the repository for the description of ecologically or biologically significant marine areas in the North-

²¹³ FAO, Report of the thirty-fifth session of the Committee on Fisheries, No. 1391, 2023, p. 6 and Annex G.

²¹⁴ FAO contribution, p. 13.

²¹⁵ FAO contribution, p. 13.

²¹⁶ FAO contribution, p. 14.

²¹⁷ FAO contribution, p.

²¹⁸ FAO, IYAFA 2022 Final Report, 2023, p. 32-33.

²¹⁹ NAFO, NASCO, NEAFC, SEAFO and SPRFMO contributions.

²²⁰ NAFO contribution, p. 4.

²²¹ NASCO contribution, p. 1

²²² NEAFC contribution, p. 3.

²²³ NEAFC contribution, p. 4.

²²⁴ SEAFO contribution, p. 2.

²²⁵ SPRFMO contribution, pp. 1, 3; UNEP contribution, p. 21, concerning CCAMLR.

²²⁶ SPRFMO contribution, p. 3.

²²⁷ CBD/COP/DEC/15/4. CBD, para. 1.

East Atlantic Ocean;²²⁸ and requested further work on the process.²²⁹ CBD Secretariat and the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre co-produced a study analysing the marine and coastal content of existing national biodiversity strategies and action plans to support implementation of the KMGB Framework.²³⁰

67. At the regional level, progress was made in the ratification of regional seas conventions and protocols.²³¹ Amendments were made to the Protocol Concerning Protected Areas and Wild Flora and Fauna in the Eastern African Region of the Nairobi Convention.²³² ICES published several ecosystem, fisheries and aquaculture overviews for various ecoregions.²³³ OSPAR delivered its Quality Status Report 2023, providing scientific knowledge on marine biodiversity and pressures to guide actions.²³⁴ Implementation of a GEF-funded project aimed at strengthening stewardship of the Sargasso Sea commenced.²³⁵

68. The first and second sessions of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, were held.²³⁶ IWC adopted a resolution on marine plastic pollution, recognising it as, *inter alia*, a major global threat to cetaceans.²³⁷ Various measures to tackle plastic pollution were also ongoing,²³⁸ including UNCTAD-led research on plastic substitutes.²³⁹ GESAMP commenced further work relating to sea-based sources of marine litter, including fishing gear- and shipping-related litter.²⁴⁰

69. In terms of hazardous chemicals and wastes, Part I of Annex A to the Stockholm Convention was amended to list three additional organic pollutants.²⁴¹ Technical guidelines were adopted for the environmentally sound management of waste under the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal.²⁴² Activities continued with respect to plastic, household and e-waste and emergency prevention and response relating to hazardous chemicals and waste.²⁴³ UNODC's Southeast Asia Waste Project aimed to deter the trafficking of plastic and hazardous waste in several countries.²⁴⁴ Amendments to Annex A of the Minamata Convention on Mercury relating to the phasing out of eight mercury-added products by 2025 will enter into force in September 2023.²⁴⁵

70. The IMO Marine Environment Protection Committee adopted amendments to designate the Mediterranean Sea as an emission control area and impose stricter limits on ship-based sulphur oxide emissions, which are expected to enter into force on 1 May 2024, with the new limit taking effect from 1 May 2025.²⁴⁶ Amendments to Annexes 1 and 2 of the 1996 Protocol to the Convention on the Prevention of Marine

²²⁸ Decision 15/25. CBD, para 6-9

²²⁹ Decision 15/26. CBD, para 10-11.

²³⁰ CBD contribution, para 14.

²³¹ UNEP contribution, p. 1.

²³² UNEP contribution, p. 21.

²³³ ICES contribution, p. 2.

²³⁴ OSPAR contribution, p. 2.

²³⁵ IOC contribution para 185

²³⁶ See UNEP/EA.5/Res.14

²³⁷ IWC contribution, p. 2.

²³⁸ IAEA contribution, p. 1, 3-4 ; IMO contribution, p. 8; BRS contribution, para. 24; OSPAR contribution, p. 3; IWC contribution, p. 3; CPPS contribution, para 6 ; UNEP contribution, p14-17, 20. See also UNCTAD contribution, p. 1; UNEP contribution, p.7.

²³⁹ UNTAC contribution, 2-3.

