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ECOSOC1

Research Report

Topic 1: Creating a framework to protect oceanic waters

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Introduction:

Water plays an undeniable part in the lives of humans. We rely on it for drinking, growing crops and animals, creating electricity, communication and much more. The oceans also contribute to distributing heat across the planet. Yet oceans have also become a dumping ground for trash, pollution and what can be determined as waste. As people have become more and more aware of how oceanic waters are being harmed, how human habits are affecting it and how vital of a role it plays, more action has been taken to protect the waters that surround our planet. This report will go into depth about the background of protecting these waters, who has been involved and what has already been done to protect oceanic waters. It will also suggest some possible solutions as to other methods.

Key Terms:

SDG:

Abbreviation for "Sustainable Development Goals." These are 17 goals set by the UN to achieve sustainable development.

Background Information:

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact date human activity-induced climate change began, let alone when it began to affect oceanic waters. However, the first scientists to officially suggest it did so in 1957. Hans Suess and Roger Revell[1] concluded that the oceans are not taking up enough carbon dioxide to make up for the increasing level due to the burning of fossil fuels.

In 1974 the UN's environmental Programme, UNEP, created a programme made to specifically focus on the oceanic environments. This programme was named UNEP Regional Seas Programme, and they strive towards protecting oceanic waters from pollution and other environmental factors. At first, it focused mainly on point source pollution, such as oil spills, plastic and the movement of hazardous waste. As research developed the focus moved to a greater area of pollution regarding oceans, including that from ships as well as the preservation of resources[2].

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[1] "The Ocean, CO₂ and Climate Change – Timeline." *Science Learning Hub*, 1 July 2022, https://www.sciencelearn.org.nz/resources/1862-the-ocean-co-and-climate-change-timeline.

[2] UN Environment. "Regional Seas Programme." *UNEP*, https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/oceans-seas/what-we-do/regional-seas-programme.

In 2015 the first UN world ocean assessment was published. This was the result of an effort to regularly report on the state of marine environments to determine how to proceed further. It was compiled of detailed research and necessary information needed to act to protect waters[3]. It stated that human activities had to change and that initiative was needed. The ocean assessment was not met with the response it expected. This was due to funding issues, political uncertainty and limited participation[4].

In 2021 the second UN world ocean assessment was published. The continuation of regularly reporting on the status hopes to create trust for politicians to take action. The second assessment lays great weight on the necessity to collaborate to investigate the ocean and how to protect it as there is much information yet to be available. It also states that sustainably developing the ocean requires more than at first anticipated. The report mentions how the ocean plays a role in many of the SDGs and is therefore complex and important[5].

This is part of what creates the conflict with creating frameworks to protect the ocean. What scientists have found through recent years is adding to our knowledge but also to the understanding of how much we are missing. Yet protecting oceanic waters is important as it affects many other issues. "The ocean provides us with food, regulates our climate, and is an essential part of the culture and identity of many people," said Dr. William Cheung, who is the director of the Changing Oceans Research Unit, as well as a professor at IOF, in an interview with the University of British Columbia[6]. This results in when a change is done to protect the ocean, it will also cause a change to the people connected to the ocean. For example, limiting fishing will economically harm both nations at national level but also individuals who's work revolves around it.

Another conflict is the impact oceanic waters can have on religion and culture. This can result in a culture being threatened alongside the sustainability of the water in question. However this can create another conflict, where the culture may not be directly harmed by the

[3] Ryabinin, Vladimir. "Guest Article: Un Ocean Decade: An Ocean Knowledge Revolution in Action: SDG Knowledge Hub: IISD." *SDG Knowledge Hub*, https://sdg.iisd.org/commentary/guest-articles/un-ocean-decade-an-ocean-knowledge-revolution-in-action/. [4] Fawkes, Kyle William, and Valerie Cummins. "Beneath the Surface of the First World Ocean Assessment:

An Investigation into the Global Process' Support for Sustainable Development." *Frontiers*, Frontiers, 17

Sept. 2019, https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fmars.2019.00612/full. [5]

[6] Jardim, Ernesto. "5 Things We Learned from the UN World Ocean Assessment II Report." *MSC International English*, 21 Apr. 2021, https://www.msc.org/media-centre/newsopinion/news/2021/04/21/5-things-we-learned-from-the-un-world-ocean-assessment-ii-report. [6]

Cheung, William et al. "Climate Impacts on the Ocean Are Making Sustainable Development Goals Harder to Achieve." *Institute for the Oceans and Fisheries*, 31 July 2019, https://oceans.ubc.ca/2019/07/31/climate-impacts-on-the-ocean-are-making-sustainable-development-goalsharder-to-achieve/.

pollution and therefore is inable to sue the polluter. This lead New Zealand to be the first country to allow a river a legal status of personhood. This allowed a human to sue a company or entity on behalf of the river to ensure it is not being polluted. This happened in 2017, which was a big step for both the indigenous people whos culture depended on the river, but also for climate activism as it allowed the river to be protected[3].

