

THE OCEANS COMPACT

HEALTHY OCEANS
FOR PROSPERITY

*An Initiative of the
United Nations Secretary-General*





BAN KI-MOON

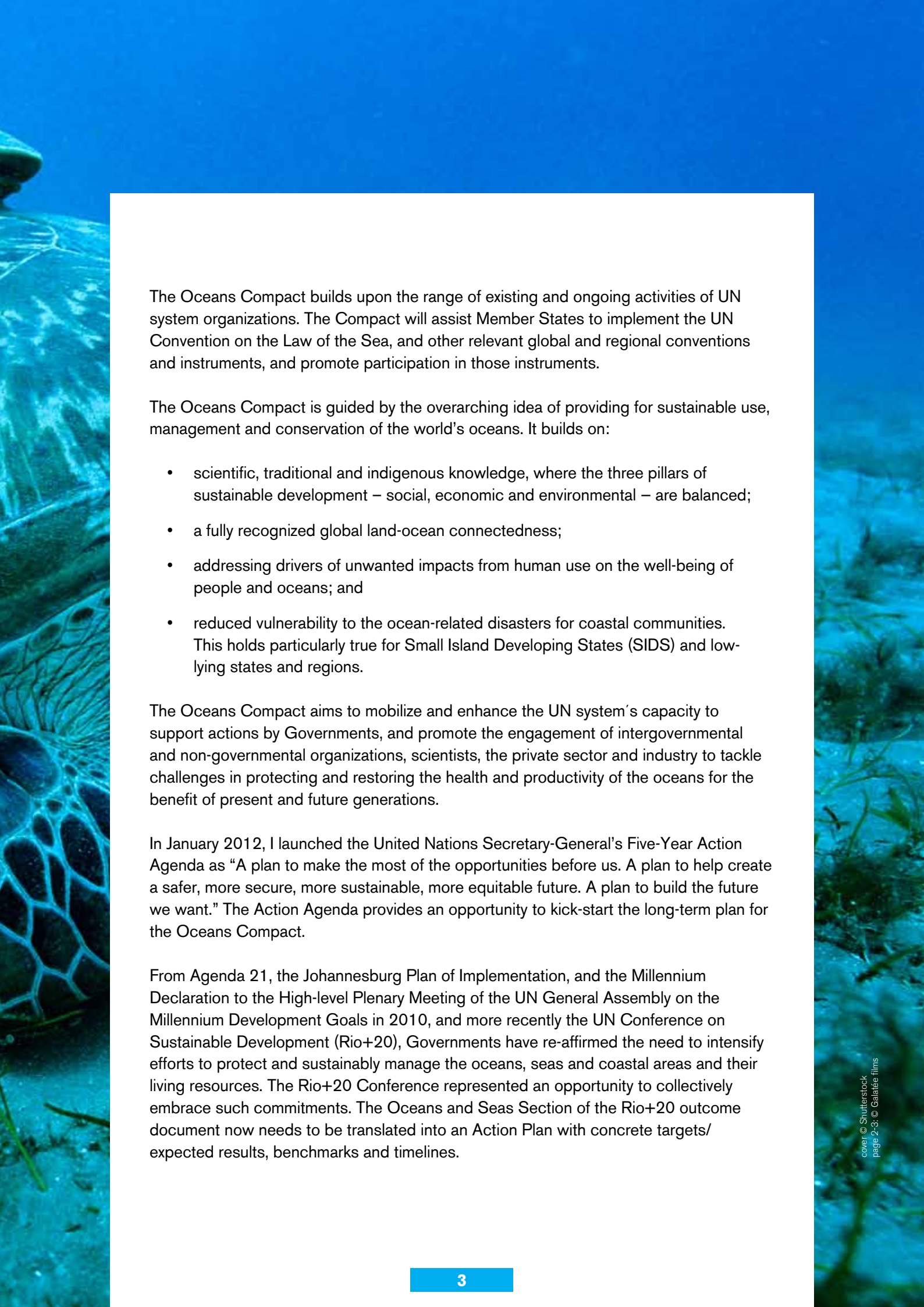
Secretary-General of the United Nations

The world's oceans are key to sustaining life on the planet. The ocean constitutes a conduit for ninety per cent of the world trade, and for connecting people, markets and livelihoods. In light of the ocean's interconnectedness, all nations of the world should strive to make the oceans places of safety and sustainability of maritime activities for all humankind.

