



June 2017 – Over three billion people depend on marine and coastal biodiversity for their livelihoods. However, an estimated 40% of the world’s oceans are heavily affected by unsustainable practices, and this June global leaders will gather at the UN-led Ocean Conference to renew momentum towards achieving [Sustainable Development Goal \(SDG\) 14, ‘Life Below Water’](#).

From the 5-7. of June, the UN is hosting a high-level [Ocean Conference](#) in collaboration with the governments of Fiji and Sweden. The theme of the conference is “Our Oceans, our future: Partnering for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14.”

[SDG 14](#) concerns life under water, and aims to conserve and sustainably use oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. The goal of the [Ocean Conference](#) is to be the game changer that will reverse the decline in the health of our ocean for people, planet and prosperity.

“The importance of the world’s ocean cannot be overstated. They supply 50% of the oxygen we breathe, feed billions of people, and provide livelihoods for millions more,” [said](#) H.E. Isabella Lövin, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for International Development Cooperation and Climate, Sweden. “They are the great biological pump of global atmospheric and thermal regulation, and the driver of the water and nutrient cycles. And they are among the most powerful tools for mitigating the effects of climate change. In short, the ocean is a critical ally, and we must do everything in our power to safeguard them,”

Although oceans are incredibly important to humans and cover [71% of the planet’s surface](#), the health of the

oceans is worsening, much because of human activity. Oceans absorb about [30 percent](#)

of the carbon dioxide produced by humans and marine pollution, an overwhelming majority of which comes from land-based sources. This is reaching alarming levels, with an average of 13,000 pieces of plastic litter to be found on every square kilometer of ocean. In addition, 30% of the world’s fish stock is overexploited.

“Oceans provide the basis for the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people, including some of the world’s poorest and most vulnerable, and contribute an estimated \$3 to \$6 trillion per annum to the global economy,” [said](#) former UNDP Administrator Helen Clark.

So far only [less than 4 percent](#) of the world’s oceans are protected, mostly in areas under national jurisdiction. Given that the marine areas beyond national jurisdiction account for nearly 95 percent of oceanic water volume, the areas under protection are not even the tip of this iceberg.

The [Ocean Conference](#) will aim to get concrete actions to protect and conserve the oceans on a global, political level. However, there is also a lot you can do at home as well. Leading up to the Conference, people are also pledging to save the oceans by their own means; from

[saying no to plastic bags](#)

and

[products containing microplastics](#)

, to producing less

[wastewater](#)

to

[beach clean ups](#)

UNCTAD Secretary-General Mukhisa Kituyi [highlighted our responsibility](#) to protect our oceans: "Human-induced problems need human solutions, we must all come together and scale up effort and cooperation to find solutions."

For more information:

- [UNRIC's backgrounder on Climate Change](#)
 - [UNRIC's library backgrounder on oceans](#)
 - [UNRIC's library backgrounder on Sustainable Development Goals](#)
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- [Ocean acidification – what it means and how to stop it](#)
 - [The way forward for reducing marine pollution](#)