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“Revitalization: Collective Action for the Ocean”

The ocean is where life began on our planet. Now, life is found in every corner and at every depth of the ocean.

But this rich and diversity of life has diminished because of human activities. Overfishing, pollution, and climate change, to name a few, have degraded the rich biodiversity of our world’s oceans. According to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, two thirds of the marine environment has been significantly altered by human activities. Almost 33 per cent of reef-forming corals and more than a third of all marine mammals are threatened. More than one third of marine fisheries operate at unsustainable levels.

It is up to all of us to stop the loss of life and bring back what has been lost.

This year’s theme for World Oceans Day, “Revitalization: Collective Action for the Ocean”, charts a path to positive change that builds on the successes already achieved. We do not have to start from scratch. Work under the Convention on Biological Diversity to develop a new framework can revitalize, protect and restore the ocean’s health.

Good progress has been made to date to protect the ocean. The Aichi Biodiversity Targets catalysed new political attention and ambition. Where good fisheries management policies have been introduced and enforced, the abundance of marine fish stocks has been maintained or rebuilt, showing progress on Target 6. Protected areas in the oceans reached the level agreed in Target 11.

But we need to achieve more. We need to further reduce pollution from land-based sources. We need to expand protection of our ocean. We need to build on successes from the Sustainable Oceans Initiative and others.

Today, we have the opportunity—the urgent need—to reinvigorate and elevate our collective ambition and take stock of effective approaches for implementation of the Convention through the post-2020 global biodiversity framework to ensure that we can “right the ship” for the ocean and its biodiversity.

The framework will contain a new set of global goals and targets for biodiversity and will be submitted for adoption at the UN Biodiversity Conference, COP 15, later this year.

This framework aims to put us on a path towards a sustainable future for the planet’s biodiversity, which is needed now more than ever by the ocean and the billions of people who depend on it.



Through its proposed targets, the framework seeks to expand our protection of the ocean (target 3), reduce pollution, including plastic discharge (target 7), and encourage sustainable aquaculture (target 10).

The post-2020 framework is just one of many important developments for the health of our ocean. The upcoming United Nations Ocean Conference will advance deliberations on marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. At the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, the world made a historic pledge to end plastic pollution by developing a new plastics treaty. These critical developments show that the time is ripe for action by the global ocean community to revitalize our ambition, our commitments for action and our approaches to implementation.

We cannot afford to miss this opportunity