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Singapore’s inputs for the concept paper on the theme of the ninth Ocean Action Panel on “Enhancing the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea”

1 The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, as reflected in General Assembly resolution 78/69, sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out and is of strategic importance as the basis for national, regional and global action and cooperation in the marine sector. The Convention established a delicate balance between the need for economic and social development through the use of oceans and their resources and the need to conserve and manage those resources in a sustainable manner. The effective implementation of international law as reflected in the Convention is therefore critical to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14).

2 The Convention, which celebrates the 30th anniversary of its entry into force in November 2024, remains one of the greatest achievements of the United Nations in the progressive development and codification of international law. Most of its provisions have been accepted as part of customary international law. The challenges to accelerating action to achieve SDG 14 by implementing international law as reflected in the Convention, and mobilising stakeholders in this regard, are capacity-related. For the third UN Ocean Conference, there is a need to build on the discussions and commitments made at the first and second Conferences, to: first, take stock of the progress that has been achieved in terms of the international community’s efforts to address capacity and resource constraints, in particular, for the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, which have impeded the exercise of rights and implementation of obligations under the Convention; and, second, explore new and innovative approaches to concrete action and the mobilisation of stakeholders to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in the Convention.

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The third Conference would also benefit from discussions on the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction, commonly referred to as the BBNJ Agreement. Widely regarded as a game changer for the international community’s collective efforts to conserve and sustainably use marine biological diversity and a major step forward towards the achievement of SDG 14, the adoption of the Agreement by consensus by the BBNJ Intergovernmental Conference and its opening for signature were welcomed by the General Assembly in its resolutions 77/321 and 78/272. A preparatory commission has been established by resolution 78/272 to prepare for the entry into force of the Agreement and the convening of the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Agreement. It would be useful for there to be dialogue on how implementation of the Agreement can advance efforts to achieve SDG 14 in accordance with the Convention, and the capacity and resource needs of countries to enable their expeditious ratification of the Agreement and the entry into force of the Agreement as soon as possible.

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