²⁴⁰ FAO contribution, p. 15.

²⁴¹ BRS contribution, para. 25.

²⁴² BRS contribution, paras. 8-9.

²⁴³ BRS contribution, paras. 11 and 35.

²⁴⁴ UNDOC contribution, p. 8.

²⁴⁵ Minamata contribution.

²⁴⁶ IMO contribution, p. 7.

Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter (London Protocol) to remove sewage sludge from the list of permissible wastes entered into force in January 2023.²⁴⁷ At the forty-fourth Consultative Meeting of Contracting Parties to the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter, 1972 (London Convention) and the seventeenth Meeting of Contracting Parties to the 1996 Protocol to the London Convention, a statement on marine geoengineering was adopted that identified four techniques needing priority evaluation, involving either carbon dioxide removal or solar radiation modification.²⁴⁸

71. The IMO Marine Environment Protection Committee approved revised guidelines for the reduction of underwater noise from commercial shipping to address adverse impacts on marine life²⁴⁹ and also agreed, in principle, to develop a review plan for the 2004 Ballast Water Management Convention.²⁵⁰

72. In terms of other issues related to marine pollution, a UN-coordinated operation to prevent environmental damage from oil stored on board the FSO *Safer* off the coast of Yemen commenced in May 2023. The vessel was stabilized and oil was transferred onto a replacement vessel, though further funds are required for the project's completion.²⁵¹ International Oil Pollution Compensation Funds provided compensation for oil pollution damage resulting from tanker spills and warned of the growing problem of unreliable insurers and of tankers operating with little or no insurance.²⁵² IAEA reported that planned discharges of treated water from the Fukushima nuclear power station were consistent with its safety standards.²⁵³ The discharges commenced in late August.

73. Activities continued on the implementation of tools, including ecosystem-based approaches, notably in respect of fisheries,²⁵⁴ and vis-à-vis harmful algal blooms,²⁵⁵ seamounts,²⁵⁶ coral reefs,²⁵⁷ mangroves,²⁵⁸ seagrass,²⁵⁹ kelp forests,²⁶⁰ marine invasive species²⁶¹ and eutrophication.²⁶² Projects for marine spatial planning and ICZM were ongoing.²⁶³ Measures were taken to protect particular marine species, including by RFMO/As.²⁶⁴

74. Work continued on area-based management tools, including MPAs.²⁶⁵ The IMO Marine Environment Protection Committee agreed in principle to the designation of a particularly sensitive sea area in the North-Western Mediterranean Sea to protect cetaceans.²⁶⁶ OSPAR expanded the conservation objectives of the North Atlantic

²⁴⁷ IMO contribution, pp. 9-10. The amendments will not apply to Contracting Parties that made a declaration that they were not able to accept the amendment at that time.

²⁴⁸ IMO contribution, p. 10.

²⁴⁹ IMO contribution.

²⁵⁰ IMO contribution, p. 9.

²⁵¹ <https://www.un.org/en/StopRedSeaSpill>, <https://iseek.un.org/nyc/article/un-operation-underway-yemen-avert-catastrophic-oil-spill> and <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/08/1140162>.

²⁵² IOPC contribution, paras. 3.9 and 3.10.

²⁵³ <https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/pressreleases/iaea-finds-japans-plans-to-release-treated-water-into-the-sea-at-fukushima-consistent-with-international-safety-standards>. See also report of the thirty-third Meeting of States Parties to the Convention, SPLOS/33/15, para. 91.

²⁵⁴ FAO contribution, p. 6-7.

²⁵⁵ IOC contribution, para 134.

²⁵⁶ PICES contribution.

²⁵⁷ UNEP contribution, p. 2.

²⁵⁸ UNEP contribution, p. 2.

²⁵⁹ UNEP contribution, p. 2.

²⁶⁰ UNEP contribution, p. 2.

²⁶¹ IOC contribution, para 146-149; CPPS.

²⁶² UNEP contribution, p. 19; BRS contribution, para 35 ; IAEA contribution, p. 4.

²⁶³ IAEA contribution, p. 5; UNEP contribution, p. 4-10, 21; IOC contribution, para 174-184, 215, 249, 258.

²⁶⁴ NAFO contribution, p. 5; NEAFC contribution, p. 6; SPFRMO contribution, p. 3; UNEP contribution, p. 21.

