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117th session
Agenda item 15

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EXTERNAL RELATIONS

(a) Relations with the United Nations and the specialized agencies

Note by the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

Executive summary: This document highlights matters of relevance to IMO as discussed at the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (ICP) at its seventeenth meeting held from 13 to 17 June 2016, and reports on IMO's participation in a high-level United Nations Summit for Refugees and Migrants held on 19 September 2016

Strategic direction: 1.1; 1.3

High-level action: 1.1.1; 1.3.1

Output: 1.1.1.1

Action to be taken: Paragraph 13

Related documents: United Nations documents A/71/204 and A/71/74 and C/ES.28/10(a)

Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea

1 The seventeenth meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (ICP) was held from 13 to 17 June 2016 and, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 69/245, focused its discussions on the topic entitled "Marine debris, plastics and microplastics".

2 The meeting was attended by representatives of 60 States, 12 intergovernmental organizations and other bodies and entities, and 8 non-governmental organizations. The meeting was conducted under the co-chairmanship of Chairs Gustavo Meza-Cuadra (Peru) and Nicholas Emiliou (Cyprus).

3 In accordance with the annotated agenda, discussions were structured around a general exchange of views by delegations on the topic of focus followed by panel discussions on relevant issues.

4 Additionally, and in accordance with the terms of reference for UN-Oceans, the inter-agency coordination mechanism on oceans and coastal issues within the United Nations system adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 69/245, the UN-Oceans focal point provided information on the activities of UN-Oceans under agenda item 4: Inter-agency cooperation and coordination.

5 The Secretariat attended the meeting, and also participated in the main discussion panel and contributed to several side events, providing input on IMO's work in relation to, in particular, MARPOL Annex V, the London Convention and Protocol, and the work of GESAMP.

6 The full report of the Co-Chairs' summary of the discussions is contained in document A/71/204, which is available on the website of the United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS) at:

http://www.un.org/depts/los/consultative_process/consultative_process.htm.

Outcomes

7 The following paragraphs provide a brief summary on those elements of the report that are of direct relevance to the Organization:

General exchange of views

- .1 Paragraphs 8 to 11, focusing on the nature and future of the ICP, in particular in light of the upcoming review of the effectiveness and utility of the ICP to take place at the seventy-first session of the General Assembly;

Topic of focus

- .2 Paragraph 18, whilst noting that the majority of marine debris originated on land, highlighted the need to also address sea-based sources of marine debris, plastics and microplastics, including marine debris from fishing gear, such as fish aggregating devices, and derelict fishing gear, as well as microplastics debris associated with deep-sea sediments, in the light of the emergence of deep-sea mining;
- .3 Paragraph 21, highlighting the importance of marine debris, plastics and microplastics in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, being specifically addressed in target 14.1 of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. Delegations also welcomed the convening of the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of SDG 14 which, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 70/226, would be held from 5 to 9 June 2017;
- .4 Paragraph 22, highlighting the role of the mandatory instruments adopted under the auspices of IMO in the reduction of marine pollution, and specifically of marine debris, including the MARPOL Convention, and in particular Annex V;
- .5 Paragraph 25, summarizing the sharing of information with respect to national policies, legislation and initiatives to address the issue, including the provision of adequate port infrastructure and addressing the issue of abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear;

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- .6 Paragraph 27, on cooperation at the regional level with respect to the treatment and disposal of waste from industries and populations in coastal areas, tourism, fisheries and shipping, as well as abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear;
 - .7 Paragraph 28, stressing the need to take into account and encourage international cooperation on issues of marine debris among the scientific community and among relevant intergovernmental organizations and bodies, such as the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP);
 - .8 Paragraph 29, on the need for international cooperation and capacity building;

