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OCEAN ACTION NEWSLETTER: YOUTH AND THE OCEAN



un.org/oceanconference



OCEAN ACTION



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



2018 Rosie Leaney WOD Theme Winner

INTRODUCTION

“Because of the climate emergency, young people are inheriting a world facing a triple planetary crisis – climate disruption, collapsing biodiversity and pollution of air, land and water that kills millions every year. In this context, we should not be surprised that both online and in the streets, young people have been expressing their impatience with the pace of change, their alarm at the war on nature, and their frustration with injustice and poor governance.”, said the UN Secretary-General in his message for the [ECOSOC Youth Forum](#).

Young people play a critical role in fighting against marine pollution, raising awareness of ocean conservation as well as finding innovative solutions to address challenges in implementing SDG14. Youth should be part of the solutions of the future of our ocean and planet.

It has been over a year since the COVID-19 pandemic forced us into a new normal. However, efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14) and to keep up the momentum on ocean action have continued. A series of webinars and events on SDG 14 have already been scheduled for 2021. This year marks the entry into the [UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development \(2021-2030\)](#). On 30 March, UNDESA organized a [webinar](#) entitled “Implementing SDG14 with the Communities of Ocean Action(COA)”. The objective of the webinar was to take stock of the implementation of voluntary commitments registered since the 2017 UN Ocean Conference, to share best practice, identify challenges and innovative solutions as well as to understand the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on advancing SDG14.

During the webinar, Ambassador Peter Thomson, Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for the Ocean, and Mr. Zhenmin Liu, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs launched a report entitled “An Assessment of Impacts of the Ocean Conference Voluntary Commitments on SDG 14”. The report underscores that the impact of the voluntary commitments goes beyond their numbers and is groundbreaking in the way they provide a means for everyone to get involved and do their part to reverse the decline in ocean health.

In the upcoming months we are preparing for various events to celebrate our planet and highlight the vital role of the ocean in advancing SDGs and achieving sustainable development.

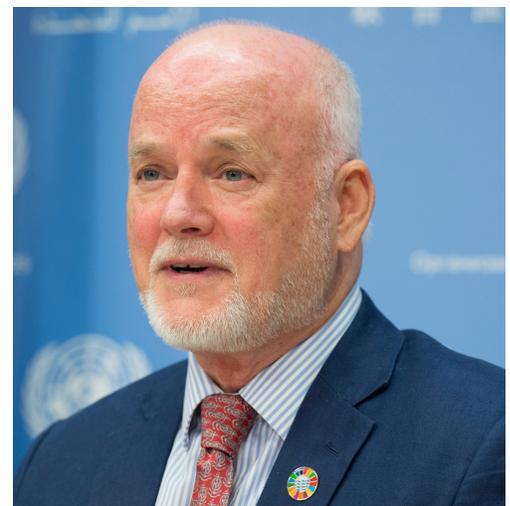
May and June will feature a series of events dedicated to the state of the ocean (World Tuna Day, World Oceans Day, Day of the Seafarer, International Day for the Fight against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing). In addition, the President of the General Assembly will convene a High-Level Thematic Debate in Support of SDG14: Life Below Water on 1 June. In July, the annual high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) will assess progress made on SDGs 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 12,13 and 17, while in September, the World Tourism Day and World Maritime Day will focus on how to rebuild tourism in a safe, equitable, and climate-friendly way. In November, the UNFCCC COP 26 in Glasgow will bring the world together to tackle climate change and to accelerate action toward the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Additionally, to keep the momentum on ocean action, LIVE events and side events are being organized and planned by UN DESA/DSDG in collaboration with the UN SEO Ambassador Thomson, with youth and influencers to raise awareness.

As we seek to recover and rebuild from the ongoing pandemic, we need to ensure that the interconnected relationships between human, animal, and environmental health are respected. Our efforts will continue to scale up ocean action and drive solutions to protect the ocean and marine resources and achieve SDG 14 on the road to the United Nations Ocean Conference in Lisbon in 2022. Using the SDGs as our overarching road map, we can have a sustainable recovery from COVID-19 by building and promoting blue-green policies and investing in a sustainable future for the young generations. Conservation and protection of the environment is a matter of survival for us all.

MESSAGE FROM AMBASSADOR PETER THOMSON, THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL'S SPECIAL ENVOY FOR THE OCEAN

The IPCC has warned us with a high degree of confidence that virtually all coral reefs will be dead when we go through the dreaded level of 2 degrees Celsius. As I often say, you cannot have a healthy planet without a healthy Ocean, and coral is an essential element for the Ocean's health. Our predicament is that we are not heading to a destination of 2 degrees; on the current path of carbon dioxide emissions, the WMO has confirmed we are heading to a temperature increase of 3 to 5 degrees by the end of this century.

