

Secretary-General's Message for 2017

"Our Oceans, Our Future"

The oceans make our home a blue planet. The oceans regulate climate, generate oxygen, and provide ecosystem services, energy and minerals. The life teeming below their surfaces and along the shorelines is a source of food and medicines. Oceans connect all of us, linking people and nations in cultural ties, and they are essential for sharing goods and services across the world. The importance of our oceans to every single living being on our planet cannot be overstated. Today, we celebrate all that the oceans give us, and reaffirm our commitment to being good stewards.

On this World Oceans Day, we look to the future. Caring for, and using, our oceans in sustainable ways is critical to achieve ecological and economic goals for communities everywhere. However, the future of our oceans is burdened by numerous threats – such as climate change and ocean acidification, pollution, unsustainable and destructive fishing practices, – and the lack of capacities to address these threats. As a group of some 600 experts from around the world reported recently in the first World Ocean Assessment, the impact of human activities on the oceans has increased dramatically, particularly the cumulative impacts, and the oceans' carrying capacity is near, or at its limit.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is an ambitious framework which, together, we will use to address these threats and improve people's lives. The World Oceans Day provides an important opportunity to advocate for a sustainable future. Ready to launch a call for action, governments, intergovernmental organizations, and civil society have gathered this week at the United Nations Headquarters for a high-level UN Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

Looking forward, the conservation and sustainable use of oceans can be achieved only if we manage to address effectively the threats that oceans face. This requires collaboration at all levels and across many sectors. Our future will thus be determined by our collective resolve to share information and find solutions to common problems. By going forward together, we can ensure that our oceans are peaceful, safe and bountiful, and remain healthy as our blue home.