

United Nations



Nations Unies

PRESS RELEASE

UN Secretary-General to Launch Oceans Compact at Yeosu International Conference

NEW YORK, 10 August — United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon will launch the Oceans Compact—an initiative to strengthen United Nations system-wide coherence to deliver on its oceans-related mandates--on Sunday, 12 August, in Yeosu, Republic of Korea.

The new Compact, “Healthy Oceans for Prosperity—An Initiative of the Secretary-General,” aims to bring together all parts of the UN system to improve the coordination and effectiveness of the work of the UN on oceans.

Mr. Ban will launch the initiative at the Yeosu International Conference to commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the Opening for Signature of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

“The world’s oceans are key to sustaining life on the planet,” the Secretary-General says in the Compact, “constituting a conduit for ninety per cent of the world trade, and for connecting people, markets and livelihoods.” But he adds that humans have put the oceans under risk of irreversible damage by overfishing, climate change and ocean acidification, 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.

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.

The Compact sets out a strategic vision for the UN system on oceans, consistent with the Rio+20 outcome document, “The Future We Want,” in which countries agreed on a range of measures to be taken to protect the oceans and promote sustainable development. The Oceans Compact also supports the implementation of existing relevant instruments, in particular the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

With the goal of achieving “Healthy Oceans for Prosperity”, the Compact establishes three objectives: protecting people and improving the health of the oceans; protecting, recovering

and sustaining the oceans' environment and natural resources; and strengthening ocean knowledge and the management of oceans.

In addition to providing a platform for all stakeholders to collaborate and accelerate progress toward promoting healthy oceans, the Compact will be underpinned by pragmatic short-, medium- and long-term strategies to increase 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.

In the Compact, the Secretary-General proposes the creation of an 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. The Advisory Group would also advise on strategies for mobilizing resources needed for the implementation of the Oceans Compact Action Plan.

Background

The launch of the Oceans Compact follows the announcement by the Secretary-General earlier this year of his Five-Year Action Agenda, which includes oceans as a main category. In that context, he decided to give strong emphasis to the importance of oceans and their role in sustainable development by putting forward the idea of an Oceans Compact that would commit the wide United Nations System to furthering "healthy oceans for prosperity."

The timing of this initiative is especially significant as 2012 marks the 30th anniversary of the opening for signature of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. The Convention is considered of strategic importance as the basis for national, regional and global action and cooperation in the marine sector and as an important contribution to the maintenance of peace, justice and progress for all peoples of the world.

The Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS) in the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) has been organizing a series of events at UN Headquarters to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention, including a panel discussion held on World Oceans Day (8 June 2012 - see: www.un.org/Depts/los/reference_files/worldoceansday.htm) and the production of a video entitled "UNCLOS at 30" (available at www.un.org/Depts/los/index.htm). The commemoration will continue at the General Assembly's sixty-seventh session, with two days of high-level meetings, on 10 and 11 December 2012, and the publication of a pamphlet and a commemorative booklet on UNCLOS.

For further information, please contact Dan Shepard, UN Department of Public Information, 1 212-963-9495, email shepard@un.org