



**PERMANENT MISSION OF JAMAICA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**STATEMENT BY
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PERMANENT MISSION OF JAMAICA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**ON BEHALF OF
THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM)**



**AGENDA ITEMS 78 (a) and (b):
OCEANS AND THE LAW OF THE SEA**

**SEVENTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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General

Madam President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the fourteen (14) Member Countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) on agenda item 78 (a) and (b) on *Oceans and the law of the sea*.

CARICOM welcomes the opportunity to participate in this debate as the issues under consideration are of seminal importance to us as small island developing states whose fortunes are integrally linked to the Ocean. We, therefore, thank the Secretary-General for the various reports that have been prepared to guide our deliberations as we take stock of what we have been able to achieve since we last met to discuss these issues during the 72nd session of the UNGA.

Madam President,

It is obvious that our efforts as an international community to confront the challenges that plague our marine resources have yielded mixed results. We can be proud of the fact that awareness about the risks faced by our oceans and seas has been increased and that this has been underpinned by a greater sense of urgency for immediate and concrete action to effect meaningful change. The situation is made patently clear in the Secretary-General's report contained in document A/73/368, most notably paragraphs 3 and 4, which describe the state of the oceans as being "*perilous..... and facing a global emergency.*" Equally unnerving are the findings of the recent study, to which the Secretary-General also makes reference in his aforementioned report, that confirms that Goal 14 has been "*ranked last in significance among all the Sustainable Development Goals set out in the 2030 Agenda.*" CARICOM, therefore, looks forward to the outcome of ongoing efforts to develop the methodology for indicators for SDG 14, with the expectation that this could improve prospects for increasing awareness about the Goal.

Madam President,

The 2 resolutions to be adopted today: the omnibus resolution on oceans and law of the sea, as well as the resolution on sustainable fisheries, are the results of long and intense negotiations with delegations showing flexibility and a desire to advance the objectives of the resolutions. We wish to thank the respective Facilitators, Mrs. Natalie Sharma, Singapore, and Mr. Andreas Kravik, Norway, under whose able guidance and leadership we were able to successfully conclude our consultations. Together, these resolutions provide important steps towards strengthening the implementation of existing instruments on oceans at the global and regional levels. Consequently, CARICOM will lend its traditional support to both texts.

Intergovernmental Conference on the BBNJ

Madam President,

The convening this past September of the first session of the Intergovernmental Conference on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) was a milestone accomplishment towards filling the legal gap with respect to the protection and use of the resources of the high seas. CARICOM wishes to congratulate the President of the Conference, Ambassador Rena Lee of Singapore, for the efficient manner in which she presided over our work and looks forward to the remaining sessions to be held over the next 2 years. CARICOM stands ready to play its part towards a successful outcome in 2020.

Regular Process

Madam President,

CARICOM also fully supports the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole of the Regular Process for the Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects, which is so ably co-chaired by our colleague experts from Barbados and Estonia. As work intensifies towards the preparation of the Second World Ocean Assessment Report, you can be assured that CARICOM will continue to be engaged in the process.

Examples of individual CARICOM initiatives

Madam President,

CARICOM countries have been playing their part to support the adoption of plans, programmes and policies aimed at ensuring the health and preservation of our oceans and seas. While currently protecting more than 10 percent of its coastal marine territory, The Bahamas has launched its next 10 percent of Marine Protected Areas designation, as part of its commitment to reach its goal of having 20 percent of its waters protected by 2020.

As we noted last year, several CARICOM countries have put measures in place to ban the use of single use plastics, namely Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia and Grenada. Jamaica recently announced that it too will impose a similar ban in January 2019, to be complemented by a ban, with effect for the same period, on the importation of expanded polystyrene foam, as well as on the importation and manufacture of plastic drinking straws. Barbados has also announced that it will ban single use plastics and Styrofoam with

effect from April 1, 2019. In April 2018, The Bahamas also signed a Memorandum of Understanding to ban single-use plastics and Styrofoam containers by 2020.

Over the past year, CARICOM countries have also become parties to several instruments. In February 2018, St. Kitts and Nevis acceded to the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the Convention Relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. Grenada also signed the Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments in July 2018.

UN Decade of Ocean Science

Madam President,

Despite our increased knowledge of what lies beneath our oceans and seas, we are still limited in how much we really understand the state and nature of the ocean environment, including the resources of the ocean floor. For this reason, CARICOM welcomes the designation of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) and looks forward to the work that will inform the various activities and programmes undertaken over the period. It is our hope that in addition to improving our knowledge of the ocean, it will inspire the kind of science, technological innovations and policy interface needed to ensure that meaningful action is taken in support of the Ocean. We look forward, in this regard, to the 20th meeting of the UN Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (ICP) next year, which will have as its theme the UN Decade of Ocean Science. We believe that this will be an important complement to the work done by the 19th session of the ICP in June 2018 on anthropogenic under water noise, under the stewardship of the Permanent Representatives of Trinidad and Tobago and Cyprus.

Climate Change

Madam President,

The impacts of climate change and acidification of oceans and seas remain central to our ongoing deliberations. We have witnessed a worsening, deepening trend where action to combat climate change and ocean acidification has not kept pace with what is really required to reverse current trends. Nowhere is this more evident than in the provision of resources for climate financing. CARICOM is pleased, therefore, that the Secretary-General has sought to confront the issue with the recent appointment of the Prime Minister of Jamaica and the President of France as champions of climate financing to maximise opportunities for the unpacking of much needed funds. We believe that this will be an important medium through

which to draw attention to the issue, while also preparing for the Secretary General's special Climate Summit in 2019.

