

THE OCEAN WE NEED



deepsea
conservationcoalition

A Blueprint for Urgent Action on Oceans from Rio+20

Given the interconnectedness of the world's oceans to the rest of the planetary life-support system, there cannot be the future we want without the ocean we need. Paragraphs 158 to 177 and paragraph 248 of "The Future We Want" address issues that are critical to the sustainability of the global ocean. Now, governments and stakeholders need to roll up their sleeves, and act on what has been formally agreed by all governments on the highest political level at Rio+20. The High Seas Alliance and Deep Sea Conservation Coalition have outlined the priority commitments agreed in Rio for high seas protection and provided actions to be taken to ensure the agreed commitments are met in a timely manner.

Top 7 Commitments and Recommended Actions

1. Commit to address, on an urgent basis, the issue of the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction including by taking a decision on the development of an international instrument under UNCLOS before the end of the 69th Session of the UN General Assembly (para. 162).

Action: In order to ensure that progress is made on this critical paragraph, preparations should begin immediately. The UN Secretary General should make this a priority issue, and undertake urgent consultations with a range of developed and developing countries, including Small Island Developing States (SIDS). A decision should be taken before the deadline of the 69th Session of the UN General Assembly, at the end of 2014 at the very latest, to launch negotiations for a legally binding agreement for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. Negotiations on a new agreement will take several years, and in order to meet 2020 Aichi Target 11, there should be no further delay.

The intersessional workshops that are already planned at the United Nations as part of the ongoing Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction ("BBNJ") should serve as a preparatory conference, to allow for prompt commencement of formal negotiations at the end of 2014. Workshops should be used to augment, rather than delay progress.

The negotiated agreement should set criteria and mechanisms to establish and maintain marine protected areas (including marine reserves) and other area-based measures, require environmental impact assessments and strategic environmental assessments, and secure the equitable sharing of benefits from exploitation of marine genetic resources. Further, negotiations of the annual Oceans Omnibus resolution of the UNGA should be transparent and inclusive of civil society.

2. Urgently take the measures necessary to maintain or restore fish stocks to levels that can produce at least maximum sustainable yield (MSY), with the aim of achieving these goals in the shortest time feasible, as determined by their biological characteristics. To achieve this, States must put in place science-based management plans, reduce or suspend catch or fishing effort, manage bycatch, eliminate destructive fishing practices, and enhance actions to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems including through the use of impact assessments (para. 168).

Action: This commitment updates the 2002 Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) commitment in a number of important respects. It makes it clear that governments must aim at levels that can produce 'at least' MSY, and in the shortest time feasible. It also specifies the way this should be done, through science based management plans, and including by reducing or suspending fishing catch and effort. Governments should start implementing this commitment by reducing or suspending fishing where stocks are overfished, until fish stocks are rebuilt to levels above MSY. Governments and regional fisheries management organizations should adopt science based management plans and set target and limit reference points as well as agree on measures aimed at ensuring that these will not be exceeded (including restrictions in fishing effort, quotas, time and area closures) based on best available science and with a high probability to achieve this objective. Where stock assessments have not been carried out, they must be carried out with urgency. Fishing should only continue where management measures are in place that will restore or maintain fish stocks as required. Fisheries management measures as listed above must be taken with the aim of achieving these goals in the shortest time feasible, as determined by their biological characteristics

Destructive fishing practices must be prevented and existing ones phased out, particularly practices that can cause significant adverse impacts to vulnerable marine ecosystems such as deep sea habitats, including cold water corals, hydrothermal vents and sponge beds.

General Assembly resolutions 61/105, 64/72 and 66/68 must be fully implemented, and where they have not been, bottom fishing must stop, in accord with resolutions 64/72 and 66/68.

3. Eliminate Illegal, unregulated, unreported (IUU) fishing including measures for coastal, flag, port and charter States, and States of beneficial owners and others, by identifying vessels engaged in IUU fishing and by depriving offenders of the benefits from IUU fishing, cooperating with developing countries to identify needs and build capacity, including support for monitoring, control, surveillance, compliance and enforcement systems (170) and speeding ratification of the Port State Measures Agreement (para. 170-171).

