

Recommendations for addressing Ocean Noise Pollution: A Joint Statement to the Ocean Conference, United Nations, 5-9 June 2017

This statement is delivered by OceanCare, a founding member of the International Ocean Noise Coalition (IONC) – a partnership of over 150 non-governmental organisations from around the world, working to address the need for a global approach to combating human-generated (anthropogenic) ocean noise.

Signatories to this statement are grateful for the opportunity to offer the following contribution to ‘The Ocean Conference’, the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

- Ocean noise must be recognised and tackled as a serious marine pollution issue to be addressed under SDG14.1 which seeks to prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds.
- Ocean noise, generated by a variety of human activities, including military, shipping traffic, coastal and offshore construction work and the oil and gas industry among others, is a significant threat to marine ecosystems, marine animals and the future sustainability of our oceans.
- The detrimental effects of ocean noise on fish, and therefore fisheries, undermines global efforts to restore fish stocks and therefore requires the increased involvement of specialist UN agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and Regional Fisheries Management Organisations/Bodies (RFMO/Bs).
- The cross-boundary and cross-sectoral challenges to addressing ocean noise require special consideration and we welcome the development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the Conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) which we believe should incorporate measures to manage underwater noise pollution.
- We advocate that governments establish indicators and targets for ocean noise management, supported by national and regional noise registers and monitoring programmes, following the example set by the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive.
- We encourage commitment to the domestic management of ocean noise through robust, comprehensive and transparent environmental impact assessments.
- We call for recognition that the propagation of noise into protected areas and other habitat protection measures must be controlled. High risk activities (including, seismic surveys for oil and gas, extraction and military training) and the noise they generate should be prohibited from operating in, and propagating noise into, sensitive habitats.
- We urge commitments from governments towards implementing existing policy measures that contribute towards the reduction and management of underwater noise.
- In the case of the IMO’s Guidelines for the Reduction of Underwater Noise from Commercial Shipping to Address Adverse Impacts on Marine Life we urge industry to embrace these in ship design and repair, and governments to quickly turn these voluntary guidelines into legally binding measures.
- Finally, but critically, we call for ocean noise to be urgently addressed by the United Nations General Assembly, Regional Seas Conventions, relevant UN agencies and programmes, Regional Fisheries Management Organisations/Bodies, relevant multilateral environmental agreements and within national policies. We request their support towards the development of a global strategy that would seek to reverse the trend of rising ocean noise levels globally.

Signed by:



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Animal Welfare Institute, USA



Australian Marine Conservation, Australia



Cetacean Society International



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