STATEMENT OF THE PHILIPPINES

74 – (a) Oceans and the law of the sea, and (b) Sustainable fisheries, including through the 1995 Agreement for the implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservations and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, and related instruments

Tuesday, 09 December 2014, UNGA Plenary Hall

Thank you, Mr. President.

At the outset, my delegation would like to thank Ambassador Eden Charles of Trinidad and Tobago and Ms Alice Revell of New Zealand, for their hard work, commitment and dedication in coordinating our annual resolutions on Oceans and the Law of the Sea and on Sustainable Fisheries, respectively.

Water covers two-thirds of our planet’s surface, and one-half of that surface is high seas, beyond the jurisdiction of any state. It is not surprising, therefore, that taken together, our two resolutions today are probably the most comprehensive subject that the General Assembly considers on an annual basis.

This year, on the eve of the 20th anniversary of the opening for signature of the 1995 Fish Stocks Agreement, the Philippines became the 82nd State Party to that Agreement. This demonstrates our commitment to the conservation as well as the optimum utilization of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks, both within and beyond the exclusive economic zone, and the management of those stocks based on the precautionary approach and the best available scientific information.

Our resolution on Sustainable Fisheries reaffirms our common, global commitments in Rio + 20 “The future we want” (1) to eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; (2) to eliminate subsidies that contribute to such fishing and over-capacity; and (3) to enhance actions to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems from significant adverse impacts, including through the effective use of impact assessments.

In addition, the resolution deals with many other critical issues, such as ensuring that the decisions taken by regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) are based on the best available scientific information, the implementation of plans of action for the conservation and management of sharks, and the impact of industrial fishing on species low down on the food chain, given their important role as food for other species in the marine ecosystem.

Mr. President, sustained global cooperation on ocean matters is paramount. Turning now to our resolution on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, the Philippines also reaffirms our commitments articulated in Rio + 20. Rio recognized that oceans, seas
and coastal areas form an integrated and essential component of the planet's ecosystem, and are thus critical to sustaining it.

Most importantly for coastal developing countries and small island states, the resolution also recognizes the importance of improving our understanding of the impact of climate change on oceans and seas. Science has begun to provide us proof of the linkage. A painful and tragic reminder for my country is Typhoon Haiyan last year. I wish, in this regard, to reiterate our deepest gratitude to the UN and to all Member States and international civil society for their support and assistance following this very dark moment.

The resolution builds on previous years' resolutions, and contributes to a rules-based international regime. It articulates our deepening concern over the continued threat of human activity on marine environments and biodiversity.

The Philippines agrees that now, more than ever, we must take action to arrest marine pollution including marine debris which compromise the health of the oceans and of marine biodiversity. We need to neutralize if not reverse the adverse economic, social and environmental impacts of the physical alteration and destruction of marine habitats that might result from land-based and coastal development activities. The Manila Declaration on Furthering the Implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, which is cited in paragraph 190 of the resolution, is very instructive in this regard.

Next year will be another important year, as we are poised to pursue our Social Development Goals. We also look forward to the meeting next month of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity Beyond Areas of National Jurisdiction, co-chaired by Sri Lanka and the Netherlands. We have to come to a decision whether or not we should launch negotiations on this overriding topic. The Philippines agrees that, yes, we should.

Mr. President, the Philippines is fully committed to maritime safety and security, and to the fight against piracy. The 2010 Manila amendments to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, is consistent with this commitment.

The Philippines also supports the acceleration of the work of the three bodies created by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, namely, the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, the International Seabed Authority which commemorated its 20th session in Kingston last July, and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea for which we elected new, highly qualified judges at our States Parties meeting last June.

The rules-based approach of UNCLOS is the way forward in addressing maritime disputes. We renew our call on those involved to avail of the dispute settlement
mechanism in UNCLOS, even as we ask them to sustain the dialogue and continue exploring opportunities for cooperation to fulfill our shared aspirations.

It is for this reason that, as our friends are aware, the Philippines has been calling for the use of settlement mechanisms anchored on international law, such as arbitration, to bring disputes to a final and enduring resolution.

We are confident that those true to the ideals of the United Nations will support this advocacy of the Philippines.

We also reiterate our support for the Secretary-General's call for States Parties to UNCLOS to clearly define and publicize the limits of their respective maritime zones, so that other States Parties will have greater certainty on their maritime spaces, and thus avoid disputes.

In closing, Mr. President, we reiterate the call on all States that have not yet done so, to ratify UNCLOS and contribute to its universality. UNCLOS stands the test of time, anchoring the Rule of Law governing the rights and responsibilities of nations in their use of the world's oceans. UNCLOS allows for an environment of peace and security to flourish in our maritime spaces.

Thank you, Mr. President.