



**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF LEGAL AFFAIRS**

World Oceans Day

IOC-UNESCO event on Oceans and Climate

**Round Table 3: The Ocean as Part of the Solution? - Aspects of
Governance - Mobilizing all sectors**

UN-Oceans statement

Delivered

by

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Thank you, Mister Facilitator, for the opportunity to deliver this statement on behalf of the members of UN-Oceans, in my capacity as UN-Oceans Focal Point.

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great pleasure to address you today to celebrate World Ocean Day 2015. In particular, I wish to thank the United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture and its Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission for organizing this important event to mark World Ocean Day and for focusing our attention on the very timely issue of oceans and climate change.

In my statement, I will present some of the major activities related to oceans, climate change and ocean acidification undertaken by UN-Oceans members. These activities aim to assist States to better understand these issues and to adapt to the impacts of climate change on the oceans and ocean acidification, as well as to achieve mitigation goals in the context of ocean activities.

Firstly, allow me to recall that UN-Oceans is the inter-agency coordination and cooperation mechanism on oceans and coastal issues within the United Nations system. It has currently twenty-two participating organizations.

I also wish to recall that in its annual resolutions on oceans and the law of the sea, the United Nations General Assembly has continued to emphasize the urgency of addressing the current and projected effects of climate change and ocean acidification on the marine environment and recommended a number of actions, including raising awareness of the adverse impacts of climate change.

The General Assembly has further encouraged States to enhance scientific activity and support marine scientific research to better understand the impacts of climate change on oceans and seas as well as ocean acidification, and develop ways and means of adaptation. It has further called for enhanced international cooperation and capacity-building.

The Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change highlighted the essential role of the oceans in absorbing heat from the warming of the planet and the associated impacts, including sea-level rise, coastal erosion, changing currents, marine species redistribution and ecosystem degradation.

It also underlined the role of the oceans in the carbon cycle and the threats associated with the resulting ocean acidification.

Cognizant of the above challenges, members of UN-Oceans carry out a variety of activities aimed at increasing scientific understanding and international cooperation in relation to the impacts of climate change on oceans and ocean acidification.

The Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations supports as secretariat the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socio-economic Aspects. The first global integrated assessment of the marine environment under the Process prepared by experts will be considered by the General Assembly this year. This Assessment will provide a baseline on the state of the marine environment, including socioeconomic aspects, in order to enhance the scientific basis for policymaking. It draws on existing assessments, including the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture coordinates observation

networks, such as the Global Sea Level Observing System and the Global Ocean Observing System. It is also involved in the International Ocean Carbon Coordination Project, as well as in the World Climate Research Programme, coordinated by the World Meteorological Organization.

The World Meteorological Organization coordinates other climate and ocean observation networks, for example the Global Climate Observing System; and undertakes research on atmosphere-ocean-land-ice interactions, with particular regard to the climate system.

With regard to ocean acidification, the International Atomic Energy Agency launched the Ocean Acidification International Coordination Centre in 2012, to advance science, build national capacity and to communicate information on the impacts of ocean acidification and the contribution of the oceans to mitigating climate change. In addition, the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations are undertaking a global assessment of the implications of ocean acidification on fisheries and aquaculture.

The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity prepared, with expert support, a systematic review document on the impacts of ocean acidification on marine biodiversity and ecosystem functions.

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UN-Oceans members are also involved in a number activities aimed at assisting and building the capacity of States to adapt to the impacts of climate change on the oceans and ocean acidification, as well as to achieve mitigation goals in the context of ocean activities.

For example, the World Meteorological Organization, through its Members, provides key operational warnings of marine storms, including tropical cyclones.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations is assisting States to increase the knowledge base on climate change implications for fisheries and aquaculture, and adaptation and mitigation options relevant to the sector, including through the Global Partnership on Climate, Fisheries and Aquaculture (PaCFA).

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development has been working on the impacts and adaptation needs of seaports and other coastal transport infrastructure.

With financial support from the Global Environment Facility, the United Nations Development Programme and the International Maritime Organization are cooperating in a global effort to transition the shipping industry towards a lower carbon future, through the project entitled "Transforming the global maritime transport industry towards a low carbon future through improved energy efficiency" (GloMEEP).

The International Maritime Organization has also supported the work of States on the regulation of carbon capture and sequestration in sub-sea geological formations and marine geoengineering activities.

The United Nations Environment Programme and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture, in collaboration with other UN-Oceans members and partners, are developing ecosystem-based solutions to mitigate and adapt to impacts of climate change, including by enhancing sequestration by and reducing emissions of "blue carbon" from carbon-rich coastal ecosystems.

These are, but a few, of the relevant activities that UN-Oceans members are undertaking to promote better knowledge of the oceans and to mitigate the causes and adapt to the impacts of climate change and ocean acidification. Other relevant activities, including the Sustainable Ocean Initiative of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, aim at increasing the resilience of marine and coastal ecosystems to the effects of climate change and ocean acidification. Also to be noted are those activities aimed at addressing wider impacts of climate change, including the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on a protection agenda for cross-border displacement in the context of climate change related disasters.

In conclusion, UN-Oceans members consider that climate change, including its impacts on oceans, is one of the great challenges facing our world today and stand ready to further support international efforts to increase our understanding of the ocean/atmosphere interface, the impacts of climate change on the oceans as well as of ocean acidification, including with a view to further assisting States in the development and implementation of adaptation and mitigation efforts.