All things being equal, my loving granddaughters will be alive at the end of this century. I refuse that burning future for them.



I hope you believe in the dictum, “Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does.” None of us should imagine we are powerless and that should be our lodestar of hope. It’s true that we’re all part of the problem, but let’s make sure we’re all doing our part, however large or small, to be part of the necessary transformations.

The transformative action to which all of us are called is that of moving to a net zero economy by 2050. If we are to keep global warming well below that fateful level of 2 degrees Celsius, scientific consensus has established that net zero is the destination we must reach - one in which we emit no more carbon dioxide than we remove from the atmosphere. To get there, all of us, as consumers and voters, have a role to play. Thus, for the protection of our children and grandchildren, the looming Climate Crisis demands we change our habits and support valid efforts to make the transformations required to achieve a net zero world by 2050.

Next year we will gather in Lisbon for the UN Ocean Conference to support the implementation of SDG14; but before that there will be some key, directly-related global conferences – the Biodiversity COP in Kunming, the Food Systems Summit in New York, and the Climate COP in Glasgow. Intergenerational justice demands that the voice of youth is heard loud and clear at all these conferences, not just to protest the harm being done to their future, but to demand of us all the transformations required for a net zero world by 2050.

You are invited to follow the Special Envoy's [Twitter account](#) and [Instagram account](#), where he shares messages of solutions and strategies for achieving a healthy Ocean through implementation of SDG 14 and fidelity to the Paris Climate Agreement. More information about his work can be found on his website, oceanconference.un.org/SpecialEnvoy.

MESSAGE FROM JAYATHMA WICKRAMANAYAKE, UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL'S ENVOY ON YOUTH

For over a year, the world has been grappling with a profound human, health, and economic crisis as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The effects of COVID-19 are disproportionately affecting the more than 1.8 billion young people around the world, predominantly in developing countries, and who will continue to experience the impacts of the pandemic for years to come. More than ever before we must support, empower, and engage young people on our journey to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Youth leadership, engagement and participation at all levels – local, national, regional and global - is critical for the success of the 2030 Agenda. This is also true for SDG 14 on life below water. Our ocean is increasingly under threat. Nearly 40% of the world’s population lives within 100 kilometers of the coast.



Unsustainable practices including in farming and waste management, economic pressures and climate change are all placing intense demands on the ocean, its coral reefs, and coastal ecosystems. By contrast, conserving and managing the ocean sustainably has the potential of bringing positive outcomes for youth and future generations, including benefits such as green jobs, poverty eradication, and a thriving and diverse ecosystem. Capturing the attention of youth around SDG 14 and actively supporting innovative youth-led solutions is vital for their future as well as for the future of our planet. Inspiring action, showcasing how the SDGs can improve our lives, giving youth a meaningful place at the table to share their ideas and perspectives on ocean action, and amplifying the voices of youth in all their diversity both online and offline, are but a few of the small steps we can take to help empower youth when it comes to SDG 14 and other related SDGs.

Young people are at the heart of the global dialogue on climate change and they have pushed for years to be at the table with other leaders. It is our collective duty to listen and involve them in the global conversation on the ocean as well.

You are invited to follow the Special Envoy's [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#). More information about her work can be found on her website, <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/>

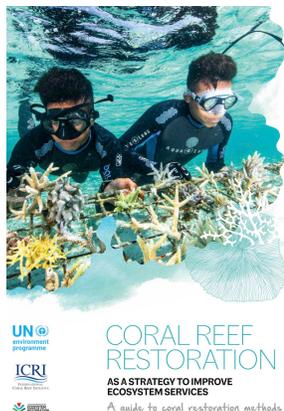
UPDATES FROM THE COMMUNITIES OF OCEAN ACTION (COAS)



Coral Reefs Restoration Guidelines

A new report on [Coral Reef Restoration](#) kickstarts the launch of the [United Nations Decade of Ecosystem Restoration](#) and of the [United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development](#).

The report was launched on 18 January 2021, via a [webinar](#) which was co-sponsored by the Reef Resilience Network, the International Coral Reef Initiative, the United Nations Environment Programme, and the National Environmental Science Programme. Coral reefs are some of the most ecologically and economically valuable ecosystems on our planet.



