



OceanCare Position Statement

Twenty-fourth session of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process
on the Oceans and the Law of the Sea – UNHQ - New York, 18-21/6/2024

Agenda Item 3, General Exchange of Views, Tuesday, 18th June 2024

Distinguished Co-Chairs and Delegates,

OceanCare has been actively participating in the sessions of the UNICPOLOS since 2004 and welcomes the opportunity to speak up and openly exchange views on topical themes annually. We would like to commend DOALOS for their professional backing of the UNICPOLOS, and we welcome the continuous commitment by the UNGA to continue ensuring its organisation.

This year's theme focuses on the oceans as a source of sustainable food. As pointed out in the written contribution by OceanCare to this meeting, which we have submitted to UNDOALOS, the theme is highly relevant considering what is happening in the ocean and its ability to act as provider of sustainable food. In this regard, the ocean is facing a multitude of cumulative and synergistic threats. Several stressors are hampering the ocean to continue providing food for a growing human population, on top of the living marine organisms that also depend on a healthy ocean. Such threats include climate breakdown impacts, overfishing, IUU fishing, destructive fishing practices, marine plastic pollution, anthropogenic underwater noise pollution, chemical pollution, habitat degradation and ocean acidification. In addition, new threats are arising – if permitted – such as deep-sea mining or marine geoengineering practices.

The Sustainable Development Goal 14 and respective targets set to “conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development” are at the heart of this year's ICP and shall be used as the guiding principle in discussions this week, while taking fully into account the extent of all said stressors. The current trajectory of failing to reach the important targets of SDG14 is a reason for concern and closely relates to the fact that also fishing practices are not yet managed in a sustainable manner at global scale.

We therefore need to recognise the utmost urgency of safeguarding the role of the oceans for its intrinsic value, but also as our life-support system, including as a source of sustainable food. This requires us needing to come together to curb the negative impacts of those human activities that exacerbate existing stressors thereby threatening food security. One powerful tool that would allow us to do that is the prompt entry into force of the BBNJ Agreement. Thus, we call upon all States to become Parties to it with urgency. As for food security specifically, we call upon States not to take decisions or actions which would ultimately result in further compromising the ability of the oceans to be a source of sustainable food and take, instead, measures that will allow the oceans to recover and thrive which will benefit the well-being of this planet and humankind.

Thank you very much for your attention,
Fabienne McLellan - Managing Director, OceanCare; fmclellan@oceancare.org