



# 1<sup>st</sup> EDITION - MONACO BLUE INITIATIVE

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## **SESSION 1. The Deep Sea: New Biodiversity in Need of Protection**

**Moderator: Dr. Monica Verbeek**, Executive Director, SEAS AT RISK, Netherlands

**The biodiversity of the ocean depths is of staggering richness. Exploration of these zones has been compared with that of outer space. While known to play an important role in climate and marine ecosystem regulation, they are also attracting attention from the petrochemical, pharmaceutical, biotech and fishing industries. Throughout history, new frontiers have often developed outside of the law. Given what is at stake, it is urgent to define a framework for future exploitation and protection of the deep sea space.**

**Dr. Verbeek** noted that the effects of climate change and acidification were already apparent in the depths, as was coral destruction. "New technology means we can explore, and exploit, deeper and deeper, with the risk of reproducing the degradation seen at shallower depths," she said.

Take fishing, for instance - the depletion of stocks in shallower waters meant the depths would be increasingly exploited, despite our current ignorance regarding deep-sea fish stocks' sustainability. Characteristics specific to deep-sea species, such as a lower reproductive rate, called for the greatest caution, she warned.

Many participants advocated a total freeze on exploitation of the deep-sea zone until there was a more precise inventory and a better understanding of the potential impact of human activity there.

"Right now, we're literally fishing in the dark," Dr. Verbeek said. Frédéric Briand, head of Monaco's CIESM, agreed. "We have no idea of the knock-on disruption of the greater ecosystem. We know less about the ocean depths than about Mars," he said.

Furthermore, legal protection of deep sea beds was nonexistent. "It's the Wild West out there," Mr. Briand exclaimed. Rather than abandoning the field to the wealthiest companies with the strongest economic interest, science needed to forge new alliances with industry, he argued, because for now, "petrol companies have better data on the depths than the scientific community does."



Geomicrobiologist **Antje Boetius** of the Alfred Wegner Institute noted that indeed, all were not equal when it came to exploration, to say nothing of exploitation. It was costly for research vessels to get to these areas, and generally only affordable by private sector players with a direct economic interest, she said, calling for a system of open access and knowledge-sharing.

**Susan Avery**, Director of the Woods Hole Institute, strongly agreed. "We can't create solutions without a knowledge base. We don't even have good bathymetry," she lamented. As Wendy Watson Wright of the UNESCO's Oceanographic Commission put it, "We can't manage what we can't measure."

Many participants evoked the need to ensure an equitable sharing of new deep-sea resources, particularly with regard to developing countries. "It's technically complex, and expensive to explore - maybe 10 countries are in a position to do so, but this new frontier must be exploited equitably," declared **Philippe Valette**, Co-Chairman of the World Ocean Network (WON). "This is one of the most promising parts of the ocean and a major challenge of the 21st century. Developing countries must not be left out, yet again," he argued.

As Chairperson of the Alliance of Small Island States **Dessima Williams** put it, "We need to answer the question, if there is exploitation, by whom, with whom, and for whom? Yes to the principle of precaution, but yes also to that of equity."

Vice President of La Prairie **Nadia Miller** backed a moratorium on exploitation of deep sea areas, despite her company and the cosmetic industry's keen interest in potential uses for their resources. "Otherwise, it will be a gold rush," she warned. "Do we want that again? Let's wait for the science to catch up, and decide on equitable management of this resource."

As was true regarding the great marine predators, the deep seas required an integrated management approach that took into account the whole ecosystem, said **Julia Marton Lefèvre**, Managing Director of the IUCN. This idea had led to the 2008 launch of the IUCN's Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative, focused on the ocean depths, she explained.

**Robert Calcagno**, head of Monaco's Institut Océanographique, proposed that a Deep Sea Conference be held in Paris in 2011. He cited the positive example of the Monaco conference and 2009 declaration on ocean acidification, which got the issue onto the table at the Copenhagen climate summit and gained wide media coverage. "Let's do the same for the deep seas," he suggested.

Shedding light on the complex interactions between human activity and the great ocean depths, the CEO of Russia's Shirshov Institute **Robert Nigmatulin** told participants of a recent study showing that the mere acoustics of oil platforms near the Sakhalin Islands had a strong negative impact on biodiversity. This must be explained to governments and industry, he said.

There was another way to get their attention, suggested Pew's **Joshua Reichert**: talk money. "We spend a lot of time looking at the oceans' biology but not their economics," he noted. "There is a striking lack of studies as to what exactly ocean resources translate to economically. We should be able to say what we stand to lose, region by region, state by state, in 15, 20 or 30 years," he declared.

