



Created on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

## Press release

### “Innovation for Sustainable Ocean”

Monday, June 8, 2020, is **World Oceans Day**. Although this is a celebration, this year it is also time for us to reflect as individuals, as citizens and as members of a global community. This has been a strange year worldwide, when a Pandemic has pushed all other thoughts from our minds. The **2020 United Nation World Ocean Conference** that was to be co-hosted by Kenya and Portugal was to be held in Lisbon 2-6 June, but has been postponed. The second **World Ocean Assessment**<sup>1</sup>, to be delivered in December 2020, focuses on establishing trends in the marine environment with relevance to global reporting needs, such as those associated with the **UN Sustainable Development Goals**<sup>2</sup>. Meanwhile, our oceans, seas and coasts are coming under increasing pressures, for example from plastic pollution, from rising temperatures, from acidification and de-oxygenation. Marine ecosystems, such as coral reefs, are collapsing and marine species, from marine turtles to sharks and whales, are under-threat. Large areas are now 'dead zones'. 2021 will see the beginning of a **UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable development**<sup>3</sup>, a rallying call to scientists to come together and not only study problems but find solutions.

So, what are the **scientific challenges**<sup>4</sup>? They include: (i) understanding of the interaction among diversity and ecosystem processes, structure and function; (ii) ecosystem shifts, biodiversity and habitat loss; (iii) restoration; (iv) sustainability strategies for human activities in the ocean, including the assessment of ocean health; (v) cumulative human impacts and climate change, as drivers of shifts; and (vi) marine conservation<sup>4</sup>.

Scientists can propose **innovative** options for management and governance, but need societal leaders to take action and make the decisions, commit to implementing these and result in positive changes. Major **challenges of governance and social priorities**<sup>4</sup> include: (i) meeting UN Sustainable Development Goals, (ii) new methods into decision support tools for policy frameworks, (iii) climate-ready Marine Spatial Planning and MPAs, (iv) transnational observation strategies, (v) engaging society more effectively in ocean science, and (vi) the role of fake news.

While these challenges are globally relevant, they are particularly significant in the Western Indian Ocean countries. It is for these reasons, **WIOMSA** and its partners from within and outside the region, have been initiated innovative approaches to address some of these challenges, including [Marine and Coastal Science for Management \(MASMA\)](#); [Innovational for Sustainability grant programme, WIO-COMPAS](#) and [Science to Policy Platform with the Nairobi Convention](#).

WIOMSA sends best wishes to Governments, non-state actors, private sector, communities, development partners and UN organizations on the occasion of the 2020 Day of the Oceans and invite all of them to join us in our efforts to find solutions to challenges facing our oceans.

**For more information:**

1) Evans, K., Chiba, S., Garcia-Soto, C., Bebianno, M., Ojaveer, H., Park, C., Ruwa, R., Simcock, A.J., Thanh, C. and Zielinski, T., 2019. The Global Integrated World Ocean Assessment: Linking Observations to Science and Policy Across Multiple Scales. *Frontiers in Marine Science*, 6, p.298. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2019.00298>

(2) <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>

(3) <https://www.oceandecade.org/>

(4) Borja Angel, Andersen Jesper H., Arvanitidis Christos D., Basset Alberto, Buhl-Mortensen Lene, Carvalho Susana, Dafforn Katherine A., Devlin Michelle J., Escobar-Briones Elva G., Grenz Christian, Harder Tilmann, Katsanevakis Stelios, Liu Dongyan, Metaxas Anna, Morán Xosé Anxelu G., Newton Alice, Piroddi Chiara, Pochon Xavier, Queirós Ana M., Snelgrove Paul V. R., Solidoro Cosimo, St. John Michael A., Teixeira Heliana, 2019. Past and Future Grand Challenges in Marine Ecosystem Ecology. *Frontiers in Marine Science*, 7, p.362. <https://www.frontiersin.org/article/10.3389/fmars.2020.00362>

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