Statement on Agenda Items
76(a) "Oceans and the Law of the Sea" and
76(b) "Sustainable Fisheries"
December 9, 2014

By Minister Mr. Hiroshi Ishikawa
Representative of Japan

Mr. President,

Let me first join the other delegates in thanking the coordinators of the two draft resolutions, Ambassador Eden Charles, Deputy Permanent Representative of Trinidad and Tobago, and Ms. Alice Revell of New Zealand, for their tremendous work.

I also wish to thank all Member States who have worked together in a spirit of cooperation during the informal consultations on the resolutions. My appreciation also goes to the Secretariat for its assistance.

Mr. President,

Japan is a maritime state surrounded by water and dependent on maritime transport for nearly all imports of energy resources, including oil and mineral resources. To advance the rule of law at sea, which are commons for the international community as a whole, compliance with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (the Convention), is extremely important. The Convention prescribes provisions for safety at sea, freedom of the high seas comprising freedoms of navigation and overflight, and peaceful settlement of disputes. In this regard, Japan attaches great importance to the three principles in “the rule of law at sea.” Firstly, states shall make and clarify their claims based on international law. Secondly, states shall not use force or coercion in trying to drive their claims. Thirdly, states shall seek to settle dispute’s by peaceful means.

The adoption of this draft resolution, to which the foresaid provisions are related, at the consensual will of the Member States, is also very important for maritime states like Japan and for the whole international community.

In this regard, Japan is pleased to co-sponsor the draft resolution.

Mr. President,
(1) International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea

With regard to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), Japan highly appreciates the important role played by the Tribunal in terms of the peaceful settlement of disputes, as well as the maintenance and development of the rule of law in the oceans. Japan welcomes that the Tribunal’s works in recent years have resulted in rendering of judgments on the merits by the Tribunal in a constant manner. Japan also welcomes that the recent works of the Tribunal cover various important legal questions of the law of the sea and the system of UNCLOS, as illustrated by the example of the case concerning the request for an Advisory Opinion submitted by the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission, which is currently pending before the Tribunal.

Japan, as the largest contributor to the Tribunal’s budget, is committed its full support for the valuable work of the Tribunal.

(2) International Seabed Authority

With regards to the International Seabed Authority (ISA), Japan would like to extend its heartfelt congratulations to the Authority’s 20th anniversary since its establishment.

Since its establishment, Japan has attached importance to the role to be played by the Authority for the international management of exploration and exploitation of mineral resources in the Area known as “the common heritage of mankind.” Japan highly appreciates that the Authority has steadily carried out its mission to establish maritime legal order in the Area, including the preparation for formulating the exploitation code, taking account of the fact that some of the contracts for exploration for Polymetallic Nodules in the Area are close to their expiration dates.

In view of the importance of ensuring a well-balanced approach between exploitation and environmental protection of the Area, Japan highly values the Authority’s activities on these issues by adoption of the guidance for contractors for the assessment of the possible environmental impacts arising from exploration of marine minerals in the Area and the workshops organized by the Authority. Japan has been supporting activities undertaken by the Authority through both human and financial resources, including its contribution to the Voluntary Trust Fund of the International Seabed Authority in the amount of 21,660 USD this year. Japan would like to express its intention to continue its support for the Authority in various fields.

(3) Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf

With regards to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS), Japan wishes to pay tribute to the Commission for its tremendous efforts in expediting its consideration for the numerous submissions with such measures as an extension in the duration of the Commission’s sessions and the additional establishment of new subcommissions.
Bearing in mind the important role of the Commission under the Convention, Japan has provided human contribution to the Commission by nominating a member of the Commission and also this year Japan made an additional contribution of 50,494 USD to the Trust Fund for the purpose of defraying the costs of participation by members of the CLCS from the developing States in the meetings of the Commission.

Japan firmly believes that through voluntary contributions to the Trust Funds by State Parties, the smooth and expeditious consideration for the submission by the Commission would be promoted.

(4) Maritime safety and security

Regarding maritime safety and security issues, we can say that although we witnessed a marked reduction in the volume of pirate attacks off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden, piracy may potentially return. To suppress piracy, Japan is of the view that a multi-layered approach, which includes assistance to enhancing maritime law enforcement capacity in Somalia and its neighboring countries, and other medium to long-term efforts for stability in Somalia, in addition to operation by naval vessels, must be pursued.

From this point of view, Japan has been deploying destroyers and patrol aircraft to the region without any interruption since 2009. In addition, Japan has contributed to enhancing maritime law enforcement capacity such as Fund to Support the Initiative of States Countering Piracy off the Coast of Somalia.

Japan also continues to play a leading role within the framework of the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP).

Mr. President,

With regards to the agenda item 74(b) "Sustainable fisheries," as a responsible fishing State and a State Party to UNCLOS and UN Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA), Japan is dedicated to addressing the promotion of sustainable use through the conservation and management of marine living resources and the appropriate conservation of the marine ecosystem, in cooperation with the parties concerned, through bilateral fisheries agreements, FAO and Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs).

Japan welcomes recent developments in the management of high seas fishing, including the conclusion of arrangements concerning the establishment of new RFMOs, which reflects the resolutions on Sustainable Fisheries in the previous years. In this regard, Japan became a contracting state to the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement in July. Japan played a leading role in drafting the Convention on the Conservation and Management of High Seas Fisheries Resources in
the North Pacific Ocean and became the first contracting state. It is decided that the secretariat of the North Pacific Fisheries Commission will be established in Tokyo. Japan hopes early entry into force of the Convention.

In closing, Mr. President, Japan iterates its wish that the two draft resolutions before us, which are the results of intensive negotiations among the Member States who worked with a spirit of cooperation during the informal consultations, will be duly adopted at this session of the General Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. President.