



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

Second UN Ocean Conference: Nations should look below the surface

OceanCare's conclusions:

- **Underwater noise: Mandatory ship speed reduction measures key to ensure a level playing field for all shipping companies**
- **Plastics: Legislative approach needed to significantly reduce plastic production (SDG12) and prevent the endless flow of plastic into our ocean (SDG14)**
- **Deep Sea Mining: Encouraging moves towards a moratorium on deep sea mining**

Lisbon / Zurich, 1st July 2022: The United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC), which took place in Lisbon from Monday, 27th June to 1st July, ends today with the adoption of its key output, a high-level political declaration. There was agreement that the ocean is in a critical state of decline and under the current trajectory and business as usual, states are on the fast track to fail meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goal 14. The atmosphere was hence one of urgency but also hope.

The high-level declaration entitled 'Our ocean, our future, our responsibility' acknowledges the negative impacts of climate change, overfishing, plastic pollution and noise on the world's ocean. This Call to Action should also serve as a roadmap to achieve SDG14 and save the ocean.

"The ocean is at the brink of disaster. So having the world community come together and discuss tangible solutions to bring the ocean back on the agenda is valuable. But what is crucial now, is that those commitments actually translate into action, including new binding regulations.", says Fabienne McLellan, managing director of the international marine conservation organisation OceanCare.

OceanCare concludes the following:

Underwater Noise Pollution:

It has become evident that:

- Legal analysis of international maritime law demonstrates that a mandatory speed limit in Exclusive Economic Zones is compatible with freedom of navigation.
- Measures to reduce the speed of ships should be mandatory to ensure a level playing field for all shipping companies.
- Reducing vessel speed is the most cost-effective operational measure to significantly reduce noise pollution. It is easy and can be implemented immediately and also has other multiple positive environmental effects, including the reduction of GHG, air pollutants and risk of collisions with marine mammals.

"The shipping industry should live up to its obligation to significantly reduce the ecological footprint in support of achieving the SDGs. OceanCare believes it is absolutely necessary to legislate and impose these mandatory speed reduction measures. Experience shows that voluntary guidelines do not work. Legislation is needed to solve this problem", declares Carlos Bravo, Ocean Policy Expert at OceanCare.

"Compared to other marine pollution issues, the discussion on ocean noise in the Interactive Dialogues was limited at UNOC with only a handful mentions highlighting it. This is all the more regrettable as it is one of the few forms of pollution whose impacts can be stopped immediately as soon as we take action to remove it.", says Nadia Deckert, OceanCare Ocean Policy Expert.

Plastic Pollution:

- The issue of marine plastic pollution is clearly a priority issue for many governments and discussions around this pervasive threat dominated many side events and conference dialogues.
- The need for a shift from a linear to a more circular economy was widely acknowledged. From OceanCare's point of view we need to ensure that such a circular economy is safe from hazardous chemicals.
- There was widespread support for a global plastics treaty which will start being negotiated later this year.

"The challenges will be for such a treaty to become legally binding, to cover the full lifecycle of plastics, from extraction of fossil fuels as feedstock for plastics to waste management. It will require clear reduction targets on plastic production and the application of the polluter pays principle and the creation of a dedicated fund", says McLellan.

Deep Sea Mining:

- OceanCare welcomes the launch by Samoa, Palau and Fiji of an Alliance of Countries Against Deep Sea Mining and hopes that the Alliance will quickly grow. Tuvalu and Guam already expressed support for it. Chile had previously also called for a 15-year moratorium on deep sea mining and similar voices have been heard by the Federal States of Micronesia and Papua New Guinea.
- French President Emmanuel Macron likewise firmly took a stance against deep-sea mining in the high seas during the conference. Such move from an EU member state was long awaited by conservationists and is in line with the position already expressed by the European Commission. OceanCare welcomes this clear stance by France and hopes that this will trigger similar commitments from other states all around the world.

Protection of the High Seas:

- Attention was drawn to the importance of raising the level of ambition for a legally binding High Seas Treaty and for the negotiations to conclude in August in New York.
- For OceanCare, it is crucial that the urgency of finalisation of the negotiations in August does not weaken the level of ambition on substance.

Civil Society Participation:

- The setting of the conference was not fully conducive to exchanges of views between governments and other stakeholders. Although termed 'Interactive Dialogues', one substantive part of UNOC did not allow for meaningful in-person civil society participation which brings important expertise and perspectives to the decision-makers.

"Restricting civil society participation and limiting the opportunity to raise the voices on the floor continues to be a worrying signal and runs counter to the pillars of inclusiveness and transparency that the international system has subscribed itself to", says McLellan.

"The Second Ocean Conference needs to be viewed as part of a longer progress towards the achievement of the UN Agenda 2030. OceanCare demands that governments and other stakeholders implement all the actions that they have committed to with the urgency that is necessary", concludes Carlos Bravo, Ocean Policy Expert at OceanCare.

Media contacts in Lisbon, Portugal, from 26th June to 3rd 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>

Context:

- UNOC has brought the international ocean governance agenda back on track, after more than two years of total paralysis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, following the 1st conference held in 2017 in New York. Yesterday, French President Macron announced that the 3rd conference will be hosted by France and Costa Rica in 2025.
- Yesterday, OceanCare took the stage on behalf of a number of coalitions and organisations who all share concern about the urgent need to address ocean noise and outline our recommendations to the conference. Statement available upon request.

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.

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