



Dan Charity/2017 World Oceans Day photo contest winner



OCEAN ACTION

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March 2019: World Wildlife Day celebrates life below water

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On 20 December 2013, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 3 March, the day of adoption of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora ([CITES](#)), as World Wildlife Day to celebrate and raise awareness of the world's wild animals and plants. The [UNGA resolution](#) also designated the CITES Secretariat as the facilitator for the global observance of

this special day for wildlife on the UN calendar. World Wildlife Day has now become the most important global annual event dedicated to wildlife.

This year's World Wildlife Day theme is "Life Below Water: For people and planet," closely aligned with [Sustainable Development Goal 14](#), with a focus on the conservation and sustainable use of marine wildlife. To mark the occasion, CITES, the UN Development Programme, UN Environment, other UN system organizations, Member States and civil society are unrolling a series of global and national events and social media activities around World Wildlife Day, including a high-level event in New York at UN Headquarters on 1 March. The UN is also collaborating with Jackson Hole WILD to organize a [Living Oceans Film Showcase](#) that galvanizes the power of media to help catalyzes change for marine species conservation. The winning films are being highlighted at the New York event.



2019 World Wildlife Day poster celebrates marine life

This is the first World Wildlife Day to focus on life below water. It is a great opportunity to raise awareness about the diversity of marine species, their critical importance to sustainable development, and how we can work together to ensure that oceans provide these services for future generations.

More information on WWD 2019 is available at www.wildlifeday.org and [@WildlifeDay](https://twitter.com/WildlifeDay) on Twitter.

CITES, a safety net for life below water

A message from Ivonne Higuero, CITES Secretary-General



Ivonne Higuero

When we think about wildlife, most of us picture elephants, rhinos and tigers – all important land-based species that are regularly on the agenda of the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES). But we should not forget about life below water and the marine species that are also regulated under CITES.

The benefits of marine and coastal resources are enormous. More than 3 billion people depend on these resources for their livelihoods globally. The market value of marine and coastal resources and related industries is estimated at US\$3 trillion per year, about 5% of global GDP. Alarming, despite its critical importance, life below water faces many threats, amongst them an area of primary concern for CITES, which is their unsustainable exploitation for international trade. Over 30% of commercially exploited marine fish stocks are overfished.

CITES provides a safety net for our threatened marine wildlife and it has a long history of regulating international trade in marine species listed on its Appendices. This role has significantly expanded over recent years, with an increasing number of commercially exploited marine species being listed. International trade should not threaten the survival of precious corals, queen conch and marine turtles, and commercially exploited sharks and rays.

CITES focuses on species that have declined to a level that requires strong trade and management measures to maintain or rebuild stocks. CITES therefore plays a role in advancing implementation of SDG 14 for well-regulated and sustainable international trade with effective compliance procedures.

Well-managed and sustainable international trade also greatly contributes to the livelihoods of coastal communities and conservation of marine species. The sustainable harvesting and trade in corals in Indonesia, which boasts the highest coral diversity in the world, has improved the livelihoods of local communities and prevented over-exploitation under CITES.

CITES Parties and its partners will continue to work tirelessly to ensure international trade in CITES-listed marine species is legal, sustainable and traceable for **people, planet and prosperity**.

Learn more about Ms. Higuero and her work on the CITES website [here](#), and follow her on [Twitter](#).



Highlights from the Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for the Ocean, Ambassador Peter Thomson

“Mitigating Climate Change and protecting the health of the Ocean are inseparably linked,” Ambassador Peter Thomson said during a 4-8 February visit to UN Headquarters. The UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for the Ocean was in New York to attend the first meeting of the High-level Steering Committee for the [UN Climate Action Summit](#). While in New York, the Special Envoy also participated in the President of the General Assembly’s special event on 4 February, attended by many former UN PGAs, in support of strengthening multilateralism. During his week in New York, Ambassador Thomson met with

Member States, including briefing with the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) and the UN Secretariat on the progress of SDG 14 implementation and the approach to the expected 2020 UN Ocean Conference.

