

## Leaders for Ocean-Climate Action

September 2019

All life on Earth depends on the climate and ocean, which are inextricably linked.

- The ocean plays a dominant role regulating the climate, including by absorbing heat and carbon dioxide. This, however, comes at a heavy cost. Through impacts including ocean warming, deoxygenation, melt, and acidification, climate change is killing ocean ecosystems. The IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C, for example, finds that coral reefs would nearly disappear with 2°C of warming and would decrease 70 to 90 percent with only 1.5°C of warming.
- In turn, the ocean impacts of climate change are harming human communities and economies. The ocean is a primary food source and economic driver for many communities on the frontlines of climate change. Already, approximately 40 percent of the global population lives within 100 km of the coast—a figure that is rapidly increasing.
- At the same time, the ocean is a source of climate solutions. From restoring blue carbon ecosystems and developing offshore clean energy to establishing well-enforced marine protected areas and creating climate-ready fisheries, sustainable ocean-based strategies have an important role in climate mitigation and adaptation.

The Leaders for Ocean-Climate Action are therefore dedicated to address the climate and ocean crises holistically.

**We share a midcentury vision for a healthy climate and a living ocean.** For 2050:

- Greenhouse gas emissions—including carbon dioxide emissions, which drive ocean acidification—reach net zero, enabling a living ocean into the long term, with living coral reefs and other vital ocean ecosystems.<sup>1</sup>
- Sustainable ocean-based mitigation, such as restoration of blue carbon ecosystems, development of offshore clean energy, and reduction of emissions from marine transport, reaches its full potential. Restoration of coastal wetlands to 1990 levels, for example, could increase carbon sequestration 160Mt CO<sub>2</sub>/yr-1, equivalent to 77.4 million tons of coal emissions.<sup>2</sup>
- Implemented and adequate adaptation plans cover all coastal communities and ocean ecosystems on the frontlines of climate change.

**We adopt medium-term goals toward this vision.** For 2030:

- Governments and stakeholders are on track to reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions;
- Governments and stakeholders are pursuing sustainable ocean- and nature-based mitigation, with the result that nature, including the ocean, reaches its potential to account for 30 percent of the climate solution by 2030;<sup>3</sup>
- Governments have identified coastal communities and ocean ecosystems on the frontlines of climate change and have appropriately funded plans to build their resilience.

**We commit to near-term action.** For 2020:

- All signatories pledge to create specific targets to reduce carbon dioxide emissions to combat ocean acidification, to complement general targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions;
- All signatories pledge to maximize sustainable ocean-based mitigation in their climate plans, such as nationally determined contributions, midcentury strategies, and subnational commitments;
- Government signatories pledge to maximize ocean-based adaptation in their adaptation plans, with the expectation of funding, as appropriate;
- Signatories in a position to do so pledge to enhance their climate ambition through their climate plans, such as nationally determined contributions, midcentury strategies, and subnational commitments;
- Signatories in a position to do so pledge funding for ocean-based mitigation or adaptation.

We also commit to help international processes overcome the siloed approach to ocean and climate issues, so that both climate and ocean forums take account of the nexus. In addition, recognizing the role of carbon dioxide in ocean acidification, we call for the development of a new scale of assessing the relative ocean impact of greenhouse gases that supplements or is integrated with the existing scale based on global warming potential, which governments could employ by 2030.

The following national, subnational, and private-sector actors are signatories to this commitment. In ensuring a healthy climate and living ocean, we note that we are also advancing priorities such as promoting food security, supporting communities on the frontlines of climate change, protecting sea animals and biological diversity, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

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<sup>1</sup> In accordance with the Paris Agreement, in which Parties aim to “achieve a balance between anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks of greenhouse gases in the second half of this century.”

<sup>2</sup> Herr and Landis, “Coastal blue carbon ecosystems” (Gland, Switzerland: IUCN and Washington, DC: TNC, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, the “Forest, Food, and Land Challenge.”