Panel presentations and discussions

- .9 Paragraphs 31 to 49, summarizing the outcome of Segment 1: Environmental, social and economic dimensions of marine debris, plastics and microplastics and progress made in preventing, reducing and controlling pollution from marine debris, plastics and microplastics. In this segment, the Chair of GESAMP presented insights from the Group's work on microplastics. IMO (the Director, MED), highlighted the work of IMO to address marine debris, plastic and microplastics from ships, and Mr. Peter Van den Dries (Belgium) reported on the collection of ships' waste in Belgian ports. In the ensuing discussion, and in relation to MARPOL Annex V, the responsibilities of the port State in terms of providing adequate port reception facilities were noted, as well as those of the flag State in terms of ensuring compliance with the regulations. The importance of training and education was stressed, and that mechanisms for promoting and ensuring compliance were in place, with various obligations for States from a flag and port perspective. The challenges faced by Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in providing adequate waste reception facilities at their ports were noted, and it was recalled that IMO had developed guidelines for the development of a Regional Reception Facilities Plan, which accommodated the particular circumstances of SIDS. The possibility under MARPOL to establish Special Areas was highlighted, as well as the provision in SOLAS for Masters to inform ships in the vicinity and competent authorities about any debris encountered that could cause a hazard to navigation;
- .10 Paragraphs 50 to 73, summarizing the outcome of Segment 2: Challenges, lessons learned, best practices and way forward to prevent, reduce and control pollution from marine debris, plastics and microplastics. In this segment, the panellists provided an overview of international and national processes to implement the G7 Action Plan to Combat Marine Litter, the European Union Marine Strategy Framework Directive, as well as work carried out under the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities of UNEP, such as the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML), for which IMO is one of the co-leads on sea-based sources of marine litter; and

Inter-agency cooperation and coordination

- .11 Paragraphs 74 to 77, summarizing the activities of UN-Oceans, the inter-agency coordination mechanism for issues relating to the oceans, since the sixteenth meeting of the ICP, held in 2015. It was noted that UN-Oceans had launched the inventory of mandates and activities of its members, developed and funded by FAO, as an online searchable platform on the UN-Oceans website. The inventory would assist UN-Oceans members in identifying possible areas for collaboration and synergy and allow for a more effective and better coordinated response to the mandates and priorities approved by the respective governing bodies of UN-Oceans members. It was also noted that UN-Oceans had identified a number of opportunities to implement its mandate to strengthen and promote coordination and coherence of United Nations system activities related to oceans and coastal areas, including through the organization of joint statements or side events at major events of relevance to the work of UN-Oceans members. UN-Oceans had also assisted with the identification of an encompassing indicator to assess the implementation of target 14.c of the 2030 Agenda. Apart from teleconferences, UN-Oceans also held face-to-face meetings from 13 to 15 June 2016 in the margins of the meeting of the ICP, and agreed on its biennial work programme for 2016-2017. This meeting was attended by the IMO Secretariat. The reports of the annual meetings and other activities carried out by UN-Oceans are available on the UN-Oceans website, www.unoceans.org.

Date and topic for ICP 18

8 It should be noted that the date and topic for the ICP 18, in 2017 will be agreed by the General Assembly, following its review of the effectiveness and utility of the ICP later this year. A "Composite streamlined list of issues that could benefit from attention in the future work of the General Assembly on oceans and the law of the sea", prepared by the Co-Chairs of the ICP, is available from the DOALOS website (see paragraph 6 above).

Summit for Refugees and Migrants

9 The Secretariat participated, on 19 September 2016, in a high-level Summit for Refugees and Migrants to address large movements of refugees and migrants, which was organized by the President of the United Nations General Assembly on behalf of the Member States and hosted by the General Assembly.

10 At the Summit, IMO stated that, although Governments and the merchant shipping industry will continue rescue operations, using the search and rescue system enshrined in the SOLAS and SAR Conventions to respond to mass mixed migration was neither foreseen nor intended. IMO further expressed the view that safe, legal, alternative pathways to migration must be developed, including safe, organized migration by sea, if necessary.

11 The Organization expressed its support for the work of UNHCR, IOM, UNODC, INTERPOL and the national and regional law enforcement and border control agencies, and explained that IMO's focus is on addressing the push factors by creating conditions for increased employment, prosperity and stability through enhancing the maritime sector and sustainable blue economy in developing countries, consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals. IMO also thanked the search and rescue authorities, navies and coastguards, as well as the masters of the hundreds of merchant ships diverted from going about their lawful occasions to rescue mixed migrants, with attendant risks to the seafarers concerned.

12 The General Assembly adopted on the day of the Summit the [New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants](#), which refers to the pledge to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.

Action requested of the Council

13 The Council is invited to consider the information provided in this document and to comment, as it may deem appropriate.