Sea-Level Rise – work of the International Law Commission

Madam President,

CARICOM welcomes the fact that the International Law Commission has agreed to include the issue of sea-level rise in its long term programme of work. There are several important legal questions of relevance to CARICOM States such as the legal implication of sea-level rise on baselines, which in turn influences the limits of maritime zones and boundaries extending from those baselines. The decision to consider sea-level rise is both timely and relevant, and could not have been more opportune. We reaffirm our call made in the Sixth (Legal) Committee for the topic to be moved to the active work programme of the Commission and look forward to the future work of the Commission in this regard.

Effective Implementation of the UNCLOS

Madam President,

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) remains the centerpiece of the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. The universal and unified character of the Convention underscores its strategic importance as the basis for national, regional and global action and cooperation in the marine sector. As the constitution of the Ocean, UNCLOS remains central to the sustainable management and use of marine resources.

The work of the International Seabed Authority, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf remain indispensable for the effective implementation of the UNCLOS. We welcome, therefore, the positive reports of the work done by each body in fulfilling its respective mandate.

We are especially pleased to note the progress made with respect to the Review of Article 154 and the development of the Strategic Plan by the Authority. We further welcome the efforts to ensure consistency and a linkage with the sustainable development goals (SDGs), as well as to have robust environmental regulations and management plans. We believe that this augurs well for the Authority's leadership role in this regard, especially in the context of the BBNJ.

Also noteworthy is the fact that the recently concluded 24th Session of the Authority was subject to a revised schedule of meetings, which saw record attendance at both the Council and Assembly sessions: Seventy-seven (77) countries (seventy-five Member States and two

Observers) presented credentials for the Assembly session while sixty (60) countries (thirty-two Council members and twenty-eight non-Council members) presented for the Council.

The work of the UN Division for the Law of the Sea (DOALOS) cannot be overemphasized. CARICOM applauds the Division for its professionalism and dedication in fulfilling its duties despite its limited resources and join in the call for the provision of the requisite resources to enable it to continue to execute its functions.

The work of the United Nations University, particularly the Fisheries Training Programme in Iceland and the International Ocean Institute in building capacity and facilitating knowledge and technology transfer in ocean governance and use of marine resources, must also be recognised and commended.

Importance of coordination and cooperation

Madam President,

Our efforts to arrest the challenges that confront our marine environment will not reap success if we do not seize the opportunities to work together to improve coordination and cooperation. For example, illegal fishing poses a great challenge with the limited capacity of small states to properly police their waters, thus requiring greater cooperation and compliance. There is scope for this and other issues to be addressed given the many initiatives being pursued at the national, regional and multilateral levels. We recognize, for example, the recently concluded Sustainable Blue Economy Conference held in Nairobi, Kenya and co-hosted by the Governments of Canada and Japan; the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy Co-Chaired by the Prime Ministers of Norway and Palau in which several other Heads of Government, including Jamaica, are also involved; and the 2020 Ocean Conference being jointly organized by the Governments of Portugal and Kenya.

As small-island developing states, CARICOM has an intimate relationship with the marine environment on which we are deeply reliant for our socioeconomic survival. We, therefore, have read with great interest the observations made by the Secretary-General in Chapter VI of his previously referenced report on "*Balancing economic growth with environmental protection.*" We support the need for both issues to be considered along a broader continuum that also seeks to strengthen regional and international cooperation and coordination, including through integrated and cross-sectoral approaches. This augurs well for the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources, while simultaneously addressing the various pressures on the marine environment. Cooperation and coordination should also extend to UN System activities related to the Ocean.

Capacity building and the creation of partnerships will no doubt remain critical. To this end, we wish to thank our bilateral partners and the UN System for the support provided to date and look forward to the strengthening of these relationships in the coming years. For example and as noted in the Secretary-General's report in 2018 CARICOM nationals from Guyana, St. Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago were awarded fellowships under the United Nations - Nippon Foundation Fellowship programme. Similarly, Barbados and Belize were among the countries benefitting from a project jointly undertaken by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and DOALOS to develop "*evidence-based and policy-coherent oceans economy and trade strategies.*"

Participation in discussions on oceans and law of the sea is key to finding solutions. The Voluntary Trust Funds that exist as part of the UN support system to advance this objective play an indispensable role in this regard. We, therefore, express our appreciation for the contributions that have been made but remain concerned about the sustainability and predictability of funding. We urge continued support to this end.

We would also like to acknowledge the work done by the Special Envoy on the Oceans, H.E. Peter Thomson, who has been using his portfolio to build greater awareness and advocacy in support of the voluntary commitments made at the 2017 Ocean Conference. The launch of the Communities of Ocean Action "*to implement the voluntary commitments, generate new commitments and facilitate collaboration and networking in support of Goal 14*" is indeed welcome.

Sustainable Fisheries

Madam President,

CARICOM is at the forefront of regional efforts to develop and implement fisheries management plans, establish and strengthen partnerships among key stakeholders within the ocean sector, and to combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing and overfishing, which pose a threat to the sustainability of local and regional fisheries. We will, therefore, continue to implement our Common Fisheries Policy and ensure regular engagement through regional workshops, public education campaigns and multi-stakeholder consultations coordinated by the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism, in partnership with organisations within and outside the region. We acknowledge the important work being done by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation to support sustainable fisheries in CARICOM and globally.

Next Steps

Madam President,

There is no denying that urgent action needs to be taken. The conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and seas and their resources is critical to sustainable development. We must act now. We must act decisively.

I thank you.