Earlier, Special Envoy Thomson was present in Davos, Switzerland, from 21 to 25 January, to participate at the World Economic Forum. While in Davos, he undertook speaking engagements to join the call from others, including Sir David Attenborough, in pressing for protection of the planet's climate, biodiversity and ocean. He utilised the Davos platform to demand an end to illegal and harmful fishing activities and other urgent targets of SDG14.

On 11 February, the Special Envoy delivered keynote remarks at the "Ocean Economy and Future Technology Conference" in Oman, which focused on the roles of the sustainable blue economy and innovation in developing economic opportunities and workable solutions to pollution. On 13 February, he was in Paris to address the Environment Policy Committee meeting of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and meet with OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría on joint action in support of SDG 14 implementation. On 12 February, he met with UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay and Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) Executive Director Vladimir Ryabinin to discuss preparations for the UN Decade for Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and the 2020 UN Ocean Conference.

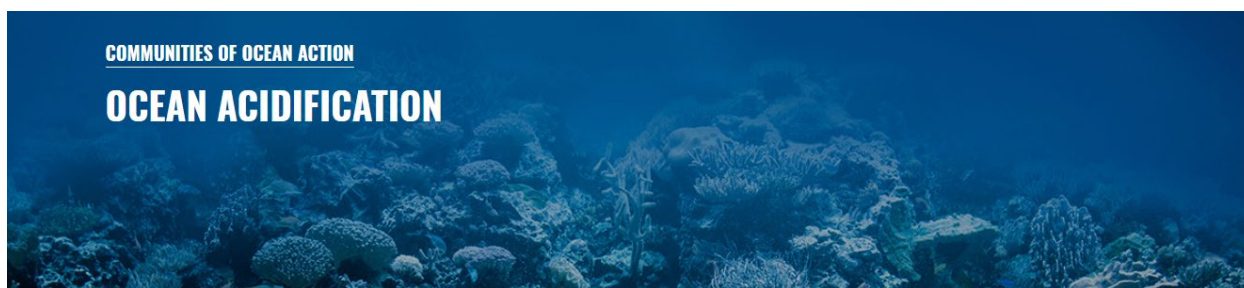
Special Envoy Thomson was in Brussels on 19 February at the invitation of the Belgian Government as a speaker in the "International Conference on the Fight Against Climate Change and the Preservation of the Ocean". On 25-26 February he was in Dublin to make an address on the State of Ocean Change at the Institute of International and European Affairs, and to meet with the Irish Government for talks on the "Our Ocean Wealth Summit" in Ireland in June.

You are invited to follow the Special Envoy's [Twitter account](#) and new [Instagram account](#), where he shares messages of solutions and strategies for achieving a healthy Ocean through implementation of SDG14 and fidelity to the Paris Climate Agreement. More information about his work can be found on the website oceanconference.un.org/SpecialEnvoy.



Updates from the Communities of Ocean Action (COAs)

The next meeting of the [Communities of Ocean Action](#) will be held in Incheon, Republic of Korea, from 30-31 May 2019. The meeting will be open to all voluntary commitment holders and will allow them to share best practices and lessons learned in the implementation of their voluntary commitments and to partner with other stakeholders involved in ocean action towards achieving SDG 14. More details will be posted soon on the COA website as they become available.



Ocean acidification

The COA on Ocean Acidification (OA) held its second webinar on 5 February as part of a webinar series aimed at highlighting Voluntary Commitments related to ocean acidification, providing updates and identifying the goals of this community. The webinar included a presentation from Jessie Turner representing the [International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification](#), which provided an overview of the Alliance's upcoming projects and their role in supporting governments to implement action plans for addressing ocean acidification.



Stakeholders participate in an ocean acidification symposium in Santa Marta, Colombia, in January.

