

## United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

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### 'Measures to ensure sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources'

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Our planet is nicknamed the 'blue marble' for good reason; most of the Earth's surface is covered in water, distributed throughout oceans, lakes, seas, glaciers and even underground. Despite the fact that most of us live on land, we depend very much on the oceans and their ecosystems for our survival. In addition to producing more than half of the oxygen we breathe, our oceans absorb 50 times more carbon dioxide than the atmosphere does, and are critical in regulating our climate and weather patterns. Our economies need the oceans too: over 90% of global trade involves marine transport, and hundreds of millions of jobs exist within sectors that are dependent on the oceans. The role of aquatic ecosystems in producing food for our species and keeping the global ecosystem in balance cannot be overstated either.

For all of these reasons, it is important that we take good care of our oceans and fight to protect them. The United Nations takes this very seriously, and its 14th *Sustainable Development Goal* is dedicated to this mission.

But our oceans are in danger, with threats coming from many places. Direct pollution through things like oil spills, industrial waste and agricultural runoff, endangers marine life as we know it; overfishing threatens to bring tens of thousands of species to extinction and unravel the global ecosystem at large; in the backdrop, the dangers of global warming and climate change loom ever greater.

How are we to address these threats? In addition to the sheer complexity involved in managing the hundreds of millions of cubic miles of water on earth, the nature of oceans, characterized by a lack of boundaries, makes it difficult to enact effective policies. Ideas that have been proposed in the past range from short-term solutions like cracking down on unsustainable fishing practices and cleaning up oil spills, to more long-term strategies including the establishment of marine parks and reservations and the revision of global marine trade methods. It is also considered important to conduct more extensive scientific research to better identify and qualify the threats that we are facing in these areas.

During this conference, we look forward to seeing many of these as well as other measures, threats and solutions addressed.