

WORLD OCEANS DAY

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The United Nations celebrates *World Oceans Day*, annually on 08 June. Though the date was officially declared by the UN in 2008 to be celebrated from 2009 onwards, many nations have been celebrating 08 June as *World Oceans Day* since the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), which was held in Rio de Janeiro. This 1992 adoption was steered by the Oceans Institute of Canada, duly supported by the Canadian Government at the Global Forum, a parallel event at the UNCED. This forum provided a platform for non-government organizations (NGOs) and civil society to express their views on environmental issues.¹ Formalisation of UNCED was spearheaded by the 1987 Brundtland Report. This report was published by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), which was established in 1983, and developed guiding principles for sustainable development, which have crystallised into the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which form part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.²

The importance of the oceans and the need to generate awareness gained momentum over the years and this was reflected in the UN Ocean Conference held in June 2017. This 2017 ocean conference was convened to support the implementation of SDG 14, *Life Below Water*. It can be said that, over time, the aim of the *World Oceans Day* has become to “raise global awareness of the benefits humankind derives from the ocean and our individual and collective duty to use its resources sustainably, as future generations will also depend on the ocean for their livelihoods.”³

The Office of Legal Affairs, Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, is the nodal office of the UN responsible for the conduct and coordination of *World Oceans Day*. It organizes several events and hosts a reception at UN Headquarters in New York City, where the UN Secretary-General’s message is delivered, and the winners of the Annual World Oceans Day Oceanic Photo Competition are announced.⁴ Since 2009, each *World Oceans Day*, has been designated a theme. The theme for 2020 is *Innovation for a Sustainable Ocean*, and due to the prevailing COVID 19 situation will be a virtual event.⁵ The 2020 theme is important as it will

¹ For more details see United Nations, “What is World Oceans Day?”, <https://unworldoceansday.org/about>

² For more details see Federal Office for Spatial Development, Switzerland, “1987: The Brundtland Report”, https://www.are.admin.ch/are/en/home/nachhaltige-entwicklung/internationale-zusammenarbeit/agenda-2030-fuer-nachhaltige-entwicklung/uno-_meilensteine-zur-nachhaltigen-entwicklung/1987--brundtland-bericht.html

³ Note 1

⁴ UN Division for Ocean Affairs and Law of the Sea, “World Oceans Day”,

<https://www.un.org/Depts/los/wod/index.htm>

⁵ United Nations, “World Oceans Day 2020”, <https://unworldoceansday.org/2020>

lead into the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, which will run from 2021 to 2030.⁶

The oceans are significant contributors to the prosperity of nations. Therefore, the awareness, and an indepth understanding, of this dependency is important. India is a maritime nation and recognises the importance of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and is actively working to achieve targets, including under SDG 14. The transition to a ‘blue economy’ has been recognised and efforts are on to maximise the advantages to be accrued from it. The concept of Blue Economy also aids *SAGAR* (Security and Growth for All in the Region), a vision that needs to be actively followed by all nations in pursuit of prosperity via the Blue Economy model. This approach would not only aid regional and global growth but also address all the 17 SDGs, thereby securing the ocean resources for future generations, by addressing common oceanic challenges and threats, both manmade and natural.

The National Maritime Foundation (NMF), places great emphasis on research work and policy-advocacy related to sustained exploitation of oceanic resources, their preservation and protection, and Blue Economy. The NMF consistently argues these issues in all its interactions with other think tanks, at national and international fora. In order to pursue these important issues at a more global level, the NMF applied for and has been granted special accreditation to participate in the UN 2020 Ocean Conference scheduled to be held In Lisbon, Portugal, which has been postponed due to the prevailing COVID 19 situation. The NMF will continue to advocate the need for sustainable development while ensuring a balance between human progress and ocean health.

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⁶ United Nations, “World Oceans Day 08 June”, <https://www.un.org/en/observances/oceans-day>