

Statement by the Maldives on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) - Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea

Monday, 06 April 2015 00:00

Statement delivered by

The Republic of Maldives to the United Nations

on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)

at the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea

6 April 2015

Co-chairs,

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). AOSIS aligns itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of South Africa, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

At the outset, we thank the Secretary General and his team for their excellent work in preparing the report and compiling the reports from the wide range of Agencies to guide our discussions. We extend our gratitude to these Agencies.

We further acknowledge with appreciation the excellent work of their Excellencies, the distinguished co-chairs, who, with the continued and outstanding support of the Secretariat prepared this meeting and ensured a balanced regional representation. We look forward to a very enriching week of insightful and thought provoking presentations and discussions.

Co-chairs,

We take the floor today to underscore that healthy, productive, and resilient oceans and seas are a critical source of livelihoods and are an important element of our identity. This should not come as a surprise, as SIDS have repeatedly reaffirmed the intimate relationship we have with oceans and seas. Indeed, action on oceans and seas form a critical component of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action [SAMOA] Pathway, the blueprint for our sustainable development.

Oceans contribute to poverty eradication by creating sustainable livelihoods and decent work in fisheries and marine aquaculture, shipping and shipbuilding, ports, tourism, oil, gas, mining, and maritime transportation industries. Moreover, they are the primary regulator of the global climate and an important sink for greenhouse gases. They provide us with water and the very oxygen we breathe.

Yet, as the report also highlighted, despite their importance, threats to oceans, seas, marine ecosystems and marine resources are skyrocketing, and the causes have been well covered in the SG report. Failure to address oceans and seas will hamper efforts to meet development goals, especially those related to poverty eradication, food security and health efforts.

We would like to highlight some important factors to take into considerations:

Restoring and sustaining healthy fish stocks is critical for the livelihood and economic sector of SIDS, as well as globally. Harmful activities including illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing, overfishing and other damaging practices are undermining the achievement of this target. They must be addressed and the subsidies, which contribute to them eliminated. SIDS have also called for concrete, sustainable support to enhance and implement the regime for monitoring, control and surveillance of fishing vessels, to effectively prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

Coral reefs are important ecosystems. They face various threats, localized and globalized. Coral bleaching is one of the most severe threats faced by coral reefs ecosystems. SIDS have called for improving monitoring to predict and identify bleaching events, supporting and strengthening action taken during such events and improving strategies to manage reefs to support their natural resilience and enhance their ability to withstand other pressures, including ocean acidification. Such strategies and efforts require international assistance to further the protection of coral reefs, and to develop and implement comprehensive and integrated approaches for their management and enhancement.

International action to address climate change remains grossly inadequate, and emissions of greenhouse gases continue to rise globally at a distressing rate. Related impacts including extreme events and slow onset events such as climate variability, temperature rise, sea level rise and ocean acidification – as well as security related issues threaten the survival and viability of SIDS and pose a significant challenge to our sustainable development efforts.

Co-chairs,

The issues are numerous and complex, but we need to act now. We needed political will to take the actions necessary to address the critical issues that are damaging oceans and seas. We need more coherence and cooperation between the relevant actors who need to work towards a common goal. This is why we welcome the dedicated ocean SDG as endorsed by the UNGA as part of the report of the OWG on SDG. The post-2015 development agenda provides an unprecedented opportunity to kick-start international action, within the framework and in accordance with UNCLOS.

To be effective, we need a framework for the delivery of sufficient means of implementation and effective partnerships to allow us to go beyond the rhetoric of sustainable development and make real, measurable progress on the ground. We would also need a robust follow up that regularly track the progress and efforts of all international partners and stakeholders to improve the health, resilience and productivity of oceans. I thank you.