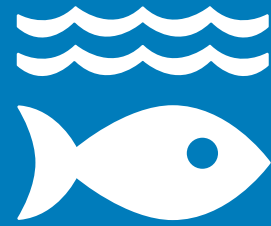




14 LIFE
BELOW WATER



LIFE BELOW WATER: WHY IT MATTERS

What's the goal here?

To conserve and sustainably use the world's oceans, seas and marine resources.

Why?

Oceans provide key natural resources including food, medicines, biofuels and other products. They help with the breakdown and removal of waste and pollution, and their coastal ecosystems act as buffers to reduce damage from storms. Maintaining healthy oceans supports climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. And have you been to the seaside? It's also a great place for tourism and recreation.

Even more, Marine Protected Areas contribute to poverty reduction by increasing fish catches and income, and improving health. They also help improve gender equality, as women do much of the work at small-scale fisheries.

The marine environment is also home to a stunning variety of beautiful creatures, ranging from single-celled organisms to the biggest animal ever to have lived on the Earth—the blue whale. They are also home to coral reefs, one of the most diverse ecosystems on the planet.

Over
3 billion
people
depend on
marine and
coastal
biodiversity
for their
livelihood

Sounds like a worthwhile thing to protect. So what's the problem?

Increasing levels of debris in the world's oceans are having a major environmental and economic impact. Marine debris impacts biodiversity through entanglement or ingestion of debris items by organisms, which can kill them or make it impossible for them to reproduce.

As far as the world's coral reefs are concerned, about 20 per cent of them have been effectively destroyed and show no prospects for recovery. About 24 per cent of the remaining reefs are under imminent risk of collapse through human pressures, and a further 26 per cent are under a longer-term threat of collapse.

Furthermore, improper marine management results in overfishing. The lost economic benefits from the fisheries sector are estimated to be around US\$50 billion annually. The UN Environment Programme estimates the cumulative economic impact of poor ocean management practices is at least US\$200 billion per year. In the

absence of mitigation measures, climate change will increase the cost of damage to the ocean by an additional US\$322 billion per year by 2050.

What would it cost to correct this?

The costs of taking action largely are offset by the long-term gains. In economic terms, the Convention on Biological Diversity suggests that scaled up actions to sustain the global ocean require a US\$32 billion one-time public cost and US\$21 billion dollars a year for recurring costs.

So what can we do?

For open ocean and deep sea areas, sustainability can be achieved only through increased international cooperation to protect vulnerable habitats. Establishing comprehensive, effective and equitably managed systems of government-protected areas should be pursued to conserve biodiversity and ensure a

sustainable future for the fishing industry.

On a local level, we should make ocean-friendly choices when buying products or eating food derived from oceans and consume only what we need. Selecting certified products is a good place to start.

Making small changes in our daily lives, like taking public transport and unplugging electronics saves energy. These actions reduce our carbon footprint, a factor that contributes to rising sea levels.

We should eliminate plastic usage as much as possible and organize beach clean-ups.

Most importantly, we can spread the message about how important marine life is and why we need to protect it.

To find out more about Goal #14 and other Sustainable Development Goals visit:

<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment>