

United Nations Nations Unies

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REFERENCE:

18 December 2008

Dear Mr. Djoghlaf,

I wish to refer to notification SCBD/STTM/JM/JL/JG/64491, dated 29 July 2008, related to voluntary reporting on the implementation of the programme of work on marine and coastal biological diversity (“the programme of work”).

The Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, Office of Legal Affairs, acts as Secretariat of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement (“the Fish Stocks Agreement”), and supports the General Assembly in its annual review and evaluation of the implementation of UNCLOS and other developments relating to ocean affairs and the law of the sea. In that context, a number of activities carried out by the Division aim at assisting States in the implementation of their international commitments related to marine biological diversity under UNCLOS, the Fish Stocks Agreement, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and other instruments, and hence contribute to the implementation by States of the programme of work on marine and coastal biological diversity, in conformity with the law of the sea.

Among specific activities that may be relevant to the implementation of the programme of work, I am pleased to inform you that the Division has undertaken a number of capacity-building activities. In particular, the Division has developed a manual and training course on the Development, Implementation and Management of Marine Protected Areas, the first delivery of which took place in Honiara, Solomon Islands, from 15-20 January 2007, for small islands developing States of the Pacific region. The Division has also developed a training course on the Development and Implementation of an Ecosystem Approach to the Management of Ocean-related Activities. The first delivery of the course was held in the context of a training workshop, organized in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme, in Mombasa, Kenya, from 27 October to 1 November 2008, entitled “Training Workshop on Ecosystem Approaches to Coastal and Ocean Management: Focus on Ecosystems-Based Management in Eastern Africa”. More information on those training courses is available on the website of the Division at: http://www.un.org/Depts/los/tsc_new/TSCindex.htm.

Mr. Ahmed Djoghlaf
Executive Secretary
Secretariat of the Convention on
Biological Diversity
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I also wish to draw your attention to the work of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (“the Consultative Process”), which has considered a number of topics of relevance to the programme of work. These include: responsible fisheries and illegal, unregulated and unreported fisheries (see document A/55/274 and Secretary-General’s report A/55/61); the protection and preservation of the marine environment (see document A/57/80 and Secretary-General’s report A/57/57); the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems (see document A/58/95 and Secretary-General’s report A/58/65); new sustainable uses of the oceans, including the conservation and management of the biological diversity of the seabed in areas beyond national jurisdiction (see document A/59/122 and Secretary-General’s report A/59/62); ecosystem approaches and oceans (see document A/61/156 and Secretary-General’s report A/61/63); and marine genetic resources (see document A/62/169 and Secretary-General’s report A/62/66).

In addition, in 2004, the General Assembly decided to study issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction through the establishment of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group (“the Working Group”). The first meeting of the Working Group, held in 2006, was mandated to: survey past and present activities of the United Nations and other relevant international organizations; examine scientific, technical, economic, legal, environmental, socio-economic and other aspects; identify key issues and questions where more detailed background studies would facilitate consideration by States of these issues; and indicate, where appropriate, possible options and approaches to promote international cooperation and coordination (report contained in document A/61/65). The second meeting of the Working Group, held in 2008, considered more particularly: the environmental impacts of anthropogenic activities on marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction; coordination and cooperation among States as well as relevant intergovernmental organizations and bodies; the role of area-based management tools; genetic resources beyond areas of national jurisdiction; and whether there is a governance or regulatory gap, and if so, how it should be addressed (outcome contained in document A/63/79). The following reports of the Secretary-General on oceans and the law of the sea have supported the discussions of the Working Group and also contain information of relevance to a number of objectives of the programme of work: A/60/63/Add.1 and A/62/66/Add.2.

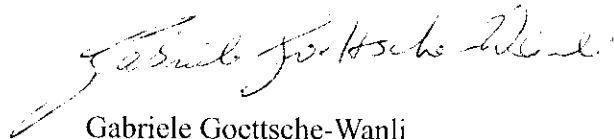
The Informal Consultations of States Parties to the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement, held annually, and the Review Conference on the Agreement, convened in 2006, have also addressed issues of relevance to the programme of work. In particular, the Review Conference considered the impacts of fishing activities on the marine environment, including marine biodiversity (see document A/CONF.210/2006/15).

Furthermore, the General Assembly, including on the basis of the outcomes of the above meetings, in its annual resolutions on oceans and the law of the sea as well as on sustainable fisheries, has addressed a number of relevant issues. For example, General Assembly resolutions 59/25 and 61/105 include

calls for specific actions regarding the impacts of destructive fishing practices on vulnerable marine ecosystems. The resolutions of the General Assembly, along with the reports of the Secretary-General and other documents referenced above, can be found on the website of the Division at:
<http://www.un.org/Depts/los/index.htm>.

In the past, the Division has collaborated with the Secretariat of the CBD on a number of specific activities, and will be pleased to continue supporting the implementation of all relevant international instruments, including the CBD and its programme of work on marine and coastal biological diversity, through its future activities. The Division also looks forward to its continued cooperation with the Secretariat of the CBD.

Yours sincerely,



Gabriele Goettsche-Wanli
Deputy Director
Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea,
Office of Legal Affairs