



Colleagues and Excellencies

The urgent need for improved policy making oriented towards ocean health has been recognized for decades, however there are no more decades to go, this is our only chance, our decade of action. Multiple global agreements and several domestic policies stress the need to conserve and sustainably use the world's oceans, seas, and marine resources. These culminated in the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UN Decade of Ocean Sciences for Sustainable Development and the SAMOA Pathway.

Great progress has been made; however, the COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted these dynamics. The pandemic has led to an increased demand for single-use plastics that intensifies pressure on an already out-of-control global plastic waste dilemma. Furthermore, the pandemic disproportionately affected SIDS, as well as vulnerable, and marginalized populations, such as women, youth, indigenous, ethnic minorities, and displaced populations, particularly in countries where health and hygiene infrastructure are poor. This poses a long-lasting doubt for the ocean environment and into its health-related potential impacts.

The pandemic starkly revealed the need to make health and well-being of all people and the protection of the environment a central component of sustainable development. We urge member states to implement integral person-centered approaches targeting Primary Health Care and Universal Health Coverage in a complementary manner, bringing together actions to address the emergency, climate change mitigation and adaptation, combat health inequalities, and facilitate the achievement through the strong interlinkage and interdependence of the SDG 3 and 14.

Ocean Health holds the keys to an equitable and sustainable planet and reverting to old practices is not an option. The new post-COVID-19 era is yet to be defined. The science is clear, while Medical IMPACT vaccinates thousands a year, there are no vaccines for the oceans, there will be no cure, we must act now to protect the state of our oceans, political will instantly urged response from member

states when acting against the pandemic, while the consequences of ocean acidification and climate change may outnumber loss of life provoked by all the pandemics.

Human health is directly related to environmental and animal health as stated by WHO's One Health Initiative, all strongly dependent of ocean health and health for all is our main priority, centering our efforts towards leaving no one behind, constructing effective supply chains and cross-country collaboration to stimulate research and development, as well as specialized interventions, focusing on prevention, capacity building, healthcare advocacy and empowering Civil Society.

The challenges we face cannot be overcome in isolation. All relevant stakeholders must be involved: member states, academia, the private sector, and other interested international bodies, through a collective effort with a strong multi-stakeholder approach, targeting meaningful engagement of civil society. The time is up, the time for action can no longer wait, commitments urgently need to be turned into action. We as civil society, have one more chance to raise our voices for our oceans, highlighting the importance and value of international cooperation, multilateralism, and solidarity.

For our future, the future of our oceans and the future of our children.

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