



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL ON OCEANS AND SEAS IS BECOMING A REALITY

Dear Global Ocean Forum colleagues:

Good News!

We are pleased to report that a sustainable development goal (SDG) on Oceans and Seas is in sight. By the last meeting of the UN Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG 12) on 16-20 June 2014, 79 countries had expressed their support for a SDG on oceans and seas. Out of those 79 countries, 37 are members of the OWG (comprising 53% of the OWG). The number of countries in support of a SDG on Oceans and Seas has substantially increased over the past year to now include the following countries:

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|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Angola | Germany (<i>OWG Member</i>) | Monaco |
| Antigua and Barbuda | Ghana (<i>OWG Member</i>) | Montenegro (<i>OWG Member</i>) |
| Australia (<i>OWG Member</i>) | Grenada | Montserrat |
| Bahamas (<i>OWG Member</i>) | Greece | Mozambique |
| Barbados (<i>OWG Member</i>) | Guyana (<i>OWG Member</i>) | Namibia |
| Belgium | Guinea Bissau | Nauru (<i>OWG Member</i>) |
| Belize | Haiti (<i>OWG Member</i>) | Netherlands (<i>OWG Member</i>) |
| Botswana | Indonesia (<i>OWG Member</i>) | New Zealand |
| Canada (<i>OWG Member</i>) | Ireland (<i>OWG Member</i>) | Niue |
| Cabo Verde | Israel (<i>OWG Member</i>) | Norway (<i>OWG Member</i>) |
| Comoros | Italy (<i>OWG Member</i>) | Palau (<i>OWG Member</i>) |
| Cook Islands | Jamaica | Papua New Guinea (<i>OWG Member</i>) |
| Croatia (<i>OWG Member</i>) | Japan (<i>OWG Member</i>) | Poland (<i>OWG Member</i>) |
| Cuba | Kazakhstan (<i>OWG Member</i>) | Portugal |
| Cyprus (<i>OWG Member</i>) | Kiribati | Romania (<i>OWG Member</i>) |
| Czech Republic | Malawi | Samoa |
| Denmark (<i>OWG Member</i>) | Maldives | Sao Tome and Principe |
| Dominica | Marshall Islands | Saudi Arabia (<i>OWG Member</i>) |
| Dominican Republic | Mauritius | |
| Federated States of Micronesia | | |
| Fiji | | |
| France (<i>OWG Member</i>) | | |

Seychelles	Suriname	Tuvalu
Singapore (<i>OWG Member</i>)	Swaziland	United Arab Emirates (<i>OWG Member</i>)
Slovenia (<i>OWG Member</i>)	Switzerland (<i>OWG Member</i>)	United States of America (<i>OWG Member</i>)
Solomon Islands	Timor Leste	Vanuatu
Spain (<i>OWG Member</i>)	Tonga	Zambia (<i>OWG Member</i>)
St. Kitts and Nevis	Trinidad and Tobago (<i>OWG Member</i>)	Zimbabwe (<i>OWG Member</i>)
St. Lucia	Turkey (<i>OWG Member</i>)	
St. Vincent and the Grenadines		

The inclusion of oceans and seas in the post-2015 development agenda has greatly evolved over the last several years. From only briefly mentioned at the beginning of the Rio+20 process, oceans and seas are now being addressed in a stand-alone SDG on Oceans and Seas and are thus likely to feature prominently in the post-2015 development agenda (see Background and Evolution of the Oceans and Seas SDG section below).

Action items

The UN Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals will be meeting, for its last session, next week on 14-18 July 2014, to deliberate on the final set of Sustainable Development Goals, and associated targets and means of implementation. For your information, the SDG document that will be considered may be found [here](#). A GOF paper documenting member state perspectives in the OWG negotiations to date may be found [here](#). The outcome of the work of the OWG will then be addressed by the 69th UN General Assembly in September 2014.

We kindly invite you to: 1) express appreciation to all the Member States that are supporting the SDG on oceans and seas, and 2) to encourage all other Member States to support the SDG on oceans and seas. Oceans and seas represent a universal agenda, and are essential to global and national sustainable development. The oceans are the most prominent feature on the planet, covering nearly 3/4 of the Earth, and play a critical role in major global processes. Regulating the water, nitrogen, and carbon cycles, the oceans provide ecosystem services that support life on Earth. People around the world depend on the oceans and seas as a means for livelihoods, food security, global trade and telecommunications, energy production, and recreation and spiritual renewal. Caring about the well-being of the oceans and of coastal and island communities and exercising ocean stewardship is thus a global imperative.

