

# Suggested Items for Inclusion in the Concept Papers for the UN Conference on Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources.

Submitted by

*the Partnership on the Rights of Nature: Integrating Nature in the Implementation of the SDGs; and the Commons Cluster of the UN NGO Major Group.*

SDG14 centres on oceans, seas and marine resources, which are an inextricable part of the Earth System as a whole. They are in constant interaction with *all* of its aspects—the hydrosphere, the lithosphere, the atmosphere and the biosphere, which includes human beings. Because of the inextricable relationships between *all that is*, the health of the world's oceans affects people everywhere; and is, in turn, the end-result of the sum of all actions by all people. We can build on this holistic perspective to take actions that are both effective and multi-faceted and can usefully complement those taken specifically with oceans in mind.

Here are some general examples, followed by more specific suggestions as these relate to several of the Concept Papers:

1. Through education in all fields and at every level; and by adjusting what is portrayed in the media *illustrate the boomerang effect: of our individual actions on the various aspects of our lives, including oceans*. In other words, show how those actions that affect oceans, directly or indirectly affect ourselves, our loved ones and our progeny. Examples are how agricultural run-off, dumping of waste and especially toxic chemicals in rivers and at sea, and the use of plastic bags affects marine life, the food chain as a whole, the availability and price of food, and our individual health.
2. Show that in addition it is important to care for all other aspects of the Earth System because all aspects are constantly affecting the health of oceans and thus our own well-being.
3. Create legislation whereby *Nature, of which oceans are an integral part, is recognized as a rights-bearing partner* with which humanity has co-evolved. Nations such as Bolivia and Ecuador have taken the lead. Other state and local governments have followed suit, including in Argentina, Mexico and the US. For example, action is being taken by NGOs against BP for its harm done to Nature through the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.
4. *Prosecute crimes against Nature* (including with regard to the Oceans) initially where appropriate within the context of the Law of the Sea; and where this is not relevant first by expanding the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court and then instituting an International Environmental Court.
5. Proclaim Ecocide a Crime Against Humanity. See also: [eradicatingecocide.com/](http://eradicatingecocide.com/)

These principles can be applied to the specific topics of the Concept Papers. Here are a few examples:

### **Addressing marine pollution.**

#### **A series of actions which together can motivate people to create innovative ways of dealing with marine pollution:**

- Publicize inspiring examples in the media and within relevant curricular in formal education of how people are dealing with aspects of marine pollution to foster creative thinking in other people. For instance, there is an initiative to purify the water around New York City by growing oysters, and a number of ways of cleaning up and reusing pollution by plastic bags that are creating whole islands of plastic.
- Show the power and versatile capacities of Nature to deal with challenges; show Nature-inspired solutions; and how innovations can be based on working in tandem with Nature.
- Provide examples of people who are making a living from such innovations.
- Offer prizes for innovations. For instance, the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands offers a prize for Innovation. There are companies that offer prizes to school children for innovative ideas, develop these to show their feasibility and even use them as a new product line. Such initiatives can be taken specifically with regard to marine pollution.
- Provide Quality Certifications, to media and educational institutions for the degree to which they help to inspire solution-oriented thinking and actually come up with and describe much needed solutions with regard to the clean up of marine pollution. The Dutch Government, for instance, issues a Prize for Innovation.

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### **Managing, protecting, conserving and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems.**

#### **Actions**

1. Taking an ecosystem approach is advantageous: Marine and coastal ecosystems are an integral part of the subsystems of the Earth System as a whole. The subsystems of earth, life, air and water merge in each of these ecosystems. Seeing parallels between each of these ecosystems helps us to see the larger perspective, makes it easier to recognize important components of problems and also to generate many-faceted solutions.
2. Using ecosystem approaches such as permaculture wherever possible:
  - create water retention landscapes,
  - engage in regenerative and restorative agricultural practices,

- restore damaged ecosystems to protect against flooding and monsoons, and
- create ecological buffer zones in coastal areas to protect coastal communities and ecosystems alike.

Also teach:

- Agro-ecology and agroforestry with key-line farming, carbon sequestration, cover cropping, no-till, rotational and multi-cropping, etc.
- Eliminate the use of toxic products, which pollute the oceans and cause death and disease; and the benefits that could come from universally adapting the use of non-toxic products.

### **Minimizing and addressing ocean acidification.**

The best means to reduce the impacts of ocean acidification is to stop the practices and activities that cause it no matter in which subsystem of area of activity this may occur. For instance, approximately 70 - 80% of the water we use goes to agriculture, much of this is to grow feed for animals. It requires much fuel to pump water over long distances. Our industrial agricultural practices result in both further loss of water and also increased levels of climate change - thus even further adding to ocean acidification.

In addition, industrial agriculture uses some 30% of our fossil fuels and produces an equal amount of green house gases in order to run farm equipment; produce fertilizer, pesticides and herbicides; and to store and move produce to market - thus leading to further acidification of the seas.

Cutting and burning down forests also results in large emissions of carbon dioxide most of which then ends up in the sea causing further acidification. This also leads to a loss of plant life which before could absorb much of the carbon dioxide released to the atmosphere, before it could be deposited in the seas.

### **Actions**

- Phase out our use of fossil fuels.
- Change our agricultural practices and diets and reverse deforestation.
- Switch to locally based, organic, regenerative and climate friendly agriculture. This uses far less energy and chemical inputs while greatly increasing productivity especially in the developing world. The practices associated with such agriculture can significantly reduce acidification, although they will need major funding increases, particularly in the developing world.
- Switch to more plant based and less meat intensive diets.
- Transition to 100% renewable energy as rapidly as possible.
- Invest in regenerating forests and adopt laws requiring sustainable management of all timber lands and conservation of forests.

## **Making fisheries sustainable.**

### **Actions**

- Encourage the formation of cooperatives of fisher-people to steward diverse types of fish. This will further enhance the experience of connection to both fish species and with-in the fishing industry. In cooperatives, all share in decision making and in the consequences of their actions. It is therefore in the vital interest of all to steward rather than to deplete available resources. Nobel Prize winner Elinor Ostrom (2009) on occasion gave the example of how lobster fishermen in the North West of America revived lobster fisheries in this way. Such cooperative relationships will tend to change the mindset from one of "making a killing" to feelings of mutual appreciation and cooperation.
- Strictly enforce agreements geared at preserving a diversity of fish species, while looking for solutions that rely on the regenerative powers of Nature herself.
- Pass and enforce laws at all levels and in all localities, even those not directly connected to the oceans, to stop the mass extinction of species, including fish. For all species are intimately connected to one another's survival and by eradicating some, you also endanger others that are necessary for humans to survive.
- Enforce such legislation with an International Environmental Court (see above) with branches at national and local levels, preferably with punishments that help perpetrators to better understand the consequences of their actions. This will achieve two things:
  - It will deter others from such crimes;
  - It will help to build a group of people who understand at first hand why a particular law is necessary. These can then be employed in an educational capacity to help inform others. They can also become members of an international group where members learn from one another.
- Regenerate fish stocks with the help of science, but with the understanding that these insights must proceed from the complex understanding of the host of subtle interlinkages within the Earth System.

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