



THE
OCEAN
CONFERENCE
UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK, 5-9 JUNE 2017

PRESS RELEASE
15 February 2017

UN calls for commitments to safeguard the world's oceans ahead of first major conference

New York, 15 February - Calling for concrete actions to protect the oceans, the United Nations today launched an online register to collect voluntary commitments made by UN Member States, businesses, civil society organizations, the UN System and other intergovernmental organizations that can meaningfully contribute to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14.

The Government of Sweden, UN Environment (UNEP) and the Peace Boat group, a non-governmental organization, were the first to list their contributions on the Registry of Voluntary Commitments during the Preparatory Meeting of The Ocean Conference today. Their commitments highlight efforts to protect the marine environment, curb marine pollution and address the impact of ocean acidification.

"Between now and The Ocean Conference in June, we're expecting hundreds of actionable voluntary commitments to be registered. They must comprehensively cover all targets for the implementation of SDG 14," said the President of the UN General Assembly, Peter Thomson of Fiji. "These voluntary commitments will be central to the global plan to reverse the cycle of decline into which human activity has put the Ocean."

The register will be a central outcome of The Ocean Conference, which will take place from 5 to 9 June in New York. The Conference will support the implementation of SDG 14, which calls for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources. The Conference will also result in a declaration that will serve as a "Call to Action" to support the implementation of the Goal.

"This is a matter for all of humanity," said the Minister for International Development Cooperation and Climate and the Deputy Prime Minister of Sweden, Isabella Lövin. "The Ocean Conference is the opportunity for all stakeholders to make their voluntary commitments to save our ocean."

The Government of Sweden commits to expand its marine protected areas to reach the SDG 14 target in 2017; UN Environment will campaign to stop plastic pollution in the ocean; and the Peace Boat group aims to launch the "Ecoship Project", a 55,000 ton energy efficient vessel which will set sail in 2020 as a flagship for the SDGs.

"Only by mobilizing all actors, from Governments and the UN system, to major groups and other stakeholders, can we generate the actions needed to conserve and protect our oceans and seas for future generations," said the Conference Secretary-General and UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Wu Hongbo. "The registry of voluntary commitments will be an important tool in this endeavour."



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More than three billion people depend on marine and coastal biodiversity for their livelihoods. However, today some 30 percent of the world's fish stocks are overexploited, reaching below the level at which they can produce sustainable yields.

Oceans also absorb about 30 percent of the carbon dioxide produced by humans, but there has been a 26 percent rise in ocean acidification since the beginning of the industrial revolution. Marine pollution, an overwhelming majority of which comes from land-based sources, is reaching alarming levels, with an average of 13,000 pieces of plastic litter to be found on every square kilometre of ocean.

Please visit the Registry of Voluntary Commitments at <https://oceanconference.un.org/commitments/>

ABOUT THE OCEAN CONFERENCE

The high-level UN Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development will be convened at the UN Headquarters in New York from 5 to 9 June 2017, coinciding with World Environment Day (June 5) and World Oceans Day (June 9), to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14. The Governments of Fiji and Sweden have the co-hosting responsibilities of the Conference.

For more information, please visit: <https://oceanconference.un.org/>

ABOUT THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

In September 2015, UN Member States unanimously adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, focused on the three interconnected elements of: economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. With 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at its core, the Agenda is universal, integrated and transformative and aims to spur actions that will end poverty, reduce inequality and tackle climate change between now and 2030.

For more information, please visit: www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment. Please follow us on social media using the hashtag **#SaveOurOcean**.

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