

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE ON WORLD OCEANS DAY

8 June 2015

Oceans are an essential component of the Earth's ecosystem, and healthy oceans are critical to sustaining a healthy planet. Two out of every five people live relatively close to a shore, and three out of seven depend on marine and coastal resources to survive. Our oceans regulate the climate and process nutrients through natural cycles while providing a wide range of services, including natural resources, food and jobs that benefit billions of people.

Given how critical oceans are to the health of our planet and the prosperity of people, they are an essential element in our emerging vision for sustainable development, including the new set of sustainable development goals now being prepared to guide the global fight against poverty for the next 15 years.

Climate change poses a great challenge for the health and productivity of the oceans. The science is clear: humans have caused changes to the climate system that are linked to the warming of oceans. Sea-levels are rising, with devastating effects on vulnerable communities, especially people living in small island developing States.

Oceans absorb a large portion of greenhouse gas emissions and are becoming more acidic as a result. Ocean ecosystems are degrading. Corals, which sustain so much of marine life, are vulnerable to bleaching and even death caused by warmer temperatures.

World Oceans Day is a chance to strengthen our resolve to appreciate, protect and restore our oceans and their resources.

This year, governments are seeking to adopt landmark agreements on climate change and ending poverty. Success will demand that they look at the essential role of world's oceans.

The oceans are vast – but their capacity to withstand human damage is limited. In this potentially pivotal year, we must commit to using the gifts of the oceans peacefully, equitably and sustainably for generations to come.