"The ocean is our life-support system, from food to the oxygen in our atmosphere," said **Enric Sala**, National Geographic Fellow and marine ecologist. He then used a thought-provoking analogy to



illustrate why we should protect species and their specific environment even if we don't know exactly what they are or what they do.

"Imagine that you're getting on a plane and the stewardess says, '10 screws are missing from this plane. We don't know exactly what they're for, but they're missing.' Would you get on that plane?" Sala asked. "I wouldn't."

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## **SESSION 2. Large Marine Species: Keystone of the Marine Ecosystem.**

**Moderator:** Lisa Speer, Oceans Program Director at the Natural Resources Defense Council, USA

**With the Principality of Monaco and HSH Prince Albert II leading the global campaign to protect the endangered bluefin tuna and other marine predators, it was only appropriate that the first Monaco Blue Initiative should address this issue. Large marine predators are essential to the stability and health of marine ecosystems as a whole, and time is of the essence.**

**Lisa Speer** recalled the previous week's CITES meeting in Doha, which failed to approve proposals to protect bluefin tuna and certain sharks. Though disheartening, she said, "Some extraordinary progress was made - for the first time a fish made it onto the front page of newspapers all over the world."

Among other lessons from Doha, "the votes shine a spotlight on the failure of regional organizations to manage fishing," she said. Speer then outlined possible solutions to the rapid destruction of top marine predators and invited participants to debate them. The discussion that ensued hammered home one consistent theme: more than words, it was time for action.

Rather than create a new umbrella organization for global marine governance, participants argued for better coordination and cross-sector cooperation among the many existing bodies engaged in these issues. For instance, the World Trade Organization's potential for effective action was often overlooked, noted Tony Haymet of the Scripps Institute of Oceanography.

Closer cooperation between the WTO and other organizations like the IOC in Paris, the FAO in Rome and the ILO in London would facilitate addressing the ocean as an integrated platform. This would enable measures such as controlling sea ports. "Every fish on a plate has traveled through a port, becoming a 'respectable' fish along the way," **Mr. Haymet** said.

There was a draft treaty on ports, which would identify vessels carrying illegal fishing gear or fish caught in protected areas and prevent them from unloading, noted the Pew Charitable Trusts' **Joshua**



**Reichert.** Ratifying this treaty would be a significant step, but implementing it would require assistance and training for developing countries, he cautioned.

Chairperson of the Alliance of Small Island States **Dessima Williams** supported an integrated global governance of oceans, but added that enforcement mechanisms were essential "to give it teeth." As did many participants, Ms. Williams considered reforming fishing subsidies to be the absolute priority.

Oceana CEO **Andrew Sharpless** summed it up bluntly: "The key driver of ocean collapse is the overcapacity of world fishing fleets. There are too many boats chasing too few fish," he said. Not mincing words, he added that "If there is one last fish in the ocean, the Japanese, Chinese or Spanish will go after it."

Mr. Sharpless agreed that the WTO was perhaps best placed to take multilateral, enforceable action, noting that the organization was currently discussing eliminating subsidies aimed at increasing fishing fleet capacity.

UNEP Special Advisor **Pavan Sudkhev** said he saw the beginnings of a political will to tackle subsidies, and particularly fossil fuel subsidies. The subsidy system was unfair, with more than 80% of subsidies going to large developed countries, he noted. These subsidies "directly affect the competitiveness and sustainability of livelihoods in small island states," Dessima Williams added.

Furthermore, Mr. Sudkhev declared, spending \$30-\$35 billion yearly on increasing trawler capacity was simply not economically efficient. "The scarce resource is the fish, not the fishing fleets," he said.

It would make more sense to subsidize, well, fish - by increasing Marine Protected Areas, for example. National Geographic Fellow and marine ecologist **Enric Sala** noted that compared to fishing subsidies, MPAs were cheap - protecting 20% of the ocean space would cost about \$16 billion, and create 1 million jobs. "We need new business models whereby conservation efforts are seen as investments, not as sinkholes of money," he affirmed.

Pew's **Joshua Reichert** stated the sobering fact that less than one-fifth of one percent of the oceans was protected from exploitation. The greatest threat to the oceans today was industrial fishing, he said, which relied on indiscriminately destructive equipment such as bottom trawls and so-called pelagic long-lines. "Fishing with lines up to forty miles long with 10,000 hooks that rake up everything from sharks to juvenile turtles is like removing a tooth with a tractor," he said. "They ought to be banned."

Mr. Reichert argued that eliminating fuel subsidies alone could end destructive fishing almost overnight. "Left to function on their own and to compete as businesses, most boats would not leave port," he said.

