

United Nations Nations Unies

HEADQUARTERS • SIEGE NEW YORK, NY 10017

TEL.: 1 (212) 963.3951 • FAX: 1 (212) 963.5847

REFERENCE:

27 June 2011

Dear Mr. Djoghlaif,

I wish to refer to notification SCBD/STTM/OH/JG/74898, dated 28 April 2011, related to the submission of information for the in-depth review of implementation of the programme of work on island biodiversity under the Convention on Biological Diversity.

In that regard, I wish to draw your attention to the annual reports of the Secretary-General on oceans and the law of the sea, which continue to draw attention to the importance of marine biodiversity, the threats it is under and the activities and initiatives of various organizations to promote its conservation and sustainable use, including in an island context. The annual reports also include information on small island developing States, highlighting their particular vulnerability and steps taken at the international level to develop adaptation and mitigation measures to various challenges.

The annual resolutions of the General Assembly on oceans and the law of the sea, while not specifically addressing island biodiversity, provide an authoritative review of required measures in the field of ocean affairs and the law of the sea. Some of the measures called for by the General Assembly are of direct relevance to island biodiversity as they relate to the need to: address the serious adverse impacts, in particular on vulnerable marine ecosystems and their physical and biogenic structure, including coral reefs, cold water habitats, hydrothermal vents and seamounts, of certain human activities, such as destructive fishing practices, and climate change; build the capacity of developing States for improved waste management, noting the particular vulnerability of small island developing States to the impact of marine pollution from land-based sources and marine debris; enhance efforts to reduce eutrophication; pursue further research on ocean acidification; strengthen the conservation and management of marine biodiversity and ecosystems and national policies in relation to marine protected areas; further international cooperation, coordination and collaboration in support of initiatives such as the Micronesia Challenge, the Eastern Tropical Pacific Seascape project, the Caribbean Challenge and the Coral Triangle Initiative; apply ecosystem approaches; and increase marine scientific research in relation to marine genetic resources as well as scientific activity to better understand the effects of climate change on the marine environment and marine biodiversity and develop ways and means of adaptation.

The annual resolutions of the General Assembly on sustainable fisheries also call for certain actions of relevance to island biodiversity, such as: achieving sustainable aquaculture; and minimizing by-catch, waste, discards, including high-grading, loss of fishing gear and other factors which adversely affect fish stocks and may also have undesirable effects on the economies and food security of small island developing States, other developing coastal States, and subsistence fishing communities.

Mr. Ahmed Djoghlaif
Executive Secretary
Secretariat of the Convention on
Biological Diversity
Montreal, Canada

The General Assembly also continuously calls for measures to build the capacity of developing countries, in particular small island developing States, to enable them to benefit from the sustainable development of the oceans and seas and protect the marine environment.

At its recent twelfth meeting, the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea focused its discussions on “Contributing to the assessment, in the context of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, of progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development and addressing new and emerging challenges”. During the discussions, a number of challenges facing small island developing States, including with regard to the protection and preservation of the marine environment, were highlighted. The report on the work of the meeting will be posted on the website of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, Office of Legal Affairs, in due course.

Finally, I wish to note that the General Assembly held a number of relevant high-level meetings in September 2011, namely the High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals (outcome available as resolution 65/1), the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly as a contribution to the International Year of Biodiversity, and the High-level Review Meeting on the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (outcome available as resolution 65/2). These meetings have highlighted the importance of the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, including marine biodiversity, in achieving sustainable development, as well as the various challenges faced by small island developing States.

The reports of the Secretary-General mentioned above as well as the resolutions of the General Assembly on oceans and the law of the sea and on sustainable fisheries are available on the website of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, Office of Legal Affairs, at: <http://www.un.org/Depts/los/index.htm>.

I hope this information is useful to the in-depth review of implementation of the programme of work on island biodiversity under the Convention on Biological Diversity, and wish to assure you of the continued cooperation of the Division.

Yours sincerely,



Serguei Tarassenko
Director
Division for Ocean Affairs and the
Law of the Sea
Office of Legal Affairs