flood monitoring and early warning, see www.rrcap.unep.org/is-

Depleted Uranium: Low-level Contamination
At the end of March 2002, a new study by UNEP of six sites in
Serbia and Montenegro that were struck by depleted uranium (DU)
munitions during the 1999 Kosovo conflict confirms the presence at
five sites of widespread, but low-level, DU contamination.

The study concludes that the DU sites studied do not present
immediate radioactive or toxic risks for the environment or human
health. These findings are consistent with those of UNEP’s 2001
DU study, carried out in Kosovo. Together, the two studies cover
the entire geographical area affected by DU munitions during the
Kosovo conflict.

However, UNEP recommends that the relevant authorities take
precautionary measures. The most important concern is the po-
tential for future groundwater contamination by corroding penetra-
tors (ammunition tips made out of DU). The penetrators recov-
ered by the UNEP team had decreased in mass by 10–15 per
cent due to corrosion. UNEP stresses that this rapid corrosion
emphasises the importance of monitoring water quality at the DU
sites on an annual basis.

The study was conducted in cooperation with the International
Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) with additional support from the
World Health Organisation (WHO).

The report is available at http://postconflict.unep.ch/.

Decline in Dugong Populations
Findings from the first ever global study of the dugong, the
‘sea cow’ or ‘elephant of the sea’, indicate that coastal develop-
ments, boat traffic, fishermen’s nets and increasing pollution are
among the list of increasing threats which are contributing to a
decline in the dugong’s fortunes. The report has gathered infor-
mation on the state of the dugong from researchers, local people,
fishermen and government officials in the 37 countries and terri-
tories where the animal has historically been recorded.

The study, which has been funded by organisations including
UNEP, IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature),
and the CRC Reef Research Centre, makes urgent conservation recommendations aimed at
stemming the decline of the dugong and boosting its numbers.

These centres around the protection of seagrass beds upon which
these herbivorous animals are almost totally dependent for food.
Seagrasses require sunlight to thrive. In many areas of the world,
seagrass beds are being cleared for development or smothered
by silt and mud as a result of run-off due to overgrazing, intensive
agriculture and deforestation.

The threats to the animal should be of critical concern to the
billions of people who rely on the oceans for their livelihoods. For
if the dugong, a key indicator species, is declining, then the coastal
environment, which provides protein in the form of fish and in-
comes in terms of tourism, is also being degraded.

According to the scientist responsible for the report, the situ-
ation in East Africa is particularly alarming, and it is possible that
this will be the next place where the dugong becomes extinct,
unless urgent action is taken. Dugongs reproduce at a very low
rate, with females rarely producing more than one calf, some time
between the ages of six and 17 years old, and failing to reproduce
at all during times of food shortages.

Climate change, together with the anticipated rise in more
violent, damaging storms and flash floods, poses a new threat. The report notes that such events have, in places like South East
Asia and Australia, devastated hundreds of square kilometres of
seagrass beds in recent years.

The study also highlights the need for countries with dugong
populations to strengthen conservation initiatives with neighbour-
ing countries, including signing and ratifying the Convention on
Migratory Species. Dugongs, which were once thought to be rela-
tively sedentary, have been found to travel up to 600 km in a few
days to search for food, the report says.

The full report can be downloaded from www.unep.org/dewa/.

Biodiversity Conservation in Central Africa
The Commission has decided to allocate 1,696,537 euros out of
its 2002 Budget to a project promoting biodiversity conserva-
tion in Central Africa by valorising flagship species: lowland goril-
las, forest elephants, marine turtles and whales.

The project’s total cost is estimated at 2,319,387 euros. The
countries to benefit are Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon,
the Central African Republic, the Congo and Sao Tome.

These funds are granted under Regulation 2493/2000/EC on
measures to promote the full integration of the environmental di-
mension in the developing process of developing countries and
Regulation 2494/2000/EC on measures to promote the conser-
vation and sustainable management of tropical and other forests
in developing countries.

UNEP: Cleaner Production
The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has
launched a new ‘Life-Cycle Initiative’ to help combat the environ-
mental impact of rising consumption patterns. The Initiative is a
collaboration between UNEP and the Society of Environmental
Toxicology and Chemistry (SETAC) and will help governments,
businesses and consumers to adopt more environment-friendly
policies, practices and lifestyles. It was launched at the start of
UNEP’s 7th International High-Level Seminar on Cleaner Produc-
tion (CP-7), the biennial global forum that looks at progress made
in promoting sustainable production and consumption.

The Life-Cycle Initiative will help address problems such as
finding alternatives to hazardous substances in products such as
lead, as well as better eco-labelling and product design systems.

For more information about CP-7, see www.unep.org/pc/cp7/.

SELECTED DOCUMENTS

UN/GA

Debate on the Convention on the Protection of
Underwater Cultural Heritage*


----- The President: I give the floor to the
representative of Brazil to introduce draft
resolution A/56/L.17.

