



# **Pacific Ocean 2020 Challenge**

## Rescuing an Ocean in Crisis

Concept Paper



The Pacific Ocean 2020 Challenge seeks to focus global attention, build new partnerships and generate the necessary commitments to address threats to the world's largest natural resource – The Pacific Ocean - by 2020.

## The Pacific Ocean 2020 Challenge

The Pacific Ocean:

- is the largest single geographic feature on Planet Earth; it represents about half the global ocean space and covers approximately one third of the earth's surface;
- hosts a complex of ecosystems<sup>1</sup> which give rise to a wealth of resources available for local and global consumption and which must be sustainably managed;
- is the engine room of the world's climate, providing the largest interface between the ocean surface layers, that stores a large proportion of the incoming solar energy, and the atmosphere;
- is "friend and foe" to millions who live in and around it. It feeds them, and is the source of many natural disasters. It influences the lives of hundreds of millions around the globe through global impacts of events.

The Pacific Ocean 2020 Challenge is an initiative to be launched in 2008, a decade after the International Year of the Ocean, to re-invigorate attention to the Pacific Ocean. It is intended to generate over the coming decade a process that will ensure the Pacific Ocean gets the ongoing attention it justly deserves to preserve and sustainably utilise it, its ecosystems and the associated resources. Thus the Pacific Ocean 2020 Challenge is the response required to the call to "Rescue an Ocean in Crisis".

### The Vision

A Pacific Ocean that is healthy and bountiful, sustaining the livelihoods and cultures of the Pacific peoples and contributing significantly to the health and economic vitality of the world.

### The Challenge

The Pacific Ocean hosts a significant proportion of the world's marine and terrestrial biodiversity. The ecosystems of the

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<sup>1</sup> The use of the word "ecosystem" in the Pacific Ocean 2020 Challenge is consistent with the Convention on Biological Diversity, which establishes an ecosystem-based approach to include all physical, chemical and biological attributes together with living and non-living resources.

Pacific islands support more rare, endangered and threatened species than anywhere else on earth.

Up to 50 percent of the region's total biodiversity is now at risk and the threats continue to grow with climate change and over-harvesting of resources, including the now accessible deep sea beds.

Rapidly declining tuna fish stocks and increasing pressure on coastal and marine habitats are depleting the ocean, impacting on Pacific island countries' economies, the livelihoods of people in the Pacific region, and food security across the globe. Climate change is threatening to exacerbate these threats, increasing the vulnerability of small islands and their ecosystems. It has been estimated, for example, that in the small island developing countries of the Pacific, coral bleaching alone will reduce GDP by 40-50% by 2020.

The Pacific Islands Forum<sup>2</sup> members, especially the island members, have stewardship over a vast part of the Pacific Ocean. Over the past decade the Forum has promoted the development of a Pacific Regional Ocean Policy (2002) and an accompanying Action Plan (2004). Regrettably, the Action Plan is yet to be meaningfully implemented.

Activities and discussions on Pacific Ocean issues have been divided into multiple international and regional fora that have split the ocean geographically or by thematic issues. Similarly, at the national level responsibility for ocean issues has generally been split across several agencies. Short-term projects have generally not been able to succeed at the scale required to provide

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<sup>2</sup> The Pacific Islands Forum is an intergovernmental organisation which aims to enhance cooperation between Pacific Island nations and represent their interests. The Forum member states are: Australia, the Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. New Caledonia and French Polynesia have been associate member territories since 2006.

sustainable solutions at the national level, nor have they been able to address wider ocean issues.

The Pacific Ocean 2020 Challenge seeks to raise the resources and commitment required to develop and implement a long-term, comprehensive and cohesive strategy and action plan to curb the impacts on the Pacific Ocean ecosystems and the resulting negative impacts on the Pacific Ocean region and the globe.

Effective actions must ensure ownership of the Challenge through:

- New partnerships with private enterprise at all levels, including Fortune 500 companies on the Pacific rim and extractive industries;
- Broad appeal to individuals, consumers, and decision-makers in target countries; and
- Empowering stakeholders at all levels.

These actions recognise the Pacific Ocean as a single ecosystem, comprised of many parts, that is a common resource for all parties and a natural asset with huge global value. There is urgency now for all parties to work together to develop workable processes to help protect and sustainably manage this common resource, whilst at the same time recognising that stewardship of large parts of the Pacific Ocean is vested nationally through the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

### **The Way Forward**

The scope and dimensions of the crisis are broadly understood and the implications of climate change upon the already struggling Pacific demand a cohesive strategy and strong actions now.

At all levels, global, regional and national, new commitments are required to re-invigorate and ensure effective action. Within the Pacific Island countries, many communities have repeatedly and clearly identified key dimensions of solutions to addressing the crisis. The solutions, largely, have not been adequately implemented.

The Pacific Ocean crisis is the result of long-term problems and threats and requires long-

term, collaborative and ongoing action for them to be adequately resourced and addressed. Securing new commitments, underpinned by a sustainable financing mechanism is key.

