



Press Release: UN Ocean Conference, 27<sup>th</sup> June – 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022, Lisbon, Portugal

## **The world is on track to collectively fail to preserve LIFE BELOW WATER (SDG14)**

### **OceanCare alerts states and the private sector for being on the fast track to fail meeting the targets of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14**

*Lisbon / Zurich, 23rd June 2022:* "We know what needs to be done, and that is why it is disheartening to witness the collective failure to reverse the decline in the health of our ocean" expresses Fabienne McLellan, Managing Director at the international marine conservation organisation OceanCare ahead of the United Nation Ocean Conference (UNOC). Between the 27<sup>th</sup> of June and the 1<sup>st</sup> of July, hundreds of delegates from around the world, representing governments, the private sector, academia, financial institutions, civil society and other Non-Governmental Organisations, will meet in Lisbon, Portugal, to reflect on the progress towards achieving the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Life Below Water. OceanCare will attend the high-level conference with a team of experts.

The official [conference website](#) is very frank in its reflection over the status quo: "The science is clear – the ocean is facing unprecedented threats as a result of human activities. Its health and ability to sustain life will only get worse as the world population grows and human activities increase. If we want to address some of the most defining issues of our time such as climate change, food insecurity, diseases and pandemics, diminishing biodiversity, economic inequality and even conflicts and strife, we must act now to protect the state of our ocean".

The ocean indeed faces a multitude of threats, including the continued entry of 9 million tons of plastics into the ocean every year, exploration for new hydrocarbon resources in the seabed – which involves deploying seismic airguns that blast marine wildlife with unbearable noise -, and the overfishing of fish, which includes legal, illegal and unreported activities, every year. It is estimated that a third (34%) of all fish stocks are currently overfished. Equally concerning; the ocean is warming and acidifying at an alarming pace. Under continued warming, the Arctic will be practically ice-free during summer for the first time before 2050. The rise in global average sea level combined with the melting of the great ice sheets for which humans bear the overwhelming responsibility, is documented in the recent reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Notwithstanding, a majority of decision-makers, within governments and the private sector, address the crisis with sustained narratives such as the need for science-based innovative solutions and the need for more research. "No one questions the need for innovation and more robust research, but it increasingly appears that constant references to these elements may serve as an excuse for inaction. Technology and innovation are not enough, and we can't solely depend on innovation to pull us out of the crisis that we have caused", says McLellan from OceanCare.

OceanCare has continuously urged decision-makers to take immediate action, including calling for:

- **an end to all harmful subsidies** for exploration and exploitation of fossil fuels, plastic production, and detrimental fishing practices;
- an immediate **ban on all new fossil fuel exploration and exploitation activities** and a binding phase-out plan for existing drilling operations;
- **the reduction of vessel speed**, in particular for the merchant fleet globally, to reduce GHG and noise emissions;



- measures to **restore fish stocks** in the shortest time feasible;
- to **end plastic pollution**, support and subsequently implement a robust, ambitious, effective and binding global legal instrument covering the full lifecycle of plastics, with clear reduction targets on plastic production.

"It is not yet too late to act. What is needed now is meaningful and bold action which is both measurable and enforceable. No one needs new objectives set in 2030 to be reached by 2050 when we are about to fail achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and targets we already have now", concludes McLellan. OceanCare sees this conference as a critical opportunity for world leaders to recognise that the future of humanity depends upon the future of our oceans.