The Global Ocean Forum will be holding a “Friends of the Sustainable Development Goal on Oceans and Seas” meeting on Tuesday, July 15, at 6:15 PM in Room S-1523FC, UN Secretariat Building in New York, an informal meeting among Member States and members of civil society to discuss final input and revisions to the stand-alone goal on Oceans and Seas and accompanying targets (listed below). All are welcome. If you are unable to come, we invite you to send us your input and suggested revisions by Monday, July 14 (to Alexis Martin, atmartin@udel.edu).

Proposed Goal 14. Conserve and promote sustainable use oceans, seas and marine resources (Zero Draft rev. 1 “Introduction and Proposed Goals and Targets on Sustainable Development for the Post 2015 Development Agenda”)

14.1 by 2030, prevent and control, and reduce by x% globally, marine pollution of all kinds, particularly from land-based activities

14.2 by 2020, sustainably manage, restore and protect marine ecosystems from destruction, including by strengthening their resilience, and address ocean acidification and its impacts

14.3 by 2020, effectively regulate harvesting, end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and destructive fishing practices, to restore by 2030 fish stocks at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield

14.4 by 2020, conserve at least 10% of coastal and marine areas, including through establishing effectively managed marine protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, consistent with international law and based on best available scientific information

14.5 by 2020, eliminate fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, and refrain from introducing new such subsidies, taking into account the importance of this sector to developing countries, notably least developed countries and SIDS

Means of Implementation

14.a increase scientific knowledge, and transfer of marine technology, and develop research infrastructure and capacities to enhance the contribution of marine biodiversity to the development of developing countries, in particular SIDS

14.b by 2030 increase the economic benefits to SIDS and LDCs from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture, tourism and provide equitable access of small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets

14.c enforce international law on territorial waters to stop illegal fishing and exploitation of marine resources in territorial waters, particularly of developing countries

Background and Evolution of the SDG Goal on Oceans and Seas

As we have reported in earlier issues of Global Ocean Forum News, at the beginning of the Rio+20 process, there was little mention of oceans; but by November 2011, 67% of nations and 100% of all political groupings referred to oceans in submissions to the Rio+20 “zero draft.” In the Rio+20 outcome document, *The Future We Want*, oceans are treated in 20 paragraphs, receiving central attention by countries. A major accomplishment of the Rio+20 process was that oceans and their role in planetary survival and human well-being are now firmly established on the global agenda. The Global Ocean Forum (GOF) was very involved in working with Member States and civil society organizations to help catalyze the oceans agenda in the Rio+20 process throughout the preparations and conduct of Rio+20. Inter alia, the GOF developed [analyses](#) on the progress made on global ocean commitments emanating from the 1992 UNCED and 2002 WSSD, held policy dialogues with Member States to discuss new global commitments on oceans, including meetings and blogs of the Friends of the Oceans at Rio+20 (for GOF activities, please [click here](#)), and organized the [Oceans Day at Rio+20](#) to discuss challenges in the implementation of Rio+20 outcomes.

However, after the Rio+20 summit, a complex set of processes of Rio+20 implementation unfolded. Many of the key Rio+20 outcomes were turned over to the UNGA to determine further needs or take further action, in

several parallel negotiation processes. The Rio+20 Conference mandated the establishment of a UN Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG), tasked with developing a set of sustainable development goals (SDGs) for the 69th Session of the UNGA in September 2014. The program of work was focused on discussions of various issues related to SDGs, including conceptualization, what specific issue areas should be included, specific targets for each goal, and means of implementation.

Initially, stakeholders were pessimistic about an SDG on Oceans and Seas. In the several brainstorming meetings and UN side events between late 2012 and early 2013, there were very few that argued that an SDG on Oceans and Seas was essential to ensure the ocean's role in planetary survival, and for national and global economic and social well-being. GOF held a brainstorming session in November 2012 to discuss how to act upon the opportunities to promote the new oceans agenda in the post-Rio+20 process and advocated for an oceans SDG (for more, please see the GOF [April 2013](#) Newsletter).