In conclusion, protecting oceanic waters has come a long way, but the path has showed that there is longer to go than at first expected. The ocean plays a big role in achieving many other goals as it provides humans with so much, and is a key part of infrastructure. Therefore it is important it is acted upon, yet carefully so, due to its impact on various areas.

[3] Perry, Nick. "New Zealand River's Personhood Status Offers Hope to Māori." *AP NEWS*, Associated Press, 15 Aug. 2022, https://apnews.com/article/religion-sacred-rivers-new-zealand-86d34a78f5fc662ccd554dd7f578d217.

Major Countries and Organisations Involved:

The International Maritime Organization (IMO):

IMO is the primary United Nations institution responsible for advancing international marine law. Its primary duty is to develop a just and practical legislative framework for the shipping sector that is widely embraced and applied.

New Zealand:

The Whanganui River was given personality status in 2017 when New Zealand approved a ground-breaking law. According to the law, the river is a living entity that incorporates all of its material and spiritual components and flows from the mountains to the sea. A settlement with the Whanganui Iwi, a group of Mori from many tribes who have long regarded the river as a living power, included the law. The innovative legal strategy established a precedent that other nations have since adopted, notably Bangladesh, which in 2019 gave all of its rivers the same rights as humans. The Associated Press followed the 290-kilometer (180-mile) river upstream in June, five years after the New Zealand law was passed, to determine what its status meant to individuals whose lives it affects.

Relevant UN Resolutions:

The UN General Assembly (UNGA) passed two resolutions that support the conservation and management of straddling and highly migratory fish populations and marine life in areas outside of national jurisdiction as well as the advancement of UNCLOS implementation (ABNJ). Member States also considered various texts pertaining to the law of the sea as well as a global legally binding instrument under UNCLOS.

1- In addition to addressing issues related to combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and overfishing, a resolution titled "Sustainable fisheries, including through the 1995 Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks" focuses on sustainable fisheries. The UNGA acknowledges in the Resolution the importance of fisheries as a source of trade, employment, economic well-being, and food security for people all over the world, and it welcomes the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter, and Eliminate IUU Fishing coming into force. The Resolution also proclaims June 5 as the "International Day for the Fight against IUU Fishing" and urges Member States to carry out the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly SDG 14 (life below water).

2- The International Seabed Authority has made progress on draft rules for the exploitation of mineral resources in ABNJ, and the UNGA also adopted a resolution titled "Oceans and the Law of the Sea" (A/72/L.18) that includes recommendations on marine biodiversity, marine science, the global process for reporting on the state of the marine environment, maritime safety, the continental shelf, capacity building, and the peaceful resolution of disputes. In response to this Resolution, South Africa stated that an appropriate regulatory

framework should be established under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and should guarantee the protection of the maritime environment while providing security of tenure for mineral resources.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue:

1- MOVEMED, an MSCA-funded initiative, enhances ocean observational systems as well. It examined, with a focus on the Mediterranean Sea, the impact of human mobility on the movement of marine megafauna using a computationally demanding data-driven methodology. The research produced a special database of environmental data, animal footprints in the ocean, and ship activity. It examined the possibilities of animal-borne sensors for ocean observation in particular. The project's findings have significant implications for studies on ocean climate, fisheries management, and conservation management. Innovations in marine observation have a big impact on how well policies are made to safeguard our oceans and seas.

2- The last international agreement on ocean protection was signed 40 years ago in 1982 - the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.That agreement established an area called the high seas - international waters where all countries have a right to fish, ship and do research.Marine life living outside of the 1.2% of protected areas are at risk of exploitation from the increasing threats of climate change, overfishing and shipping traffic.

Possible Solutions:

In-depth observation is necessary for developing policies for long-term ocean conservation. The commitment of multiple nations to strengthen collaboration in research and observation across the Atlantic, from the Arctic to Antarctica, is the foundation of the All-Atlantic Ocean Research Alliance. The large-scale endeavor is supported by the EU-funded project AANChOR, which looks at long-term strategies for cooperation and science diplomacy while also identifying and implementing specific cooperative actions.

1. Around €500 million in seed money will be provided through the Horizon Europe program, the European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund, Invest EU, and other EU programs between the years of 2021-23, in addition to contributions from Member States and private finance. The EU will greatly increase the preservation of our planet's marine and freshwater ecosystems in the years to come by incorporating scientific discoveries into policy decisions.

2. The Ocean Conference, co-hosted by the governments of Kenya and Portugal, took place at a crucial moment when the world is attempting to address the vast majority of the deeply ingrained social issues that the COVID-19 pandemic exposed and which will necessitate significant structural changes and shared solutions that are rooted in the SDGs. The Conference hoped to inspire much-needed innovative, science-based solutions that would kick off a new era of global ocean action. Innovative applications of marine resources and environmentally friendly technologies are solutions for an ocean that is managed responsibly. Additionally, they address issues like as acidification, marine trash and pollution, illicit, unreported, and unregulated fishing, habitat loss, and biodiversity loss that pose risks to the health, ecology, economy, and governance of the ocean.

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