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1. The present report highlights key developments relating to ocean affairs and the law of the sea, including those undertaken by the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations pursuant to General Assembly resolution 78/69. It should be read together with other reports relevant to oceans and the law of the sea issued by the United Nations during the period under review,¹ as well as the detailed contributions provided by the United Nations specialized agencies, funds, programmes and bodies, and other intergovernmental organizations.²

¹ These include: (a) report of the Secretary-General on oceans and the law of the sea (A/79/68), which addressed the topic of focus of the twenty-fourth meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea; (b) report of the seventeenth round of informal consultations of States Parties to the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10

smugglers.⁵⁸ These risks were compounded by limited State-led search and rescue capacities, incidents of pushbacks at sea, violations of the principle of non-refoulement and restrictions on humanitarian assistance.⁵⁹ A special rapporteur on trafficking in persons reported on these challenges, as well as the need to ensure the safe disembarkation of people in distress at sea in addition to safe and regular migration pathways.⁶⁰

22. In addressing these challenges, UNHCR launched a multistakeholder pledge to develop comprehensive responses to the challenges faced by refugees and migrants moving by sea.⁶¹ IOM and UNODC signed a statement of partnership to strengthen strategic cooperation on transnational organized crime related to migration.⁶² The first maritime rescue coordination centre in Somalia was established.⁶³ UNODC held a roundtable with Libyan and EU officials to bolster cooperation and uphold human rights in maritime law enforcement in Libya.⁶⁴

23. Actions were also taken to build capacity for the protection of life at sea. IOM and UNHCR launched an online course on the protection of migrants and refugees moving by sea to build capacity.⁶⁵ IOM was preparing a training curriculum on protecting human rights of migrants at sea for the Middle East and North Africa region.⁶⁶ UNODC delivered training programmes to promote the safety of life at sea and human rights compliant approaches in responding to migration by sea and to counter trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling across multiple migration routes.⁶⁷ UNODC established a regional centre of excellence in partnership with Trinidad and Tobago.⁶⁸

24. ~~At UNHCR consideration was~~ given to the impact of unsafe migration on shipping and the need for cooperative arrangements among States and relevant organizations,⁶⁹ alongside the development of guidelines concerning non-survivors in migrant boats.⁷⁰ UNHCR promoted protection-sensitive and human rights compliant approaches to search and rescue and disembarkation with coastal States and other stakeholders, including through regional forums.⁷¹ An UNHCR-led inter-agency

⁵⁸ UNHCR contribution, p. 1.

⁵⁹ UNHCR contribution, pp. 1-3 and IOM contribution, p. 1.

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, [A/HRC/56/60](#), 24 April 2024. See

also UNHCR contribution, p. 1 and IOM contribution, p. 1.

⁶¹ UNHCR contribution, p. 1. See <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/multistakeholder-pledge-developing-comprehensive-responses-protection-challenges-faced-refugees-and#:~:text=This%20pledge%20aims%20at%20encouraging,t>

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41. In its advisory opinion in Case No. 31,¹²⁷ the Tribunal found that anthropogenic greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions into the atmosphere and excess energy absorbed by the ocean constituted “pollution of the marine environment” under the Convention and that States have the specific obligation to take all necessary measures to prevent, reduce and control this type of pollution and to cooperate to adopt relevant rules and standards directly or through competent international organizations. The Tribunal also found that, where the marine environment had been degraded, the obligation to protect and preserve the marine environment may call for measures to restore marine habitats and ecosystems, both to maintain the mitigation function of ocean ecosystems as carbon sinks and to build the resilience of ecosystems as a form of adaptation.¹²⁸

42. Access to climate finance remained essential to address climate change,¹²⁹ highlighting the need for stable and accessible funding to ensure sustainable ocean management, marine conservation, and ecosystem restoration (see also para. 53). However, a significant adaptation finance gap persists.¹³⁰ A sectoral review of NDCs and NAPs conducted by FAO indicated that adaptation costs for fisheries and aquaculture in developing countries could reach USD 4.8 billion per year by 2030.¹³¹ Adaptation finance flows to this sector have averaged only USD 0.22 billion per year from 2017 to 2021.¹³²

43. While efforts increased for the support of technology transfer for a low-carbon, climate-resilient transition in the marine sector,¹³³ many necessary technological advancements remained underdeveloped.¹³⁴ In addition to reducing fleet sizes, UNCTAD reported that improving vessel

Small Island Developing States,¹⁵⁰ and in preparations for the Summit of the Future¹⁵¹ taking place in September 2024. The 2025 United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development (2025 United Nations Ocean Conference), will also provide a high-level dedicated opportunity to accelerate action for achieving SDG 14.¹⁵²

48. Significant opportunities to ensure the long-term health and sustainability of the ocean are also present by increasing participation and enhancing implementation of ocean-related instruments, including the BBNJ Agreement and the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies.¹⁵³ The latter marks a major step towards ocean sustainability

financing solutions and to facilitate easier access to affordable and concessional finance, including by considering multidimensional vulnerability.¹⁷⁹

54. The United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (Decade of Ocean Science) provided an impetus to increase knowledge¹⁸⁰ and promote marine science and technology, with a diverse portfolio of endorsed actions.¹⁸¹ An Ocean Decade Capacity Development Facility was launched to match capacity development needs with Sustainable Development Goals.

"Sustainable fisheries management in the face of climate change".²⁰⁹ The twenty-fourth meeting of the Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea held multistakeholder discussions on the theme, "The ocean as a source of sustainable food".²¹⁰ At its thirty-sixth session, the Committee on Fisheries of FAO (COFI-36) focused on the vital role of fisheries and aquaculture in tackling

fishing vessels and tools to combat IUU fishing,²⁴⁵ as well as addressing the vulnerabilities of coastal communities and SIDS.²⁴⁶

77.

80. Strengthening cooperation and partnerships was also at the center of recent and upcoming processes related to sustainable development. In anticipation of the 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference, the preparatory meeting held in 2024 pursuant to General Assembly resolution 78/128 discussed the themes for the ocean action panels, including a theme focusing on all forms of cooperation, especially at the regional and sub-regional level. The outcome document of the fourth International Conference on

addition to its established activities, the Tribunal expanded its junior professional officer p-

whole are urgently needed to ensure the full implementation of the international legal framework for fisheries and support the long-term sustainability of marine living resources.

102. Negotiation of an international legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, and ongoing work in support of the implementation of the KMGB Framework represent other key developments. Additional efforts are needed to conclude these negotiations and ensure the early entry into force and implementation of relevant legal instruments and frameworks, in particular the BBNJ Agreement. The timely and effective implementation of the BBNJ Agreement could make vital contributions to addressing ocean challenges.

103. Enhanced cooperation and coordination across the ocean mandates of relevant organizations, including through UN-Oceans, will be essential to identify synergies and opportunities for coll_ 0