



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MR. KARIM MEDREK, COUNSELLOR TO THE PERMANENT MISSION OF THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ENTITLED "OCEANS AND LAW OF THE SEA" (New York, 24 November 2003)

Mr. President,

It is an honor for me to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on the agenda item entitled "Oceans and the Law of the Sea".

The State Parties to the Convention, member of Group 77 and China consider that the entry into force nine years ago-and more precisely on the 16th of November 1994 – of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea represented a decisive milestone in the establishment of a comprehensive international legal framework governing the oceans.

The Group of 77 and China have been involved from the beginning in the codification of the law of the sea, fully aware of the unique nature of the marine environment which lends itself to the global and integrated approach of the Convention.

We note with satisfaction that the institutions established under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea are functioning well. I am referring to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, the International seabed Authority and the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf.

The Group of 77 and China wish to thank the Secretary General for his exhaustive and relevant report on the oceans and the law of the sea. We also wish to extend special thanks to the Division for Ocean Affairs and Law of the Sea, in particular to Mrs. De Marffy Director of the Division for its ongoing contribution and dedication to the success of our work.

Mr. President,

The Group of 77 and China remain concerned about the growing deterioration of the marine environment and the overexploitation of living marine resources.

With respect to protection of the marine environment, it is clearly urgent today to put an end to the degradation of the marine environment from land-based activities and from ships. This phenomenon is detrimental to human health, to combating poverty, to food security and to industry.

The Group of 77 and China support the Global Program of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, which through useful and practical guidelines provides direction for national and regional authorities in preparing and implementing measures aimed at preventing, reducing and eliminating the degradation of the marine environment by pollution of land-based activities.

With regard to pollution from ships, the accident of the Prestige focused attention on the important role played by the International Maritime Organization in elaborating international rules and regulations to prevent pollution of the marine environment from ships. In this respect, the Group of 77 and China associate themselves to this normative effort to prevent that such disaster does not reoccur.

Mr. President,

Marine biological diversity is threatened by a variety of human activities. The effective protection and sustainable exploitation of the marine and coastal biological diversity must henceforth be a matter of urgency for the States and international organizations concerned.

In accordance with the Plan of Implementation of the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Group of 77 and China urge the international community to adopt every measure necessary to maintain or restore stocks at the level needed to obtain a constant maximum yield by the year 2015 at the latest.

Similarly, the Group of 77 and china support the recommendations of the meeting of the Consultative Process with respect to the biological diversity of the marine area, including in areas outside national jurisdiction.

Mr. President,

The Group of 77 and China are of the opinion that international coordination and cooperation are still a prerequisite for the effective management of the oceans and seas. Within the context of the United Nations, we believe in the importance of establishing machinery for notification and evaluation of the state of the marine environment. With the assistance of all organizations and agencies concerned, such machinery will provide a solid scientific basis for States and regional organizations to take decisions on questions concerning the oceans.

Mr. President,

Aware of the close interconnection among the various components of the oceans and seas, the General Assembly set up an informal process for the integrated review of maritime affairs based on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and Agenda 21.

The Group of 77 and China attach particular importance to this process; it represents a forum for discussion, open to all States, in which to examine in the most constructive and comprehensive manner trends in maritime affairs and means of strengthening cooperation. By reviewing in depth and in all their many aspects the different questions relating to the oceans, this process has led to a revitalization of the debate on oceans and the law of the sea.

In this respect, the Informal Consultative Process, which held its fourth session from 2 to 6 June 2003, once again perfectly fulfilled its mandate by facilitating better understanding of the oceans. At this meeting of the consultative Process, the Group of 77 and China highlighted some of its views with regard to oceans and the Law of the Sea.

The Group of 77 and China consider the chosen themes—navigation, including strengthening the capacity to produce nautical charts, and protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems—which were the focus of our debate, to be of great importance.

In order to reinforce the safety of navigation, the Group of 77 and China are of the view that the various aspects of safety navigation are dealt with in a comprehensive and substantial body of international rules and regulations. It seems that what we need is to ensure the implementation of the existing rules. We believed that the majority of accidents at sea are the consequence of insufficient implementation and enforcement measures.

The Group of 77 and China shared the view that Hydrographic surveys and nautical charting are critical to the safety of navigation and life at sea, environmental protection, including vulnerable marine ecosystems. The move towards electronic charting will not only provide significantly increased benefits for safer navigation but will also provide a precious data and information.

In this regard, the Group of 77 and China encourage intensified efforts to build capacity for developing countries, to improve hydrographic services and the production of nautical charts, including the mobilization of resources and building capacity with support from international financial institutions and the donor community.

Concerning the Protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems, the Group of 77 and China believed that the key is to manage effectively the threats to, and impacts on, those ecosystems. While there is already a substantial body of international agreements and programmes of work, the Group of 77 and China reiterate the urgent need to improve the implementation of international agreements, the coordination and cooperation of organizations with related mandate.

The Group of 77 and China support the suggestions and recommendations contained in the final report of the fourth meeting of the Informal Consultative Process. We believe that these conclusions have helped to improve the content of this year's draft resolution on oceans and the law of the sea. Our Group is party to the Consensus emerged on this draft resolution.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, the Group of 77 and China fully endorse the remarkable work carried out by our organization to establish an order for the oceans which preserves global equilibrium while responding in an equitable way to the concerns of all members of the international community. Let me seize this moment to assure you that the Group of 77 and China will continue its active and constructive participation to the future deliberations on this agenda item.