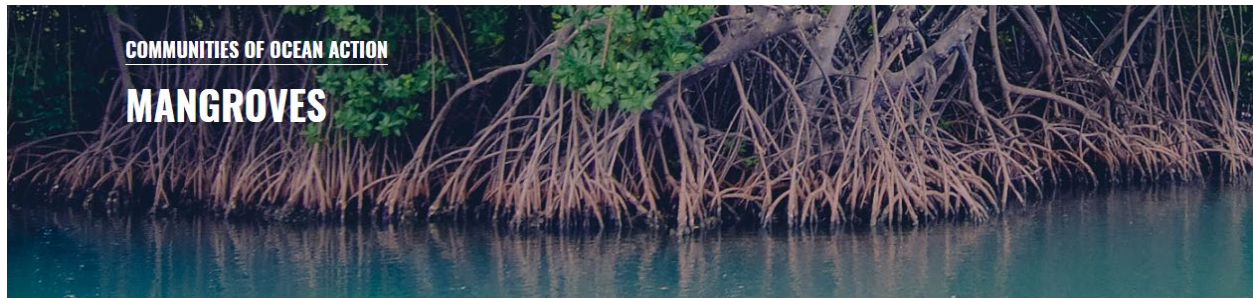
The global ocean acidification community has been involved in various efforts related to both capacity-building and policy in recent months. An ocean acidification symposium and advanced training for the Latin American and Caribbean region were held in January at the Instituto de Investigaciones Marinas y Costeras (INVEMAR) in Santa Marta, Colombia. These events were hosted by several members of the COA on OA, including the Global Ocean Acidification Observing Network ([GOA-ON](#)) and [The Ocean Foundation](#). The symposium, which

included 80 participants from 15 countries, brought together scientists, policy-makers and industry professionals from the region to collaborate and identify strategies for building resilience to ocean acidification. Participants of the training course received training on ocean acidification monitoring equipment, as well as using the [SDG 14.3.1 Indicator](#) methodology and the associated data and metadata files.

The COA on OA was also represented at the Commonwealth Ocean Acidification Action Group Workshop held in Dunedin, New Zealand, where 45 scientists and marine policy officials met to discuss ways to address and combat ocean acidification collaboratively. Find more information about this meeting [here](#).

In May 2018, the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association ([WIOMSA](#)), in partnership with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO ([IOC-UNESCO](#)), the IAEA Ocean Acidification International Coordination Centre ([OA-ICC](#)) and the Global Ocean Acidification Observing Network ([GOA-ON](#)), welcomed proposals for establishing ocean acidification observation systems in the field,

investigating biological responses to ocean acidification using experimental set-ups in the laboratory, or a combination of both, from institutions in the Western Indian Ocean. The first coordination meeting for the six selected projects was hosted by the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI) in Mombasa, Kenya, 12-14 February. The meeting discussed ways to address the joint objectives for the region. These ocean acidification projects are focused on achieving SDG target 14.3, creating a community of scientists working on OA and other stressors in the region, and relating OA observations to species with socio-economic importance.



Mangroves

Save Our Mangroves Now! conducts workshops to enhance legal capacity for mangrove management in Kenya and Tanzania

As part of its [COA commitment](#), SOMN is hosting workshops with local partners to raise awareness and develop legal capacity of mangrove conservation and management. Funded by the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, the SOMN initiative jointly implemented by WWF Germany and the IUCN Environmental Law Centre will use these workshops to facilitate dialogues and understanding to improve use of legal tools in Kenya and Tanzania. Using results from [a study](#) recently published by SOMN, it was found that in many cases adequate legislation already exists, but it is not implemented due to lack of resources, coordination and capacity.

Participants of the two workshops co-hosted by the Kenyan Marine and Fisheries Research Institute and the University of Nairobi, and the Tanzanian forestry service and the University of Dar es Salaam, respectively, come from a mix of governmental, NGO and private sector backgrounds. These include legal experts and field-based practitioners as well as community members and business owners. The goal is to share perspectives on mangrove conservation challenges, build understanding of available legal tools for conservation, and foster discussion on how to improve the legal frameworks for conservation and sustainable use of mangrove ecosystems. These will be followed by two more workshops in Mozambique and Madagascar later in the year. For more information contact [Dorothee Herr](#) and [Raphaelle Flint](#).

