

# Rio Ocean Declaration

*Calling for strong and immediate action to meet the sustainable development goals for oceans, coasts, and small island developing States (SIDS) at Rio+20 and beyond*

Co-Chairs' Statement of The Oceans Day at Rio+20

June 16, 2012

Rio Conventions Pavilion

United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

The Co-Chairs of The Oceans Day at Rio+20, a high-level ocean event that gathered over 375 participants from 169 organizations and 46 countries, call for strong and immediate action on oceans, coasts, and small island developing States (SIDS), including:

- **Scaling up successful ecosystem-based management/integrated ocean and coastal management (EBM/IOCM) efforts** at national and regional and in marine areas beyond national jurisdiction.
- **Developing an integrated approach to addressing the interlinked issues of oceans, climate change, and security** that includes provisions for: Stringent reductions in greenhouse gas emissions; ecosystem-based adaptation strategies through integrated coastal and ocean management; sufficient funding to support adaptation for coastal and island communities that are at the frontline of climate change; conservation of coastal ecosystems as major carbon sinks; and moving towards a low-carbon economy through, inter alia, emissions reductions from marine industries and the development of offshore renewable energy.
- **Enhance the capability of small island developing States (SIDS) and developing coastal countries to benefit from, and sustainably manage, their marine resources and to adapt to climate change** through increased financing, technology transfer, commensurate with the needs and challenges facing developing countries and SIDS, and ocean use agreements to ensure that the benefits derived from the sustainable use of resources in the EEZs of SIDS and developing coastal countries accrue to them.

The Oceans Day at Rio+20 gathered over 375 ocean stakeholders from 46 countries and all sectors (governments, intergovernmental organizations and international agencies, non-governmental organizations, industry, and scientific institutions) at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20 Conference) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on 16 June 2012 to highlight the importance of oceans, coasts, and small island developing States (SIDS) in sustainable development. The Oceans Day at Rio+20 also highlighted 12 tangible commitments for oceans, coasts, and SIDS.

The Co-Chairs of The Oceans Day at Rio+20 declare the following:

**Oceans are essential to supporting life on Earth and are of great economic, social, and cultural significance to all countries, including 183 coastal countries and island states. Ocean and coastal areas:**

- Are the life support system of the Earth, producing half of the oxygen that we breathe, cycling over 93% of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and storing over half of all naturally

sequestered carbon, and absorbing 80% of the heat added to the global system in the last 200 years; and

- Provide critical social, economic, and nutritional benefits and underpin the global economy, including through providing an estimated 61% of the world's total Gross National Product (GNP), supporting 90% of global trade through shipping; and providing more than 4.2 billion people with more than 15% of the animal protein they consume through fisheries;

---

**We, furthermore, note with great concern the many threats and negative drivers that are compromising the ability of the oceans to continue providing essential resources, food and nutritional security, and critically important services to the global community. These threats include the following:**

- Growing threats from climate change, ocean acidification, pollution (including marine litter), overfishing, illegal, unregulated, and unreported (IUU) fishing, destructive fishing practices, and habitat destruction and degradation; and

- Weak monitoring, control, enforcement and compliance; inadequate integration of the precautionary and ecosystem-based principles; and insufficient capacity to effectively manage ocean and coastal resources; low political prioritization of ocean and coastal issues; persistence of harmful subsidies leading to overexploitation; and inadequate public education and awareness.

**We express our appreciation for the high level of attention given to oceans, coasts, and SIDS in the Rio+20 outcome document, and the recognition of their importance in achieving the three pillars of sustainable development, and the fact that much progress has been made in implemented integrated, ecosystem-based approaches to ocean and coastal management in the past 20 years.**

---

**We call for the world's leaders present at the Rio+20 Conference to agree to take immediate steps to achieve the sustainable development goals related to oceans, coasts, and SIDS through the following measures:**

## **1. INTEGRATED OCEAN GOVERNANCE**

**Scale up successful ecosystem-based management/integrated ocean and coastal management (EBM/IOCM) efforts:**

- At national levels* to include the entire coast and ocean under national jurisdiction and through the strengthening of institutions and decision-making processes for integrated ocean and coastal management, including through the enactment of ocean and coastal laws;
- At regional levels*, including through the Large Marine Ecosystem Programs and the Regional Seas Programmes, encouraging the adoption of regional protocols on EBM/IOCM to guide action at regional and national levels; and
- In marine areas beyond national jurisdiction*, through organizations or processes with vested authority, to address multiple use conflicts, manage new uses, and protect vulnerable ecosystems and marine biodiversity.

