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# OCEAN ACTION IS CLIMATE ACTION

A secure biodiverse ocean is key for climate mitigation  
and the protection of coastal communities

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**A healthy ocean, with abundant biodiversity, is fundamental to our life on Earth. As the world's largest active carbon sink, the ocean is the greatest nature-based solution for climate change mitigation and its marine ecosystems offer essential adaptation opportunities.<sup>1</sup> Well over three billion people depend on marine and coastal biodiversity for their livelihoods.<sup>2</sup>**

A 2015 study that investigated the cumulative impacts of human activities found that almost the entire ocean (97.7%) is affected by a combination of human-driven stressors.<sup>3</sup> The dominant pressures are the impacts of anthropogenic climate change, such as ocean acidification and increased surface temperatures, as well as effects of the industrial fishing and shipping industries. Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing presents an additional grave threat to marine biodiversity and to the world's fish stocks, some of which are already on the brink of collapse: A third of stocks are being overexploited and a further 60% are maximally sustainably fished, with a slightly worsening trend.<sup>4</sup>

We must act now to protect our global ocean: 2022 represents a critical juncture for ocean and climate action, and we must adopt ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity conservation targets in order to secure the biodiverse ocean ecosystem that is key for climate mitigation and the protection of coastal communities. An ambitious global goal for marine area-based conservation is an important step in achieving biodiversity protection, climate control and a just transition to a green economy for all.<sup>5</sup>

Oceana and the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) welcome Germany's commitment to ocean protection as a member of the Global Ocean Alliance. **The German Presidency of the G7 presents a critical opportunity to push forward on the goals of the Global Ocean Alliance and translate pledges into a concrete and ambitious 30x30 ocean protection plan which designates and conserves at least 30% of the global ocean as ecologically representative fully or highly protected marine protected areas by 2030. We welcome the explicit expression of intent to progress with "the protection and sustainable use of the seas" in the official G7 programme and look forward to seeing this translated into tangible actions.**

**The German Presidency must lead with ambition at the upcoming Convention on Biological Diversity Conference of the Parties (COP) to set binding, measurable international biodiversity restoration and conservation targets, and to leverage technical and financial support for developing nations to meet such targets.**

**In order to achieve a 30x30 ocean protection plan which safeguards biodiversity, advances the goals of the Paris Agreement and protects the human rights of coastal communities, we call on the German Presidency of the G7 to:**

- **Advocate for science-based decision-making and the precautionary principle in all national and multilateral arenas:** Protection zones must be designed according to the latest available science and managed to protect and restore critical ecosystems for biodiversity conservation and climate mitigation action.
- **Implement 30x30 compatible commitments in G7 national territories:** Recognising that a significant proportion of top marine biodiversity priority areas are contained within 200 nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs),<sup>6</sup> the German Presidency must push for robust protection plans compatible with the 30x30 global goal focused in the EEZs of G7 member states, and promote such an approach with partner coastal nations worldwide.
- **Prioritise the finalisation and adoption of an ambitious, legally binding Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Treaty:** A new treaty must provide rules targeting the protection of marine ecosystems to address the current lack of conservation protections outside of national jurisdictions and designate comprehensive high seas Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) compatible with the goal to protect 30% of the global ocean by 2030.
- **Integrate blue carbon and the climate control function of the ocean in G7 climate policy:** The German Presidency and the G7 must lead by example in implementing the Glasgow Climate Pact's call for more ambitious climate mitigation and adaptation targets, and integrate the potential of coastal and marine ecosystems in updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and throughout all G7 climate mitigation legislative packages.
- **Advocate for human rights-centred design of 30x30 at the national and international level:** Protection zones must be co-designed and governed in partnership and close collaboration with coastal communities and Indigenous peoples in a way which affirms their traditional knowledge and protects

their rights, including the right to self-determination and free prior and informed consent. The German Presidency of the G7 must recognise the essential role of Indigenous peoples as custodians of biodiversity and look to learn from their expertise. The 30x30 ocean protection plan must not be a new tool in fortress conservation, or further oppress or endanger the lives, livelihoods and traditions of vulnerable and marginalised communities.

- **Eradicate marine ‘paper parks’:**<sup>7</sup> The German Presidency must ensure that all new and existing protected areas designated by G7 members and partners offer effective protections against the most environmentally damaging activities, pursuant to the IUCN Global Conservation Standards for MPAs.<sup>8</sup> Only well-managed MPAs, with sufficient restrictions in place, adequate resourcing, and transparent and accountable governance structures can guarantee the achievement of nature conservation and climate goals. Because conservation benefits are commensurate to the degree of protection, the German Presidency of the G7 should also encourage G7 members to scale up MPA protection levels, by creating more and larger no-take reserves, the most effective protected areas in the ocean<sup>9</sup> in, crucially, close collaboration with coastal communities.
- **Increase transparency in the global fishing industry:** The German Presidency of the G7 must advocate for G7 members and their partners to follow the **30 criteria** set by the **EU IUU Fishing Coalition** (Oceana, Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF), The Nature Conservancy, The Pew Charitable Trusts and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)) and adopt the **‘10 principles for global transparency for the fishing industry’**. These principles - which include simple, cost-effective actions such as publishing vessel licensing lists and making vessel tracking data publicly available - are well within the reach of any country and could play a pivotal role in the battle against illegal fishing and human rights abuse in the fishing sector and contribute to the sustainable management of our ocean ecosystems for people and the planet.

<sup>1</sup> Duarte, C.M. et al. (2013) The Role of Coastal Plant Communities for Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation. *Nature Climate Change*, vol. 3, pp. 961-968.

<sup>2</sup> Convention on Biological Diversity, (2018), ‘People depend on marine and coastal biodiversity for their livelihoods’, accessed 15.03.2021, <https://www.cbd.int/article/food-2018-11-21-09-29-49>

<sup>3</sup> Halpern, B.S. (2015) Spatial and temporal changes in cumulative human impacts on the world's ocean. *Nature Communications*, vol. 6(7615).

<sup>4</sup> FAO (2020) *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2020 - Sustainability in action*, Rome, Italy, p. 47.

<sup>5</sup> O’Leary, B. et al. (2016) Effective Coverage Targets for Ocean Protection. *Conservation Letters*, vol. 9(6), pp. 398-404.

<sup>6</sup> Selig, E. et al. (2014) Global Priorities for Marine Biodiversity Conservation. *PLOS One*.

<sup>7</sup> European Court of Auditors (2020) *Marine environment: EU protection is wide but not deep*. Luxembourg, 74 pp. [https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR20\\_26/SR\\_Marine\\_environment\\_EN.pdf](https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR20_26/SR_Marine_environment_EN.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> IUCN WCPA (2018) *Applying IUCN’s Global Conservation Standards to Marine Protected Areas (MPA): Delivering effective conservation action through MPAs, to secure ocean health & sustainable development*, Version 1.0. Gland, Switzerland, 4pp. <https://www.iucn.org/commissions/world-commission-protected-areas/our-work/marine/marine-protected-areas-global-standards-success>

<sup>9</sup> Sala, E. & Giakoumi, S. (2018) No-take marine reserves are the most effective protected areas in the ocean. *ICES Journal of Marine Science*, vol. 75(3), pp. 1166-1168.