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Opening Remarks, The Oceans Day at COP 21 Paris  
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Rio Pavilion

## **Why are we here?**

On behalf of the 45 co-sponsoring organizations for Oceans Day, I welcome you all to Oceans Day at COP 21 Paris at this critical time for oceans and climate.

Since 2001, the Global Ocean Forum has been working with partners around the world to advance the global oceans agenda in the major international fora related to oceans, including the Rio+20 process, the sustainable development goal process, the climate negotiations, the process of management of areas beyond national jurisdictions, among others.

This is the 4th Oceans Day at a Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. We began this work in Copenhagen in 2009, followed up with Cancun and Durban.

Since Copenhagen, we have seen:

--**irrefutable scientific evidence** on the trajectory of climate change and its impacts, especially for the 70% of the world that is oceans and the 50 percent of the world's population that lives in coastal areas and islands in 183 countries around the world who are at the front line of climate change

--that the impacts **are already happening now**, not in some hypothetical future

--**that urgent action is needed now**, and not tomorrow.

That is why we are gathered here today: **to mobilize our common knowledge, policy, and political resources to address the oceans and climate issues.**

## **What do we want from COP 21?**

An ambitious legally binding agreement with stringent reductions in greenhouse gas emissions

This is the **best thing** for the ocean and for coastal and island peoples to avoid disastrous consequences

We want **urgent attention on and recognition of the central role of the oceans in regulating climate**, and the fact that the ocean will not be able to perform these functions in the future if global warming continues unabated.

We want **urgent attention and targeted financing to address climate change impacts in coastal communities and island states**—for **adaptation** programs/ for **capacity development**/ for **mitigation efforts** to preserve coastal and ocean ecosystems/ for addressing the problems of **climate-induced population displacement** with equity and justice

To assist in this process, with experts from the collaborating organizations, we have developed a **draft policy brief and recommendations** for your consideration at the Oceans Day and beyond. As you will hear in several stage-setting papers, for each of the issues, we have examined:

--the current status of the issue

--the current state of play of the issue within the UNFCCC

--the opportunities and pathways that may be available within the UNFCCC, and outside the UNFCCC process, to advance the issue in the next five years

--financial considerations regarding each issue.

Our intent is to work together, with all of you, to build on this initial work and to **develop a strategic action plan on oceans and climate for the next five years** to be carried out through all of us, in an “alliance of the willing.”

**What are the prospects for success for advancing the oceans and climate agenda in the next stage?**

Some ingredients for success are already present:

--*Broad mobilization* of groups and organizations from governments, civil society, academia, private sector—more than 100 entities mobilized on this issue

--*Intellectual/expert engagement* in the analysis and identification of needed actions—what we have started but which must grow with the engagement of all willing individuals, groups, governments, international organizations

--*Political support from high level leaders around the world*, which is so much in evidence today.

As President Hollande said, the future of life is at stake in this COP, we are fighting for our lives. We have important commitments from countries around the world, we have great

moral leadership in the host country, France, we have thousands of bottom up initiatives.  
**We have to succeed.**

We are all connected to and fully dependent on the future of our oceans, and therefore I hope we all leave Paris determined more than ever to implement real, substantive change by galvanizing wide public awareness and support for our ocean leaders, and by building an effective alliance on oceans and climate. Just as important, I hope that the model of our ocean leaders that we will hear from today, will inspire similar ocean leadership by all of us in whatever roles we play, including in our individual actions every day.

Thank you.

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