

Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry, UNESCO's partner in the International Year of Chemistry in 2011.

At the signing, Maxim Volkov remarked that the project was the first of its kind to be sponsored by a Russian company. 'We view the Green Chemistry

for Life project as an investment in the whole planet,' he enthused, 'and a successful example of how science and business can unite under the auspices of UNESCO to create new knowledge aimed at protecting the environment. I also believe this project will help to

improve the prestige of chemistry and lead to more young scientists choosing to study the topic.'

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## UN sets its sights on **protecting the open ocean**

**The open ocean covers almost half of the Earth's surface. A UN working group has just asked the 68th UN General Assembly, which got under way in New York on 17 September, to explore the feasibility of developing a new instrument to protect marine biodiversity in the open ocean, the area beyond national jurisdiction.**

The issue at stake is whether the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea should include a new agreement covering implementation, in order to protect marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, or whether a better implementation of existing instruments would be sufficient.

If the UN working group on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction obtains its mandate, it will submit its recommendations to the 69th UN General Assembly in September 2014.

Today, 60% of the world's major marine ecosystems have been degraded or are being used unsustainably. We are now exploiting fish stocks farther away from the coasts and deeper into the

ocean. Marine litter is becoming a huge problem, especially for sea birds and marine mammals, as is the warming, increasingly corrosive ocean – the consequence of absorbing so much of the CO<sub>2</sub> emitted into the atmosphere.

There is overall consensus that we ought to protect our precious living resources better and manage them sustainably. However, agreeing on how this should be tackled is far from easy. Regulating activities that have an impact on biodiversity affects many economic sectors, including fishing, mining, drilling, oil and gas exploitation, wind farms, aquaculture, tourism and basic research, including prospection for bio-active compounds. At this time, there is no central database to record all these activities.

One of the most difficult tasks will be to agree on what tools and mechanisms are needed and on who should implement these and control and monitor economic activities in the open ocean.

Some countries argue that we must respect the freedom of the seas. Others, notably the G77/China and the European Union, consider the resources in the open ocean as the common heritage of

humankind. For them, the open ocean belongs to everyone and we are all responsible for taking proper care of it, including when it comes to sharing the fruits of research and the benefits of exploitation among all nations.

On 22 August, the UNESCO-IOC organized a side event with Tara Expeditions on scientific cooperation and data-sharing, while the working group was meeting at UN headquarters in New York. A panel of experts presented the IOC's Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS), a global database on marine life, and a number of programmes which collect samples from the least explored parts of the ocean, including the International Network for Scientific Investigation of the Deep Sea, the Deep Ocean Stewardship Initiative and the schooner *Tara* (see *interview overleaf*). All the collected data are being stored and made available in global open-access information systems like OBIS.

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## **Climate communication centre** opens in Indonesia

**On 3 September, the Climate Communication Centre (*Pusat Komunikasi Iklim*) opened in the Indonesian province of Central Kalimantan.**

The centre will give local communities access to online discussions on climate change and enable them to exchange information on sustainable ways of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Courses in related areas will also be run from the centre.

Central Kalimantan is home to the Dayaks, the indigenous inhabitants of Borneo. Deforestation was encouraged

by President Suharto until his fall in 1998 and, today, illegal logging remains an acute problem.

The burning of peat forests is responsible for about 70% of Indonesia's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. In 2009, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono committed to cutting Indonesia's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 26%. A year later, Indonesia imposed a two-year moratorium on the exploitation of its peat and natural forests.

Indonesia can obtain compensation for the revenue it loses from limiting deforestation via REDD+. The plus sign refers to the implications

for indigenous people and local communities of projects funded by the UN Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (REDD). Once earmarked for widespread rice cultivation, Central Kalimantan is now a pilot province for REDD+.

As part of UN support for the Indonesian REDD+ initiative, UNESCO's office in Jakarta helped to develop the community-learning centre in Central Kalimantan. The project was launched in October last year, in