



Written Statement

Heirs To Our Oceans, NGO, Stakeholder

Charley Peebler, 18 years, Co-Founder

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I am 18 years old and a co-founder of Heirs To Our Oceans, a youth-led organization with a mission of educating youth about human impacts on their oceans, waterways and climate, supporting youth through essential skill development, and connecting youth around the world in purpose.

In my journey I have spent a lot of time with youth around the world. I've seen that most youth don't speaking about the science of human impacts on our oceans because they are unaware. They haven't had the opportunity to learn about how human activity impacts our oceans and waterways. This is troubling.

Worse, our number one greatest challenge worldwide as we try to supplement youth education is the education system itself. This we see anywhere youth of Heirs To Our Oceans are located. Around the world education systems are failing our youth in not preparing them for the real world issues they are inheriting, and, more so, not making space for even independent study on ocean and water issues nor excusing them for civic and community engagement.

Modern day education system has failed youth generation after generation. We see the ill effects as we look around today at the state of humanity and our natural environment including our oceans. As Ambassador Thomson shared, "humanity is knowingly destroying the very support systems that keep us alive." The worst offenders of the impacts on our environment are corporations who are making decisions based upon profit and ROI. These leaders are products of our modern-day education system.

The Ocean Decade is a decade of science. But resources have been put into science. As Canada's Ambassador shared at the UN Ocean Pre-Conference, "the science is clear." We have the science needed to justify taking.

To turn the tide my generation is currently facing with ocean and waterway collapse, we must adopt a different commitment – **invest in the youth**. Youth starting in secondary school must be taught about the real-world challenges we are facing and be given tools and opportunity to develop solutions collaboratively.

Unlike science, education has not been prioritized, and, at this point, it must be. Education reform as defined here will go to the heart of the problem, not just fix a symptom. *Quality, useful* education we need to #saveourocean.

Heirs To Our Oceans requests that SDG 4 -- *quality* education (as I define below) – be considered interconnected with SDG 14.

We request each of the UN Member States active in the Ocean Decade commit sufficient time and resources to reforming education where:

- * critical thinking, problem solving, creative thinking and empathic leadership skills are developed;
- * ocean, water and climate literacy is an essential component of their curriculum along with ecology and relational education and indigenous ways;
- * youth learn *in* their natural environment;
- * youth learn about the science of human impacts on their ocean and waterways, and they are encouraged to process solutions including protecting, not exploiting, the ecosystems that protect them;
- * youth learn that the ocean crisis is inextricably linked to human rights crises; and
- * civic engagement and community engagement are supported.

Heirs To Our Oceans asks that youth – youth under 25 years of age – are *meaningfully engaged in the Ocean Decade*. Our ocean needs true intergenerational partnership. The 12-year olds at the start of the Decade will be 22 years in 2030, and the time to act is now. The next generation is the next generation of decision makers, and a generation that understands and appreciates biodiversity will protect biodiversity.

We organized the United States Youth Advisory Council to the UN Ocean Decade in 2020 to allow youth to authentically be a part of the Decade with their voices and stories amplified and their ideas put into action. We want youth advisory councils organized around the world! **Heirs To Our Oceans has developed a toolkit to support formation of UN Ocean Decade Youth Advisory Councils.**

We also request that the minimum age for attendance at the UN Oceans Conference be reconsidered to include 15 or 16-year old ocean advocates. Including teen youth in forums like this is crucial in raising the next generation of environmental leaders.

Thank you.

Charley Peebler, Co-Founder, Heirs To Our Oceans