----- Mr. Biato (Brazil): I have the honour,
as one of the coordinators, to introduce
draft resolution A/56/L.17, entitled ‘Oceans
and the law of the sea’.

----- Two recent milestones in the ongoing
endeavours to progressively enact a com-
prehensive law of the oceans are equally
noteworthy: the imminent entry into force
of the United Nations Fish Stocks Agree-
ment and the adoption last month by the
United Nations Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization of the Convention on
the Protection of the Underwater Cultural
Heritage.

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Clearly, there is a growing understanding of the problems of the oceans and the seas are interrelated and require a holistic approach. We therefore consider that progress in generating a modern legal framework for regulating their use to be highly positive. The adoption of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Convention, as well as the entry into force of the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement, is indeed a great pleasure for me to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on item 30 (a) of the agenda, entitled "Oceans and the law of the sea."

I have mentioned a number of times already the excellent international cooperation within the United Nations process and generally on law of the sea matters. It is therefore all the more regrettable that lack of such international cooperation or consensus regarding law of the sea issues in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage. Many provisions of that agreement and notably the framework rules, will be helpful in addressing underwater cultural heritage.

We note with interest the recent adoption of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage. The adoption of that instrument in the United Nations process and generally on law of the sea matters. It is the challenge ahead to explore the opportunities for cooperation and coordination that they provide, in the spirit of the Convention. Mr. Siv (United States of America): My delegation is pleased to co-sponsor the draft resolution entitled "Oceans and the law of the sea."

I have been involved in the efforts to protect and preserve underwater cultural heritage and it is with great pleasure that I am able to welcome the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage. The Convention will provide protection against illegal acts and thus completes UNESCO’s regulatory architecture for protecting the underwater cultural heritage. As stipulated in article 3, the Convention should be considered.

We consider that the UNESCO Convention represents a major achievement and can be considered as a whole. The Convention is the legal framework within which all activities related to the oceans must be considered.

In October this year, the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adopted the Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage. While Norway remains committed to further strengthening international cooperation for that purpose, we feel obliged to vote against the adoption of the Convention. The Convention does indeed provide useful principles and measures that serve to bring forward and strengthen international cooperation in this respect. However, the Convention, unfortunately, also includes parts which jeopardize the fine balance of jurisdiction achieved through the carefully drafted United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Norway is committed to maintaining the fine balance of the regime of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Efforts to further strengthen the protection of underwater cultural heritage should be promoted within that framework. That would ensure broad international agreement and support, and thus the efficiency that such measures deserve. We also believe that while UNESCO Convention will provide for the appropriate legal framework and support, it and cannot be considered in resolving any conflicts involving non-parties or their vessels.

Mr. Asadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): It is indeed very pleasing for me to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on item 30 (a) of the agenda, entitled "Oceans and the law of the sea." We in the developing world attach great importance to this issue, as it relates to the multifaceted topic of oceans and seas.

We note with interest the recent adoption of the Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). It will set the framework for future debate on this topic.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): The establishment of a legal order for the seas and oceans in the form of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea represents a major contribution to the strengthening of peace, security, cooperation and friendly relations among nations. The full implementation of the Convention at all levels will promote the economic and social development of all countries of the world. It remains fundamental that the problems of ocean space are closely interrelated and need to be considered as a whole. The Convention is the legal framework within which all activities related to the oceans must be considered.

Another positive development was the adoption last month of the Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage. The Convention represents a major achievement and has our full support. We are aiming at universal ratification, which all activities related to the oceans and the seas are interrelated and require a holistic approach. We therefore consider that progress in generating a modern legal framework for regulating their use to be highly positive. The adoption of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage.

Mr. Boisson (Monaco): At its thirty-first session on 2 November, the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization adopted the Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage. The adoption of that instrument and its annex was the outcome of four years of work in the committee of experts. Filling a legal void, the provisions of the Convention will provide protection against the plundering and destruction of ancient shipwrecks and archaeological sites that have been under water for at least 100 years.

The underwater cultural heritage will thus be subject to the same ethical standards and scientific regulations as apply to the archaeological heritage. The Convention rounds out the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which makes no specific provision for the protection of the underwater cultural heritage. As stipulated in article 3, the Convention should be interpreted and applied in compliance with international law and the provisions of the Montego Bay Convention. My delegation is thus very pleased to welcome the adoption of that instrument.

Mr. Marechal (Belgium): The set of legal instruments regarding oceans and the law of the sea continues to grow. In this regard, the European Union welcomes the adoption by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) of the Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage.

Argentina welcomes adoption by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage. The Convention protects sites and objects of cultural value located in the sea from pillage and other illegal acts and thus completes UNESCO’s regulatory architecture for protecting the underwater cultural heritage.

The Convention is in keeping with the requirements of the General Assembly’s relevant resolutions, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization adopted the Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage. The adoption of that instrument.