Covering less than 0.1 per cent of the world’s ocean, they support over 25 per cent of marine biodiversity and serve up to a billion people with a wide range of ecosystem services such as coastal protection, fisheries production, sources of medicine, recreational benefits, and tourism revenues.

However, they are also on the frontline of the climate crisis due to their sensitivity to warming seas. As much as 50 per cent of our coral reefs have already been lost. According to recent reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), up to 90 per cent of reef-building corals could be lost by 2050, even if warming is limited to an increase of 1.5°C.

We can’t afford to lose this valuable ecosystem. As we strive to accelerate climate action to halt global warming, there is great urgency to protect our remaining reefs.

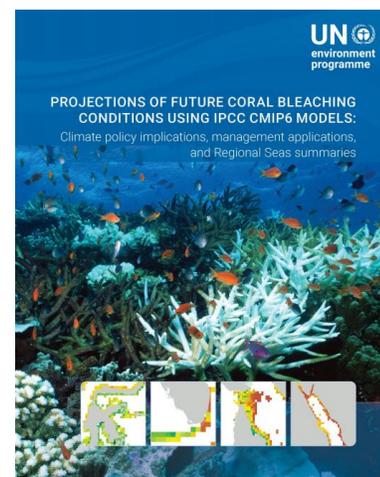
How to do this is the subject of a new report by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), which concludes that well-planned, well-funded and long-term coral reef restoration can be a useful tool to support coral reef resilience.

The report entitled, *Coral reef restoration as a strategy to improve ecosystem services*, aims to assist practitioners, managers, and decision-makers to consider whether and how to use coral reef restoration as a strategy to protect coral reefs locally, regionally and globally.

The report suggests coral reef restoration strategies follow four critical principles: 1) planning and assessing around specific goals and objectives, 2) identifying adaptive strategies to mitigate risks, 3) engaging local stakeholders and communities in all stages of the restoration efforts, and 4) developing long-term monitoring plans to allow for adaptive management and to improve the understanding of restoration effectiveness for specific goals.

Projections of Future Coral Bleaching Conditions using IPCC CMIP6 models: Climate Policy Implications, Management Applications, and Regional...

The third global coral bleaching event, which started in 2014 and extended well into 2017, was the longest coral bleaching event on record. The length of the event means corals in some parts of the world had no time to recover in 2014, 2015 or 2016 during the cool/winter season, prior to experiencing bleaching the following year. This recent global bleaching event of 2014-2017 represents what climate model projections presented in this Report suggest may become the norm over the coming two decades. Importantly though, great spatial variation exists in the projected timing of the onset of annual severe bleaching (ASB) conditions among the world’s coral reefs.



This report updates the UNEP 2017 report with projections of the timing of severe coral bleaching conditions using the new generation of climate models used by the IPCC – the CMIP6 generation of models.

COMMUNITIES OF OCEAN ACTION

OCEAN ACIDIFICATION

The Community of Ocean Action on Ocean Acidification

As we commence the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), all ocean advocates – from communities interested in protecting the ocean to policy makers charged with ensuring environmental sustainability – have an essential role to play in promoting and advancing best strategies to build resilience against future Ocean Change. Ocean acidification and its impact on marine life is arguably one of the grand challenges that will impact coastal and marine ecosystems, economies and communities dependent on a healthy ocean.

The Community of Ocean Action on Ocean Acidification (COA OA) is directly aligned with the goals and objectives of the Ocean Decade through the Voluntary Commitment (VC) process. As of mid-April 2021, all VCs on ocean acidification that have been reported to UN DESA have been evaluated for their effectiveness and ‘performance’. Many of the VCs were submitted after the 2017 UN Oceans Conference and some have already reached their due date. We are however pleased that quite a few new VCs and some renewals, have been submitted as recently as this year.

Despite challenges arising from the COVID 19 pandemic, COA OA members have remained active through a host of new events, such as the Global Ocean Acidification Observation Network webinar series, the Ocean Acidification Information Exchange platform, mentoring of early career researchers, and global coordination meetings. The scientific community and stakeholders participated in the annual Day of Ocean Acidification Action held on 8 January 2021, which was a combined in-person and virtual symposium held in Monrovia, Liberia. This meeting followed an Africa-focused webinar on 5 February 2021 to explore enhanced capacity building opportunities. Further, a session focused on ocean acidification in the Mediterranean Sea was organized by the Ocean Acidification Mediterranean Hub on 24 March 2021 during the Monaco Ocean Week.

