

Plenary Statement (Oceana) - June 9, 2017

Speaker on behalf of Oceana: Alicia Cate, Senior Counsel

Introduction

Oceana is the largest international advocacy organization solely dedicated to protecting and restoring the world's oceans on a global scale. Our offices around the world work together using grassroots organizing, in-house scientific expertise, strategic communication, political engagement and litigation to win strategic campaigns that achieve measurable outcomes in the water to make our oceans more biodiverse and abundant. Since its establishment in 2001, Oceana has won over 100 victories for the oceans and protected more than one million square miles of ocean habitat.

Rebuilding Ocean Abundance

Oceana's primary campaign is "Save the Oceans, Feed the World." We work to improve fishery management around the world in order to restore the oceans' fish stocks with the goal of feeding at least one billion people a healthy seafood meal each day. For example, Oceana recently commissioned the most comprehensive scientific study ever made on the status of European fish stocks and their potential productivity if sustainably managed. 397 fish stocks were analyzed. That is more than double the 150 fish stocks that are monitored by the European Commission. 85% of European fish stocks are overexploited. But, it doesn't have to be this way! If fishing pressure is reduced, stocks will be restored and catches can be maximized. The potential is fantastic! If properly managed by setting quotas or catch limits based on best available science, stopping illegal and destructive fishing, and protecting the most important and valuable places in the sea, the fish will come back in large numbers. In fact, in less than 10 years, fish stocks could recover to allow a sustainable catch of almost 60% more fish! This means more fish, more jobs, and more food!

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Fishing Subsidies

Despite the depleted state of the oceans, many governments still provide subsidies to their fishing sectors. “Overfishing” subsidies drive increased and intensified fishing, such as programs for fuel, boat construction and modernization, equipment and other operating costs. Fishing subsidies are also linked to destructive fishing practices such as Illegal Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. World leaders simply must follow through on SDG14 Target 14.6 by taking action to end fishing subsidies once and for all at the upcoming WTO negotiations in Buenos Aires, Argentina this December.

Marine Protected Areas

We can save the oceans and marine life if we protect a large percentage of them as “no take” zones that are strictly enforced. The global target for marine protected areas (MPAs) set by governments under SDG14 is 10% by 2020. However, the World Conservation Congress recently agreed that 30% by 2030 is a reasonable target. Oceana has engaged in over 40 marine expeditions to document important marine habitats and has helped to protect more than one million square miles of ocean habitat. Oceana’s expeditions are effective in creating MPAs because we develop the scientific underpinnings for protection, and we then help governments deliver on their commitments, including, whenever possible, bringing in funding to help set up the MPA.

Global Fishing Watch

Oceana, Skytruth and Google launched Global Fishing Watch at the Our Oceans conference in September 2016. Global Fishing Watch delivers a powerful and unprecedented tool that can help rebuild fish stocks and protect our oceans, which are threatened by overfishing, IUU fishing and habitat destruction. This intuitive and free interactive online tool shows the apparent fishing activity of over 35,000 commercial fishing vessels operating throughout the world. Global Fishing Watch collaborates

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with governments, private industry, and scientific and international organizations to enable additional transparency and sustainability policies.

Seafood Fraud

Trace Register, the leading traceability solution provider for the global seafood industry, is working with Global Fishing Watch to enable its customers to verify that their seafood was legally and responsibly produced. Oceana is leading the way in exposing seafood fraud through extensive DNA testing and campaigning for policy changes that would result in fish being tracked from boat to plate.

Climate & Energy

Oceana is also working to prevent offshore drilling, seismic airgun blasting and to promote offshore wind energy. Oceana is determined to end our dependence on dirty fossil fuels, the leading source of carbon pollution on the planet, which is causing the oceans to become more acidic, thereby threatening the entire food web.

Conclusion

By convening world leaders, scientists, private companies and NGOs in New York this week to discuss how to implement SDG14, the UN Ocean Conference created much needed momentum for concrete actions to protect and restore our beautiful blue planet. While our oceans are indeed in trouble, Oceana is optimistic about our ability to turn things around – provided we all leave here today and follow through with the Call to Action and the hundreds of voluntary commitments that have been registered thus far to save our oceans. Oceana itself has registered three voluntary commitments and promises here and now to achieve them. Oceana looks forward to continuing its work with governments, the private sector and other NGOs to save our oceans and feed the world.