## **2. CLIMATE AND OCEANS**

**Develop an integrated approach to addressing the interlinked issues of oceans, climate change, and security** within and outside the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that includes provisions for:

### ***Mitigation***

- Adopt stringent reductions in greenhouse gas emissions to avoid disastrous consequences on coastal communities, marine ecosystems, and ocean chemistry;
- Accelerate efforts to reduce emissions from marine industries, including efforts by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and others;
- Conserve and sustainably manage coastal ecosystems as major carbon sinks ("Blue Carbon"), and integrate Blue Carbon into the policy and financing processes of the UNFCCC as a major tool for climate change mitigation;
- Sustainably develop ocean-based renewable energy (such as offshore wind power, wave energy, tidal power, etc.) guided, inter alia, by marine spatial planning;
- Consider and develop regulatory systems for carbon capture and storage.

### ***Adaptation***

- Implement ecosystem-based adaptation strategies through integrated coastal and ocean management institutions at national, regional, and local levels to reduce vulnerability and build the preparedness, resilience, and adaptive capacities of coastal communities. This includes coastal restoration and the establishment and effective management of networks of marine protected areas.
- Provide sufficient funding, supported by improved estimates of adaptation costs, to support adaptation for coastal and island communities that are at the frontline of climate change, including through the possible creation of a special Coastal Adaptation Fund; and
- Develop and support measures to address the issues associated with the displacement of coastal populations as a result of climate change.

### ***Capacity Development, Scientific Monitoring, and Public Education***

- Provide technical and financial assistance to SIDS and developing countries to build institutional capacity to implement mitigation and adaptation measures, early warning systems, and disaster risk reduction;
- Establish the scientific capacity in all countries for marine environmental assessment, monitoring, and prediction, including the implementation of a global ocean acidification observing network as part of the global ocean observing system;

- Promote a science-policy mechanism at national and regional levels through the UN Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment as a key mechanism to ensure that emerging issues are promptly reviewed and properly addressed in various decision-making and regulatory frameworks; and
- Expand public outreach and education efforts to improve awareness in general and particularly to improve awareness of the risks posed to SIDS and coastal communities, and to catalyze support for mitigation and adaptation responses.

### **3. PROTECTION OF MARINE BIODIVERSITY THROUGH NETWORKS OF MARINE PROTECTED AREAS (MPAs)**

**Undertake ecosystem-based approaches for ensuring the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in the context of integrated ocean governance**, including through marine spatial planning and networks of marine protected areas, with a view to achieving the Convention on Biological Diversity's Aichi Biodiversity Target of conserving or managing at least 10% of marine and coastal areas by 2020.

### **4. ENHANCING FISHERIES FOR FOOD SECURITY, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS**

**Prevent, deter, and eliminate IUU fishing, and eliminate environmentally and socially harmful fishing subsidies that contribute to overcapacity, overfishing and IUU fishing**, reaffirming the commitments made in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

**Enhance the capacity of developing countries and SIDS to make optimal use of their fishery resources through enhanced fisheries management** (e.g., adjusting fishing capacity and practices in a manner to avoid or eliminate overfishing, ceasing harmful harvesting methods, restoring depleted fish stocks) to increase the economic, social and nutritional benefits from their fisheries.

### **5. CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT: ENHANCE THE CAPACITY OF SIDS AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE AND TO MANAGE THEIR MARINE RESOURCES**

**Enhance the capability of small island developing States (SIDS) and developing coastal countries to benefit from, and sustainably manage, their marine resources** and adapt to climate through:

- Provide financial support to SIDS and developing coastal countries to improve their ability to adapt to climate change, supported by improved cost estimates;
- Increase the total amount of financing devoted to capacity development, commensurate with the needs and challenges facing developing countries and SIDS; and
- Ocean use agreements, including fisheries partnership agreements, in the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) of SIDS and developing coastal countries that ensure social equity, resource conservation, and public transparency, and ensure that the benefits derived from the sustainable use of resources in the EEZs of SIDS and developing coastal countries accrue to them.

### **6. CONTROLLING ALL SOURCES MARINE POLLUTION**

**Mitigate marine pollution, including marine debris, persistent organic pollutants, heavy metals, and nitrogen-based compounds, from land-based and marine sources** through:

- Supporting the implementation of the Global Program of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (GPA), including through increased capacity development to implement national plans of action and regional Land-Based Sources Protocols;
- Developing regional programmes for marine litter and incorporating them into national budgets to support implementation and participation; and
- Developing and utilizing innovative economic incentives/measures (such as plastic bag taxes; extended producer responsibility; award-based incentives for coastal communities with integrated waste management systems; fines for illegal disposal of litter, and incentives to fishermen to remove marine litter) to prevent and reduce the release of plastics and other marine litter to the ocean and the abandonment and discarding of fishing gear at sea.

