

**Oceans, Seas and Sustainable Development:  
Implementation and follow-up to Rio+20  
Expert Group Meeting**

**Thoughts on the Post 2015 Process**

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At the outset, I would like to share my disappointment at not being able to join you. I am a few streets away, participating in the Open Working Group on SDGs. Yet this predicament ably illustrates a key challenge the ocean community faces and that needs to be tackled as a matter of priority: how to overcome a conceptual divide that could limit the inclusion of oceans in the ongoing negotiations on the Post 2015 framework.

There is broad agreement – in the global online and thematic consultations, the HLP proceedings, and other related events worldwide – that the Post 2015 agenda must focus on poverty eradication as a priority, and that it must be “people-centered”. Unfortunately, for many the focus on “people” still translates into a perspective that excludes the natural resource base and in fact, often seems to pit people against what is broadly referred to as “the environment”. It is surprising that in this age of progressive climate change impacts and growing resource scarcity large segments of the global main street still resist the connection between development and environmental.

In addition to this, discussions around global commons are often politically charged and often get tied up in controversies over CBDR<sup>1</sup> and issues of sovereignty. At best, oceans are seen as a dimension beyond the scope of development interests, at worst as an unwelcome distraction that could undermine “priority” social and economic agendas.

Therefore in the coming years of the Post 2015 process, the ocean community faces a major challenge which calls for:

- i) making-the-case for why oceans need to be included in the new development agenda in a way that is compelling for laypeople everywhere;
- ii) identifying entry points for ocean-related issues into the agenda; and,
- iii) identifying constituencies/fora where it is possible to advocate for inclusion of ocean issues, as well as identification of champions from these constituencies.

The agenda of this meeting amply demonstrates the vital importance and cross-cutting nature of ocean issues. But it is necessary to acknowledge that there have been failures in articulating

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<sup>1</sup> The principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities

to a broader audience the centrality of functional, healthy, resilient oceans to human development. We need to develop a convincing, inclusive, overarching vision that can be readily understood, and to advocate that vision. Both Biliiana and Imen will speak to the links between ocean issues and environmental, social and economic objectives. I encourage you to engage in these discussions thinking of how to translate ocean issues and concerns for the main street - and for diplomats a few streets away.

Ideally we should aim for a stand-alone goal on oceans. However, we need to recognize that this is unlikely given the calls for a limited number of goals and the endless competing agendas. It is more probable that oceans could be included in a broader goal related to “ecosystems” or “ecosystem services”, but even that is not a given. Therefore it is important, in addition to advocating for the inclusion of oceans *per se* in the new agenda, to identify and leverage entry points related to issue areas that are already central to the discussion, such as food security and nutrition, employment or health. Fisheries for example, is seldom included in discussions, consultations or papers on food security and nutrition, that usually focus exclusively on sustainable agriculture, land degradation, and drylands. One of the sessions at this meeting will focus on jobs in the maritime sector, and on tourism. Employment and generation of jobs is a major concern worldwide. Better understanding of the risk to X number of tourism-related jobs from degradation of coastal areas would be an example of an entry point. Additionally, Colombia has been emphasizing the need not only to generate jobs but to protect existing livelihoods as a key factor not only for income generation but for social stability and cultural preservation. Again, this is a possible entry point given the importance of fisheries for most coastal communities – and SIDS – worldwide.

Finally, a robust level of engagement will require staying abreast of discussions on the post 2015 agenda and identifying champions in UN agencies, country delegations, civil society organizations and private sector. This could be a task the Expert Group as well as other ocean-related initiatives, such as the Global Partnership for Oceans and the Oceans Compact, assign themselves.

The definition of the new development agenda will be a complex process. The ocean community needs to position itself early on, and to work diligently on all fronts over the coming years. It is vitally important that oceans are not marginalized from the new development agenda.

I wish you all the best in your deliberations. Within the fora that I am engaged in, you have my full commitment to work together with you to advance the cause of the oceans.