

Celebrating World Oceans Day 2022



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The theme for this year (2022) Ocean Day is **Revitalizing Collective Action for the ocean**; the two terms revitalization and collective action are very endearing and challenging. However deteriorating health of the ocean, acidification, disappearance of coral reefs and mangrove abuse of its living and non-living resources and its impact on our humanity present an enormous challenge to the very survival of the planet we call Earth for the simple fact the ocean is a source of life and human security.

The interdependence of the health of the ocean and urban development are intertwined. In fact the benefits derived from sustainable use of oceans services and resources do not automatically reflect the socioeconomic dimension of an ocean-urban nexus economy. Hence the SDGs and particularly SDG14 cannot be treated as a standalone goal in implementation, but is interdependent on achieving other Goals.

In fact, a recent article asserted that the SDGs were created as an interlinked set of mutually reinforcing targets with meeting all of them required to reach the ultimate vision of a sustainable future for our planet and its people*

It is clear to all stakeholders whether urban, coastal or islands what transpires in one sector is of consequence in other sectors. We cannot separate climate change from ocean acidification, extreme hurricanes, storm surges to sea level rise, which is an existential threat, from the warming of the planet. The consequent cost is incalculable. Hence, we cannot address the revitalization of the ocean in separation.

Our celebration of ocean day calls for serious reflection. An ocean in trouble is humanity in trouble. Nevertheless, the capacity of humans for destructiveness is only matched by the ingenuity of humans for creativity and placing revitalization on the agenda is demonstrative of that attribute.

In pursuing ocean revitalization, we have at hand two strategic avenues with a once in millennium opportunity to create real change, namely the sustainable development goals of 2030 in particular SDG14 and the close possibility of a legally binding international agreement on BBNJ (biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction) - to revitalize the two opportunity it demands a committed and effective multi-lateral corporation which has not been forthcoming of recent times. Multilateral cooperation for capacity building in most aspects of trade and development became even more elusive and challenging. The international community faces a growing demonstrable lack of trust in multilateral cooperation for development, given the deplorable state of regress experienced by most of the humanity, particularly in developing and least developed countries with no economic or social safety nets, and inadequate capacity to meet the targets agreed in the SDGs of Agenda 2030.

In the very recent words of Prime Minister Motley of Barbados: *Multilateral institutions and values are under threat... the global order is not working; it is not delivering in areas of critical importance necessary to achieve the goal of sustainable development for the majority of the world population*

Thus, the combined effect of COVID-19, with the state of neglect of the ocean, and the consequences of the nexus of ocean and climate change and human health is indicative of a possible identical fate for the SDGs as for the misfortune of the MDGs. Which reminds us of the words of Jeffrey Sachs: *all that need to be said have been said but very little done* .

The UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres in his recent statement *said “the world is on the edge of an abyss and moving in the wrong direction. He painted a stark picture of unsustainable inequalities, runaway climate change and feckless leadership ... the world must wake up. He felt the world is slipping towards two different sets of economic trade, financial, technological rules two divergent approaches to development of Intel artificial intelligence and ultimately the risk of a Cold War, to restore trust and inspire hope we need cooperation we need dialogue we need understanding ... we are on the edge of an abyss”.*

Unfortunately, in the past years an effective global ocean financing mechanism at international and national level with priority setting in policy decision has been missing. Availability of targeted and adequate financing is a priority for the desired level of the revitalization process.

Facing such realities we have to seek several alternative pathways: starting with public awareness and the role of stakeholders and civil society of the role ocean sustainability plays in their welfare and future.

For the longer term, we need to create a new momentum to ocean literacy through education, awareness creation and long-term capacity development starting from early adjusted children schooling syllabi.

Adoption of circular economy processes to reduce the scourge of harmful and toxic substances such as pesticides, chemicals, discards and plastics that is choking our ocean from and rivers. Accepting eco-system approaches for resolution of adverse impacts on ocean and coasts.

The ocean day agenda for managing human relations with an ocean in crisis can benefit from the successful experience of the integrated development approach of the CIRDAP, an international model of cooperation.

The IOI remains committed to the vision of its founder as it celebrates its fiftieth anniversary in capacity development in all areas of ocean governance for global sustainability.

Thank you.