This event offered the possibility to engage in a dialogue with a variety of stakeholders on how to develop strategies on reducing the impacts of ocean acidification and how to increase scientific capacity at the regional level.

A presentation on progress achieved for the COA OA was delivered at the 30 March 2021 virtual event entitled “Keeping The Momentum For Ocean Action: Webinar series for 2021 “Implementing SDG 14 with the Communities of Ocean Action”. This event was moderated by Ambassador Peter Thomson, Special Envoy for the Ocean for the UN Secretary General. These ocean acidification events have been attended by hundreds of scientists from around the world, documenting active community-engagement.

The effectiveness of global capacity building efforts aligned with the 2030 Agenda has resulted in 30 countries reporting to data to the SDG 14.3.1 target online database hosted by the IOC-UNESCO. This is more than a tripling of the number of countries contributing data compared to the first year of reporting in 2019. More countries are also building capacity to submit data using learning tools such as the OceanTeacher Global Academy.

We are very much energized and encouraged by the new OA trainings and events organized by the members of this COA and the broader OA community, as well as by the new interest generated during the recent panel discussion and COA updates delivered at the 30 March 2021 event “Implementing SDG 14 with the Communities of Ocean Action”. Opportunities and sustained progress of the VCs for SDG14.3 are one metric that demonstrates momentum to deliver on ocean action as we prepare for the next UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon Portugal.



Nine projects combating marine pollution selected as UNDP Ocean Innovators

On 09 March 2021, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) announced the nine winners of the 2020 Ocean Innovation Challenge (OIC). OIC is a unique mechanism launched by UNDP, with support from Sweden and Norway, in January 2020 to accelerate progress on the Ocean SDG 14 by identifying, financing, and mentoring innovative approaches to ocean and coastal restoration and protection that sustain livelihoods and advance the “blue economy”.

Our ocean faces unprecedented threats to the ecosystem goods and services it provides to humanity, from climate regulation to food security to coastal tourism. Despite some progress, many ocean challenges, from nutrient pollution to illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing to ocean acidification, continue to worsen.

The nine winning innovations cover a diverse range of technical, policy and regulatory approaches to reducing marine pollution such as using benign organic substitutes for plastics products, introduction of extended producer responsibility regulations to reduce plastics pollution, and sustainably harvested seaweed as a substitute for synthetic fertilizer.

The first OIC global Call for Proposals focused on marine pollution (SDG 14.1), received over 600 concept proposals from a wide range of stakeholders including NGO, private sector, UN, academia and others.

UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner congratulated the 2020 Ocean Innovators: “Humanity depends upon the ocean for a wide range of ecosystem services including the millions of jobs and livelihoods provided by ocean sectors such as fisheries and coastal tourism. But progress on several SDG 14 targets, such as marine pollution and overfishing, remains insufficient, underscoring the need to step up our efforts considerably. I am very pleased to learn of the first cohort of UNDP Ocean Innovators and wish them every success in delivering tangible and scalable solutions to ocean sustainability challenges.”

United Nations Special Envoy for the Oceans, Peter Thomson, expressed his strong support for the 2020 Innovators: “Covering 70% of the planet’s surface the ocean’s health is vital to us all. SDG14, the ocean goal, is one of the most ambitious of the 17 SDGs, and the world clearly needs to accelerate progress on SDG14. Initiatives like UNDP’s Ocean Innovation Challenge provide opportunities for organizations with great ideas for ocean protection and restoration to bring game-changing approaches to fruition. My congratulations to each of the 2020 Ocean Innovators and I look forward to learning of their progress.”

Second Call for Proposals

The Ocean Innovation Challenge also announced that its second Call for Proposals, on sustainable fisheries and aquaculture focusing on SDG targets 14.4, 14.7 and 14.b, is officially opened. These targets call for ending overfishing and IUU fishing, increasing the economic benefits to SIDS and LDCs from marine resources, and enhancing small scale fishers access to fisheries resources and markets. Eligible organizations are invited to submit proposals by the closing date of May 9.

The OIC is generously funded via contributions from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad).

ONE ON ONE WITH BOYAN SLAT, INVENTOR AND ENTREPRENEUR WHO CREATES TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS TO GLOBAL PROBLEMS

The Ocean Cleanup is a non-profit organization founded by Boyan Slat at the age of 18 in his hometown Delft, the Netherlands, which is developing advanced technologies to rid the world's oceans of plastic. It is a voluntary commitment registered in connection with the 2017 UN Ocean Conference ([#15227](#)) that aims at environmentally friendly, large-scale, and efficient removal of plastic pollution from aquatic ecosystems.

