

**The Honorable Paula Dobriansky
Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs**

**U. S. Commission on Ocean Policy's Inaugural Meeting
Washington, D. C.
September 17, 2002**

Good morning. I would like to join Jim Connaughton in welcoming you. Specifically, on behalf of Secretary Powell, I extend congratulations to you on your appointments as members of the Commission on Ocean Policy.

This indeed is an historic occasion. The last time the United States took a comprehensive look at its ocean policies and programs involved the Stratton Commission in 1966. The recommendations submitted by the Stratton Commission in 1969 laid the foundation for a number of important innovations the establishment of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in 1970, the enactment of the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, and the enactment of the Magnuson Fisheries Management Act in 1976.

While the Stratton Commission performed its work with great vision, the world has changed markedly since 1969. For example, the world's population has migrated increasingly toward coastal areas. In the United States, over 30% of GDP and 40% of new commercial and residential development flows from coastal areas. Oceans industries play an ever increasing role in our economy including industries that exploit marine resources such as oil, gas, and fisheries. In addition, recent discoveries offer important economic and scientific opportunities for new uses of ocean resources with pharmaceutical, biomedical and energy potential.

However, while the oceans were once thought to be limitless – capable of use without corresponding effect – we now know that the oceans are subject to degradation. Many marine and coastal habitats are threatened by pollution and other human activities. Invasive species represent an increasing problem worldwide. In fact, the more we know about the oceans, the more we recognize the complexity of the threats to the marine environment.

In the United States, our attempt to address oceans related issues has created, over time, a complex domestic legal and administrative framework. A review of that framework to assess, among other things, coordination and duplication of programs and policies, and to assess ways to address ocean-use conflicts is certainly needed.

Building on the U.S. domestic framework and the provisions of the Law of the Sea Convention on traditional uses of the oceans, the Department of State and other federal agencies have also been actively engaged internationally. For

example, we have developed a network of international fisheries agreements designed to promote sustainable fisheries throughout the world. We have also taken the lead in international efforts to prevent land-based and vessel source pollution. In fact, internationally our goal generally is to assure that the rigorous standards we apply here at home also become the norm abroad. I am sure that these efforts will be informed and strengthened by the Commission's work.

As members of the Commission, each of you brings substantial expertise and a unique perspective on the oceans issues. I know that you will be seeking information broadly from stakeholders, counties, states, the private sector, and interested institutions throughout the United States. Representatives of federal agencies involved with oceans affairs also stand ready to assist you in any way we can. Each agency has its own set of responsibilities and expertise. My agency, of course, will endeavor to provide information to the Commission on the international legal framework applicable to the oceans. Many oceans policies and programs – even if applicable only within U.S. waters – implicate international law and U.S. international obligations.

In closing, I want to underscore what critical work you are undertaking as members of the Commission on Oceans Policies. It is important not only to the federal government, but also to the American public. Internationally, it will be important to our allies and other coastal states, several of whom have just completed reviews of their own ocean policies. Thus, on behalf of Secretary Powell, let me, again, congratulate you and extend to you our good wishes and our offers of assistance. Good luck and godspeed to you as you undertake your work.

Now is perhaps the time to actually swear you in. For that purpose, let me call on Beverly Holden in her capacity as Notary Public.