

The Oceans Day at Nagoya

At the Tenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Nagoya, Japan, October 23, 2010

Opening Remarks by Dr. Biliiana Cicin-Sain, Global Forum on Oceans, Coasts, and Islands, Co-Chair of the Oceans Day at Nagoya

Dr. Djoghlaf, Ambassador Jumeau, Minister Kondo, Mr. Terashima, distinguished panelists, and participants:

It is my great pleasure to convene the first-ever Oceans Day at a meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

On behalf of the Global Forum on Oceans, Coasts, and Islands, I would like to extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Ocean Policy Research Foundation, Japan, the Government of Japan, the Government of France, the Global Environment Facility, and the other collaborating organizations noted in the program for their valued contributions to the organization of Oceans Day at Nagoya.*

We would also like to thank the government of Japan for their gracious hosting of COP 10 and congratulate the government for its work on oceans and coasts, especially for the enactment of the Japan Basic Ocean Law, an international model for national legislation on integrated ocean governance.

The idea for the Oceans Day at Nagoya was conceived at the Global Oceans Conference 2010 held at UNESCO, Paris, May 3-7, 2010, organized by the Global Forum, the Government of France, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, UNESCO, and 67 other collaborating organizations, and involving 850 participants from 80 countries, including heads of state and other high-level participants. The Global Oceans Conference addressed three central themes: Preserving Life: Halting Marine Biodiversity Loss (2010 global goal) and Achieving Networks of Marine Protected Areas (2012 global goal)—Toward COP-10 in Nagoya, also in celebration of the International Year of Biodiversity; as well as Ensuring Survival—Climate and Oceans, and Improving Integrated Ocean Governance. The Global Oceans Conference developed a set of recommendations to halt biodiversity loss and further encourage the development of networks of marine protected areas.

* Many thanks are due to the following Collaborating Organizations: UN-Oceans, United Nations Development Programme, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, UNESCO, UNESCO Division of Ecological Sciences, United Nations University, Japan, Government of Japan (Ministry of Environment, and Secretariat for Ocean Policy), Government of Canada (Department of Fisheries and Oceans), Government of France (Directorate for Water and Biodiversity, Ministry of Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and the Sea, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, and French Marine Protected Areas Agency), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Asian Development Bank, The Nature Conservancy, Global Legislators Organization for a Balanced Environment (GLOBE), International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative (GOBI), Korea Ocean Research and Development Institute, World Ocean Network (WON), The University of Delaware, Gerard J. Mangone Center for Marine Policy

This Oceans Day at Nagoya also follows the pattern set by the Oceans Day in Copenhagen, where almost a year ago, we brought together, with many key partners, the oceans and climate issues to the UNFCCC climate negotiations and highlighted the need for a comprehensive program related to oceans and climate, including aspects related to mitigation, adaptation, financing, and capacity development.

What do we want to accomplish at Oceans Day at Nagoya?

First, we want to take the pulse, to take stock of progress (or lack thereof) in the achievement of global biodiversity targets.

The Global Biodiversity Outlook report concludes that “the 2010 biodiversity target—to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional, and national level as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth—has not been met in full,” and continues to say that “.....action to implement the Convention has not been taken on a sufficient scale to address the pressures on biodiversity and there has been insufficient integration of biodiversity issues into broader policies, strategies, and programmes, and as a consequence the underlying drivers of biodiversity loss have not been addressed significantly.”

We must reflect on this assessment in the area of marine biodiversity:

--How much has been achieved? What successes can we build on? We can certainly point to some excellent models reflecting the highest level of political commitment in supporting marine biodiversity protection and sustainable use, such as for example, the Coral Triangle initiative of the six heads of state in Southeast Asia, and the very extensive marine protected area of the Phoenix Islands which President of Kiribati Tong told the Global Oceans Conference 2010 was Kiribati’s gift to humanity.

--Why have we not achieved more? Has it been a problem of

--lack of financing?

--insufficient political will?

--lack of capacity?

Second, we must look at the new forces that are affecting marine biodiversity.

Climate change is the most serious threat to oceans and coastal communities. Oceans play a central role in climate, and coastal populations and SIDS at the frontline of climate change, will suffer disproportionately from the effects of ocean warming (sea level rise, intensity and frequency of storms, changes in species distribution, and ecosystem function, changes in ocean currents/circulation), and from ocean acidification which may lead to irreversible effects on marine resources such as corals.

There is also growing concern about the impacts on the marine environment in marine areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction. Available data indicate that growing levels of human activity in deep-sea and open ocean areas are seriously impacting these sensitive ecosystems. Growing scientific evidence, as well, points to the central role of biodiversity in deepsea areas in maintaining ecosystem function, including the ocean’s capacity to absorb carbon. Through global discussions at the UN General Assembly, the CBD, and other venues, we must continue to move toward ecosystem-based management of these areas.

Third, we must consider that needs to be done in the next stage? What should be the vision for the next decade? What priority actions will be required to ensure the long-term health and well-being of the oceans?

The challenge now facing the global community is to develop a vision and mobilize the political will and financial commitments to accelerate progress to halt marine biodiversity loss and to establish global representative networks of marine and coastal protected areas, in the next decade, 2011-2020.

In this regard, it is clear that the Jakarta Mandate on Marine and Coastal Biodiversity, adopted at the Ministerial Segment at the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in 1995, has been instrumental in focusing significant attention on the need to protect and conserve marine and coastal biodiversity. However, the political commitment embodied in the Jakarta Mandate needs to be rekindled and a renewed vision of how to achieve marine biodiversity protection and sustainable use needs to be developed.

A major message that the Oceans Day at Nagoya will send to the countries assembled at COP-10 is the need to develop a new marine and coastal mandate in conjunction with the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the CBD COP-11 in India.

We hope that this event will help to catalyze action and outline the steps required to make tangible progress in advancing the marine biodiversity agenda. We are fortunate to have a number of renowned experts from many sectors and backgrounds to address the most pressing issues facing the oceans, highlight tools and approaches being used in various areas, and outline the potential elements of future actions to advance the global marine biodiversity agenda. We hope that the discussions emanating from today's panels will contribute to crafting such a vision for the future.

In closing, we must do our work with a great sense of urgency. A changing climate and continued loss of biodiversity for land, water, and oceans, is a powerfully negative combination that threatens our planetary survival and our human well-being. The time to act is now, not tomorrow.

Thank you for being with us and we look forward to very productive discussions.