

Event Summary—One Ocean: Regenerating Fish Stocks, Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 14.

July 1st, 2015

A high-level symposium “*One Ocean: Regenerating Fish Stocks, Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 14*” was held on Wednesday, July 1st, 2015. The symposium was co-sponsored by The Commonwealth of the Bahamas, the Republic of Poland, and the Republic of Palau, and co-organized by the Ocean Sanctuary Alliance, Global Partnerships Forum, and the Institute for Ocean Conservation Science. Other UN Member States in support of the symposium included the Commonwealth of Australia, the State of Israel, the Italian Republic, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Republic of Maldives, and the Delegation of the European Union.

Moderated by Mr. Amir Dossal, Chairman of the Global Partnerships Forum and Co-Founder of the Ocean Sanctuary Alliance, the symposium gathered representatives of nations and organizations to address challenges and opportunities as part of SDG 14, while examining effective solutions and actions already underway.

H.E. Mr. Stuart Beck, Ambassador for Oceans and Seas, Palau, and President of the Ocean Sanctuary Alliance began by sounding an alarm similar to the call for action made by scientists decades ago on climate change. “*Hindsight is 20/20. If we had acted upon the scientific consensus on climate change twenty-five years ago by the IPCC, the world would clearly face a better future. We must not make the same mistake with the ocean.*” Ambassador Beck implored Member States to act now. “We have observed accelerating extinctions as well as the collapse of important fisheries. It has even been predicted that without action, there will be no more fish in as little as 40 years.” Ambassador Beck noted a consensus among scientists that a coordinated network of marine sanctuaries will begin to regenerate fish stocks, and that a minimum of 10% of protected areas is needed by 2020. This target, embedded in SDG 14, is measurable, can be established relatively quickly, and is capable of being enforced with existing technology.

Dr. Naoko Ishii, CEO and Chairperson of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) opened the symposium with a poignant statement: “We currently face the biggest challenge that the human race has ever faced: how to reach economic prosperity without undermining future opportunities. There is scientific proof that we are pushing the earth’s systems to their carrying capacity. Thankfully, 2015 brings an opportunity we have never seen before: SDG 14.” She emphasized the need to bring together key stakeholders and create strong market linkages and financing

opportunities. She spoke of the GEF's experience with innovative fisheries projects, and noted that in over twenty years, the GEF has provided over \$1.15 billion in grants for ocean and coastal conservation and management in over 120 countries, including the establishment of over 250 marine protected areas (MPAs) worldwide.

Several other ambassadors expressed support for SDG 14 and the sanctuaries target. H.E. Mr. Sebastiano Cardi, Permanent Representative of Italy, pointed out that diplomats play an effective role in ocean protection by working with national governments, and he reiterated Italy's support in making Palau's nationwide marine sanctuary a reality. H.E. Mr. Boguslaw Winid, Permanent Representative of Poland, expressed that healthy oceans contribute to poverty eradication, sustainable economic growth, food security and creation of sustainable livelihoods for many millions of people; however the key question is how to develop while preserving the oceans for future generations. H.E. Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Head of the Delegation of the European Union, speaking for EU Commissioner Karmenu Vella, expressed that "it is our job to make SDG 14 work, through awareness, cooperation and coordination between nations." He noted that in the EU, 6% of waters are currently protected under the Natura 2000 Network, and it will work toward the goal of 10% by 2020 through an ecosystems approach that includes the implementation of MPAs.

One purpose of this symposium was to highlight examples from Member States that could lead the way towards sanctuary development across the globe. H.E. Ms. Gillian Bird, Permanent Representative of Australia, highlighted signature approaches used by Australia in designing its system of marine protected areas (MPAs), and stressed that they are founded in evidence-based decision-making. The existing network of protected areas within Australia is one of the largest in the world, covering approximately 36% of its waters, and is representative-- ensuring many types of habitats and species are included.

H.E. Karel Jan Gustaaf van Oosterom, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Co-Chair of the Group of Friends of Oceans and Seas at the United Nations discussed challenges in both the North Sea and Caribbean regions. In the Caribbean, challenges include tourism, sewage management, over-development, and cruise ships, while in the North Sea, challenges are different because it is a highly trafficked and industrial area. Ambassador van Oosterom explained that because The Netherlands has a small ocean area, it has expertise in marine spatial management including protected areas. Perhaps most importantly, Ambassador van Oosterom emphasized that SDG 14 must now be implemented, and "we must keep one another accountable for our commitments."

