



# Global Ocean Forum World Oceans Day Message June 8, 2011

As we celebrate World Oceans Day today on June 8, 2011, I would like to call on ocean leaders from governments, international agencies, non-governmental organizations, scientific institutions, and the private sector to mobilize: We must seize the opportunity to achieve a significant ocean outcome at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) at Rio de Janeiro one year from now, on June 4-6, 2012. The new vision embodied in the 1992 Earth Summit (UN Conference on Environment and Development) represented a major paradigm shift that changed the world and many of us around the world.

Twenty years later, we must take advantage of Rio+20 as an opportunity to assess where we began and what we have achieved, and to craft the way to a new future: A future where we can all live and prosper in a low-carbon global economy in health and harmony with nature. Today the Global Ocean Forum launches "Rio+20 Friends of the Ocean" for the benefit of the planet and of half of the world's peoples living in coastal areas in 183 countries, including 44 small island developing States. The purpose of "Rio+20 Friends of the Ocean" is to support governments and others who would like to achieve a significant ocean outcome at Rio+20. Individuals and organizations interested in participating are kindly invited to contact the Global Ocean Forum Program Coordinator, Dr. Miriam Balgos, at [miriambalgos@globaloceans.org](mailto:miriambalgos@globaloceans.org)

The Global Ocean Forum will be preparing assessments on "How well are we doing" in fulfilling the international commitments made at the Earth Summit in 1992 and at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. We will use these assessments to identify priority actions that now need to be taken (please see the Draft Plan for Rio+20 Assessments, available at: <http://www.globaloceans.org/sites/udel.edu.globaloceans/files/Rio20assessments-DRAFT.pdf>, and the Table of Action Items from Agenda 21/JPOI, available at: <http://www.globaloceans.org/sites/udel.edu.globaloceans/files/Table-Rio20-1992-2002-DRAFT.pdf> ). Cooperation from all sectors and countries is kindly invited in this endeavor (please contact Dr. Balgos as above).

There will be many challenges to sort out on the road to Rio+20. Given the space limits of this message, I address one area where we have had relative success- integrated ocean and coastal governance--and another area where we are facing very difficult challenges- oceans and climate change.

## **Integrated Governance**

The genius of the 1992 Chapter 17 of Agenda 21 (the oceans chapter) was the realization that we can no longer manage the oceans as we had traditionally, sector-by-sector, use-by-use. Instead we must adopt, as Agenda 21 put it, approaches that are "integrated in content, and precautionary and anticipatory in ambit."

In fact, since 1992, we have successfully built the infrastructure for integrated ecosystem-based governance. Like with a house, we have built the foundations and the frame, and now we have to build operating systems and expand the scope.

Information on how well we are doing is, unfortunately, more anecdotal than systematic and empirical, partly because no international agency has clear responsibility for monitoring this important cross-cutting area.

Nevertheless we do know:

--How to do Ecosystem Based Management, and Integrated Ocean Coastal Management (EBM/ICM), which are closely interrelated.

--There have been many new applications of EBM/ICM in the last decade, including through marine spatial planning, expanding efforts initially focused on coastal zones to the 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zones, and to adjoining regional areas:

- Some leading examples under national jurisdiction are in France, the US, UK, Canada, Vietnam, Japan, Australia, Brazil, China, Germany, Jamaica, the Russian Federation, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, India, Mexico, and the Philippines;
- In regional areas-especially in the 16 Large Marine Ecosystem Programmes the Global Environment Facility has supported (involving 110 nations around the world), and in the 18 Regional Seas Programmes;
- In the European Union, with its pioneering work on the European Integrated Maritime Policy;
- In East Asia, with the pioneering work done by the Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA).

Given the nature of the added challenges that ocean and coastal areas and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) face as a result of climate change, it is now imperative that we scale up our EBM/ICM efforts and significantly enhance collective investments.

A major challenge will be how to extend the practice of integrated governance to the 64% of the ocean that lies beyond national jurisdiction. Management of *marine areas beyond national jurisdiction* is sectorally-based and fragmented, making it very difficult to address inter-connected issues such as fishing, extraction of genetic resources, maritime transportation, pollution, offshore oil and gas development, marine scientific research, climate change, carbon sequestration and storage.

There are significant differences of opinion among developed and developing countries, industries, and environmental interests, on what needs to be done to improve governance of these important ocean areas. A major challenge to progress in this area will be to find areas of commonality and possible avenues of agreement among nations and interests. The Rio+20 process can play an important role in this regard.

