

Oceans and Coasts at Rio+10

Toward the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg

UNESCO, Paris. December 3- 7, 2001

Concluding Statement by Conference Co-Chairs

The goals of next year's World Summit on Sustainable Development can only be met if effective action to protect ocean and coastal areas is implemented—and soon. This conclusion was reached at a meeting held in UNESCO headquarters, Paris, France of over 400 coastal and ocean experts assembled for *The Global Conference on Oceans and Coasts at Rio+10: Toward the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg*.

"Sustainable development and poverty reduction cannot be achieved without healthy oceans and coasts," said the meeting's Co-Chairs, Dr. Patricio Bernal, Executive Secretary of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO, and Dr. Biliiana Cicin-Sain, Director of the Center for the Study of Marine Policy of the University of Delaware (USA). "The key question is how to sustain the natural resource base and the integrity of coastal and ocean ecosystem services, while continuing to expand economically. We strongly recommend that the United Nations put sustainable development of oceans—comprising 70% of the Earth's surface—as a central feature of the World Summit."

The United Nations will convene heads of state for the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa in September 2002, the tenth anniversary of the 1992 Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro.

"We have great reason for concern about the health of our oceans and coastal areas. Participants at the Conference generally agreed that we are in a critical situation of declining trends that requires immediate action by nations and governing bodies worldwide." This sense of urgency and priority was corroborated in ministerial statements, as well as by non-governmental, inter-governmental experts, scientists, commercial fishing, and industrial representatives attending the meeting. "It is significant that this broad array of ocean and coastal experts agrees with this statement," said Bernal and Cicin-Sain.

The highlights of the Conference Co-Chairs' report:

1. Poverty reduction during the coming decade requires more access to sustainable economic livelihoods and wealth derived from the ocean, and development of safer, healthy coastal communities

The UN Millennium Declaration notes the need to halve, by 2015, the proportion of very poor people in the world, and to reduce the scourge of diseases like malaria and water-borne infections (250 million clinical cases of gastroenteritis and upper respiratory diseases are caused annually by bathing in contaminated sea water). This is a key concern, and perhaps the most difficult challenge facing our use of the oceans.

Meeting these needs requires new commitment to making the benefits of trade and globalization available to coastal communities, participatory management of resources, programs specifically targeted to reducing vulnerability of coastal people and infrastructure, and commitments to full participation of women and youth in decision-making and activities related to locally-based coastal and ocean decisions.

2. Full implementation and effective compliance with international agreements is needed

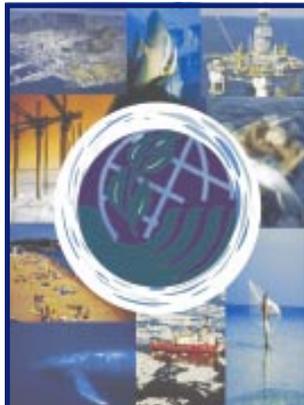
The significant number of international agreements that have come into effect since 1992 now need to be properly implemented and enforced, and their implications for national level action more fully addressed. There is an urgent need for better cooperation and coordination among regional and international bodies

governing oceans and fisheries to ensure harmonized and efficient implementation. For example, the implementation of the fishing instruments concluded in recent years (UN Straddling Fish Stocks Agreement, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing, and the FAO Compliance Agreement) is an essential element in putting fisheries on a sustainable development path that could address existing overcapacity and subsidized fishing fleets.

3. Capacity building for good governance of coastal and ocean use is necessary

Scientific advances and technology development will continue to open untapped potential for use of coastal, offshore and Exclusive Economic Zones, and deep ocean areas. Yet our understanding of the role and vulnerability of these resources and habitats is still limited. And all countries, rich and poor, lack the needed capacity to manage even the existing level of development in a well-integrated way.

Thus the capacity of local and national governments to apply effective institutional and legal frameworks for integrated coastal and ocean management must be strengthened. This will enable them to pursue opportunities for economic development in the coasts and oceans while protecting their ecological integrity and biodiversity. It will require, among other things, raising public awareness of coastal and ocean



issues, the re-targeting of financial assistance to take into account lessons learned from experience, and building of the capacity of the educational institutions of coastal nations. Capacity building is required within governments, local communities, and NGOs, as well as to enable effective involvement of the private sector.

