

BRACENET  
SAVE THE SEAS. WEAR A NET

**The oceans are the foundation of life, and we are all united in our mission to save them. We are excited and honoured to join the international community at the 2022 UN Ocean Conference to discuss the best course of ocean action.**

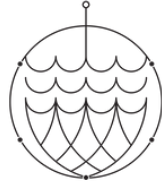
We are BRACENET, a project based in Hamburg, Germany, and have joined the conference for two reasons. First, we aim to inspire the private sector with our solution of recovering and upcycling ghost gear. Second, we propose the designation of an official World Ghost Gear Day by the UN to facilitate global partnerships and effective preventive action.

To begin, what is the specific problem BRACENET is fighting against? In short, our oceans are drowning in an ever-increasing flood of plastic waste. This includes one of the deadliest forms of marine debris – lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear, also called “ghost gear”. According to the World Wildlife Fund for Nature, up to one million tons of old fishing nets enter our oceans every year. They lose their purpose, but not their function, and keep on fishing for centuries to come. They are silent killers and a great danger to marine life, or simply a deadly disease.

What can we do to stop this disease? On the one hand, we can ease the symptoms by removing ghost gear from the oceans. On the other hand, we can stop it from spreading by preventing additional ocean pollution. While the former task constitutes our daily business, our greatest ambition is to tackle the latter.

In the spirit of SDG17 (Partnerships for the Goals), we have teamed up with the Healthy Seas Foundation and the Ghost Diving Foundation to fight the symptoms. **Together, we recover ghost nets from the oceans with diving teams all over the world. Next, we bring these nets and end-of-life nets to our manufactory in Hamburg, where we upcycle them in fair and local production by hand into new products such as bracelets, keychains and dog leashes.** With our sales, we collect regular donations to Healthy Seas, Ghost Diving and other organisations (e.g. Sea Shepherd, Charles Darwin Foundation, Ocean Voyages Institute and Everwave) to help finance the clean-up and protection of our oceans. To date, our partnerships have resulted in over 773 tons of recovered ghost gear, over 7 tons of upcycled nets, and over 190.000 € in donations.

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As our mission diverges from typical recycling solutions, we hope it can serve as an inspiration and example for the private sector. For that purpose, we want to highlight two key points. First, we perceive ghost gear as an abundant resource in times of resource scarcity. Harvesting this resource is not detrimental, but most important to ocean health. Second, we hope to see more upcycling products going forward. Their production uses much less energy compared to recycling, and their components from materials that were formerly regarded as waste help spread the story of our joint mission to save the seas.

Considering the scale of the issue, we are aware that our solution is only the start of a much larger movement. However, our solution demonstrates how the oceans can benefit from partnerships between the private sector and non-governmental organisations. This is what we hope to support on an international stage, and where our ambition to stop the illness from spreading comes into play. **To facilitate global action in preventing and removing ghost gear, we are proposing the initiation of an official World Ghost Gear Day, proclaimed by the UN!**

We believe this is the most effective way for the international community to gather support to combat the deadly threat of ghost gear. While discussions and bans of plastic straws and bags are highly commendable, this much larger danger remains hardly noticed by society. We need a strong global campaign supported by the UN to raise awareness and build effective international partnerships to ultimately save our oceans.

We are grateful for the opportunity to take part in this conference and help shape the course of global ocean action. We are looking forward to our joint fight for the future of our oceans and the world.

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Madeleine von Hohenthal & Benjamin Wenke

Team BRACENET