Although the threat of climate change is formidable, with it also comes an increased awareness that is creating opportunities: opportunities for exciting strategies to build new partnerships, mobilise resources and make a real impact on the declining health of this global natural asset.

### **The Initiative**

The overarching actions will include

- The preparation of a Scientific Statement on the threats to the Pacific Ocean, in particular, those that are being accelerated by climate change;
- The completion of a Pacific Ocean Report;
- The development of a Pacific Ocean 2020 Strategy that is built through ownership and an integrated strategic approach across all stakeholders, and based upon the recommendations of the Pacific Ocean Report and on a review of the Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy and Action Plan as well as existing national marine strategies;
- The establishment of a Pacific Ocean Trust Fund;
- The launch of a biennial Meeting process which will ensure that ongoing attention is given to the Pacific Ocean that is built around ownership and an integrated strategic approach across all stakeholders.

#### **1. The Scientific Statement**

The Scientific Statement will be developed by scientists from 30+ nations in and around the Pacific, identifying key threats to the Pacific Ocean that are being accelerated by climate change. The Statement will provide the scientific basis with which to raise the call for urgent action.

#### **2. The Pacific Ocean Report**

The report will review existing information to establish the foundations for a long-term Programme of work to support conservation in the Pacific. The information is to be

presented in a manner that is meaningful and useful to decision-makers, and will deliver a compelling call to action.

### **3. *The Pacific Ocean 2020 Strategy***

The Report will be the basis for developing the Pacific Ocean 2020 Strategy which will identify new actions and build on the significant, ongoing work that is essential to the future of the Pacific. The Strategy will comprise a Programme of work which will build strongly upon existing plans and strategies across the Pacific Ocean, including the Pacific Islands Region Ocean Policy and Action Plan and other regional policies. The Pan-Pacific component of the work will have global implications as it will reflect the positive impacts of a healthy Pacific Ocean to the globe versus the cost of inaction if we allow the current over-harvesting of these resources to continue.

The strategy and an action plan will develop broad recovery targets that will halt and reverse the environmental decline and identifies activities that will enable these targets to be achieved.

### **4. *A Pacific Ocean Trust Fund***

Effective implementation of the Pacific Ocean 2020 Strategy requires a sustainable financing mechanism.

Interest generated from the Trust Fund will ensure significant perpetual support for local, national and regional initiatives identified in the Strategy.

The climate change threat also opens new opportunities: growing awareness in all sectors, especially in developed country markets and new doors for fund raising. This initiative is aimed at raising new funding for Pacific Ocean issues at a scale that can significantly shift the level of engagement with environment at all levels in the region.

Appropriate and robust governance structures, investment and disbursement models for the functioning of this trust fund must be developed and implemented.

### **5. *A Biennial High Level Summit***

This summit provides an ongoing platform to address environmental and development issues affecting the Pacific Ocean. Participants are to include government, private sector, donor / development agencies and civil society. The summit allows participants to build high-level networks, raise attention and commit to challenges.

***The Pacific Ocean 2020 Challenge could become a flagship for implementation of an Ocean strategy with Small Island Nations and rim countries in other oceans. As such it will contribute to internationally agreed outcomes such as the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation from the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002) and the Mauritius Strategy for further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States (2005).***

### **What Next?**

#### **Pacific Ocean 2020 Challenge Partners**

The Pacific Ocean 2020 Challenge will be facilitated by IUCN Oceania and key partners, working together with regional organisations, government decision-makers, the private sector and non-government organisations with a stake in the Pacific Ocean.

Activities to initiate the Pacific Ocean 2020 Challenge include the following.

- Identify and invite key high-level partners who want to be involved in the development and oversight of the Pacific Challenge.
- Develop the Scientific Statement in partnership with the Center for Ocean Solutions by September 2008.
- Establish a core strategy team from amongst the initial partners.
- Develop and commence implementation of an overarching communications strategy to accompany all stages of the Pacific Ocean 2020 Challenge.

- Partners to determine the way forward for a “Pacific Ocean Report”. This will include:
  - Discussion on submissions from IUCN Oceania on a way forward
  - Commitments to funding
  - Makeup of appropriate teams / partners
  - Guiding activities including reviewing and consolidating all available information on values and the state of the Pacific and threats to the Pacific values and resources
  
- Partners to guide the Pacific Ocean 2020 Strategy including:
  - Reviewing and consolidating all available information on existing conservation plans and their success
  - Identifying examples of and criteria for success and for failure
  - Identify marine and coastal conservation management gaps
  - Collaborative development of overarching Pacific-wide conservation strategies, processes and criteria building on existing plans
  
- Partners to determine the way forward for the Pacific Ocean Trust Fund which will include:
  - Developing robust, transparent and equitable governance structures around the Pacific Challenge Trust Fund
  - Developing robust, transparent and equitable disbursement processes for use of the Pacific Challenge Trust Fund
  - Developing effective and reliable investment strategies for the Pacific Challenge Trust Fund.

*For more information, please contact:*

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