Dr. Ellen Pikitch, Professor and Executive Director, Institute for Ocean Conservation Science, and Board Member, Ocean Sanctuary Alliance, chaired a panel highlighting science. Dr. Pikitch noted that sanctuaries are underutilized; only 2% of the ocean is protected in some way, and less than 1% of that is strongly protected from activities such as fishing. Scientists have documented that MPAs, or sanctuaries, promote biodiversity, conserve habitats, can be economic engines, and regenerate fish stocks both within and outside protected areas. Dr. Pikitch urged science-based implementation of the 10% protected areas target within SDG 14 and moderated a panel of three scientists with experience across diverse areas and ecosystems.

Mr. Eric Carey, Executive Director, The Bahamas National Trust highlighted that the Bahamas is made up of many islands, and many environmental issues occur outside of the capitol. Limited policing resources mean that education and outreach is the best form of protection for more remote islands. He noted that “science for the common man” is needed, where science informs a system of MPAs, but is also brought down to a community level. Mr. Carey urged that it is important to work together through partnerships, communities and NGOs in order to help fill the gaps that are impeding further success in protecting oceans.

Dr. Yimnang Golbuu, CEO, Palau International Coral Reef Center, spoke about the experience of a small island state in the Pacific. Palau enacted a Protected Area Network (PAN) where marine areas were assessed for resiliency to warming conditions, and connectivity between sites was taken into consideration. Scientists measured fish biomass within and outside MPAs, and found nearly double the fish biomass, and a higher incidence of top predators, within protected areas. Palau hopes to establish a MPA within its entire exclusive economic zone (EEZ) to ensure the conservation of its ocean resources for its people.

Dr. Iwona Paliczka vel Pawlik, from the Institute of Oceanography, University of Gdansk, in Poland, discussed the cold Baltic waters and threats to biodiversity that exist in her region. She told a compelling story of how a sanctuary for seals was able to recover the population after decades of severe exploitation. Now, other steps can be taken such as creating a management plan for the seals and their habitats, and increase awareness for this important species.

In addition to presentations by diplomats and scientists, other invited speakers brought important experience and insight to the symposium. Mr. Ajay Markanday, Director, FAO Liaison Office for North America, highlighted that the fisheries sector is of major socioeconomic importance and spoke of the UN Food and Agricultural

Organization's work on fisheries and oceans. He also outlined the benefits and costs of implementing good systems of MPAs. Mr. Olkerlil Kazuo, Office of the President of the Republic of Palau, brought an enforcer's perspective. Mr. Kazuo stated that Palau has just one patrol boat for its entire EEZ, and two smaller vessels for the inner reefs. This year, Palau apprehended multiple Vietnamese "blue boats" illegally fishing in Palau's waters, and burned the boats at sea ([see photos](#)). Illegal fishing is an enormous challenge for an island nation with a large, remote EEZ and limited resources. Other challenges include lack of manpower and training, and a lack of funding and technology. Mr. Kazuo emphasized the need for increased surveillance as well as resources such as air, radar, and sonar technologies for use in Palau.

The final panel was dedicated to the topic of financing marine sanctuaries. Mr. Peter Bryant, Senior Programme Officer for The Walton Family Foundation spoke about the Foundation's MPA programs and partnerships, in Indonesia—where 3.3 million hectares and nearly 500,000 hectares of no take zones were established—and in Costa Rica, where MPA coverage doubled and where a long term finance mechanism was created. Mr. Andrew Hudson, Head of Water and Ocean Governance Programme, UNDP, followed with remarks on how MPAs have been statistically proven to be a smart investment socially, environmentally and economically. He noted that while the world has the capacity to invest and create MPAs, the challenge will be in financing their management and upkeep. Finally, Mr. Carl Linaburg, Chairman and Co-Founder, Sovereign Wealth Fund Institute (SWFI) stated that sovereign wealth funds need to be paying more attention to sanctuary establishment and development.

Mr. Mark Newhouse, Chairman, Ocean Sanctuary Alliance, and Ambassador Beck provided closing remarks. Mr. Newhouse highlighted that over 140 Member States have already declared sanctuaries, and that this is a "[golden thread](#)" that ties nations together on ocean issues. He urged that Member States approve SDG 14 with the 10% sanctuary goal intact, and strive to ensure that SDG 14 becomes more than just words.

Ambassador Beck concluded with a positive call for action among Member States and others. "The UN and all participants today have the power and resources to actually restore the fish stocks of the world and preserve and protect our oceans. What is needed now is leadership. One or more of the Member states and one or more of the UN agencies can step forward now to curate this process, assemble the scientists, and implement their plan."