Experts at Global Mangrove Alliance’s annual workshop create roadmap to increase mangrove habitat 20% by 2030

The Global Mangrove Alliance—a unique platform by founding partners Conservation International, IUCN, The Nature Conservancy, World Wildlife Fund and Wetlands International to accelerate a comprehensive, coordinated, global approach to mangrove conservation, restoration and sustainable

use at a scale that matters—held its annual workshop in Washington in January. Based on a global analysis of the threats to mangroves and opportunities for conservation, the GMA is building a global movement of civil society organisations, technical experts, government agencies, corporations, funding agencies, foundations and community groups to jointly work towards the ambitious [goal of increasing global mangrove cover by 20% by 2030](#), with defined underlying targets for biodiversity conservation, climate regulation, food security and human well-being.

The workshop brought together more than 80 global mangrove experts from 15 partner organizations to create a roadmap for opportunities and strategies for the conservation and sustainable management of mangroves worldwide, refine the Alliance’s vision and work plan, and assess progress towards the GMA targets. Global programs, regional and field staff, and academics from IUCN, WWF, Wetlands International, Conservation International and The Nature Conservancy, as well as Scripps Institute of Oceanography, NASA, Wildlife Conservation Society, Restore America’s Estuaries, the Mangrove Action Project, Audubon Society, Rare, Cinestav and Pew Charitable Trusts all participated in a week of discussion and collaboration on the Alliance targets, identifying common goals and strategies, and highlighting opportunities for synergies and collaboration in specific topics and geographies. A full report of the outcomes of this workshop is in development and will be shared as an update to the voluntary commitment ([#14787](#)) when complete.

Read more [on the GMA website](#).

Ramsar Resolution XIII.14: Promoting conservation, restoration and sustainable management of coastal blue-carbon ecosystems

At the 13th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (COP13), Resolution XIII.14: Promoting conservation, restoration and sustainable management of coastal blue-carbon ecosystems was adopted, which encourages contracting parties with coastal blue-carbon ecosystems in their territories to identify and raise awareness of the benefits of these ecosystems and promote actions at appropriate scales and levels within their countries, especially for sustainable development and climate change mitigation and adaption. Read the Resolution [here](#) and contact [Maria Rivera](#) for more information.

Updates from voluntary commitments

- **Strengthening the Resilience of Coastal Communities for Climate Change in India ([#27677](#)):** M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) is working to harness science and technology for sustainable development through a pro-poor, pro-nature, pro-women and pro-sustainability approach. The foundation also believes in combining modern science with action research to influence policy issues. MSSRF works in the areas of Coastal Systems Research, Biodiversity, Biotechnology, Eco-technology, Food Security, and Information, Education, and Communication. The main aim of the Coastal System Research Programme (CSR) is to integrate livelihood security of coastal communities and ecological security of coastal systems for the sustainable development of the coastal zone.

MSSRF initiated its mangrove conservation and sustainable fisheries programme all along the East Coast of India to enhance the ecological security of the coastal areas and the livelihood security of the coastal communities. The main objectives of the programme are a.) to restore and sustain critical coastal ecosystems such as mangroves, coral reefs, and coastal forests; b.) to promote the adoption of responsible and sustainable fishing practices through knowledge and skill enhancement; and c.) to strengthen the resilience of fishing communities to climate change.

MSSRF is working with the coastal communities to conserve and manage this important ecosystem. To date it has restored nearly 2,500 hectares of degraded mangroves through participatory management in the states of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, West Bengal, and Maharashtra.

- **Implementing Ecosystem-Based Adaptation Approaches to both Mangrove and Coral Reef Restoration in Grenada, with a focus on Sustainable Livelihoods and Co-Management (#14568):** Grenada is currently piloting a number of ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) projects throughout the country in order to combat the negative effects of climate change. This project aims to enhance and demonstrate integrated planning tools and technical guidance to assist decision-making and effective stakeholder consultation in the development of coastal EbA interventions focused on mangroves and associated ecosystems, support relevant authorities and communities in the selection, planning and implementation of practical EbA measures, and support regional capacity-building and global transfer of good practices and experiences gained to other coastal regions as a means to scale up EbA development and implementation, including informing supportive adaptation policies, strategies and adaptation plans.
- **Improved Participatory Management of Mangrove Resources for the Control of Coastal Erosion, Pollution, Preservation of Fisheries Resources and the Reduction of Poverty in Cote d'Ivoire (#17782):** To help overcome the challenges of the current pace of exploitation and degradation of mangrove ecosystems in coastal countries in West Africa, FEREADD initiated this project with the objective to conserve mangrove biodiversity in Cote d'Ivoire and manage in a sustainable and participatory way with a view to combating coastal erosion, pollution and the preservation of fish stocks. The target locality is Grand-Lahou. The following results are expected:

