They should aim at improving understanding, sharing experiences and identifying best practices for the consideration of States parties, as well as the General Assembly and the Review Conference.

Recalling this recommendation, the General Assembly, in its resolution 72/72 of 5 December 2017, requested the Secretary-General to convene the thirteenth round of informal consultations in 2018 to focus on the topic "Science-policy interface".

Accordingly, this year's informal consultations will feature a discussion panel on that specific topic, with presentations by experts and practitioners to lead into interactive discussions amongst States Parties to the Agreement and invited observers.

I am hopeful that this new format will result in substantive and focused discussions, which contribute to the improved implementation of the Agreement at all levels.

Distinguished delegates,

An effective science-policy interface is important for the full and effective implementation of the regime for the conservation and management of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks set forth in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the 1995 United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement.

Indeed, both instruments require the best scientific evidence available to be

developing States. They should take into account fishing patterns, the interdependence of stocks and any generally recommended international minimum standards, whether sub-regional, regional or global.

The Agreement further stipulates that in order to conserve and manage straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks, coastal States and States fishing on the high seas shall, inter alia, apply the precautionary approach in accordance with article 6 and Annex II to the Agreement.

In this regard, it requires States to be more cautious when information is uncertain, unreliable or inadequate, and provides that the absence of scientific information shall not be used as a reason for postponing or failing to take conservation and management measures.

The Agreement also sets out requirements for States to agree on the mechanisms by which regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements will obtain scientific advice and review the status of the stocks, including, where appropriate, the establishment of a scientific advisory body.

In fulfilling their obligation to cooperate through sub-regional or regional fisheries management organizations or arrangements under the Agreement, States are required, inter alia, to obtain and evaluate scientific advice, review the status of the stocks and assess the impact of fishing on non-target and associated or dependent species. They should also agree on standards for collection, reporting, verification and exchange of data on fisheries for the stocks, as well as compile and disseminate accurate and complete statistical data and promote and conduct scientific assessments of the stocks.

Thus, the effectiveness of the conservation and management measures adopted pursuant to the Convention and the Agreement is dependent on the availability of sound science and accurate data, as well as the effective interaction between scientists and policy-makers.

Despite the importance of the science-policy framework for the implementation of the Convention and the Agreement, the instruments provide little guidance on how to forge such an interaction. While the goals are clear, the process is not. As a result, various approaches have been developed at the global, regional and national levels. Some of these

approaches have proven successful. This means that there are important lessons to be learned by sharing experiences.

The resumed Review Conference in 2016 recommended that States, individually or collectively through regional fisheries management organizations or arrangements, strengthen interaction between fisheries managers and scientists, and other stakeholders. They should ensure that conservation and management measures are based on the best available scientific evidence and meet the management objectives set by the regional fisheries management organization or arrangement, through a regular review process, taking into account the adverse impacts of climate change and ocean acidification.

This round of Informal Consultations thus provides a valuable opportunity to further explore how to strengthen the interaction between fisheries managers and scientists.
It also provides an opportunity to benefit from the discussions taking place in other fora on the science-policy interface, for example, in the General Assembly. In this context, the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects, a universal mechanism to regularly review the environmental, economic and social aspects of the state of the world's oceans, directly contributes to the science-policy interface.

The First Global Integrated Marine Assessment, one of the main outputs of the first cycle of the Regular Process, was completed in 2015 and provided a baseline study of the state of the world's oceans. The second world ocean assessment, due to be completed by 2020, will extend to evaluating trends and identifying gaps, and it is expected to include a number of chapters devoted to fisheries.

The process for the review of the impact of bottom fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of deep sea fish stocks is another example of how the General Assembly can strengthen the science-policy interfacein relation to straddling stocks.

Indeed, the annual resolutions on sustainable fisheries and oceans and the law of the sea have provided guidance on measures to be taken to strengthen the science-policy interface in relation to fisheries.

Organizations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora and the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals also have relevant science-policy interface mechanisms.

Distinguished delegates,

The report of the Secretary-General to the resumed Review Conference made clear that the overall status of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks has continued to deteriorate since the entry into force of the Agreement. This is despite all of the progress achieved thus far in implementing the Agreement. It also noted that data limitations regarding the status of certain stocks continued to exist and the state of exploitation of some stocks might be unknown.

This means that the international community must redouble its efforts to improve the management of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks, including by strengthening the science-policy interface at all levels.

Over the next two days, delegations will have an opportunity to exchange information and views on the science-policy interface for sustainable fisheries, with a view to identifying challenges, opportunities and best practices.

You will also have an opportunity to explore the role that can be played by relevant global processes and fora, in particular the resumed Review Conference, to further strengthen that interface.

In this context, I would recall that the resumed Review Conference, in 2016, also decided to keep the Agreement under review through the resumption of the Review Conference at a date not earlier than 2020, to be agreed at a future round of informal consultations.

The outcome of these informal consultations, as well as next year's discussions on "Performance reviews of regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements" will serve to inform discussions at the resumed Review Conference, as well as within the General Assembly, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, RFMOs and other relevant global and regional fora.

Distinguished delegates,

To conclude my opening remarks, let me take this opportunity to wish you, on behalf of the Secretary-General, successful discussions over the next two days.