Mr President,

1. My delegation is pleased to address the General Assembly on agenda item 74, “Oceans and the law of the sea”. We thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive reports on this agenda item. We would also like to thank Ambassador Eden Charles of Trinidad and Tobago and Ms Alice Revell of New Zealand for their excellent work in coordinating the informal consultations on the draft omnibus resolution on Oceans and the Law of the Sea and the draft resolution on Sustainable Fisheries respectively. We also wish to record our appreciation to the Director and staff of the Division for Ocean Affairs and Law of the Sea for their assistance and support on these drafts.

Mr President,

2. On the sixteenth of November this year, the international community commemorated the twentieth anniversary of the entry into force of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Singapore is grateful that one of our very own, Ambassador Tommy Koh, was given the honour and privilege to preside over the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea from 1980 to 1982 – the process
which gave birth to this "constitution of the oceans" that has stood the test of time. Over the past twenty years, the vital contribution of UNCLOS to the maintenance and strengthening of peace, security, cooperation and friendly relations among all nations has been widely and repeatedly recognised. This achievement is owing to and reflective of, amongst others, the careful balance that was struck in UNCLOS of the competing uses of the oceans and seas. My delegation is firmly of the view that the contribution and importance of UNCLOS will only continue to increase in the years to come.

3. In this regard, we echo the call in the draft omnibus resolution for States that have not done so to become parties to UNCLOS in order to fully achieve the goal of universal participation. As it stands, UNCLOS, with its 166 States Parties, enjoys near universal acceptance. Furthermore, even countries that have yet to become parties also recognise much of UNCLOS as reflecting customary international law. Indeed, UNCLOS has been recognised as setting out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out and it remains the overarching framework for governance of the world's oceans and seas.

Mr President,

4. This year also marks the twentieth anniversary of the International Seabed Authority (ISA) – one of the three institutions created by UNCLOS. Singapore commends the work that the ISA has done in establishing a deep seabed mining regime. As a newly elected member of the ISA Council, Singapore firmly believes that we will be able to contribute constructively to the Council as it works to establish policies to safeguard the common heritage of mankind. Singapore values the contributions of all the ISA Member States and for this reason, we urge that all Members continue to participate actively in the meetings organised by the ISA Secretariat.
Mr President,

5. On the issue of sustainable development, my delegation notes that the oceans and seas form an essential component of the Earth’s ecosystem and are critical to sustainable development. The sustainable use of oceans and seas, and of their resources, is particularly pertinent in light of its contribution towards poverty eradication, sustained economic growth, food security, at the same time protecting marine biodiversity and addressing the impacts of climate change. We are also mindful that the full development potential of the oceans and seas can only be realised when ocean-based activities are carried out in a sustainable manner. In this regard, we are heartened to note that the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals established by the General Assembly considered the issue of oceans and seas and proposed a goal to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. Accordingly, we are very supportive of and look forward to contributing constructively to the elaboration of the post-2015 Development Agenda on this issue.

6. On a related note, my delegation has followed with great interest the exchange of views made at the first and second meetings of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group on issues concerning marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction, which were convened in April and June 2014. We look forward to the next meeting to be held in January 2015. In this regard, my delegation affirms the view that UNCLOS must remain the overarching framework for discussions on this issue. The principles, rights and duties enshrined within UNCLOS continue to be relevant, and any future work in this area should not contradict or undermine UNCLOS. In addition, the principles and provisions in UNCLOS should not be applied selectively, but rather, should be viewed in a holistic manner.
Mr President,

7. Singapore's long-standing commitment to the law of the sea is well-known. We are a small island State with significant maritime interests. We are also one of the three littoral States bordering the Straits of Malacca and Singapore. These Straits are a major international shipping route of long-standing importance. Today, about 90 per cent of global trade is carried by sea, about half of which passes through these Straits. It is therefore in our common interest that the principles, rights and duties under UNCLOS, which include those on navigation and passage, continue to be adhered to.

Mr President,

8. At the time UNCLOS entered into force, it represented, in many ways, a new global order for the oceans and seas. Beyond the achievements marked by its inception, we have, over the last twenty years, also witnessed first-hand the continued successes of UNCLOS in maintaining and strengthening a peaceful order in the world's oceans and seas. Singapore is committed to ensuring the continued maintenance of this peaceful order and it is our firm belief that this can only be achieved by continuing to respect and maintain the integrity of UNCLOS.

9. I thank you, Mr President.

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