The tide of opinion started to turn during the summer of 2013, with specific proposals on an SDG on Oceans and Seas being distributed and meetings held to discuss the importance of oceans in sustainable development. In particular, the Mission of Palau to the United Nations organized a key meeting that brought together Member States from all regions of the world, with the leadership of the Pacific Island Developing States (PSIDS) and Timor Leste, on how to best incorporate oceans into the ongoing negotiations on SDGs. During the meeting, Ambassador Stuart Beck of Palau discussed the proposal for a SDG on Oceans and Seas developed by the Government of Palau, focusing on ensuring the health of the marine environment and sustainable fisheries. Ambassador Gary Quinlan, Permanent Representative of Australia to the UN, thanked Palau for its leadership. As co-chair of the States' Friends of the Ocean at the Rio+20 Conference (a political coalition mobilized to support oceans in the Rio+20 Conference), Australia was in a key position to mobilize support for oceans in the SDG process. Ambassador Robert Aisi (Papua New Guinea), speaking on behalf of PSIDS, emphasized the need to building coalitions both within and outside the UN to foster support for oceans in the SDG process, and that advocacy for an Oceans SDG should target Member States, as they are the key actors in achieving the goal. **Ambassador Isabelle Picco (Monaco) stressed that an oceans SDG must centrally incorporate social and economic dimensions and have people at its core.** Many other governments, including high-level representatives from Colombia, Costa Rica, New Zealand, Singapore, Dominican Republic, and Samoa expressed strong support for the building of a coalition for oceans in the SDG process. At the end of the meeting, Bilitiana Cicin-Sain, GOF, expressed deep appreciation for the catalytic meeting, marking the beginning of a broad alliance of nations from all regions of the world to actively pursue an SDG on oceans.

Building on the momentum of increasing support for an oceans SDG, GOF co-organized two UN side events in June and August 2013 to discuss various proposals for integrating oceans in the SDGs and for exploring opportunities to ensure that oceans would be adequately addressed in the SDGs (for more information on the meetings held by Palau and PSIDS and by GOF, please see the GOF [July 2013](#) and [December 2013](#) Newsletters).

A defining moment for a SDG on Oceans and Seas came at the 8th meeting of the OWG in February 2014, where oceans issues were centrally addressed. Previously, the perception of many of the OWG members seemed to be that oceans were mainly an environmental issue, and did not have strong social and economic dimensions. Therefore, many of the interventions made during the meeting, including a presentation made by President Tommy Remengesau, Jr. of Palau, were geared towards demonstrating the importance of oceans for all three pillars of sustainable development. During the meeting, GOF presented a [proposal for a SDG on Oceans and Seas](#) that provided the justification of the centrality of oceans and seas to sustainable development, as well as providing a preliminary list of potential targets.

The leadership of the PSIDS and Timor-Leste countries, led by Papua New Guinea, was pivotal during this time. The PSIDS and Timor Leste, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, and Global

Ocean Forum organized a Joint [Side Event](#) on *Towards a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on Oceans and Seas: Healthy, Productive and Resilient Oceans and Seas- Prosperous and Resilient Peoples and Communities* at the 8th Session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals on 3 February 2014. Key speakers, including Ambassador Robert Aisi (Papua New Guinea), Ambassador Makurita Baaro (Kiribati), Ambassador Isabelle Picco (Monaco), Wendy-Watson Wright (IOC), Arni Mathiesen (FAO), Biliانا Cicin-Sain (GOF), and Martin Visbeck (ICSU), spoke on the centrality of oceans to sustainable development, and the imperative of oceans and seas as a universal agenda. The event was widely attended, drawing over 100 participants from Member States, intergovernmental organizations, and civil society organizations. Numerous Member States vocalized their support for a stand-alone SDG on Oceans and Seas during the comment period, including members of PSIDS and Timor-Leste and Turkey. The main conclusions arrived at the meeting were that there must be a dedicated SDG on Oceans and Seas in the Post-2015 Development Agenda and that next steps and discussions must focus on goals, targets, and indicators to measure and ensure the health and vitality of the ocean for present and future generations.

Since the February meeting, support for a stand-alone SDG on Oceans and Seas has continued to grow with, as noted, currently, 79 Member States supporting the SDG on Oceans and Seas. The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the United States, European nations, and many African, Middle East, Asian, and Latin American nations have vocalized their strong support for a SDG on Oceans and Seas. Concurrently, civil society support for a stand-alone SDG on Oceans and Seas has been expressed as well. During the 10th meeting of the OWG (April 2014), GOF convened a “Friends of the Sustainable Development Goal on Oceans and Seas” meeting, which produced a civil society statement to Member States of strong support for a stand-alone oceans SDG on the part of GOF, the World Ocean Network, Tara Expeditions, The Pew Charitable Trusts, High Seas Alliance, Deep Sea Conservation Coalition, Global Ocean Commission, World Society for the Protection of Animals, Center for Environmental Legal Studies at Pace Law School, and the Coastal and Marine Union (EUCC). Civil society support for a stand-alone SDG on Oceans and Seas has continued to grow, coordinated by Andrew Friedman of the Pew Charitable Trusts (formerly with the Palau UN mission), in the development of issued at OWG 11 and OWG 12.

Please continue supporting the SDG on oceans and seas to ensure it becomes a reality.

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