### **Climate Change and Oceans**

There is now no doubt that climate change is the defining issue of our time, and the global ocean plays a central role in climate.

Oceans generate oxygen, absorb carbon dioxide and regulate climate and temperature. Just as you cannot do without a healthy heart and lungs, the world cannot do without a healthy ocean.

Coastal populations in 183 coastal countries and island states are already beginning to experience disproportionate impacts from: ocean warming, sea level rise, extreme weather events, and ocean acidification.

But, strangely, oceans and coasts have not figured on the current agenda of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) until very recently. Indeed, the UNFCCC negotiators have tended to look at ocean and coastal concerns as a "sectoral nuisance."

The global oceans community is promoting the development of a comprehensive program on oceans and coasts, both inside and outside the UNFCCC, which emphasizes:

- Adoption of the most stringent reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, within a short time frame;
- The positive contributions that oceans offer in the mitigation of global warming, such as: Using natural carbon sinks in coastal areas, developing ocean-based renewable energy, reducing air pollution from ships and carbon capture and storage.

A comprehensive oceans/climate program must have a well-funded adaptation component, including capacity building and public education, to respond to the needs of coastal countries at the frontline of climate change. A minimum of half of the adaptation funds should be devoted to coastal and island communities, home to one-half of the world population.

Adaptation efforts must encourage ecosystem-based methods to increase the resilience of marine and coastal ecosystems; must address the human tragedy of possible displacement of millions of coastal and island peoples; and must be implemented through existing and experienced integrated coastal and ocean management institutions.

### **Developing a New Vision for Rio+20**

Rio+20 is our opportunity to make a leap forward.

What is the new vision for the next phase? Two major themes are currently emphasized in the Rio+20 process:

- Green economy (for ocean and coastal countries and peoples, a "blue economy")
- Improved international environmental governance, in the context of the institutional framework for sustainable development

Looking ahead to Rio+20, this new paradigm is still evolving. While the Earth Summit heralded with the Brundtland Report, *Our Common Future*, a paradigm shift that pointed the way to a sustainable development future, there is not yet, in my view, a clear vision for Rio+20.

The "green economy" and the "blue economy" are still rather hazy concepts and a roadmap of how to achieve them is not clear. On the subject of International environmental governance, it appears that so far this is being addressed in a very incremental way-with minor tinkering of the existing system rather than a fundamental shift.

My own view is that we are in a new era in which climate change effects inexorably usher a situation of higher risk and possible tipping points. Changes in ocean chemistry, temperatures and currents, effects on coastal communities, and widespread displacement of coastal communities all pose prominent risks of disaster. We are in a "struggle for survival." At the same time, as we chart the way to the new low-carbon economy and society, great opportunities for ambitious innovation are also prominent on the horizon.

The global oceans community needs to engage in active and spirited discussion on what the ocean outcomes at Rio+20 should be. Among the many topics that need to be discussed:

- Scaling up the practice of integrated oceans governance to all countries and regions around the world, including in areas beyond national jurisdiction
- Providing sufficient financing for developing countries and SIDS to cope with the effects of climate change
- Providing adequate financing to support the capacity development and public education that is so much needed for integrated oceans governance
- Instituting integrated oceans governance in the United Nations
- Bringing the actions of the global negotiating fora related to oceans (the Law of the Sea processes, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity, etc.) into coherence.
- Including oceans in the UNFCCC outcomes.

### **A Sense of Urgency**

Those of us wishing to help the governments involved in the Rio+20 process to move the agenda forward must have the courage to keep the visions alive. And we must have the confidence that our actions are likely to matter. So we must exercise leadership.

Especially for the youth, who are the target of the World Oceans Day this year, I want to emphasize the importance of leadership and of exercising discretion using whatever resources you may have at your disposal. Each of us can exercise discretion and leadership, no matter what sector or job we are in. Our professional and our personal actions can make a big difference.

As we join together for Rio+20, we must conduct our work with a great sense of urgency. A changing climate and continuing loss of biodiversity, represent for land, water, and oceans a powerfully negative combination that threatens our human well-being and planetary survival. The need to create and act upon a new vision of a low-carbon economy and a new "blue society" where people act as stewards of our oceans and coasts, is a compelling imperative. The time to act is now, not tomorrow.

Happy World Oceans Day 2011!

Dr. Biliانا Cicin-Sain