1. Introduction

Oceans and seas are of paramount importance to the survival and development of the human society. Over 3 billion people across the world depend on coastal and marine resources, generating many jobs in various industries such as shipping/transportation, tourism, biotechnology, fishing, and deep sea mining. The ocean therefore has a significant part to play in the worldwide development, and it can help fight poverty. Their unsustainable use negatively affects food security, livelihood sustainability and aggravates the impact of climate change including desertification. The achievement of SDG 14 is therefore paramount and the involvement of all stakeholders in its implementation, including landlocked countries is important.

While landlocked countries don’t have direct access to the sea because of their geographical location, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) gives them the right to access and use the ocean space as well as the oceans resources. The UNCLOS gives rights to the landlocked states (described as States that have “no sea-coast”) including: right of access of land-locked States to and from the sea and freedom of transit; right of land-locked States in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of coastal States; right of land-locked States to grant their nationality to ships; and the freedom of the high seas and the common heritage of mankind. Article 69 of the UNCLOS states that “Land-locked States shall have the right to participate, on an equitable basis, in the exploitation of an appropriate part of the surplus of the living resources of the exclusive economic zones of coastal States of the same sub-region or region, taking into account the relevant economic and geographical circumstances of all the States concerned and in conformity with the provisions of this article and of articles 61 and 62”. Landlocked states also have the right to the high seas, to lay
submarine cables and pipelines, to construct artificial islands and other installations permitted under international law, fishing and scientific research as per Article 87 of UNCLOS. According to Section 2 of UNCLOS on Principles Covering the Area\(^1\), “the Area and its resources are the common heritage of mankind” and Article 148 promotes the effective participation of developing States in activities in the Area.

Whilst the UNCLOS gives the landlocked states the right to access and utilise the oceans and its resources, most of the landlocked states are still faced with challenges limiting them from taking full advantage of their rights. Access remains the big challenge of the landlocked States. Access is subject to agreements between the land-locked and transit states as stated in article 62.2 which states that “The terms and modalities of such participation shall be established by the States concerned through bilateral, sub-regional or regional agreements …” The political will and commitment of transit states highly condition the rights of landlocked states.

Out of the 44 landlocked states 28 have ratified or acceded to UNCLOS of which twenty\(^2\) are LLDCs. This shows that a good number of the landlocked countries have not yet ratified UNCLOS. In addition, the participation of landlocked states, in particular the LLDCs, in forums including in the Meetings related to the implementation of UNCLOS has also been quite limited. The limited participation in the activities relating to use of the oceans, seas and marine resources can be attributed to limited resources, lack of awareness, as well as limited access to the sea. Long distance from the seaports, combined with poorly developed transit and transport system as well as reliance on their neighbouring transit countries for transit access to the sea are some of the factors curtailing the participation of the LLDCs.

The UNCLOS is regarded as basis for the implementation of SDG 14 and as such there is the need to address the challenges regarding its implementation including its ratification as well as achieving easy access and utilisation of the common resources of the oceans and the seas including undertaking marine scientific research. In this regard, it is important to ensure that its implementation is inclusive and integrates all stakeholders including the landlocked countries.

Enhancing participation of the landlocked countries in the implementation of SDG 14 is paramount to ensure that no one is left behind. There is need for awareness raising, sharing of information and provision of capacity building and technical assistance in particular to the LLDCs to ensure that implementation of SDG 14 is inclusive.

\(^1\) “Area” means the seabed and ocean floor and subsoil thereof, beyond the limits of national jurisdiction

\(^2\) Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bolivia, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Chad, Lesotho, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malawi, Mali, Mongolia, Nepal, Niger, Paraguay, Republic of Moldova, Swaziland, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe
2. Objectives of the event

The event will be organised during the margins of the Ocean Conference and aims to foster the participation of the landlocked in the implementation of SDG14 as well as their participation in the blue economy. The specific objectives of the event include to:

i. Raise awareness on rights and obligations of the landlocked countries in the UNCLOS and as well as on the relevance of SDG 14 to these countries;

ii. Solicit ideas on enhancing the participation of landlocked countries, in particular, of the LLDCs in the blue economy;

iii. Foster partnerships for sustainable capacity building and technical assistance to LLDCs; and

iv. Enhance the participation of the landlocked developing countries in meetings related to the implementation of UNCLOS.

3. Expected Outcome

i. Increased awareness on the SDG 14 and UNCLOS and their implementation;

ii. Identification of areas for technical assistance and capacity building and possible partners;

iii. Recommendations for enhanced participation of the landlocked states in the blue economy.

4. Format of the event

The event will feature panel presentations by panelists representing different stakeholders including representatives from UN, other international organizations and Members States. The panel presentations will be followed by an interactive dialogue with members of the audience.

5. Co-organizers

The event is being organized by Zambia (the Chair of the LLDCs) and UN-OHRLLS.

6. Participants

The event will bring together senior officials from the landlocked countries, development partners and other member states, United Nations organizations, multilateral development institutions, academia, the private sector and civil society.

7. Date and Venue

The side event will be held on the 8th June 2017 at 15:00hrs to 16:30hrs during the Ocean Conference and will be held in Conference Room A at the UN Headquarters in New York.
8. Background Documents

i. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
iii. Vienna Programme of Action
iv. Call for Action