**Media contacts** in Lisbon, Portugal, from 26<sup>th</sup> June to 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2022 (time difference CEST: -1h)

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#### Further information and links:

- SDG Tracker for SDG14: <https://sdg-tracker.org/oceans>
- Dashboard on SDG14: <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/map/goals/SDG14>

#### The UN 2030 Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals

Central to the UN's 2030 Agenda are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are designed to shape national development plans over the next 8 years. The Second UN Ocean Conference themed "Scaling up ocean action based on science and innovation for the implementation of Goal 14: Stocktaking, partnerships and solutions" will focus on the implementation of SDG 14 entitled "Life Below Water" with the goal to Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

#### How is the world doing on SDG14?

The most recent reporting on the Member States' progress in their pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2021 paints a worrying picture. Indeed, the [reports](#) are abundantly clear: Countries are not on track to meeting Sustainable Development Goal 14. Assessments show that for at least two targets, there is an ongoing negative long-term trend, which is even distancing us from reaching these targets by 2030: 14.1 Reduce marine pollution, and 14.4 – Sustainable fishing.

While it is already now clear that many of the targets have not been met others will likely not be reached in time. This gives rise to considerable concern as the ocean is our life-support system.

#### Side Events where OceanCare is engaged:

##### 1) Reduce Ocean Noise and Save Our Ocean – 29th June 2022, 11:30-12:30 GMT

One of the most threatening forms of pollution the ocean faces is underwater noise. Noise travels far and wide under water and its impacts may be registered far from its point of origin. Noise emissions comes as 'non- impulsive' typically a constant drone predominantly generated from shipping, and 'impulsive' generated by hydrocarbon exploration activities, as well as other industrial and military activities. Underwater noise pollution can cause irreversible damage on marine wildlife, from large whales to small krill. Reducing underwater noise pollution is simple: prevent the introduction of this pollutant into the ocean (i.e., stopping oil and gas exploration and implementing ship speed reductions), which will also produce other environmental benefits, such as the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.



OceanCare in collaboration with other NGOs and under the co-sponsorship of Germany and Switzerland, will be hosting a [side-event](#) to address underwater noise pollution. Besides addressing underwater noise the event will moreover discuss the multi-environmental benefits of noise prevention and mitigation measures from shipping and the oil & gas sector, including how a ban on new oil and gas exploration and slow steaming contributes to lower GHG emissions.

## 2) A Plastics Treaty for our Oceans and our Health - 30th June, 2:30-3:30pm GMT

Plastic pollution constitutes a planetary crisis with impacts on our oceans, health, biodiversity and the climate system. As such, it undermines the health and resilience of our life support system and, as a pervasive threat, cuts across most of the SDGs. Following the adoption of the resolution End Plastic Pollution: Towards an International Legally Binding Instrument at the 5th Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly in 2022 (UNEA-5), countries have a chance to come together and address the root causes of plastic pollution. In order to achieve the targets under SDG 14, we must address fundamental issues occurring throughout the lifecycle of plastics, as well as the interlinkages of plastic pollution with the other planetary and health crises our planet is facing.

Leading NGOs working on national and international plastics policies will facilitate a discussion, on how to address plastic pollution and its consequences. The discussion will highlight how the lifecycle of plastics relates to challenges under SDG14 and how to protect our oceans as the absence of pollution is critical for healthy oceans. It will also cover interlinkages to other SDGs including the relationship between plastics, the climate emergency and biodiversity loss, and how a vision for addressing plastics cannot ignore the reality that plastics are fundamentally carbon and chemicals – all whilst recognising the need to turn words into urgent action through action plans and reporting requirements.

### **About OceanCare**

OceanCare is a Swiss non-profit organisation. It was founded in 1989 and has a strong commitment to realistic and cooperative initiatives. The organisation works at national and international level in the areas of marine pollution, environmental changes, fisheries, whaling, sealing, captivity of marine mammals and public education.

OceanCare holds Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) and is partner of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), and the UNEP/CMS Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS), as well as UNEP/MAP. Since 2021, OceanCare is accredited observer to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the International Seabed Authority (ISA). The organisation has been an observer at the IWC since 1992. OceanCare has also been accredited as part of the Major Group 'Science & Technology' to the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), which is the governing body of UNEP and is a part of the UNEP Global Partnership on Marine Litter. [www.oceancare.org](http://www.oceancare.org)