²⁶⁵ UNEP contribution, p.4; NEAFC contribution, p. 5; FAO contribution, p. 18.

²⁶⁶ IMO contribution, p. 10

Current and Evlanov Sea Basin MPA.²⁶⁷ A fishing area in the NEAFC Regulatory Area was expanded and existing closed areas were renewed until 2027.²⁶⁸ The IWC Scientific Committee reviewed its Southern Ocean sanctuary²⁶⁹ and the Regional Network of Marine and Coastal Protected Areas of the South-East Pacific was reactivated under the framework of the Lima Convention.²⁷⁰ In relation to the Area, collection of scientific information in support of the development of regional environmental management plans in the Indian Ocean has progressed.²⁷¹

VIII. Strengthening international cooperation and coordination

75. UN-Oceans continued to play a critical role to enhance cooperation and coordination among relevant international organizations, including through joint activities and regular meetings for the sharing of information and best practices. UN-Oceans members organized several side events during the reporting period, including an event in the margins of the UNFCCC COP-27 to showcase ambitious science-based initiatives for ocean-climate action that are accessible, replicable, scalable and sustainable and at the CBD COP-15 to highlight the critical synergistic role of UN-Oceans in assisting States and civil societies through joint action and cooperation across diverse mandates in the implementation of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (later adopted as the KMGB Framework). At the United Nations 2023 Water Conference, UN-Oceans organized an event with UN-Water, instrumental in calling attention to the importance of the ocean and seas in the water cycle and the need for solutions to address the linkages between ecosystems from source to sea in a holistic, integrated and cross-sectoral manner.²⁷²

76. UN-Oceans members continued to support ocean-related processes, such as the Ocean Decade, the twenty-third meeting of the Informal Consultative Process and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Ocean and Climate Change Dialogues. UN-Oceans also delivered on the voluntary commitment made at the 2022 Ocean Conference in the form of a publication entitled, “The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea at 40: Successes and Future Prospects”.²⁷³

77. Particular focus was given to issues concerning the safety of migrants and refugees at sea,²⁷⁴ promoting decent work in the maritime sector,²⁷⁵ maritime safety and security,²⁷⁶ climate change research and impacts,²⁷⁷ sustainable blue economies,²⁷⁸ sustainable and resilient shipping,²⁷⁹ ocean science, including through

²⁶⁷ OSPAR contribution, p. 3.

²⁶⁸ NEAFC contribution, p. 4.

²⁶⁹ IWC contribution, p. 8.

²⁷⁰ CPPS contribution, para 4.

²⁷¹ ISA contribution, para 9.

²⁷² IAEA contribution, p. 6; UNCTAD contribution, p. 9. See also:

https://www.un.org/depts/los/coop_coor/un_oceans.htm.

²⁷³ United Nations, The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea at 40: Successes and Future Prospects, 2023 (United Nations publication, sales no.: E.22.V.11), available at:

https://www.un.org/depts/los/doalos_publications/9789210018036_Unclos40EngWeb.pdf.

²⁷⁴ IMO contribution, pp. 5-6; IOM contribution, p. 2; UNHCR contribution, pp. 1, 3-6.

²⁷⁵ FAO contribution, p. 88; IMO contribution, pp. 5-6; ILO contribution, p. 15.

²⁷⁶ CTED contribution, para 6; DPPA contribution, pp. 1-2, 5, 6; IMO contribution, p. 4; IHO contribution, p. 1; IWC contribution, pp. 2, 4, 7; UNODC contribution, pp. 3, 7; ; UNHCR contribution, p2;

²⁷⁷ IOC contribution, pp. 1-5; IAEA contribution; BSEC contribution, p. 2; PICES contribution; UNCTAD contribution, pp. 9-10, 14; UN-Habitat contribution, p. 1 ; UNEP contribution p. 11-12.

²⁷⁸ BSEC contribution, p. 1; ILO contribution, pp. 6-7; IOC contribution, p. 34; UNCTAD contribution, pp. 2-3, 4; UN-Habitat contribution, p. 1 ; UNEP contribution, pp. 3, 6.

