



UN Ocean Conference 5-9 June 2017

WWF International plenary statement

[greeting phrase]

This conference marks the moment when the ocean undeniably arrived at the center of the main agenda for decision makers from all sectors.

While we have collectively been making steady progress, we all know that to take on the exponential growth of threats, we need ambition, scale of impact and political will - of a whole new order of magnitude.

We must ensure that all humanity, especially coastal and island people, can continue to rely upon the ocean for food and livelihoods, and where ocean economy can provide the asset base for sustainable economies for centuries ahead.

As this conference comes to its end, I'd like to ask that we all consider what concrete action we will take - on Monday, and on Tuesday, and for months and years ahead - to ensure that the momentum we have created here together can achieve what we all know is so urgently needed.

We must all hold ourselves and each other accountable to the aspirations and needs of the billions of people represented in this place, and to our planet, and come back to future meetings with clear evidence of progress.

I'd like to offer WWF's perspective on what we see as the essential priorities.

We must:

-Protect critical habitats for fisheries, local tourism and for coastal protection through effective spatial management measures, and ensure that at least 30 percent of mangroves, coral reefs, mudflats, sea grass beds and all key ecosystems are conserved.

-Urgently reduce carbon emissions to reduce the assault on coral reefs, mangroves, the Arctic and Antarctica, and other vulnerable ecosystems.

-Phase out destructive fishing methods, including bottom trawls in vulnerable areas, ensure bycatch is reduced significantly, and drive real sustainability in fishing, including in the small-scale sector which warrants far more attention.

-Adopt an effective global agreement to phase out harmful fisheries subsidies.

-Agree to fast-track the negotiations of a legally binding high seas biodiversity agreement to enable integrated ocean management in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

-Adopt and implement sound principles and guidelines for public and private investments in the sustainable blue economy.

And:

-Reduce the production and use of plastics and micro-plastics, and apply recycling and waste management.

All of the above can only happen if we also support gender equality especially recognizing the role of women and youth, and authentically empower communities - particularly the least developed, and large ocean states and indigenous peoples - and those most vulnerable to the decline in ocean health. In WWF we say together possible, and I truly believe this, especially today.

WWF stands ready to work with you all to ensure we achieve these outcomes. We will work with you to reinforce your strengths and accelerate your gains.

Thank you.