United States Statement

Sixty-ninth Session of the United Nations General Assembly

Agenda Item 74(a): Oceans and the law of the sea

and

Agenda Item 74(b): Sustainable fisheries, including through the 1995 Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the UN 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, and related instruments

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates,

My delegation has the honor to co-sponsor the General Assembly resolutions on oceans and the law of the sea and on sustainable fisheries.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates,

The annual General Assembly resolutions on oceans and fisheries that we are debating today serve as important opportunities for the global community to identify key marine-related issues and develop constructive ways forward to address them. The United States attaches great importance to oceans and fisheries issues, and we value the platform that the UN General Assembly provides to elevate these issues.
Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates,

As many of you know, Secretary of State John Kerry is a passionate advocate for the ocean and has made protection of the ocean a focus for American diplomacy. This June, Secretary Kerry hosted the Our Ocean conference in Washington to draw global attention to the urgent need to promote the health of the ocean, and to focus in particular on three key ocean issues: sustainable fisheries, marine pollution, and ocean acidification. The General Assembly has made progress on these important issues through the oceans and fisheries resolutions, and we were glad to continue that work at the conference by providing a forum where stakeholders from government and civil society could share lessons learned, the best science, and commitments for action.

We are building on the momentum of the conference to end overfishing, reduce pollution entering the marine environment, stem the increase of ocean acidification, and protect more ocean areas. Working with all of you, we were pleased to move some of these issues forward in this year’s oceans resolution, for example, by incorporating new text on reducing marine debris and nutrient pollution and measuring ocean acidification. And we are already looking forward to fruitful exchanges on the important topic of marine debris, plastics and microplastics, in the 2016 Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and Law of the Sea.

Similarly, we see this year’s sustainable fisheries resolution as once again serving as an effective platform to strengthen the call to meet both the challenges to ensuring sustainable fisheries and the responsibilities of the Member States, both individually and collectively. This year’s resolution addresses the ways in which the international community continues to strengthen its commitment to ending overfishing through science-based conservation and management, cooperation in
regional fisheries management organizations, and broadening and strengthening the implementation of important international legal instruments such as the UN Fish Stocks Agreement. The United States was also gratified that the other Member States supported recognition of the need for increased focus on the impacts of ocean acidification in fisheries, concerted action to minimize fisheries waste and discards, and continuing attention to the shared responsibility to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates,

The 2014 sustainable fisheries resolution also contains important commitments to strengthen the collective effort to combat illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing, including a call for ratifications or accessions that will help bring into force the global Port State Measures Agreement, a vital tool that will help developing and developed countries alike to deny economic benefit to those that continue to undermine legitimate and sustainable fisheries management through IUU fishing activities.

We welcome the decision of the Government of Chile to host the second Our Ocean conference in October 2015 to further enhance collaboration and action to conserve the ocean and its resources. We look forward to a very fruitful and action-oriented conference.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates,

The United States would like to thank Director Gabriele Goettsche-Wanli and the staff of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for their expertise and support on both resolutions. We would also like to thank
Ambassador Eden Charles of Trinidad and Tobago for his coordination of the oceans resolution and Ms. Alice Revell of New Zealand for her coordination of the fisheries resolution. Both again did an outstanding job.

Finally, I would like to conclude by expressing appreciation for delegations' hard work and cooperation in crafting both resolutions. It is our hope that this spirit of cooperation will characterize our efforts to address the numerous and complex issues that lie ahead in the new year.

Thank you.
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