



UNITED NATIONS

**OFFICE OF LEGAL AFFAIRS**

**Third Session of the Intergovernmental Conference  
on an international legally binding instrument 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**

Monday 19 August 2019 at 10:00 am CR.4

**Opening Remarks address by  
Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares  
Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs  
and United Nations Legal Counsel,  
Secretary-General of the Conference**

Distinguished President of the Conference,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,



The first two sessions of the Conference laid a strong

to embark on. Under the skilful guidance of Madam President, Ms. Rena Lee, including through her aid to discussions and aid to negotiations, combined with the hard work of delegations, those sessions advanced discussions on the various issues of the package agreed in 2011, leading to the identification of some



Since the last session, the 2019 Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services of the Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and

Ecosystem Services (IPBES), was approved by the IPBES Plenary at its 7th session in May 2019 in Paris. The report, which was prepared by 150 leading experts from 50 countries, with additional contributions from a further 250 experts, has found that, across most of the globe, nature has been significantly altered by multiple human drivers, with the great majority of indicators of ecosystems and biodiversity showing rapid decline. According to the report, and I quote:

“Except in scenarios that include transformative change, negative trends in nature, in ecosystem functions and in many of nature’s contributions to people are projected to



The report further notes that 66 per cent of the ocean area

is experiencing increasing cumulative human impacts, primarily from climate change stressors, including sea surface temperature anomalies, ocean acidification, and ultraviolet radiation. There is widespread evidence that these anthropogenic impacts are having major effects on the health of marine ecosystems. However, the report also states that

sustaining and conserving marine species and ecosystems **can** be achieved through a coordinated mix of interventions, including multilevel coordination across stakeholders. Thus, this Conference can, and it is my hope that it will, play an important role in turning the tide against this rapid decline.



Distinguished delegates,

As we begin this important third substantive session, I am

confident that our common interest in providing future generations with a healthy, resilient and productive ocean will

continue to guide delegations in their negotiations. I am also