

AS DELIVERED

**UNICPOLOS 6  
6 to 10 June 2005**

**OPENING STATEMENT OF NEW ZEALAND**

Co-Chairs

The New Zealand delegation is very pleased to participate in the sixth meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea.

May I also say what a pleasure it is to have old friends and colleagues guide our deliberations.

Renewing UNICPOLOS' Mandate

When UNICPOLOS was established in 1999, it was charged with the aim of facilitating a more coordinated approach to consideration of oceans and law of the sea issues. The United Nations General Assembly called on governments and the international community together to deal with the complex and interrelated area of oceans in an integrated, rather than fragmented, way. One of the key goals was to deepen and broaden the General Assembly's annual debate on oceans issues.

UNICPOLOS has had real success with these objectives. New Zealand considers that the opportunity UNICPOLOS presents - to enable rigorous discussion of current marine-related issues in a cross-cutting way and with the broadest of participation - is unique and of the utmost value in our work as stewards of the world's oceans and their resources.

For these reasons, it is crucial for UNICPOLOS to continue, and for its open-ended, informal and consultative mandate to be safeguarded.

Co-Chairs

New Zealand welcomes the themes for this year's meeting - Fisheries and their Contribution to Sustainable Development; and Marine Debris.

Fisheries and Their Contribution to Sustainable Development

The three primary pillars of sustainable development, - environmental protection, economic growth and social development - will be at the forefront of our discussions this week. More particularly, however, New Zealand recognizes that we must have success with the first of the goals - environmental protection - if we are to have any chance of securing economic growth and social development for the long-term.

The Johannesburg Plan of Action reminds us of our responsibilities in this respect.

At the core of ensuring the sustainable development of global fisheries resources is sound governance. The tools for achieving sound governance are enshrined in UNCLOS and UNFSA. It is our individual and collective responsibility to ensure these tools are fully implemented.

The States Parties to the 1995 United Nations Agreement on Straddling and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (UNFSA) met last week and have developed a work plan for the period leading to the Review Conference in May next year. This work plan is a proactive programme aimed at improving ratification and implementation of the Agreement.

### High Seas Biodiversity

As many of you will recall, the issue of high seas biodiversity, and the need for improved protection in this area, was a key, and contentious, issue at last year's UNICPOLOS meeting. New Zealand continues to share the growing concern of the international community at the damage that is being caused to seamounts and other underwater structures from the practice of bottom-trawling.

Delegations will recall that UNGA59:

- called for urgent action to consider interim prohibitions,
- called on RFMOs to adopt measures or to expand their competence to include bottom fisheries and ecosystem management, and
- called on states to establish new RFMOs where necessary and appropriate.

We are very committed to maintain the hard won language on high seas biodiversity and bottom trawling agreed at last year's UNGA, and, we hope, to strengthen it. New Zealand calls upon states to cooperate to give effect to the UNGA call for interim targeted bans of destructive fishing practices in vulnerable areas.

Since that meeting, New Zealand has taken steps to address this concern through a number of avenues and initiatives.

In September last year, the New Zealand Government agreed a strategy aimed at improved protection of high seas biodiversity. It addresses, among other things, the threat to seamounts and other vulnerable structures from the adverse impact of bottom trawling. New Zealand will pursue long-term, medium-term and immediate actions at the international, regional and domestic levels to address adverse impacts on high seas biodiversity, including those caused by bottom-trawling.

A key element of the strategy is an initiative being pursued by New Zealand and Australia – now joined by Chile – to commence discussions on the establishment of a new fisheries management organization for non-tuna species in the South Pacific. We would welcome an opportunity to discuss this initiative with interested delegations this week.

UNGA59 also called for a review of progress within two years, with a view to further recommendations. New Zealand strongly supported the need for this review. The urgent need to protect marine biodiversity and marine ecosystems from adverse impacts demands that we, members of the international community engaged in oceans management, make sure that our review of these actions is rigorous and takes place well within the agreed timeframe.

New Zealand looks forward to hearing from other delegations and organizations at this meeting of UNICPOLOS and at the next about the actions they have taken to implement these calls.

### IUU Fishing

Failures by States and RFMOs to apply and enforce management frameworks offer an opportunity for fishing operations to reflag and move to lower cost operations. The result is depletion of fish stocks. IUU fishing activity currently poses a major impediment for fisheries to successfully contribute to environmental, economic and social pillars of sustainable development.

New Zealand will be strongly promoting moves to assist enforcement and monitoring of IUU fishing – and in particular to define the important role of both port states and flag state obligations.

### Marine Debris

In his report on oceans and the law of the sea, the Secretary-General identified inadequate waste management and deficiencies in implementation of existing standards – as well as a lack of awareness of the issue – as the major reasons for the increasing problem of marine debris. New Zealand shares this concern, and at this meeting will be highlighting the importance we attach to compliance with existing instruments and guidelines to minimize marine debris. We will lend our support to practical initiatives which recognize varying regional capacities to deal with the issue.

We look forward to the week ahead and our collective discussion on the themes of the meeting, and to providing UNGA with useful guidance for its deliberations later this year.