

United Nations Ocean Conference  
Plenary Session

**NGO Intervention:** The Center for Oceanic Awareness, Research, and Education  
**Date:** Wednesday, 07 June 2017 (afternoon)

Thank you, and good afternoon co-presidents, distinguished heads of state and governments, ministers, excellencies, delegates and colleagues, ladies and gentlemen.

I represent **COARE**, The Center for Oceanic Awareness, Research, and Education

I also speak today on behalf of the **Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation, Seventh Generation Advisors, Plastic Pollution Coalition, Wishtoyo Chumash Foundation, 5 Gyres**, and the **Sustainable Oceans Alliance**.

We would like to share with this body of leaders four main points:

First,

The high seas represent two-thirds of our ocean, and almost one-**half** of our planet. Because they are beyond the areas of national jurisdiction, often, the high seas are thought of as belonging to nobody. In reality, they are a critical shared-resource that belongs to EVERYbody.

Article 192 of UNCLOS stipulates that States have an OBLIGATION to protect and preserve the marine environment, and our organizations agree that it is time for a high seas treaty to protect two-thirds of the ocean.

Second,

Our organizations encourage all members here to join the International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification: (<https://www.oaalliance.org>)

Third,

We ask for **strengthening of the UN Oceans inter-agency mechanism** in order to promote greater integration of ocean policies and coordination between UN bodies with ocean-related mandates. Just as the **UNFCCC** has provided leadership for climate change, the solutions and policies that come out of this conference need permanent leadership.

And lastly, we have heard from speaker after speaker about the horrific problem of plastic and marine pollution

Like many of you, our organizations call for reductions in the the amount of plastic entering our waterways and oceans.

However, it is important to realize that this is not just a waste management problem; it is – more simply put – a WASTE problem. The more plastic we create, the more we have to clean. It is time to shift our focus and energy upstream, and, thus, our organizations call for **reductions in the volume of plastic being produced**, and we recommend the UN begin a process to establish target reductions within a specified time frame.

This goal is in direct concert with

- **SDG 6.6** for protection and restoration of water-related ecosystems;
- **SDG 12.4** for sound management of chemicals and waste;
- and naturally, **targets 14.1** and **14.2**

We would also like to urge members, IGOs, and CSOs to consider carefully the rush to alternatives. Please remember that bio-based and compostable plastics are **STILL** plastic that, even if disposed as intended, may still alter the composition of our environment and our oceans.

As His Excellency Peter Thompson, President of the General Assembly stated during the opening of this conference. "The time has come for us to change our wrongful ways."

It is time for us to re-examine our patterns of production and consumption, and it is time for us to all, collectively **and individually**, to walk our talk and embody the change we call for in others. This is a pivotal moment in our history, and I thank you all for your commitment.