

The International Ocean Institute is represented at the 10th Session of the Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (ICP), UN Headquarters, New York

Dr Cherdsak Virapat, Executive Director, International Ocean Institute, attended the Tenth Session of the **Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea** held in New York, 17-19 June 2009. During the meeting, Dr Virapat presented a statement on behalf of IOI and focussing on the important contributions made by the ICP as an *“informal oceans forum within which awareness creation and consensus building can be undertaken”*.

We invite you to read through this statement, included in its entirety below.



Above: Dr Virapat speaking during ICP9

Statement of the IOI to the 10th Session of the ICP, Dr. Cherdsak Virapat, Executive Director

Distinguished Co-chairs,

It gives me great honour and pleasure to have this opportunity to address the tenth session of the Informal Consultative Process (ICP) at this critical time in its short history since its establishment by General Assembly resolution 54/33 of 24 November 1999.

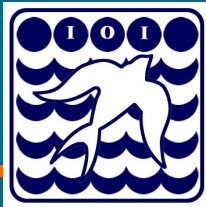
Our founder, the late Elisabeth Mann Borgese, was party to the negotiations of that resolution. She was very proud of that achievement as it finally gave a real voice to oceans within the General Assembly and beyond, and it kept oceans on the sustainable development agenda.

I am however tempted to begin by recalling the message of the United Nations Secretary General on the occasion of Ocean Day, in which he stated that *“Human activities are taking a terrible toll on the world’s oceans and seas”* and goes on to describe the myriad of negative impacts and underlines the compounding effect of climate change. Piracy and armed robbery at sea, as well as trafficking by sea, are also correctly highlighted as critical issues we all face.

In this statement, the Secretary General has accurately described the disastrous situation of the health of the oceans, the provider of all services that sustain our basic human needs, not to mention our economies. This is truly important to bear in mind as you address at this session the importance and relevance of this forum.

Co-chairs,

The report of the Secretary General to the General Assembly A764/66 has documented the vast areas of critical issues that the ICP addressed in its 10 years of young life.



Of course, not everyone's high expectations or aspirations were met. But the ICP's greatest contribution has been in serving as an informal oceans forum within which awareness creation and consensus building can be undertaken. These two parameters are central to the soul of the United Nations – how and what we all undertake in these meeting rooms and corridors – and perhaps the most important ingredients in effective ocean governance at any level.

The ICP has unquestionably provided a forum through which all relevant stakeholders can interact and understand each other's concerns. The ICP also gave a voice for all entities involved in ocean affairs, including – through a rigorous accreditation process – nongovernmental actors.

This last point is particularly important today as few States could claim that ocean affairs remains the sole domain of Governments. By way of example, allow me to note that the non-governmental organization which I represent – the International Ocean Institute – has operated globally since 1972 at all levels of ocean affairs: from the 39 floor of the United Nations, through top levels of Governments, to the fishing villages of the world's poorest coastal communities. The ICP has provided a formidable forum through which we may share our experiences, learn from others and help ensure that the General Assembly is properly briefed on issues of global concern.

Co-chairs,

We are convinced that in making any evaluation of the achievements and shortcomings of the ICP, the wakeup call of the Secretary General message must be taken into account.

One can only ask how much worse it may have been in defining human relations with the ocean had it not been for the ICP, every year drawing our attention and challenging our actions or motivating us to do better in the face of persistent systemic challenges to ocean governance as well as new and emerging one.

For example it was at this forum that we debated the lacunae between adopting legal rules and conventions and the implementation, exercise of jurisdiction and compliance and thus identified the extent of the governance deficit. In these halls we understood the relevance of the link between the health of the ocean and climate change. We also spurred nations to take action against destructive practices and encouraged action to reinforce the duties and jurisdiction of flag states. These are but few of the many examples of the value and contribution of the ICP as an informal consultative forum that allows for honest, direct and free exchange of ideas, concerns and possible solutions – none of which could be possible, for obvious reasons, through the SPLOS meetings, nor through the time-constrained General Assembly.

From our perspective as a knowledge-based institution, the ICP also has given back: for 9 sessions we have followed closely the work of the ICP, its debates and nonbinding conclusions. This has allowed us to constantly adapt our policy advice and capacity building strategies and training programs for developing countries and countries in transition commensurate with the needs identified in this forum.

Let me close by saying that we work with a number of partners and we found that the ICP was instrumental in creating synergies and coherence in the delivery of such capacity building. We strongly appeal to you not to focus on the shortcomings but to build on the ICP achievements.

THANK YOU

SUMMARY OF THE TENTH MEETING OF THE UN OPEN-ENDED INFORMAL CONSULTATIVE PROCESS ON OCEANS AND THE LAW OF THE SEA

The tenth meeting of the UN Open-Ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (ICP-9 or Consultative Process) took place from 17-19 June 2009, at UN headquarters in New York. The meeting brought together over 350 representatives from governments, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and academic institutions. Further information is summarized on:

<http://www.iisd.ca/vol25/enb2555e.html>