²⁷⁹ UNCTAD contribution, pp. 1, 15.

the Ocean Decade,²⁸⁰ marine resource management,²⁸¹ including with respect to IUU fishing,²⁸² conservation²⁸³ and sustainable use of marine and coastal biological diversity,²⁸⁴ including protection from plastic pollution, area-based management tools,²⁸⁵ and emergency prevention, preparedness and response.²⁸⁶ The third meeting of the Sustainable Ocean Initiatives Global Dialogue continued to promote cooperation and coordination between regional seas organizations and regional fisheries bodies in supporting the achievement of ocean-related global goals and targets.²⁸⁷ The working groups of the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP) also continued to provide opportunities for cooperation and coordination among their sponsoring organizations.²⁸⁸

78. Areas beyond national jurisdiction were a particular focus of cross-sectoral cooperation, including with respect to marine scientific research and knowledge-sharing on deep-sea biodiversity,²⁸⁹ fisheries,²⁹⁰ deep-sea ecosystems, more generally,²⁹¹ and area-based management tools.²⁹² Importantly, a second phase of the Common Oceans Program, a global partnership funded by the Global Environmental Facility to promote sustainable fisheries and biodiversity conservation in areas beyond national jurisdiction, in particular through cross-sectoral cooperation, began in mid-2022 and will run until mid-2027.²⁹³

79. The CBD COP-15 called for enhancing collaboration and cooperation on thematic issues related to marine and coastal biodiversity in support of the implementation of the KMGB Framework and the 2030 Agenda,²⁹⁴ requested identifying options for modalities for collaboration and cooperation in the context of the BBNJ Agreement and established a technical and scientific cooperation mechanism comprising a network of regional and subregional support centres coordinated by a global entity.²⁹⁵

80. Building on the SDG Summit in September 2023, the Summit of the Future: Multilateral solutions for a better tomorrow, to be held in September 2024, preceded by a preparatory ministerial meeting on 18 September 2023, presents a critical opportunity to promote more effective international cooperation and coordination to

²⁸⁰ ICES contribution, p. 2; IOC contribution, particularly pp. 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 35-38, 40; ISA contribution, paras. 13-15; NEAFC contribution, p. 2; OSPAR contribution, pp. 3-4; PICES contribution; UNEP contribution p. 7.

²⁸¹ FAO contribution, pp. 3-5; 22-24; IWC contribution, p. 2; NAFO contribution, pp. 2, 6; NASCO contribution, p3; NEAFC contribution, pp. 3, 6-7; CBD contribution, paras. 26-29; SPFROM contribution, p. 4; UNEP contribution, p. 7.

²⁸² FAO contribution, pp. 4, 10, 13; NEAFC contribution, pp. 7-8; UNODC contribution, p. 7-8; ILO contribution, pp. 14-15.

²⁸³ BRS contribution, paras. 5, 11-17, 22-25, 27, 31-32, 38; BSEC contribution, p. 2; CBD contribution, para. 28; FAO contribution, pp. 14-15, 16, 21; IMO contribution, pp. 8-9, 11; IOC contribution, pp. 25-27, 35, 48; IWC contribution, pp. 1-3, 6, 8; NEAFC contribution, pp. 5-6; OSPAR contribution, p. 3; PICES contribution; UNCTAD contribution, p. 4; UNODC contribution, p. 8; UN-Habitat contribution, p.1; IAEA contribution, pp. 2, 4; UNEP contribution, pp. 2, 14-17, 19-20.

²⁸⁴ CBD contribution, para. 14. 26-29.

²⁸⁵ CBD contribution, para. 28; IOC contribution, pp. 33-35, 47; IWC contribution, p. 7; NEAFC contribution, p. 7; OSPAR contribution, p. 3; UNEP contribution, pp. 6-7, 21.

²⁸⁶ BRS contribution, para. 35; IOC contribution, pp. 17-18, 20; UNEP contribution, p. 22.

²⁸⁷ CBD contribution. See also CBD, Busan Outcome: Third Meeting of the Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI) Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organizations (RSOs) and Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs), available at <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/dcee/41b9/255ee54901e1c8ed2551f06d/soi-om-2022-outcomes-en.pdf>.

²⁸⁸ BRS, FAO, IAEA, IOC-UNESCO and IMO contributions.

²⁸⁹ ISA contribution, paras 15-20, 42

²⁹⁰ NAFO contribution, p. 6; NEAFC contribution, p. 3.