Action: Governments should immediately make every effort to close their ports and markets to IUU fish and to close or otherwise penalize their nationals and companies within their jurisdiction engaged in illegal fishing or trade in IUU products. Governments should collaborate to develop national, regional,

and global monitoring, control, surveillance, compliance and enforcement systems as a matter of urgency.

4. Commit to transparency and accountability in regional fishery management organizations (RFMOs) and make publicly available RFMO performance reviews, implement recommendations and strengthen comprehensiveness of reviews (para. 172).

Action: Governments should establish a process through the UN General Assembly to hold RFMOs accountable to the commitments made by States on fisheries and oceans in Rio and under international law. Governments should ensure that RFMO decision-making is transparent, open to civil society participation and science-based. Independent performance reviews should be repeated at least every five years and they should specifically assess the level of implementation of recommendations from previous reviews. Where reviews have not yet taken place, they should be undertaken with urgency. The recommendations of the reviews should be implemented as a priority, and programmes of action should be initiated and implemented by RFMOs immediately, with full transparency and participation. The UN Fish Stocks Resumed Review Conference in 2015 should review all performance reviews and reports of implementation, and make recommendations accordingly.

5. Eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing and overcapacity (JPOI), including by prohibiting such fisheries subsidies, improving transparency and reporting of existing fisheries subsidies programmes through the World Trade Organization (WTO), as well as by unilateral initiatives by eliminating subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and over-fishing, and refraining from introducing new, extending or enhancing such subsidies (para. 173).

Action: Governments should eliminate harmful fisheries subsidies unilaterally and/or collectively, by acting at the national or regional level. Governments should make publicly available information on the direct and indirect subsidies granted to their fisheries sectors. The WTO process has been in deadlock since the 2001 WTO Ministerial Conference in Doha. Eleven years have passed. Paragraph 173 calls on governments not to wait to start reforming their fisheries subsidies regimes and maximizing positive investments into the fisheries sector. The Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement, and bilateral or regional fisheries partnership agreements are examples of where action can be taken right now.

6. Recognize the importance of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), as a tool for conservation of biological diversity and sustainable use of its components (para. 177).

Action: Aichi Target 11 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) calls for 10% of the ocean to be protected by 2020. The scientific information produced by the CBD for identifying ecologically or biologically significant areas (EBSAs)

can make a significant contribution by providing an objective basis for the selection of priority places for protection. States should now work to urgently establish more marine protected areas, including in particular no-take marine reserves, within their EEZs and on their continental shelves, aiming for at least 10% coverage. These should be complemented by action to establish MPAs and marine reserves in areas beyond national jurisdiction at the regional level, using regional mechanisms where they exist. These MPAs should also be nested within wider integrated management, planning and zoning of ocean-based activities applying the ecosystem and the precautionary approaches.

Governments at the UNGA in 2012 should ask the 6th UN Working Group on BBNJ to provide advice on what processes and procedures the UNGA should establish to ensure that areas meeting the CBD criteria for ecological or biological significance are adequately protected. In addition, States and competent intergovernmental organizations need to support and contribute to the ongoing scientific process under the CBD on the description of areas meeting the EBSA criteria to ensure this process is as comprehensive as possible. Nevertheless, in practical and legal terms, Target 11 cannot be achieved without agreement and implementation of a global legal framework, preferably under the Law of the Sea Convention (Implementing Agreement) to enable the full establishment and maintenance of MPAs and marine reserves in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

7. Establish an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that is open to all stakeholders with a view to developing global sustainable development goals to be agreed by the United Nations General Assembly (para. 248).

Action: Similar to and supportive of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), (SDGs) will focus the debate on a practical level, enabling States to address implementation by underpinning internationally agreed objectives with targets and indicators. They will play a major role in guiding national, regional and global policy focus on a structural level, and will become an important instrument to channel funding institutional development and capacity building.

Oceans and fisheries have been identified as a priority policy area for sustainable development, food security and poverty eradication. Now that Rio+20 decided to initiate a process for the development of SDGs, the development of such a goal explicitly devoted to oceans and fisheries is of crucial importance to ensure the successful implementation of existing international commitments in this area, and of ensuring that multilateral and unilateral funding and capacity building are focused on the priorities agreed at Rio+20.

For further information

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