**Frédéric Briand** of Monaco-based CIESM said better funding and communication were needed to combat what he diplomatically called "the other side," which sought to continue whaling and fishing of other large predators and had defeated the Doha protection proposals.

"Let's be frank about it, they get the votes by putting pressure on South American, African and Asian countries in particular, and they have the money," Mr. Briand said.



Alongside better funding, a powerful, simple message was needed, rather than complicated scientific explanations. The message Asian fishing lobbies used, namely that marine predators competed with man for fish, was wrong but effective. "We have to explain that the disappearance of top predators won't mean more fish," he concluded.

**Susan Avery** of Woods Hole agreed simple communication was key. The "One Atmosphere" slogan had helped advance climate change awareness, and though the ocean was more complicated because of competing national marine interests, "One Ocean" was an idea to carry forward, she said.

That said, more sophisticated communication also had a role to play, according to **G rard Riou**, head of the Mediterranean for France's IFREMER. "Protecting the oceans is a fine message for public opinion, but we must inject science and economics into the equation to enable more focused recommendations for fisheries, and maintain pressure on existing structures for better management," he urged.

More transparent reporting by fisheries also helped, indicated the European Environment Agency's **Jacqueline McGlade**. She pointed out that the UN General Assembly now required countries to furnish regular data on the performance of their fisheries. This effectively created "a league table of dysfunctional fishing organizations," she said, which would ultimately lead to greater accountability.

**Achim Steiner**, Executive Director of the UNEP, reiterated the need to consider ocean management from an integrated "systems perspective." For example, he explained, "we know the consequences of land-based agriculture for the oceans, so agricultural policy must take that into consideration".

This approach did not preclude tackling specific issues, he said, taking bluefin tuna as an example. "The debate goes beyond that fish - it gets people to think about the oceans, and enhances their understanding of cause and effect," he said.

After all, noted **Wendy Watson Wright** of UNESCO's Oceanographic Commission, "the predator we are really targeting is humans."

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## **Closing speech: HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco**

« Ladies and gentlemen, Dear friends,

First, I would like to thank you for your very fine work, your freedom of tone and your commitment.

Of course, this represents only the beginning of what I am certain will be an exciting, if long and complex undertaking.



As we have been reminded throughout the day, the Planet's seas have already undergone dramatic situations that could be cause for despair. Global warming, threats to biodiversity and ecosystems, overexploitation, pollution: the main problems affecting our Planet seem to be concentrated in the oceans.

I would like nonetheless to highlight what, in this meeting, gives us reason to hope.

Most of our speakers have mentioned this today: to protect marine areas, we can benefit from existing successful outcomes.

I am thinking in particular of the development of marine protected areas, something well known to Monaco where one of the first undersea reserves was created in the Mediterranean over thirty years ago, and the initiative to create one of the first protected areas at sea was taken at the end of the past decade.

These protected marine areas embody one of our hopes for the protection of deep seas as well as of marine species... The issue, as many of you have said, is that they only represent a very small share of our oceans – 1%, while 20% would be necessary.

How can they be further developed?

I retain of all you have said of course the need to continuously raise awareness. We must prove that the energy we dedicate to the protection of marine areas is a gain for our populations. We must help human beings, consumers or producers, understand that their future is linked to that of our environment, and particularly to that of the sea.

This is our main focus. But it is not the only one.

You have also mentioned the need to better inform decision-makers, who are sometimes devoid of the necessary knowledge. To this end, we must imperatively call upon the scientific community, whose work is the foundation and core of our actions in favour of the environment. We must defend it, support it, listen to it, but also ask that it improve the coordination of its actions.

We must also underscore the economic gains that more sustainable management of marine resources will bring. And at the same time, examine short-term subsidizing policies.

The second aspect I have retained from your exchanges is the need to simplify the institutional complexity in these matters. I believe it is possible as it is possible, and undoubtedly desirable to improve the 1982 international convention of law of the sea.

This is why I have confidence in the future. One of you this morning said that we had succeeded in making the front pages with one fish. Let me say that with entire oceans we could do much better!

Ladies and gentlemen, Dear friends,

For their grandeur, their vital elemental force, for the dreams they engender, the seas are among the last areas of our Planet that still remain partly unexplored, the last recollections of the



purity of the world; they are also among the first victims of the devastation we inflict on our environment.

Today, you have spoken of the sea. But you have also spoken of women and men, food, health, life and hope... Because our seas too speak of all that.

This is why it is so important to preserve them: for our material survival, of course, but also for our ability to mobilise our forces for a cause that surpasses us.

Were we to fail in defending them, this would mean that we have failed to defend a certain concept of humanity.

Thank you. »

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