 - Mangrove resource management systems and institutions are effective in Cote d'Ivoire;
 - The 1,500 hectares of mangrove forest are planted every year in Cote d'Ivoire;
 - 800 mangrove management actors are trained in Cote d'Ivoire;
 - The capacity of 40 coastal zone groupings is strengthened on alternative livelihoods such as oyster production techniques, bee breeding and the production of natural honey each year;
 - Village councils for sustainable management of mangroves are created, strengthened and operational. For more information contact [Loukou Koffi Jules](#).
- **NO to littering cigarette butts (#28004):** On 8th December, the team was at a renowned shopping mall in Grand Baie (North of Mauritius), with a designed frame NO to littering of cigarette butts whereby we explained people about the bad effect of littering cigarette butts to the environment. We also invited people to take picture with our frame as well. Many people were unaware of the dangers of cigarette butts hence this part of the awareness campaign was successful.

- **Sustainable Ocean Ambassador (SOA) ([#27732](#)):** SOA has initiated and strengthened up its Sustainable Ocean Commitment with multinational MBA students and other members of academia through Assumption University in Bangkok to bring sustainability to its ocean knowledge platform.
- **Reduction of Coral Reef Decline/Sharing strategies, information and action plans ([#20824](#)):** The St. Maarten Coral Summit was destroyed during a hurricane. All work, meetings, and contractual arrangements have been redirected to humanitarian delivery of more than 100 boxes of relief material delivered by our operational director at the time, by private boat owners and distributed to victims on the island.

New Voluntary Commitment Spotlight: Illuminating Hidden Harvests

A major new study on small-scale fisheries is underway. Led by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, in partnership with WorldFish and Duke University, the [Illuminating Hidden Harvests](#) ([#28237](#)) study will analyze data on small-scale fisheries from around the world to quantify their contribution to sustainable development and produce replicable methods for secondary data collection and synthesis.



The results, to be published in 2020, will support the sustainable development of small-scale fisheries by informing policy-making processes and empowering fishing communities with key information.

Small-scale fisheries are critical to the livelihoods of millions of people, particularly in developing countries; they provide food and nutrition for billions and serve as an economic and social engine, affording employment and development opportunities to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is estimated that 90 percent of all people directly dependent on inland and marine capture fisheries work in the small-scale fisheries sector. Women are significant participants in the sector, particularly in post-harvest and processing activities.

The small-scale fisheries sector is so vital that the global community assigned a specific target – SDG 14.b: Provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets – to ensure visibility, recognition and enhancement of the sector's contribution to sustainable development.

The study will involve local experts in priority countries that have significant production or dependence on small-scale fisheries. To date, specialist teams have been selected to lead case studies in nearly 50 countries.

Other new Voluntary Commitments

- **Blue Justice for Small-Scale Fisheries**, [29400](#) (TBTI Global)
- **Goal 14 implementation for the protection of Mediterranean Sea's whales and dolphins**, [28447](#) (Battibaleno Association)
- **Clean coastline (Ren Kustlinje)**, [28429](#) (Municipality of Sotenas)
- **Taking actions towards our ocean through environmental education in Guatemala**, [28407](#) (Semillas del Oceano/Seeds of the Ocean)
- **Reducing marine pollutions/protecting ecosystems/sustainable fishing/conservation of coastal and marine areas/implementing and enforcing international sea law**, [28379](#) (Blue Seas Protection)
- **Reducing marine debris**, [28016](#) (Shanghai Rendu Ocean NPO Development Center)
- **Microplastics research in lakes, rivers, seas and oceans**, [28204](#) (By the Ocean We Unite)
- **Bikash Ranhan Rautray**, [28312](#) (Association for Rural Area Social Modification - ARASMIN)