²⁹¹ FAO contribution, p. 20.

²⁹² NEAFC contribution, p.7; OSPAR contribution, p. 3.

²⁹³ FAO contribution, p. 24.

²⁹⁴ Decision 15/24. See CBD contribution, para 5.

²⁹⁵ CBD contribution, para. 16.

address vital challenges facing global governance, including with respect to the ocean, boosting implementation of existing commitments, such as the SDGs, and moving towards a reinvigorated multilateral system.

IX. Capacity-building and technical assistance

81. Many organizations and agencies reported on capacity-building initiatives to assist developing States in sustainably managing ocean spaces, resources and activities.²⁹⁶

82. The Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs (the Division) provided information, advice and assistance to States and intergovernmental organizations and other stakeholders through its capacity-building programmes, including technical assistance projects and fellowships and participation in conferences, meetings, workshops and training events.²⁹⁷

83. The Division continued to assist developing countries in implementing the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and its implementing agreements and in promoting strengthened, sustainable and inclusive ocean economies in the context of a four-year programme of assistance funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation.²⁹⁸

84. The Division completed substantive work on a four-year project funded through the United Nations Development Account, which it implemented together with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.²⁹⁹ The Division also launched a new three-year project in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to strengthen participation in and implementation of the Fish Stocks Agreement, funded by the European Union.³⁰⁰

85. The Division continued to contribute to an ocean governance training programme under the PROBLUE programme of the World Bank. It also delivered an in-person training in Eritrea to build capacity in ocean affairs and the law of the sea, with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme country office, the United Nations and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs.

86. The Division continued to administer nine voluntary trust funds to assist developing States in implementation of the Convention and its Implementing Agreements, participation in ocean-related meetings and intergovernmental processes and settlement of disputes through the Tribunal.³⁰¹

87. Alongside its existing capacity development and training programmes on deep-sea issues, the Authority established a new trust fund to, inter alia, promote and encourage marine scientific research in the Area. The Authority also piloted a

²⁹⁶ BRS, CBD, CPPS, DPPA, FAO, IAEA, IHO, ILO, IMO, IOC-UNESCO, IOM, ISA, ITLOS, IWC, NEAFC, PCA, UNCTAD, UNEP, UNHabitat, UNHCR and UNODC contributions.

²⁹⁷ See www.un.org/oceancapacity and www.un.org/Depts/los/general_assembly/documents/DOALOSListActivities1Sep202131Aug2022.pdf.

²⁹⁸ See www.un.org/oceancapacity/norway for additional information, including assistance available through the project activities.

²⁹⁹ See www.un.org/oceancapacity/oets for additional information.

³⁰⁰ See www.un.org/oceancapacity/UNFSAproject for additional information, including assistance available through the project activities.

³⁰¹ See www.un.org/oceancapacity/TF and https://www.un.org/Depts/los/general_assembly/SGReportTrustFunds1August202131July2022.pdf.

mentoring programme for young female researchers.³⁰² The Tribunal launched a new series of workshops for legal advisers from developing countries.³⁰³

Fellowships

88. During the reporting period, the Division successfully implemented the United Nations-Nippon Foundation (UNNF) Fellowship; the Strategic Needs Fellowship; training activities under the United Nations-Nippon Foundation Alumni Programme; and the Hamilton Shirley Amerasinghe Memorial Fellowship.

89. New cohorts of 13 UNNF and 11 Strategic Needs Fellows were welcomed by the Division for in-person deliveries to support 16 women and 8 men, from 21 developing countries. Several virtual sessions were also organized, allowing for the participation of United Nations-Nippon Foundation Alumni.³⁰⁴

90. A three-day United Nations-Nippon Foundation Alumni Meeting took place in Cascais, Portugal, which specifically targeted Lusophone Alumni and brought together 14 nationals (7 women and 7 men) from Brazil, Timor-Leste, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe and Mozambique.

91. Implementation of the Hamilton Shirley Amerasinghe Memorial Fellowship was resumed, with Ms. Linda Bana from Ghana as the recipient.

