

High Seas Alliance Opening Statement

4 September 2018

Thank you Madame President, I am honored to speak on behalf of the High Seas Alliance and its 40 non-governmental member organizations including Greenpeace, NRDC, the Pew Charitable Trusts, Turkish Marine Research Institute, OceanCare, Icelandic Nature Conservation Association, Mission Blue, the Marine Conservation Institute, Global Fishing Watch, Int'l Fund for Animal Welfare, IPSO, The Nature Conservancy and Global Ocean Trust, who collectively represent millions of people around the world concerned with the future of the high seas, and we align ourselves with the statement made by IUCN.

We reiterate our congratulations on your appointment as President of the Conference and give you our full support in the critical work set before you through 2020. We would also like to thank the UN Under-Secretary General for Legal Affairs and the Secretary General of this conference, Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares, for his leadership, as well as DOALOS for their tireless and ever-constant support now and throughout these many years.

Madame President, distinguished delegates, and esteemed colleagues, we have come through sometimes rough and turbulent waters to get to this momentous point – indeed 14 years of discussions -- and along the way, much effort and commitment from governments and individuals who have been instrumental to lead us here -- and culminating in the 2017 adoption of resolution 72/249 convening this Conference to elaborate the text of an international legally binding instrument under the UNCLOS with a view to develop this instrument as soon as possible.

We are now embarking on a new course and uncharted waters. It is a **remarkable opportunity** to put into place protection for nearly half the planet. It is also a sobering responsibility, and while the route ahead may be difficult to navigate, we trust Madame President, that with you at the helm, delegations will overcome any challenges ahead. We have heard repeatedly from scientists and at many previous meetings the increasing threats that prevail on ocean areas beyond national jurisdiction, including climate change, ocean acidification, chemical, noise and plastic pollution, over-fishing and destructive fishing practices, and new and emerging uses. As the summary of the First Global Integrated Marine Assessment noted the “the greatest threat to the ocean comes from a failure to deal quickly with these manifold problems.”

So after 14 years of scoping and meeting and discussing, and as noted by the EU, the time has come to go beyond the PrepCom conceptual explorations and move towards text-based negotiations. We therefore strongly support the recommendation, made by many here yesterday and today, including the African Group, Bangladesh on behalf of LDCs, Togo, Morocco, Costa Rica, Mx, Tanzania, Nigeria, Eritrea, that a draft text is developed as soon as possible, and before the next session of the IGC.

We are grateful for the work of the President providing the Aid to Discussion questions which will help focus the discussions toward that end, and are eager to assist you and all States in the weeks and years to come; we truly appreciate the opportunity to participate in this historic process.

Madame President, we are confident that under your guidance, and with the constructive attitude of all delegations, this first session of the IGC will be a success; **because we simply cannot fail.** You have in your hands the future of the high seas, half of our beautiful blue Planet; **one ocean, one planet, one treaty.**

Thank you very much.