The Ocean Cleanup project goal is to reach 90% reduction of floating ocean plastic by 2040. Given the world's situation today, is the project on track?

The Ocean Cleanup is still on track to achieve our goal of 90% reduction of floating plastic in the oceans by 2040. It needs to be noted, though, that on that timeline there are quite a few uncertainties and design challenges that still need to be proven or solved.

Microplastics have the potential to affect marine ecosystems and human health. How would you describe the impact of the Ocean Cleanup project regarding the concentration of microplastics present in the ocean?

The smaller the particles, the harder it becomes to remove them effectively from the aquatic environment. With our technology we have been able to demonstrate to be able to collect particles upward from 1 mm, which was a better performance than originally expected.

From a broader perspective, it is important however to note that larger pieces are the source of microplastics, that evolve from the breaking down of the particles under influence of sunlight and abrasion by waves and other friction. The larger pieces in our eyes therefore present the ticking timebomb that we urgently need to address to avoid the further creation of more microplastics below our capturing range. In that sense it is very important to reference our study on the Great Pacific Garbage Patch in Scientific Reports in March 2018 where we demonstrated that 92% of the total mass of plastic in the GPGP is made of debris that is larger than 5 mm.



Boyan Slat - The Ocean Cleanup

As youth activist and founder of the Ocean Cleanup, what would be your message to the international community to help address the challenges that all the youth activists face in their work?

To be honest, I don't see myself as an activist at all. I am an inventor and an entrepreneur, although running a non-profit organization. What I truly believe in, and what is driving our work at The Ocean Cleanup, is that big problems require big solutions. And, as a personal note: when someone tells you something is impossible, the absoluteness of that statement should be enough to make you wary, and investigate more.



World Ocean Day Competition 2017 2017 Jack McKee 1st Place Youth

NEW VOLUNTARY COMMITMENTS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Qeep Up by Maggie Q for SDG14 [38459](#)

The Qeep Up project has made the commitment that 100% of products sold by the brand will be made from recycled or materials. The Qeep Up collection is not only fully recycled - from product to packaging - the manufacturing process is completely transparent. Focusing on women's activewear and swimwear, all fabrics are made using certified, tested and traceable Repreve fibers and technology. Repreve, a certifiably sustainable and transparent process, meeting the Global Recycled Standard, takes both ocean plastics and consumer waste and safely recycles them into polymers, which are used to make yarns to knit into performance fabrics. Qeep Up is building a supply chain with a low carbon footprint based on region. Ocean plastics + waste are harvested on the eastern seaboard of the United States and turned into yarns in North Carolina.

The Coral Sonata [38013](#)

ARTSail is a nomadic, multi-faceted platform, which facilitates interdisciplinary practice to cultural producers in the creation of innovative content addressing the climate crisis specific to South Florida. The projects connects artists with climate activists, scientists and marine experts to investigate how climate change and man-made pollution are impacting the South Florida waterways and assist them in the creation of tangible outcomes with climate advocacy value.

Zoe : Artificial Reef Assessment and Coral Planting [37902](#)

"Zoe - A Living Sea Sculpture" is a 15ft x 9ft x 6ft coral restoration project in Cozumel, Mexico using electrolysis through seawater to precipitate Calcium Carbonate onto a steel, DNA-inspired structure 12ft deep & 60m from shore. This project unites art, science, technology, and tourism to help regenerate corals and marine biodiversity in a highly degraded area due to storms, climate change, disease, and development.

Empowering One Million Ecopreneurs [37887](#)

Suraksha is an organization with a mission of educating individuals and MSMEs to prevent pollution. The training programs offered by Suraksha cover ocean acidification, reduction of GHG emissions, and achieving sustainability along with support to the innovation and technology commercialization around the globe. The aim of the project is to train one million individuals. The programs were designed to offer online and affordable course to many.

OTHER NEW VOLUNTARY COMMITMENTS

- Water Ecologies for our Shared Future - [38010](#) (ARTSail Residency and Research Initiative)
- 2025 Pledge towards Sustainable Tuna (25PST) - [37968](#) (Global Tuna Alliance)
- Dell Commits to Scaling Commercial Use of Ocean Bound Plastic - [37851](#) (Dell Technologies)
- Delivery of Education on Ocean and Climate Health - [37707](#) (AimHi Education Ltd.)



2018 Henrique Hioe 2nd Place Above Water Seascapes

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