92. Overall, the fellowships have been characterized by a broad geographic scope, with significant participation in the United Nations-Nippon Foundation fellowships from LDCs (22%), landlocked developing countries (2%) and SIDS (24%). Gender parity has been successfully achieved in each of the United Nations-Nippon Foundation fellowship programmes, with 51 per cent of women awarded fellowships overall. The Hamilton Shirley Amerasinghe Memorial Fellowship has ensured equal representation of men and women throughout its nearly 40 years of existence.

X. Conclusions

93. The ocean remains under threat on multiple fronts, as cumulative human impacts continue to deteriorate the health of marine ecosystems and biodiversity. With the arrival of the “era of global boiling”,³⁰⁵ addressing climate change remains an urgent priority. Growing awareness of the ocean-climate-sustainable development nexus will help to ramp up ambition in the ocean space. Ocean-related responses will need to be sustainable and inclusive in order to address the climate emergency and build more resilient societies. The request for an advisory opinion from the Tribunal shows the importance and relevance of the institutions established by the Convention in addressing challenges such as climate change.

94. The BBNJ Agreement demonstrates the continued relevance and flexibility of the Convention in addressing contemporary needs and challenges. Negotiation of a legally binding instrument in 2024 to end plastic pollution represents another opportunity to enhance the resilience of the marine environment and protect marine ecosystems and species. Early entry into force of these new instruments will be essential to ensure ocean objectives can be achieved, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and SDG14. Significantly strengthened and enhanced

³⁰² ISA contribution.

³⁰³ ITLOS contribution.

³⁰⁴ Since 2004, in the context of the various United Nations-Nippon Foundation fellowship programmes, 251 individuals (124 men and 127 women) from 91 countries have been trained. Between 2018 and 2021, 181 delegates (87 men and 94 women) undertook training relating to the BBNJ Intergovernmental Conference. A total of 34 individuals (18 men and 16 women) from 31 developing countries have completed the Hamilton Shirley Amerasinghe Memorial Fellowship since its inception in 1986.

³⁰⁵ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/07/1139162>.

cooperation with and among relevant legal instruments and frameworks and relevant global, regional, subregional and sectoral bodies will also be required.³⁰⁶

95. In the area of marine science, continued and enhanced support for the Ocean Decade and the third World Ocean Assessment in order to strengthen the ocean science policy interface will ensure that ocean actions are informed by the best available science. This is essential for innovation and transformative change to occur in order to address the triple planetary crisis and ensure the sustainable development of the ocean vis-a-vis its interface with terrestrial ecosystems.

96. Addressing the difficult working conditions of seafarers remains a priority, in particular, seafarer abandonment and sexual assault and harassment. With growing recognition of gender equality as a cross-cutting issue in ocean sectors, there is a need to identify further opportunities to promote the empowerment of women and girls and incorporate gender-responsive strategies and approaches at national, regional and global levels.

97. Concerted efforts and collaboration, both globally and regionally, are helping to address ongoing issues of maritime security, including the continued decrease of piracy and armed robbery against ships. Greater international cooperation will be needed to ensure the safety of people moving by sea, especially people in vulnerable situations, including victims of trafficking and unaccompanied children, as well as refugees and other people requiring international protection.

98. In the fisheries sector, further coordinated efforts will be urgently needed to strengthen implementation of the international legal framework for fisheries and ensure the long-term sustainability of marine living resources.

99. Many organizations and agencies remain actively involved in capacity-building initiatives to assist developing States in sustainable ocean management. The Division continues to play a key role in this regard, striving to provide assistance on a needs-basis in close cooperation with States and other stakeholders.

100. While significant progress was made during the reporting period to strengthen the legal order for the seas and oceans, further urgent efforts will be needed to secure a healthier, more resilient and more productive ocean for the benefit of current and future generations. All stakeholders will need to seize the opportunity of the 2023 SDG Summit to accelerate actions toward achieving SDG 14 and ocean related goals and targets.³⁰⁷ The Secretary-General's SDG Stimulus to Deliver the 2030 Agenda could play a crucial role in bridging the funding gap needed to achieve SDG 14, which remains the most underfunded of the SDGs. The 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference also represents a major opportunity to stimulate transformative actions to conserve and sustainably use the ocean, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

³⁰⁶ See A/CONF.232/2023/4, particularly article 8. See also IOC, p. 32.

³⁰⁷ See "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", as adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 70/1 and SDG 14 on Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.