4. The health of the oceans and coasts is directly linked to the proper management of river basins, including freshwater flows to the marine environment

Eighty percent of marine pollution comes from land-based sources. In the developing world, more than 90% of sewage and 70% of industrial wastes are dumped untreated into surface waters where they pollute water supplies and coastal waters. Ecosystem approaches that link management of river basins to marine ecosystems, such as the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities, must be effectively implemented. This is especially important in the context of the coastal megacities (70% of cities with over 8 million people are coastal), such as Lagos, Nigeria—where 65% of the estimated 13.4 million population live in poverty.

5. Protecting coastal and marine areas and biodiversity takes an ecosystem approach

The very significant shift from a sectoral to an ecosystem-based approach that recognizes precaution and linkages among activities is an important achievement of the past decade. The Convention on Biological Diversity provides an international framework for an ecosystem-based approach that will depend upon protection of marine habitats at regional and national levels. A global representative system of marine protected areas is now needed as one essential component for ecosystem understanding, management and biodiversity protection.

6. Strengthening science-based monitoring and assessment of the oceans is essential for managing the long-term sustainability of marine ecosystems

Effective international coordination needs to be developed to support an integrated assessment of the status of oceans and coasts, and their use. A periodic, comprehensive global report on the State of Oceans and Development that builds upon existing regional and sectoral efforts is needed. It could be complemented by similar reports at the national level. This report should anticipate and plan for emerging ocean and coastal issues, such as offshore aquaculture and bioprospecting of marine genetic resources.

7. The special problems and issues of Small Island Developing States must be addressed

Small island developing states have special problems and opportunities related to the oceans which need to be recognized and addressed. These nations, small in land area, typically have control and stewardship responsibilities over huge Exclusive Economic Zones. As Ambassador Tuiloma Neroni Slade, Chair of the Alliance of Small Island Developing

States, put it, “Small island states are a special case since they are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, especially sea level rise. We are responsible for the stewardship of our islands and vast areas of the oceans, containing high biological diversity, the most extensive coral reef systems in the world, and significant seabed minerals. We have a critical role to play in the future of the oceans.”

Fishing remains the most widespread economic activity in the ocean. “The future integrity of our coastal communities and of the world’s food security is directly linked to sustaining our fisheries and their related ecosystems. The 400 million fishing men and women of the world are a testimony to one of the richest heritages of mankind. Fishing brings us one of the last sources of wild food—let us not take it for granted,” said Pietro Parravano, World Fisheries Forum of Fish Workers and Fish Harvesters, and a participant at the Conference.

A substantial body of scientific evidence supports the urgent call by the conference to place coastal and ocean issues squarely on the World Summit’s agenda. More than half of the world’s population currently lives within 100 km of the coast, and by 2025 it is estimated that 75% of the world’s population, or 6.3 billion people, will live in the coastal zone, concentrated in coastal megacities and many living in poverty on less than two dollars a day. FAO says that, in the last 40 years, the demand for fish has been growing at twice the rate of population growth. Over 500 million people depend on coral reefs for food and income, yet 70% of reefs worldwide are threatened. Eighty-eight out of 126 species of marine mammals are threatened, and several are extinct or close to extinction.

“It is essential that we link economic development, social welfare and resource conservation in order to achieve sustainability. Governments worldwide must realize that resource conservation and protection must be an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation,” said Bernal and Cicin-Sain.

The Paris discussions did report some good news about the decade since the Rio Earth Summit: significant progress has been made in laying the groundwork toward sustainable development of the oceans—a new cluster of some eight global agreements provide the direction for good governance of coastal and ocean use; many countries, both developing and developed, have experimented with various approaches to ocean and coastal management; significant funding, by both national and international donors has taken place; and a significant body of knowledge and practical experience on ocean and coastal management has been accumulated.

Ocean resources and environmental conditions have continued to decline, however, and, unless oceans and coasts are given high priority by the world’s governments, “under present trends and circumstances, the outlook for our oceans and coasts in the year 2020 leaves little room for optimism. It is obvious that action is required now to correct our present course,” said Bernal and Cicin-Sain. “As the world’s population continues to grow and if current development and social trends continue, there will be even greater pressures on our coastal resources. We have an alternative vision for the future – one of healthy and productive seas, clean coastal waters, and prosperous coastal communities. We have an obligation at the World Summit to look at the root causes of many of the world’s economic and social crises, and nearly all of these are affected by the way we care for our oceans and coastal areas.”

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Conference reports (Co-Chairs Summary of the Conference, Ministerial Perspectives Presented at the Conference, and Working Group Reports) will be posted at the conference’s website <http://www.udel.edu/CMS/csmpr/rio+10>.

A detailed summary of the conference, prepared by the Earth Negotiations Bulletin, is available at <http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/sd/ocrio+10/>