## 7. MOVE TOWARD THE BLUE ECONOMY

**Take steps towards the Blue Economy** to ensure that the use of marine resources contributes to income and jobs, reduced pollution and waste, social equity and inclusiveness, food and nutritional security, and poverty reduction through:

- Scaling-up successful blue economy initiatives (e.g., responsible coastal tourism practices, certification of sustainably caught seafood) and strengthening means of implementation through technology transfer, provision of financial resources, and sharing of best practices;
- Supporting the valuation and payments for ecosystem services for more effective decision making in development planning involving ocean resources;
- Supporting alternative livelihood development;
- Supporting research, development, and transfer of clean and renewable technologies, including offshore renewable energy.

## LOOKING BEYOND RIO+20

**We note that the institutional framework for sustainable development in the context of oceans and coasts has not been fully addressed in the Rio+20 process and that this is a major area in need of further attention and concrete action.**

We recognize the need to make use of key opportunities for reassessment of the institutional framework for sustainable development for oceans in the next phase, including the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), “the constitution for the world’s oceans.”

In the next phase, there is an urgent need to take concrete steps to:

- Re-assess the institutional framework for oceans and coasts at national and regional levels, as well as in marine areas beyond national jurisdiction, to improve the implementation of ecosystem-based, integrated ocean and coastal management, including through the potential adjusting or enhancing of the mandates of existing mechanisms, or the possible creation of new mechanisms for coordinated and coherent multiple use ocean governance;
- Elevate oceans to the highest levels of the UN system (UN Secretary General), to enable a cross-cutting approach, and appropriate and timely response to major threats and opportunities, including through the establishment of a high-level entity/coordination mechanism on oceans;
- Develop appropriate legal and policy frameworks based, inter alia, on the ecosystem and precautionary approaches for new and emerging issues, including carbon capture and storage, offshore aquaculture, deepwater offshore oil development, and bioprospecting for marine genetic resources.

*Annex 1.*  
**Rio+20 Voluntary Commitments for  
Oceans, Coasts, and Small Island Developing States**

---

**1. Global Partnership for Oceans**

*Lead Organization:* World Bank, with 70 partner organizations

**2. Ocean Watch: Assessment and Promotion of Progress in the Implementation of the 1992, 2002, and 2012 Global Commitments On Oceans, Coasts, and Small Island Developing States**

*Lead Organization:* Global Ocean Forum (GOF)

*Partners:* United Nations Development Program, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, Ocean Policy Research Foundation, Japan

**3. The Sustainable Maritime Development Initiative by the IMO and the shipping industry**

*Lead Organization:* International Maritime Organization

**4. Building Oceans Readiness: Capacity Development for Integrated Ocean Governance**

*Lead Organization:* Global Ocean Forum

*Partners:* Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, UNESCO, World Ocean Network, Ocean Policy Research Foundation, Japan

**5. Building Global Capacity for Marine Sciences, Observation, and Transfer of Marine Technology**

*Lead Organization:* Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO

*Partners:* The Global Ocean Forum

**6. Global Goal and Commitments to End Plastic Pollution**

*Lead Organization:* Natural Resources Defense Council

*Partners:* Government at all levels, business, and non-governmental organizations are invited to join the current 32 signatories to this commitment.

**7. Plastic Disclosure Project (PDP)**

*Lead Organization:* Ocean Recovery Alliance

*Partners:* The Association for Sustainable & Responsible Investment in Asia, and partner investors and universities

**8. The Marine Litter Initiative**

*Lead Organization:* United Nations Environmental Programme

*Partners:* Regional Seas Programmes (RSP), United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

**9. Global Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction**

*Lead Organizations:* The Global Environmental Facility (GEF) and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization

**10. The Ocean Stewardship Initiative in the Blue Society**

*Lead Organization:* World Ocean Network

*Partners:* Nausicaà, Global Ocean Forum, Sea for Society Partnership, International Union for Conservation of Nature, Agence des Aires Marines Protégées

**11. Mainstreaming Ocean Education**

*Lead Organization:* World Ocean Network and the Ocean Policy Research Foundation

**12. Smart Ocean/Smart Industries: Global scaling up of ocean and climate data collection by industry**

*Lead Organization:* The World Ocean Council (WOC)

*Partners:* companies from a variety of sectors (e.g. shipping, oil and gas, fisheries, cruise ship tourism, and others) will collaborate to develop the system to foster, improve, and expand industry efforts to collect ocean and climate data.