



VOICE OF THE OCEANS Statement (by David Schurmann) at the UN Ocean Conference

June 30, 2022

We would like to thank the organizers and other participants of the UN Ocean Conference for the opportunity to unite our voices, share experiences, and discuss collective action to recover and sustain our water planet.

This is a concern that naturally permeates our history. In 1984, when I turned 10, we set sail for the world from Brazil and made the seas and oceans our home. At that time, besides me and my parents, my brothers Pierre, 15, and Wilhelm, 7, were also on board. From that moment on, our commitment to this immense marine environment was confirmed. It became our home, our school, our workplace and our recreational space! How could one not care for such a vast and rich environment?

It took ten years to complete our first circumnavigation. From then on, the sailboat became the official residence of the Schurmann Family. In 1997 we set sail again, this time with our younger sister Kat on board. In 1998, after about a year of sailing, we were surprised by the garbage that flooded the deserted and paradisiacal Henderson Island in the Pacific Ocean. It was a sight that impressed us. We were shocked by this unprecedented and unexpected fact.

At that moment, we had no idea that we were witnessing a fact that would become more and more widespread and alarming. In all modesty, we exercise our role as sea faring people and collect the garbage to protect and preserve this environment. In 2014, we set out on our third world voyage aboard our new - and sustainable - sailboat, the Kat. During that voyage, in 2015, we came across an appalling amount of trash scattered across miles of white sand on West Fayu, another island in the Pacific Ocean, also deserted and paradise-like. The trash, mostly plastic, came from all over the world.



This time, we posted this alarming reality on our Facebook and YouTube channels, in addition to the images and alerts in traditional media. Our "cry" reached millions of people in Brazil and around the world. Most importantly, it awakened in us the urgency of broader and more collective actions that can reverse this scenario. When we anchored back in Brazil in 2016, our next mission did not yet have a defined route, but it was already focused on one defined goal: saving our oceans.

In the four decades of our history, we have witnessed a growing and worrying movement of the absurd invasion of plastic on our water planet. For a long time, we felt lonely in the midst of this disturbing scenario. Gradually, other testimonies emerged and are growing in number. Our voices have added up and a chorus of warning has mobilized our society for this cause, that is so important for the oceans, marine life, the environment as a whole and for us humans!

The challenge is great, but we were not going to stand still! So, we launched our current mission: the Voice of the Oceans initiative, of which the maritime expedition began in August 2021 with the global support of the UN Environment Program. By November 2023, we will pass more than 65 strategic locations on the planet, including points in the oceans where a wide variety of plastics accumulate, coming from different parts of the world through ocean currents. We will end this first stage in New Zealand, but the journey of the Voice of the Oceans will continue, with two more stages. The second part will pass through Asia and Africa and the third will take us to Europe, including Portugal, ending with the return to Brazil.

In total, Voice of the Oceans will sail for more than 6 years through the oceans of our planet to seek and stimulate transformative solutions capable of saving and preserving our oceans. The challenge is great, but we have already encountered initiatives that are encouraging and filling us with hopes! Transformation takes place through individual and collective action, and the UN Ocean Conference underscores the importance and strength of the coalition that is already positively shaping this Decade of Ocean. To all of you, our thanks for navigating the waves of change. Be the Voice of the Oceans!