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Let's start with a big Mexican wave to congratulate Mexico on their very recent announcement to create a massive new marine reserve around the Revillagigedo Islands – an uninhabited volcanic archipelago 240 miles southwest of the Baja Peninsula. This is now the largest marine reserve in North America! The
area, also known as the Galapagos of North America, is teeming with marine life – it's “a superhighway... for sharks, manta rays, whales and turtles.” This announcement follows a trend of very large marine reserve designations – from the Atlantic, to the Antarctic, and very recently the Chilean waters in the Pacific. These are all part of a growing drumbeat towards achieving 30% protection of the Ocean by 2030, which is what the science is telling us is needed to keep the Ocean healthy. Read Richard Branson’s blog to learn more about this amazing new marine reserve.

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**Seen from the Lighthouse – what's happening now?**

WTO ministerial – a make or break for getting rid of harmful fisheries subsidies

Negotiators are doubling down efforts to make sure there’s a deal on time to remove harmful fisheries subsidies at this year’s World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference (MC11) in Buenos Aires in December. Working documents have emerged from meetings held from the 13–17th November regarding overfished stocks and IUU fishing, but these are just 2 of a number of issues that need to be considered. China rocked the boat last month with the late submission of a new and watered down proposal on illegal fishing.

Luckily, it was opposed by others. The US also muddied the waters with a suggestion to expand the scope from marine fisheries to include inland and recreational fisheries.

There’s still a lot to do before the Ministerial meeting, but according to the Chair of MC11, Argentinian Minister Susana Malcorra, “there is life after Buenos Aires”. She believes a deal can be struck on fisheries subsidies, but if some aspects aren’t resolved this year they can be carried over for decision at the next ministerial meeting in 2019. This issue has been on the international diplomatic table for the past 20 years, so – for the sake of the Ocean (and the negotiators working their socks off) – let's hope there's a strong deal ready to be agreed in December that removes harmful fisheries (and fuel) subsidies once and for all.

For more details, read this comprehensive update by the NGO Bloom. Check out the next Navigator to find out what was finally agreed in Buenos Aires, and keep up to date by following #FisheriesSubsidies and #MC11.
United Nations Environment Assembly to address pollution

Pollution is the theme for this year’s UN Environment Assembly (UNEA), the “world's highest-level decision-making body on the environment”, which will meet in Nairobi, Kenya, from the 4–6th December. Governments, UN and inter-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector will meet to try to agree on a number of tangible commitments to end the pollution of our air, land, waterways and Ocean, and to safely manage chemicals and waste.

These include a Political Declaration on Pollution, resolutions and decisions that address specific dimensions of pollution, voluntary commitments and the #BeatPollution Pledge, a collection of individual commitments to clean up the planet. Click here for the UNEA schedule.

There’ll also be lots of discussion on actions taken to beat Ocean plastic pollution by countries, hopefully building on the UN Environment #CleanSeas campaign that has been working to get countries to ban plastic bags. Let’s hope this meeting sets the stage for more leadership on environmental policy to combat plastic pollution.

Ocean Signals – short announcements

- Check out OCTO (Open Communications for the Ocean), a super handy tool providing information and knowledge on everything from sustainable Ocean management to MPAs, marine litter and Ocean plastics.
- 2 new Ocean newsletters: Ocean Witness brings together a collection of real stories told by men and women dedicated to the preservation of the Ocean; and this newsletter on FAO’s Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels and Supply Vessels Programme – a key tool for fighting IUU fishing.
- 9 Communities of Ocean Action have been launched at the UN to follow up on the implementation of nearly 1400 voluntary commitments made to achieve SDG14; to generate new voluntary commitments; and to facilitate collaboration and networking among different actors.
- Do you have any SDG solutions in mind? Submit them to the Global Opportunity Explorer.
- STRONG High Seas project launched to strengthen regional Ocean governance for the high seas.
- Are you invested in companies overfishing the seas? Shareholders can be powerful forces for environmental sustainability in the corporate world. A new initiative, called Fish Tracker, has attempted to rate the practices of 228 major public companies involved in seafood production.
- Ocean Nomad: Catch a Sailboat Ride & Contribute to a Healthier Ocean, the newly launched Atlantic edition is the first in an adventure travel series connecting people to the Ocean.
Waves on the Horizon – what's coming up?

