



Italy – Monaco – Palau

Healthy Oceans & Seas: Paving the Way Towards a Sustainable Development Goal

A high-level special event on the occasion of the opening of the 69th session of the General Assembly, Friday 26 September 2014 - UN CR 7

CONCEPT NOTE

One of the most important decisions made in 2012 at the Rio + 20 Conference was that the General Assembly Sustainable Development Goals, a new framework that will shape the world's development agenda for the coming decade. Following a year and a half of far reaching discussions among all development stakeholders, the proposal for the SDGs has been completed and contains Goal No. 14: conserving and promoting the sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources.

The high-level meeting will explore policies and strategies that will allow Goal 14 to be achieved, including in relation to Goal No. 2 on ending hunger and achieving food security, particularly in those regions where the livelihood, food and nutrition, as well as general wellbeing of the populations, directly depend upon the health of the oceans and seas.

While eradication of hunger and the promotion of food and nutrition security is a moral and political imperative which requires bold effective action at all levels, the preservation of the planet's resources for future generations is also a moral and political imperative, which requires the development of sustainable food systems and a better targeting of production and research investments.

Intensive agriculture on land has increased food production and enabled higher average per capita food consumption in many parts of the world, with however a high environmental and social cost, loss of biodiversity as well as food loss and food waste. The situation is similar in the oceans and seas. The unsustainable exploitation of the oceans and seas is rapidly exhausting the limits of their resources and harming the marine ecosystem. Overfishing, that is the equivalent of intensive agriculture on land, is now not only threatening food security for over half a billion people living less than 1 meter above sea level, but also the protein intake of billions of people who live on land.

Pollution, 80% of which is generated by land-based activities, is literally suffocating marine life, endangering marine species and exhausting the marine food chain. Invasive species, transported were they do not occur naturally by human activity are disrupting the ecological architecture of marine environments, thus again the marine food chain.

As sustainable tourism represents an important driver of economic growth and creation of decent jobs, the meeting will also explore policies that foster tourism projects with positive economic, social and environmental impacts and that allow local communities to participate and gain optimum benefits from tourism. In particular, as much of tourism in the islands depends upon the existence of pristine ecological systems, the event will explore the implementation of national sanctuaries.

The objective of this meeting is to showcase the most important components of the oceans and seas SDG in their full multidimensionality and highlight the challenges they represent. From global food security, to social welfare of Millions living by and from the sea, and the benefits from sustainable tourism, oceans and seas will occupy a prominent part of the post-2015 development agenda. The discussion will bring together world leaders and policy makers, representatives from civil society and the business community, as well as international organizations.

The high-level meeting, organized on the occasion of the opening of the 69th session of the General Assembly, will be hosted by Italy, Monaco, and Palau, in cooperation with the UN Department of Public Information.