RISE UP background and response

23rd March 2022

Background

The RISE UP Blue Call to Action is a joint call by Indigenous Peoples and Fisherfolk groups, Ocean advocacy organisations and philanthropies to governments and corporations. It was agreed ahead of the UN Ocean Conference, that was originally scheduled to take place in Portugal in 2020. This Conference was postponed for two years due to the corona virus and now is scheduled to take place in June 2022.

RISE UP was initiated because despite the importance of the ocean, the international political response has not come anywhere near what is needed to avert the ocean crisis. RISE UP aims to inspire decision-makers and key stakeholders to agree on a course of action that will give our Blue Planet the best chance of survival.

The UN Ocean Conference offers a crucial opportunity to set the trajectory for global ocean action in the months and years to come. In particular, we want governments and companies to commit to advancing the different interlinked goals and actions enshrined in RISE UP Blue Call to Action and to work nationally, as well as globally to ensure the necessary changes are made in both policy and action.

As indicated by the Seascape Analysis, it is by coalescing around a common agenda, working collaboratively and delivering our shared messages, especially at key global moments such as the UN Ocean Conference, we create the possibility of catalysing transformative action.

Response to the Zero Draft of the 2022 UNOC Political Declaration by the RISE UP Hub

RISE UP welcomes The Zero Draft of the 2022 UNOC Political Declaration and is supportive of the desire to strengthen the many different aspects of ocean science that will ensure better decision making. Indeed, many RISE UP network organisations look forward to participating in the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. However, it is not a lack of scientific
understanding or data that is preventing us from halting and reversing the decline in the health of our ocean.

Many of the key aims and actions in the current zero draft mirror those in the text of RISE UP’s Blue Call to Action that are widely accepted as key solutions to the ocean and climate crises, but it is hard to see how these aspirations will translate into the concrete actions. To avoid repeating the feeling of ‘deep regret’ expressed in response to the collective failure to achieve the four targets under Goal 14 that matured in 2020, countries need to address the underlying systemic causes for the failure. These systemic failures include putting short-term economic gain over long-term sustainability, partial and ineffective governance and lack of investment. More than anything else, progress has been hobbled by a lack of political will.

The coming months offer a number of key opportunities that are referenced in the declaration. These should be prioritised as they will have significant impact for the global ocean agenda as a whole and if achieved will constitute a step-change in our approach to ocean action. The decisions made will be a litmus test on whether those fine words made in the Declaration are not just empty promises. These include:

1. **High Seas Treaty**

The UN Treaty to protect marine life on the high seas has been many years in the making and negotiations must be brought to a successful conclusion before the end of 2022. This treaty that will be critical to fulfil the ambition of the 30x30 protected areas target just concluded its latest round of negotiations in New York made some headway, Progress has been very slow, despite the creation of a new High Ambition Coalition. Governments will need to inject a high level of political will and urgency to ensure negotiations are successfully concluded this year. We urge the UN Ocean Conference to use this opportunity to help facilitate progress in upcoming negotiations.

2. **CBD and 30x30**

The CBD meeting scheduled for the third quarter of this year in Kunming, China will set the trajectory for nature protection in the coming years, including in the ocean. That over a hundred countries now support the adoption of the 30x30 target is encouraging and we hope that this international target will be adopted at the meeting. This must enable the establishment of a global network of effective and representative marine protected and Indigenous Peoples and Local Community (IPLC) conserved areas that are fully or highly protected to provide climate, food security, livelihood and biodiversity benefits. Upholding and enhancing IPLC rights is fundamental to making sure protected area systems are both effective and equitable.

3. **Ending Harmful Fishing Subsidies**

An ambitious global agreement by the World Trade Organization to phase out harmful subsidies that fuel overfishing and illegal fishing is long overdue. Hampered by COVID delays, Governments finally have the opportunity to ensure a successful outcome on fisheries subsidies in mid-June. An agreement is within our grasp, and
would be an excellent result to celebrate at the UN Ocean Conference that will be happening shortly after.

4. Small-scale fishing

Around the world, more than 100 million people rely on the oceans for their livelihoods: fish provides 17% of the average animal protein for more than 3.1 billion people, and more than 50% in many countries in the Southern Hemisphere and yet these people are not foregrounded in the declaration as much as we might expect in the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture.

To strengthen the ability of local coastal communities, Indigenous peoples and small-scale fishers and fishworkers, especially women and youth, to conserve biodiversity, safeguard food security, build climate resilience and eradicate poverty, countries should within their territorial waters seek to prevent industrial threats and prioritise access for sustainable small-scale fishing while recognising and promoting community-based management.

5. Finance

For the intentions set out in the declaration to have real impact, not only will all harmful exemptions and subsidies for fossil fuel, oil and gas drilling, and detrimental fishing and agricultural practices have to be eliminated but sufficient finance will need to be made available to implement the identified solutions. This will mean increasing investment for innovation and development so we can rapidly transition to a circular economy which will include the development of a sustainable and inclusive blue economy. Low-impact ocean-based renewable energy sectors will have a part to play and it will be imperative to invest in nature based solutions, such as the restoration and protection of blue carbon ecosystems that are key in climate mitigation and adaptation.

Recently some leading environment groups have agreed that some of the world’s wealthiest countries should support a target of at least $60 billion annually of international finance for biodiversity in developing countries. In the marine context, it is especially important that ambitious global financial instruments are developed to implement and enforce existing and new MPAs, particularly for small island and developing states; and promote capacity-strengthening for MPA managers, Indigenous peoples and local communities.

The success of the UN Ocean Conference 2022 will be judged by the outcomes of these crucial global processes and not simply for the fine words in the declaration. Countries’ good intentions must be translated into concrete actions and the RISE UP Network and civil society at large will be watching closely.

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1 https://www.campaignfornature.org/news/category/finance