Taking Arctic Oil to court

Greenpeace and the Norwegian group Nature and Youth have taken the Norwegian government to court. They argue that the government is contravening Article 112 of the Norwegian Constitution by awarding new oil exploration licenses to a number of oil companies. Article 112 says the State shall ensure for everyone, including future generations, the right to a safe and healthy environment.

The environmental groups want to show the Court that the Norwegian government, knowing full well the effects of burning oil on climate change and Arctic warming, is willfully violating their obligations under the Paris Agreement to limit climate change.

This court case is part of a growing trend in litigation against governments for falling short on their commitments to fight climate change. The proceedings ran from the 14–22nd November in Oslo. A ruling will be made, possibly in early 2018.

2018 International Year of the Reef

2018 will be the 3rd International Year of the Reef, following on from previous ones in 1997 and 2008. In preparation, countries will meet at the General Meeting of the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) in December, back to back with the UNEA. The aim is to build awareness about the value of, and threats to, coral reefs, and how different stakeholders can work together to share information and promote protection.

Coral reefs – the hotbeds of marine life, livelihoods and coastal defense – are taking a huge battering, especially from overfishing and climate change. Get involved to see how you can raise awareness and take action. The 2018 logo is available here, and to find out more check out these articles or contact the ICRI Secretariat.
Ocean Reflection – a look back at what's been happening

Climate conference: the Ocean slowly but surely seeping into discussions

During the UNFCCC COP23 climate change conference in Bonn earlier this month, 15000 climate scientists issued a Warning to Humanity, calling for urgent action to fight climate change and to "practice a more environmentally sustainable alternative to business as usual", or else our planet is doomed. Did the meeting respond accordingly? Well, “modest” accomplishments were made, including completing the rules of the Paris Agreement. But, a couple of papers released show that we are still way off course from our climate goals.

UN Environment's latest update of its Emissions Gap report confirmed – again – the huge gap between current pledges (that lead us on a track to more than 3C warming) and what is needed to limit warming to below 2C and avoid reaching climate tipping points. Check out Carbon Brief's and the New York Times' summaries of what happened (and didn’t happen) at COP23.

There was also a concerted push to make the Ocean a priority in Bonn, with some delegates commenting that this was "the Ocean COP". The UNFCCC COP23 Presidency, Fiji, announced the launch of the Ocean Pathway Partnership, which aims to better incorporate the Ocean into climate negotiations by 2020. The specifics have not yet been formalized, but the initiative attracted significant high-level support. Together with Sweden, Fiji announced their intention to engage in round-tables and consultations in 2018 to further develop the pathway.

Outside of the negotiations, better consideration of the Ocean in the climate context was also driven by the Ocean Actions Day on the 11th November, as well as by efforts from Chile and Monaco, who have led the Because the Ocean Declaration initiative. These countries are trying to generate support for the Ocean to be better reflected in countries’ Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) – their national-level commitments to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement.

A paper looking at Ocean commitments in NDCs released the week before COP23 in Nature, showed that 70% of the NDC submissions analyzed included mention of the Ocean. This shows a growing acknowledgment by the international community of the importance of the Ocean in climate mitigation and adaptation efforts. However, the paper also revealed significant gaps in terms of the substance of these commitments. Countries can update their NDCs before 2020 to include additional aspects of climate action.

It is great that the Ocean is rising on the agenda of the UNFCCC, and finally the message is getting louder that we can’t live without a resilient Ocean. But there is still a long way to go.
CCAMLR leaves East Antarctica MPA proposal out in the cold

Once again, the proposal put forward by Australia, France and the EU to establish a new system of marine protected areas off the coast of East Antarctica did not get the consensus needed at the annual meeting of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). Following the successful designation of the Ross Sea Marine Reserve in late 2016, it was clear that securing another reserve this year (particularly given US politics and relations with Russia) was going to be tough.

While efforts to secure an East Antarctic marine reserve at this year’s CCAMLR meeting were unsuccessful, only 2 countries (Russia and China) blocked the consensus from going forward. Both have current or historical fishing interests in the region. To learn more about the ins and outs check out MPA news and The Conversation.