They provide a range of benefits for human well-being and prosperity – food production, employment creation, temperature moderation, carbon sequestration, nutrient cycling, habitats and biodiversity, tourism, an energy source, and others. Humans, however, have put the oceans under risk of irreversible damage by over-fishing, climate change and ocean acidification (from absorbed carbon emissions), increasing pollution, unsustainable coastal area development, and unwanted impacts from resource extraction, resulting in loss of biodiversity, decreased abundance of species, damage to habitats and loss of ecological functions.

We need to reverse these trends by using the vast potential wealth of the oceans to build a society that uses ocean resources wisely and is less vulnerable to ocean-related hazards. We need to adopt a more proactive vision for the oceans and establish a new understanding of their capacity. We need to create new partnerships while strengthening key existing ones, and develop ways of sharing the wealth of the oceans to benefit all.

The Oceans Compact is an initiative to set out a strategic vision for the UN system to deliver on its ocean-related mandates, consistent with the Rio+20 outcome document "The Future We Want", in a more coherent and effective manner. It aims to provide a platform for all stakeholders to collaborate and accelerate progress in the achievement of the common goal of "Healthy Oceans for Prosperity". It is essential to address the issues of declining ocean health and productivity as well as weak ocean management. The Oceans Compact will be underpinned by pragmatic short-, medium- and long-term strategies to increase cross sectoral coordination and cooperation at the national, regional and global levels as well as within the United Nations system. The intent is to address the cumulative impacts of sectoral activities on the marine environment, including through implementing ecosystem and precautionary approaches.



The Oceans Compact builds upon the range of existing and ongoing activities of UN system organizations. The Compact will assist Member States to implement the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, and other relevant global and regional conventions and instruments, and promote participation in those instruments.

The Oceans Compact is guided by the overarching idea of providing for sustainable use, management and conservation of the world's oceans. It builds on:

- scientific, traditional and indigenous knowledge, where the three pillars of sustainable development – social, economic and environmental – are balanced;
- a fully recognized global land-ocean connectedness;
- addressing drivers of unwanted impacts from human use on the well-being of people and oceans; and
- reduced vulnerability to the ocean-related disasters for coastal communities. This holds particularly true for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and low-lying states and regions.

The Oceans Compact aims to mobilize and enhance the UN system's capacity to support actions by Governments, and promote the engagement of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, scientists, the private sector and industry to tackle challenges in protecting and restoring the health and productivity of the oceans for the benefit of present and future generations.

In January 2012, I launched the United Nations Secretary-General's Five-Year Action Agenda as "A plan to make the most of the opportunities before us. A plan to help create a safer, more secure, more sustainable, more equitable future. A plan to build the future we want." The Action Agenda provides an opportunity to kick-start the long-term plan for the Oceans Compact.

From Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and the Millennium Declaration to the High-level Plenary Meeting of the UN General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals in 2010, and more recently the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), Governments have re-affirmed the need to intensify efforts to protect and sustainably manage the oceans, seas and coastal areas and their living resources. The Rio+20 Conference represented an opportunity to collectively embrace such commitments. The Oceans and Seas Section of the Rio+20 outcome document now needs to be translated into an Action Plan with concrete targets/expected results, benchmarks and timelines.



OCEANS

ONE GOAL, THREE OBJECTIVES

I will encourage Member States, the private sector and civil society to make global and individual commitments to restoring oceans to healthy, productive and resilient systems as a matter of urgency and against the appropriate baselines to ensure human well-being and prosperity. To attain the goal of “Healthy Oceans for Prosperity”, we need to discover new and innovative ways to protect ocean resources, use them more efficiently, while ensuring sustainable use and conservation of natural resources by all stakeholders. Three inter-related objectives advance this goal:

1. *Protecting people and improving the health of the oceans through:*

- Reducing the vulnerability of people to the effects of ocean degradation and natural hazards, including tsunamis, and anthropogenic environmental degradation, including possible sources of livelihood for coastal populations;
- Developing ways and means of adaptation to the impacts of climate change, including sea level rise;
- Promoting more sustainable management of coastal areas;
- Reducing pollutants from sea and land-based activities, including gas and oil extraction, marine debris, harmful substances and nutrients from wastewater, industrial and agricultural runoff entering the world's oceans;
- Reducing over-fishing and eliminating destructive fishing practices;
- Encouraging a green economy approach in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication;
- Strengthening the implementation of existing agreements.

In this regard, it is particularly important that:

- a. Regions and countries most vulnerable to marine related hazards (including sea level rise) be identified and mitigation and adaptation plans developed;
- b. Early warning systems for tsunamis and other extreme events be established for all vulnerable regions;
- c. By 2025, based on collected scientific data, all countries set relevant national targets for nutrients, marine debris and wastewater.

