

## **Sixty-fourth Session, General Assembly**

### **Agenda Item 76: Oceans and the Law of the Sea**

**Delivered by Mr. Harlan Cohen**  
(Please check against delivery)

**4 December 2009**  
**New York**

Mr. President,

IUCN – The International Union for Conservation of Nature welcomes the resolutions put forward this year for consideration by the General Assembly. The resolutions foresee a number of important meetings during the coming year within the United Nations with respect of Oceans



With respect to reducing other ocean stressors, we welcome language in the Sustainable Fisheries resolution that calls for the implementation of the precautionary approach and ecosystem approaches to the conservation, management and exploitation of fish stocks. We share the concern expressed in the resolution that though progress has been made with respect of bottom fishing as called for in General Assembly resolution 61/105, these actions have not been sufficiently implemented in all cases. Thus further actions are necessary to strengthen implementation, in particular a need to conduct the assessments in advance of such fishing, to conduct further marine scientific research and to use the best scientific and technical information available to identify where vulnerable marine ecosystems are known to occur or are likely to occur and to adopt conservation and management measures to prevent significant adverse impacts on such ecosystems or close such areas to bottom fishing until conservation and management measures have been established.

We welcome agreement to implement the 2008 International Guidelines for the Management of Deep-sea Fisheries in the High Seas of the Food and Agriculture Organization to manage sustainably fish stocks and protect vulnerable marine ecosystems, including seamounts, hydrothermal vents and cold water corals, in view of their great importance and value, including for marine biodiversity. We also welcome the adoption this year of the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing of the Food and Agriculture Organization and look forward to its early entry into force. We further welcome the decision of the Committee on Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization at its most recent session to support the development of a Comprehensive Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels, and Supply Vessels. Such a Record will serve as a useful tool to better monitor vessels in order to combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing.

This year the five regional fisheries management organizations with competence to regulate highly migratory species (sometimes referred to as the tuna RFMOs) met in San Sebastian, Spain and agreed that global fishing capacity for tunas must be addressed and in a way that recognizes the legitimate rights of developing countries, in particular small island countries, to participate in and benefit from these fisheries. These concerns are well-justified and in this connection, we note that the state of bluefin tuna stocks, particularly that of the eastern Atlantic, remain of grave concern. My delegation is deeply troubled that a quota agreed for the coming year was significantly higher than that recommended by the scientific advisory body of the relevant RFMO. If fisheries are to be sustainable for this and future generations, management decisions will have to be based and implemented on the best available scientific advice. Otherwise, there is a real possibility that these stocks will cease to exist as a viable or sustainable fishery.

With reference to the importance of assessments for better knowledge about the role of the oceans and to better conserve and manage their resources my delegation would welcome consideration of an integrated approach to assessments to better inform science and to better manage human impacts, including cumulative impacts, on the oceans. Such an approach could include a requirement to conduct environmental impact assessments for all activities likely to have impacts on the oceans that are more than minor or transitory. Under the Convention on Biological Diversity an expert workshop to provide scientific and technical advice that could help the development of guidance on environmental impact assessments and strategic environmental assessments took place recently in Manila, the Philippines. We would welcome it if efforts to advance such assessments can be discussed more fully in meetings under the General Assembly during the coming year.

Implementation in 2002 to have established representative networks of marine protected areas. In this regard, we welcome work under the Convention on Biological Diversity on scientific and technical guidance on the use of biogeographic classification systems and identification of marine areas beyond national jurisdiction in need of protection that was held in Ottawa, Canada and look forward to implementation of this work to identify areas on the high seas for consideration of protection. We also welcome steps taken by States to use areas closures to protect particularly vulnerable ecosystems and to conserve and manage fish stocks, as described in the Secretary-General's report of 17 August 2009<sup>4</sup>. The decision of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources to close a large area east of the Antarctic Peninsula is an excellent step towards representative networks. More needs to be done to establish networks of marine protected areas quickly and we look forward to discussion at meetings under the General Assembly next year to promote this outcome.

In closing, I refer to the most recently updated IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™ that shows that 17,291 species of the 47,677 assessed species are threatened with extinction. The results reveal that 32 percent of open ocean sharks and rays are threatened with extinction, primarily through overfishing. Also 21 percent of all known mammals, 30 percent of all known amphibians, 12 percent of all known birds, and 28 percent of reptiles, 37 percent of freshwater fishes, 70 percent of plants, 35 percent of invertebrates assessed so far are under threat. This latest analysis shows the 2010 target to reduce biodiversity loss will not be met. Thus scientific evidence indicates a growing threat of the risk of extinction of species, including marine. My delegation looks forward to working with others next year, the International Year of Biodiversity, as we identify and implement steps to protect marine biodiversity.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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<sup>4</sup> A/64/305