Australia and France, the 2 proponent countries, are set to take a strengthened proposal forward again next year. At the same time, Germany is developing a proposal for protecting the Weddell Sea, and Argentina and Chile are preparing a proposal to protect some of the Antarctic Peninsula.

It is clear that it takes time to align national incentives and generate international diplomatic action. Fingers crossed that results next year will be more positive. Greenpeace has just launched their campaign in the Weddell Sea, which will definitely help build momentum and public pressure for greater action in the region. Lewis Pugh, extreme swimmer, UNEP Patron of the Ocean and our very own Ocean Unite Network member, has also been getting his trusted diplomatic Speedos wet with another plunge into the freezing waters of the Antarctic in order to capture the attention of world leaders about the need to protect this special place – because Ordinary Won’t Change the World.

Shark protections at international migratory species meeting, while ICCAT misses the boat

Good news for sharks at the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals meeting last month, where extra protection was given to 6 shark species: whale sharks, blue sharks, dusky sharks, angel sharks, common guitarfish and the white-spotted wedgefish. This cross-border conservation agreement has committed to further protect these sharks no matter whose waters they swim into.

This includes either prohibiting catch of any endangered species (Appendix I species) or cooperating to manage and protect those shark species most in need of conservation action (Appendix II species). New countries also signed up to the Sharks Memorandum of Understanding that ensures increased coordination for the protection of sharks.

Meanwhile, in Marrakech, the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) lived up to its nickname from more than a decade ago – the “International Convention to Catch all Tunas” – by abandoning recovery plans for eastern and western stocks of Atlantic bluefin and failing to adopt...
precautionary measures to protect overfished Atlantic bigeye populations. A measure agreed on shortfin mako shark management includes so many exceptions that it essentially enables business-as-usual despite the status of the shark population becoming even more dire. How much longer will the international community allow this fisheries mismanagement to continue? The only glimmer of hope was the adoption of a harvest strategy for North Atlantic albacore tuna. This should be the way forward for every species ICCAT manages – letting science rather than politics determine how these fisheries are managed.

Other Key News

- Pacific Island countries could lose between 50-80% of their fish to climate change
- Coca-Cola released new goals to reduce plastic packaging in Europe: to collect 100% of its packaging and use at least 50% recycled plastic to make its PET bottles by 2025.
- EU gives Vietnam yellow card over illegal fishing
- Kenya becomes party to FAO Port State Measures Agreement
- Giant octopus and historic ship combine to create new coral ecosystem with the help of Richard Branson
- Global insurers unite to cut financial lifeline to pirate fishing
- Government takes important step in protecting Canada's oceans and seamounts
- Amount of rubbish found in British waters increases by 150% in a year
- Landmark ILO Convention that will boost global efforts to ensure decent work for world's 38 million fishing sector workers enters into force
- Central America’s Ocean trash islands offer grim evidence of growing Ocean pollution
- Large Ocean sanctuaries need to benefit both sea life and people to succeed

Click here for more news

Recent Reports

- Climate change imperils 1 in 4 natural heritage sites according to new report, including coral reefs, glaciers, and wetlands.
- New study shows that marine species are under threat from deep sea mining.
- New technologies shine spotlight on role of undersea canyons in carrying carbon from Ocean surface to deep sea.
- New study shows what jellyfish can teach us about climate change.
- New study reveals plastics found in stomachs of even the deepest sea creatures.
- Network of divers made groundbreaking coral reef study possible.
- New study shows vast quantities of single-use, on-the-go plastic items used by Europeans.
- White House releases report contradicting its own position on climate change.
- New report finds EU governments still illegally discarding bycatch in the Baltic Sea.

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- Mexico creates largest marine protected area in North America by Richard Branson
- Saving the Ocean with sound waves by Gail Gallie
- Look after nature so it can continue to look after you by Dr Deborah Cracknell
- Why we need a plastic deposit refund system by Richard Branson
- Hurricanes do not discriminate by Joseph Ierna Jr

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Join us in uniting and activating powerful voices for Ocean conservation by wearing one of Ocean Unite’s cool organic cotton t-shirts, hoodies and bags.

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