

First Because the Ocean Declaration

Paris, 29 November 2015

The first Because the Ocean Declaration was signed in Paris on the eve of COP21 by Heads of State and Government and ministers from **Aruba, Australia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Fiji, France, Guinea Bissau, Kiribati, Madagascar, Mexico, Monaco, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Palau, Peru, Senegal, Seychelles, Spain, and Sweden.**

Under UNFCCC Art. 4.1 (d) all Parties committed to: “promote sustainable management, and promote and cooperate in the conservation and enhancement, as appropriate, of sinks and reservoirs of all greenhouse gases not controlled by the Montreal Protocol, including biomass, forests and oceans as well as other terrestrial, coastal and marine ecosystems.” This is a collective legal obligation our countries share as Parties to the UNFCCC.

As COP21 is about to begin, and regardless of its final outcome, we urge the international community to take action in order to enhance global Ocean resilience to the impacts of CO2 emissions and climate change.

Because the Ocean sustains life on Earth and our collective well-being. It produces half the oxygen every human being breathes. It also absorbs 25% of all the CO2 emitted by human activities, it captures approximately 90% of the anthropogenic heat added to the global system, and it receives nearly all the water from melting ice.

Because the Ocean is central to economic wealth, with an estimated contribution of between US\$3-6 trillion per year to the global economy. 90% of globally traded goods are transported by sea; fisheries provide 4.3 billion people with more than 15% of the animal protein consumed, and coastal areas provide crucial services for local communities.

Because the Ocean is already experiencing significant stress, now aggravated by increased CO2 concentrations liable to seriously affect marine life. Carbon dissolved in the Ocean alters its chemistry, already driving acidity up by 30% since the beginning of the industrial revolution.

Because the Ocean is warming, causing irreversible damage to coral reefs and other ecosystems and species, stronger storms, changes in sea currents, including accelerating the spread of invasive species.

Because the Ocean level is rising, and we must anticipate that millions of people are at risk of being displaced especially in low lying areas and Small Island States.

Because the Ocean will have a critical role in the implementation of the 2015 Paris Agreement and its accompanying decisions.

1. We pledge to support the proposal for a Special Report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to address comprehensively the ocean/climate nexus.

2. We reaffirm our commitment to reinforce Ocean resilience by meeting the targets agreed under the UN Sustainable Development Goal #14 (**SDG 14**): Conserve and Sustainably Use the Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources for Sustainable Development; with this in mind we express support for the convening of a **High-Level UN Conference on Oceans and Seas in June 2017** in Fiji to promote implementation and to maintain political momentum to achieve SDG 14.

3. We believe, in keeping with the sense of urgency, that it is high time to promote an **Ocean action plan under the UNFCCC**, starting in 2016, and we shall continue to meet as a group to address the challenges identified in this declaration, inviting the participation and input of other relevant processes and initiatives, within and outside the UN.

The Because the Ocean initiative was launched at COP21 with the support of Chile's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, France's Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy, the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, the Global Ocean Commission, the Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI) and Tara Expeditions.