



UN Ocean Conference Secretariat

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### **UN Ocean Conference and synergies between SDGs 14 and 13**

March 24<sup>th</sup> 2017

Dear Excellencies,

we would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide input to the UN Ocean Conference agenda. LINGO works on climate change, particularly on the transition from a fossil fuel based to a 100% clean energy based world economy, keeping fossil fuels in the ground. As such, our comments and proposals will focus on how to increase the synergies between the work on oceans and on climate change mitigation.

Our key concern is:

***Oil and gas that is under the ocean today, should stay there, to protect the climate.***

Acting on this concern has a big untapped potential for new synergies between the climate and oceans agendas.

#### **The context**

According to the IPCC, present reserves of oil, gas and coal exceed the available carbon budget by a factor 4 to 7.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, recent research has shown that existing oil and gas fields and coal mines can take us past the 2° mark.<sup>2</sup> This makes fossil fuel exploration a highly questionable activity, in today's world. Taken together with the impacts of seismic testing on marine wildlife, the danger of accidental oil spills such as the Deepwater Horizon disaster and the routine impacts of the offshore oil and gas industry during normal operations, this makes offshore drilling for oil and gas a good candidate for an immediate moratorium. This can be achieved in a stepwise fashion, starting with exploration, then moving towards halting extraction. "The Area" can be the first place to prohibit oil and gas extraction and exploration, then moving to formally protected areas and finally taking the seas of whole nations off the oil and gas map.

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<sup>1</sup>IPCC (2014). AR5 Synthesis Report. [http://ar5-syr.ipcc.ch/topic\\_futurechanges.php](http://ar5-syr.ipcc.ch/topic_futurechanges.php)

<sup>2</sup>Oil Change International (2016) The Sky's Limit: Why The Paris Climate Goals Require A Managed Decline Of Fossil Fuel Production. Oil Change International, September 2016. [http://priceofoil.org/content/uploads/2016/09/OCI\\_the\\_skys\\_limit\\_2016\\_FINAL\\_2.pdf](http://priceofoil.org/content/uploads/2016/09/OCI_the_skys_limit_2016_FINAL_2.pdf)

In the face of a global fossil fuel endowment many times greater than what can be extracted, it is an urgent task to identify those areas where extraction can be foregone. The ocean, and especially the deep sea are a low-hanging fruit from that perspective, because extracting their oil, especially where exploration has still not started, is a decade-long and very expensive undertaking with heavy ecologic and climate impacts and uncertain financial returns.<sup>3</sup>

While in national policy arenas, fossil fuel interests continue to have a strong standing, we must start building momentum for keeping fossil fuels in the ground by recognizing the inconvenient truth that most fossil fuel reserves must stay below the ground and we have to start somewhere. The ocean is one of the best places for starting.

Accordingly, we would like to submit three proposals to the Ocean Dialogues:

1. **“The Area”** shall be declared a **no-go zone for oil and gas extraction**.
2. A **global moratorium on new offshore oil & gas exploration permits**.
3. Creation of a **registry for countries to report marine protected areas with oil and gas potential that will not be pursued** to the UNFCCC as contributions to climate change mitigation.

The “Call for action” document could include a reference to contributing to achieving the mitigation ambition of the Paris Agreement by excluding sea areas from fossil fuel extraction.

Some further comments on the seven topics of the Dialogues:

**1. Addressing marine pollution:** The offshore oil and gas industry does not only contribute significantly to climate change, it also produces important amounts of pollution.

Disasters like the Deepwater Horizon can be avoided by ending offshore oil & gas extraction. This will not happen overnight. In a stepwise process, it makes sense to start with exploration, where no capital is yet committed.

Seismic blasting, a key technology for offshore oil and gas exploration is a form of sound pollution – an end to which should be covered by the dialogue.

In order to reap significant synergies with the climate agenda, new or renewed offshore exploration permits should be put under a moratorium immediately.

**2. Managing, protecting, conserving and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems:** Protection must include an implementation of IUCN resolutions that prohibit extractive industry activities and

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<sup>3</sup>LINGO (2016) The low-hanging fruit: Fossil fuel exploration and climate change. Leave it in the Ground Initiative (LINGO). Report, November 2016. <http://leave-it-in-the-ground.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Exploration-and-Climate-LINGO.pdf>

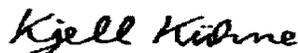
mining in protected areas.<sup>4 5</sup> New protected areas that count towards Aichi Target 11 must make sure no extraction takes place. Countries should be encouraged to explicitly exclude sea areas from fossil fuel extraction such as done for example by the USA and Canada<sup>6</sup> and Mexico.<sup>7</sup>

In order to protect all ecosystems in The Area from the impacts of the offshore oil and gas industry and support climate change mitigation efforts at the same time, The Area shall be declared off limits for oil and gas development.

**3. Minimizing and addressing ocean acidification:** The root cause of ocean acidification is the emission of CO<sub>2</sub>, most of it from the burning of fossil fuels. By protecting fossil fuel deposits under the ocean from extraction, that source of further acidification is eliminated. The above mentioned proposals are a contribution to limiting the severity of ocean acidification in the long term.

**7. Enhancing the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea:** It should be recognized that extractive industries by definition can not be a sustainable use and should therefore be banned from most areas. UNCLOS should limit offshore oil & gas development for climate reasons and a prohibition of such activities in The Area could be a good first step.

With kind regards



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Director, Leave it in the Ground Initiative (LINGO)

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<sup>4</sup>World Conservation Congress (2000) Resolution 2.82 Protection and conservation of biological diversity of protected areas from the negative impacts of mining and exploration. Amman, 4–11 October 2000. [https://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/wcc\\_2000\\_en.pdf](https://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/wcc_2000_en.pdf)

<sup>5</sup>World Conservation Congress (2016) Motion 26 - Protected areas and other areas important for biodiversity in relation to environmentally damaging industrial activities and infrastructure development. Hawai'i 2016. <https://portals.iucn.org/congress/motion/026>

<sup>6</sup>White House (2016) United States-Canada Joint Arctic Leaders' Statement. December 20, 2016, Office of the Press Secretary. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/12/20/united-states-canada-joint-arctic-leaders-statement>

<sup>7</sup>Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México (2016) PRESIDENT ENRIQUE PEÑA NIETO DESIGNATED FOUR NEW PROTECTED AREAS AND FIVE SAFEGUARD ZONES. Press Release. 06 December 2016. <https://embamex2.sre.gob.mx/hungria/index.php/en/news/press-releases/613-13th-conference-of-the-parties-to-the-united-nations-convention-on-biological-diversity>