2. *Protecting, recovering and sustaining the oceans' environment and natural resources and restoring their full food production and livelihoods services through:*

- Rebuilding of over-exploited, depleted and recovering fish stocks, including by encouraging States to renew efforts to ensure that living resources are no longer endangered by over-fishing and destructive fishing practices taking into account the effects of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing;
- Conserving and restoring marine habitats important for carbon sequestration and storage;
- Conserving and protecting marine and coastal biodiversity;
- Halting the spread of invasive alien species; and
- Strengthening the implementation of existing instruments and measures.

In that regard: I will work with all Member States to promote the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets related to marine and coastal biodiversity, with a view to ensuring that:

- a. **By 2020**, at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes; and
- b. **By 2015**, the multiple anthropogenic pressures on coral reefs, and other vulnerable ecosystems impacted by climate change or ocean acidification are reduced so as to maintain their integrity and functioning.

I will support Governments' efforts to meet the 2015 target agreed in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation to maintain or restore stocks to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield.

I am committed to supporting Member States in their work in the context of the General Assembly Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group to study issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. In particular, together, we must endeavor to complete, before the end of the 69th session of the General Assembly, the process initiated within the Working Group to ensure that the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction effectively addresses those issues, including through the implementation of existing instruments and the possible development of a multilateral agreement under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The UN system will also work with Member States to step up efforts to prevent and combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, including actions to ensure that flag States comply fully with existing obligations and exercise effective control over their nationals, vessels engaged in such fishing are identified and offenders are deprived of the benefits accruing from it and capacity needs of developing countries are identified and supported. We must also step up efforts to reduce the capacity of the world's fishing fleet to levels commensurate with the sustainability of fish stocks, including through ongoing capacity assessment. We also need to encourage the elimination of subsidies that contribute to overfishing and overcapacity and to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, including through the strengthening of disciplines on subsidies in the fisheries sector.



To this aim, I will deploy efforts to jointly promote with Member States, consistent with international law, the applicable international instruments and relevant General Assembly resolutions and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Guidelines:

- the development and implementation of science-based management plans, including by reducing or suspending fishing catch and effort commensurate with the status of the stock;
- enhanced actions to manage bycatch, discards, and other adverse ecosystem impacts from fisheries including by eliminating destructive fishing practices; and
- enhanced actions to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems from significant adverse impacts including through the effective use of impact assessments.

3. **Strengthening ocean knowledge and the management of oceans through:**



- Promoting marine scientific research,
- Strengthening general science-based knowledge and capacity building for ocean management;
- Addressing the need for robust ocean observation and relevant infrastructure, including capacity development in ocean and coastal areas;
- Deploying all efforts to better understand the effects of climate change on the marine environment and marine biodiversity;
- Undertaking further research on, and observation of, the impacts of ocean acidification and supporting efforts to address levels of ocean acidity and the negative impact of such acidity on vulnerable marine ecosystems, particularly coral reefs and mangroves;
- Continuing to address with caution ocean fertilization, consistent with the precautionary approach;
- Supporting the development of the global integrated assessment of the state of the marine environment including socio-economic aspects by 2014;
- Enhancing management frameworks along with coordinated global, regional and national mechanisms to ensure integrated ecosystem management, and protection of coastal populations; and
- Promoting the sustainable use and conservation of ocean resources.

This must be underpinned by a robust global ocean observation and knowledge infrastructure and the successful operation of the General Assembly's Regular Process. In that regard, while all relevant UN system bodies will provide the necessary support to the Regular Process, it is crucial for Member States to provide the required resources to enable the sustainable functioning of the Process for it to achieve its work.

There should be as soon as feasible:

- a. A clearly defined consensus on user requirements for sustained monitoring of ocean ecosystems, their services, and human impacts, as a part of an integrated Global Ocean Observing System,
- b. Robust monitoring and knowledge-sharing systems in place to underpin decision-making;
- c. A completed first cycle of the UN Regular Process by 2014 and further ocean monitoring, research and capacity-development needs identified;
- d. A global and regional assessment of capacity building requirements conducted and a strategy formulated and implemented;
- e. A global observing network on ocean acidification developed, producing regional impact assessments of ocean acidification on vulnerable ecosystems and economic activities;
- f. UN support to Member States, upon their request, to develop integrated and coastal ecosystems-based and science-based conservation and management policies where they do not exist, and to strengthen them where they exist.