The Convention represents a major achievement and has been under water for at least 100 years.

Mr. Stuart (Australia): Oceans and the law of the sea issues are of critical importance to Australia, which is the world’s largest island and has one of the world’s longest coastlines and among the world’s largest maritime zones and continental shelves.

Another positive development was the adoption last month of the Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage, which provides for an international regime to better protect and preserve underwater cultural heritage. Appropriately, the Convention reflects the primary role of the coastal State in bringing about such protection.

Mr. Tarabrin (Russian Federation): The Russian Federation attaches priority to the General Assembly’s examination of the marine issues, in view of the importance and relevance of this issue for the entire international community.

We consider the Convention to be the basis of national, regional and global action in the marine sector. Unfortunately, we must point out that certain international mechanisms are working on problems related to the law of the sea outside the framework of the 1982 Convention, which is something that detracts from a single order for the entire world. We therefore view as a provisional the draft Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage. Some of the provisions of the Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage.

The underwater cultural heritage will thus be subject to the same ethical standards and scientific regulations as apply to the archaeological heritage. The Convention rounds out the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which makes no specific provision for the protection of the underwater cultural heritage. As stipulated in article 3, the Convention should be interpreted and applied in compliance with international law and the provisions of the Montego Bay Convention. My delegation is thus very pleased to welcome the adoption of that instrument.
The Hague Ministerial Declaration of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity*

We, the Ministers responsible for the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity, having met in The Hague, The Netherlands, on 17 and 18 April 2002, on the occasion of the sixth meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity

1. Acknowledging the critical importance of biodiversity – the variability among living organisms from all sources and the ecological complexes of which they are a part, including diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems – that has made earth a uniquely habitable place for humans and that is essential to our planet and our well-being;

2. Acknowledging further that biological diversity is being destroyed by human activities at unprecedented rates and that the Convention on Biological Diversity is the foremost instrument for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, as well as for the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their utilization;

3. Noting the shift in emphasis within the Convention process from policy development to implementation and the need to put equal weight on the three objectives of the Convention;

4. Recognizing the need for clear targets and timetables as follow-up to the adoption of the Strategic Plan and to put mechanisms in place to reach these targets and review progress in the implementation of the Convention’s work programmes;

5. Recognizing that biodiversity underpins sustainable development in many ways; property security, food security, provision of fresh water, soil conservation and human health all depend directly upon maintaining and using the world’s biological diversity and therefore sustainable development cannot be achieved without the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity;

6. Reconfirming our commitment to the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity and underline the need to guide our actions based on ethical priciles of implementation of the Convention towards the broad goal of sustainable development, based on integration of economic, social and environmental matters. We commit ourselves to move from dialogue to action;

7. Emphasizing the progress made in the last decade in transmitting the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity into national and international policies and concrete activities, including through:
   - National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans in more than one hundred countries;
   - The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety;
   - The Bonn guidelines on access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their utilization;
   - The development and use with respect to all ecosystem services and biodiversity concepts, such as the ecosystem approach;
   - The work programme on the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity;
   - Guiding principles on invasive alien species that threaten ecosystems, habitats or species;
   - Work programmes on forest biological diversity, on dry and sub-humid land, inland water ecosystems, marine and coastal ecosystems, agrobiodiversity and on cross-cutting issues;
   - Increasing awareness that biodiversity is critical for the provision of goods and services;
   - Clearing-house mechanisms established at the Secretariat and at national levels to promote technical and scientific cooperation and information exchange.

8. We stress the importance of the contribution of the Convention on Biological Diversity to the implementation of Agenda 21 and emphasize that at the same time Agenda 21 is indispensable for the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

9. We reconfirm our commitment to consider the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, as well as the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources as essential for achieving sustainable development and contributing to poverty eradication. We urge the promotion of synergies between the Convention on Biological Diversity and related conventions and the exchange of experiences and lessons learned between countries and regions and all relevant stakeholders.

10. We regret, however, that despite the efforts of governments and relevant stakeholders the Global Biodiversity Outlook indicates that biodiversity continues to be destroyed by human activities. We underline the line of the Secretary-General of the United Nations: “Therefore we must face up to an inescapable fact: the challenges of sustainability simply overwhelm the adequacy of our responses. With some honourable exceptions, our responses are too few, too little and too late.”

11. We acknowledge that life is on the line and therefore resolve to strengthen our efforts to put in place measures to halt biodiversity loss, which is taking place at an alarming rate, at the global, regional, sub-regional and national levels, by the year 2010.

12. We commit to developing and revising, as appropriate, National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, and the time the seventh Conference of Parties is held.

13. We recommit the commitment to halting deforestation and the loss of forest biodiversity and ensuring the sustainable use of timber and non-timber resources and we commit ourselves to the full implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity’s expanded action-oriented work programme on all types of forest biological

* This text is the approved, unedited UN text. See also page 130.