



Seas, Rivers, Islands & Coastal Areas

Call For Oceans And Climate

Our seas and oceans are the source of our very existence. They created life on Earth and are of extreme importance for our survival. Today's and future challenges can only be tackled successfully if we acknowledge the vital role seas and oceans play on this planet by covering 71 per cent of its surface.

Today, they represent a tremendous opportunity for growth and jobs, and help support our well-being.

Both a source of oxygen and a regulator of our CO₂ emissions, they are also an essential component of our climate system. It is considered that our seas and oceans absorb a quarter of CO₂¹ and 90 per cent of the heat trapped by human produced greenhouse gases. As a result they should be at the centre of global climate discussions.

Alas, it no longer has to be demonstrated that these regulatory functions have been harnessed for too long and too harshly by human activities, and that today our oceans are enduring and suffering from climate change. Indeed, it is undeniable that they experience acidification, global warming and dramatic changes due to the melting of the polar ice caps. The pollution and changes that affect the health of our seas and oceans are threatening to restrict their ability to be climate regulators.

In addition, these major changes cause damage to both the biodiversity and the marine wealth we enjoy and other advantages that we could benefit from.

Climatic upheavals disrupt marine ecosystems and fish stocks. Thereby the fisheries sector is threatened and with it our food supply. This also affects many more sectors of activity such as maritime and coastal tourism or sectors that are still emerging and depend on marine biodiversity such as blue biotechnology or seaweed farming.

Resulting in a rise in sea levels, these climatic upheavals already threaten our coast by eroding coastal strips and threatening the very existence of small island states. They are dangerously reducing our ability to withstand storms and to protect our coastal populations. More than 600 million people live in coastal areas less than 10 meters above sea level and eleven of the world's largest fifteen cities lie along shores.

To slow down these changes, we must rethink our models of production and consumption and in particular our energy model. We know that we need to increase the use of renewables drastically. Once again, our seas and oceans hold one of the keys to our future, as, through the power of the currents, the sea winds, the tides and the waves, they offer inexhaustible sources of clean and diverse energy.

For the damages they have sustained, for the role they play and will play in regulation, and even more so for the solutions that they offer, in short for our future, COP21 must be an opportunity to ensure that seas and oceans take centre stage in our efforts to combat climate change.

¹ <http://www.earth-syst-sci-data-discuss.net/5/1107/2012/essdd-5-1107-2012.pdf>