Realizing the objectives of the Oceans Compact will require the creation of enabling conditions so that interventions and actions can be undertaken as part of an integrated and results-oriented "Action Plan" and, where appropriate, up-scaled to ensure an improved quality of life and enhanced opportunities for the hundreds of millions of people whose lives depend on the oceans. This will involve:

- Increasing capacity and technical assistance to Member States that may require it. In that regard, I call for the elaboration and implementation of a global strategy to build national and regional capacity in ocean affairs, including the ability of States to implement existing agreements and arrangements and use available

tools, such as marine spatial planning, integrated coastal zone management, assessments, monitoring and surveillance, to better address the cumulative impacts on the marine environment;

- Building and sharing the scientific, traditional and indigenous knowledge base for sustainably managing ocean and coastal resources, protecting coastal populations, and maintaining ecosystem services;
- Creating the economic and social conditions to ensure sustainable livelihoods and economic development through green practices, increased societal awareness and respect of human rights including the right to food and active participation of all interested parties in the elaboration and implementation of integrated ocean-related policies;
- Improving ocean governance through enhanced and coordinated global, regional and national mechanisms;
- Increasing participation in, and the implementation of, global and regional agreements addressing the protection and preservation of the marine environment and its living marine resources against all sources of pollution and other forms of physical degradation.

MOVING FORWARD

© Galatée films

Our growing scientific knowledge, communications, technology and resources, coupled with the productive potential of the oceans, mean that it is possible to feed a significant part of the world and enjoy healthy oceans. Nevertheless these efforts need to be scaled-up, strengthened and secured with innovative and sustainable financing and appropriate technologies, and underpinned by effective institutional and legal frameworks to facilitate viable management and sustainable development over the coming decades. This will take time and sustained political commitment.

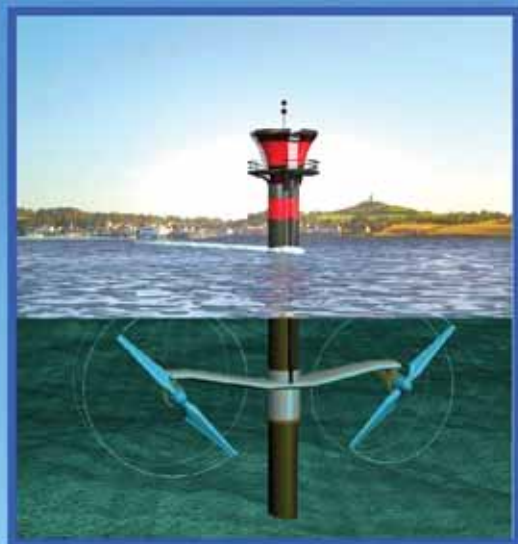
In various areas of the oceans there are policy and regulatory frameworks in place that are facilitating transformative change. Good governance and compliance schemes that address the issues of non-compliance by some ships with internationally agreed marine safety and environment standards as well as governance systems to support integrated, sustainable and ecosystem-based management of fisheries and aquaculture must be developed, including the full and effective implementation of international agreements, marine safety and environmental standards and arrangements.

Changing the way we use the oceans will require changes in many areas including in market and finance incentives such as certification and investor schemes, responsible governance of tenure to marine space, fisheries and coastal land that underpin sustainable livelihoods, and environmental, social and governance reporting. But further work is warranted. Developed and developing countries' public and private sectors need to improve their capacity for ocean administration and knowledge sharing, and to promote capacity building. Civil society's capacity to engage in ocean issues could also be strengthened through citizen science, ocean awareness and literacy, environmental citizenship and youth programmes.

To accompany the elaboration of the Oceans Compact Action Plan, to facilitate stakeholder dialogues and to catalyze support in various quarters for concrete actions in oceans, I propose to create, in consultation with stakeholders, a time-bound Oceans Advisory Group, composed of Executive Heads of involved UN system organizations, high-level policy-makers, scientists, leading ocean experts, private sector representatives, representatives of non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations. This Oceans Advisory Group will thus bring together different stakeholders and contribute to developing a new focus and direction for the work on ocean issues. The Oceans Advisory Group will also advise on strategies for mobilizing resources needed for the implementation of the Oceans Compact Action Plan through mechanisms such as the Global Environment Facility and the World Bank Global Partnership on Oceans. It will serve to catalyze UN system-wide cooperation and arrangements in support of the Oceans Compact. The elaboration of the UN system wide Action Plan for implementation of the Oceans Compact will be coordinated through UN-Oceans, as appropriate.



Published July 2012
© 2012 United Nations



www.un.org

