



**Informal Meeting of the Legal Advisers of the
Ministries of Foreign Affairs**

Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares,
Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs,
United Nations Legal Counsel

Distinguished delegates,
Colleagues and friends,

[Opening remarks]

I am pleased to see you all again and to deliver the opening statement for this year's Informal Meeting of the Legal Advisers from the capitals. This is one of the highlights of my year and every year it is a distinct pleasure.

First of all, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the delegation of Poland



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[LAW OF THE SEA]

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Turning briefly to issues pertaining to the law of the sea, many of you will recall that the General Assembly, in its resolution 72/249 adopted by consensus on 24 December 2017, decided to convene an intergovernmental conference, under the auspices of the United Nations, to consider the recommendations of the Preparatory Committee established by resolution 69/292 on the elements and to elaborate the text of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, with a view to developing the instrument as soon as possible.

The Assembly also decided that negotiations shall address the topics identified in a package agreed in 2011, namely, the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, in particular, together and as a whole, marine genetic resources, including questions on the sharing of benefits, measures such as area-based management tools, including marine protected areas, environmental impact assessments and capacity-building and the transfer of marine technology.

In the resolution, the Assembly reaffirmed that the work and results of the Conference should be fully consistent with the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and recognized that this process and its result should not undermine existing relevant legal instruments and frameworks and relevant global, regional and sectoral bodies.

It further decided that, initially with respect to 2018, 2019 and the first half of 2020, the Conference shall meet for four sessions. In accordance with the resolution, an organizational meeting was held in New York in April this year, at which Ms. Rena Lee of Singapore was elected as President of the Conference. The meeting also decided on a number of procedural and organizational matters. Also in accordance with the resolution, the first session of the Conference took place from 4 to 17 September. That session focused on the four topics of the package, working through informal working groups, and considered, at the request of the President and on the basis of a President's aid to discussions, what would need to be included in the international legally binding instrument.

It is my assessment, as Secretary-General of the Conference, that the meeting was largely considered a success in terms of putting the Conference on a solid path





towards the development of a zero draft of an international legally binding instrument.

The second session is tentatively scheduled to take place from 25 March to 5 April 2019. In preparation for that session, the President was requested to prepare a document with the aim of facilitating focused discussions and text



