



Message by Dr. Ahmed Djoghla
Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity
on the occasion of
World Oceans Day
“Our oceans: greening our future”
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The world's oceans play an important role in the Earth's climate system. The rich marine biodiversity is the essential basis for the stable ecosystem functioning and a variety of important goods and services upon which hundreds of millions of people rely for their livelihoods. As communities around the world strive to build a green economy, however, they face multiple challenges due to the emerging threats of global-scale climate change and unprecedented biodiversity loss.

Unfortunately, the oceans are becoming a global repository of the wastes produced by various human activities. Marine biodiversity suffers from myriad threats, ranging from microplastic pollution to ocean acidification. Increasing ocean acidification, a direct consequence of increasing atmospheric CO₂ concentrations, reduces the availability of carbonate minerals in seawater, important building blocks for marine plants and animals; it is predicted that by 2100, 70% of cold-water corals, key refuges and feeding grounds for commercial fish species, will be exposed to corrosive waters. Recent scientific studies have shown that, along with ocean acidification, marine debris, in particular plastic, is a growing transboundary problem with significant potential to adversely affect marine biodiversity. Overfishing and other unsustainable fishing practices continue to threaten the sustainability of marine ecosystems, together with habitat loss and alterations.

“Greening” our oceans will require new efforts if we are going to overcome the global challenges threatening the sustainability of marine biodiversity. We need to bring together all the different communities of users at global, regional and national levels, and mainstream ecosystem-based, integrated and holistic approaches to the management of oceans. At the global level, this requires UN-wide collaboration and cooperation. We cannot afford to waste any more time if we are going to build “*blue sustainability*.”

The 2020 Aichi Biodiversity Targets on marine and coastal biodiversity, adopted by the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity at its tenth meeting in Japan in October 2010, offers a comprehensive framework and milestones for mobilizing global efforts

toward *blue sustainability* by engaging various stakeholders, including the general public, youth, business sectors, academia, media and other civil society groups. For example, the 18,500 participants representing the 193 Parties and their partners agreed to increase by 2020 the cover of marine and coastal protected areas of the world from the current 1% to 10%.

Moving toward *blue sustainability* can happen only through the building of a shared vision and strong commitments toward conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity. Combined with innovative approaches for linking science with policy development and implementation through multi-stakeholder partnerships, these efforts will ensure a sustainable future for the oceans of the world.

Within the framework of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the Convention has further enhanced its global stewardship of marine biodiversity by setting the theme of the 2012 International Day of Biological Diversity on marine and coastal biodiversity. This global celebration will be highlighted through various global events scheduled next year, such as Expo 2012 in Yeosu, Republic of Korea (May - July 2012), being organized under the theme of “The Living Ocean and Coast”.

I invite all individuals and policy-makers around the world to take their part in meaningful stewardship toward *blue sustainability* based upon actions that support healthy marine biodiversity. Now is the time to act!
