BECAUSE OUR PLANET IS BLUE
Petition to the United Nations Ocean Conference 2025

08/06/2024

To António Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations

To Emmanuel Macron, President of the French Republic, Co-Host of the United Nations Ocean Conference 2025

To Rodrigo Chaves Robles, President of the Republic of Costa Rica, Co-Host of the United Nations Ocean Conference 2025

To all Heads of States and Governments represented at the United Nations Ocean Conference 2025

The Ocean is the Earth's cradle of life, nourishing and connecting the entire planet. We all depend on the balance and wellbeing of the endless blue. We all have the duty to take care for it.

However, the Ocean, seas and marine wildlife are increasingly being threatened, degraded or destroyed by human activities, reducing their ability to provide the vital functions on which life on Earth depends.

Addressing the ocean crisis responsibly means accepting the need to take rapid and far-ranging action to avoid the worst consequences of our unsustainable and unhealthy dependence on fossil fuels and strategic minerals and putting the Ocean on a path to recovery.

To turn the tide, we ask the world's governments to adopt, at the UN Ocean Conference 2025, six steps – as specified in the OceanCare declaration "Because Our Planet Is Blue" – to be implemented immediately at global, regional and national levels:

1. Ban offshore oil and gas exploration and phase out existing fossil fuel extraction;
2. Implement mandatory measures to reduce vessel speed;
3. Ban destructive fisheries such as bottom trawling;
4. Adopt global rules to end plastic pollution, addressing the full life cycle of plastic;
5. Agree on a global moratorium on deep-sea mining;
6. Ensure effective protection of marine habitats and enforce marine conservation measures to restore ecosystems damaged by human activities.

We must stop harming our planet and start caring for it. We must protect and restore the Ocean so its inhabitants can survive and thrive. Because our planet is blue.

Why is this important?

The world is facing simultaneous crises of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss, which pose a serious threat to the future existence of humanity.

The Ocean covers more than 70 per cent of the Earth's surface and constitutes 95 per cent of the biosphere. By storing solar radiation and distributing heat and moisture around the globe, it influences the world's climate and drives weather systems that affect life on land and in the water. The Ocean and its ecosystems also provide significant benefits to the global community, including climate regulation, around 50 per cent of oxygen production on Earth, food, livelihoods, employment, maritime trade, recreation and cultural well-being.

Through the Agenda 2030, the United Nations have agreed on seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), committing to achieving sustainable development in a balanced and integrated way.

While many of the SDGs are relevant to ocean conservation, number 14 - 'Life under water' - is at its core. Currently, the world is failing to meet this goal.

As the planet's largest carbon sink, the Ocean absorbs the excess heat and energy released by rising greenhouse gas emissions and trapped in the Earth's system. Today, the Ocean has absorbed about 90 per cent of the heat generated by rising emissions. As the excess heat and energy warms the Ocean, the change in temperature leads to unprecedented cascading effects, including ice melting, sea level rise, and marine heatwaves. Marine heatwaves have doubled in frequency and become longer, more intense and more widespread. Rising temperatures increase the risk of irreversible loss of marine and coastal ecosystems, including damage to coral reefs and mangroves that support marine life.

The Paris Agreement's goals can only be met if we immediately stop exploring for new fossil fuel reserves. Yet billions of dollars continue to be spent exploring the seabed for oil and gas. Marine protected areas are not exempt from these efforts. Drilling, production, transport, refining, etc. are often the cause of major oil spills. Hydrocarbon exploration involves the use of airguns, which produce some of the loudest man-made noise ever known, damaging marine life from the smallest plankton to the largest whale.

Anthropogenic noise in the marine environment is generally increasing at an alarming rate. In some areas, underwater noise levels have doubled every decade over the past 60 years. This poses a significant threat to marine ecosystems and the survival of mammals, turtles, fish and other marine life. Shipping is the main source of continuous noise emissions to the marine environment. Ship strikes remain a major cause of mortality for large whales in many regions. The shipping sector, whose greenhouse gas emissions have increased by 20 per cent in the last decade (accounting for about 3 per cent of total global emissions), operates with an ageing fleet that is 98.8 per cent dependent on fossil fuels for its operations.

Pollution from the overproduction and consumption of plastics has become an existential threat to the planet, including our ability to stay on track to a 1.5°C world. Global plastics production is projected to triple from 460 million tonnes per year in 2019 to 1,231 million tonnes in 2060 without significant regulation. An estimated 9 million tonnes of plastic waste enters the Ocean each year killing vast numbers of whales, dolphins, seals, sharks, turtles, sea birds, and other marine life. The use of destructive fishing gear, along with overfishing, is one of the greatest threats to marine ecosystems today. Trawling and dredging should be banned in vulnerable seabed habitats and in areas where these fishing methods result in incidental harm and mortality of threatened megafauna species. Harmful fisheries subsidies must be eliminated.

Deep-sea mining could destroy habitats, wipe out populations and species, and cause potentially unavoidable widespread and irreversible damage to ecosystems and biodiversity. It would also interfere with the planet's largest carbon sink in the midst of a global climate emergency.

These threats are likely to cause irreversible damage to marine biodiversity and have lasting impacts on the lives and livelihoods of coastal communities and beyond.

The UN Ocean Conference 2025 provides a unique opportunity for governments to agree on a global strategy to protect and restore the Ocean. It is vital that such a strategy addresses the key gaps in the current failure of world governments to meet the targets of SDG 14. It must also be consistent with the Paris Agreement's goal of limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

The window of opportunity for meaningful action to change this is likely to close within the next 5 to 10 years.

The time to act is now.