

Summer 2017



Dominicans at the UN

Cry out as if you have a million voices, for it is silence that kills the world.

St. Catherine of Siena

As you enjoy your summer days at the beach.....

You may want to know that the United Nations has convened the first-ever [Ocean Conference](#) from June 5-9 at UN Headquarters in New York, highlighting the need to protect and conserve the world's oceans for future generations. The conference focused in particular on [Sustainable Development Goal 14](#), which stresses the need to conserve and sustainably use oceans, seas and marine resources to benefit present and future generations.



In his remarks at the opening ceremony, President of the General Assembly, Peter Thompson, whose home is the island nation of Fiji, said *"Our task at this conference is to ensure that SDG14 receives the support necessary to meet its critical targets. To do that we need to hear the truth about the state of the Ocean, we need to learn about the difficulties it is facing, and most importantly, we have to assemble the solutions required to overcome those problems. We are here on behalf of humanity to restore sustainability, balance and respect to our relationship with our primal mother, the source of all life, the Ocean."*

He went on to enumerate some of the critical challenges facing Earth's oceans and seas: illegal and destructive fishing practices; rising sea levels; increased acidification; deoxygenation due to global warming; and the "plague of plastic" which we have unleashed upon our oceans. And Mr. Thompson went on to say that *"the central conclusion for humankind at this time is clear: if we want a secure future for our species on this planet, we have to act now on the health of the Ocean and on Climate Change."*

Changing Climate and the Common Good

The magnitude of the problem is such that it calls for a global response. No one country can do it on its own. In that sense, the Ocean Conference is a timely reminder that we here in the United States are best served when we participate in global venues that make an effort to act on behalf of the common good, imperfect though that effort might be. Since the [RIO + 20](#) conference in June 2012, there has been an ever greater awareness on the part of the Member States of the United Nations that we are all connected and that we share a common responsibility in regard to the health of the planet. President Trump's decision to withdraw the United States from the historic Paris Climate Accord flies in the face of this concerted effort to act on behalf of something greater than any one country's narrow national self-interest. On the other hand, the President's decision may well give each of us greater impetus to engage more deeply with the critical issues of our times, and do whatever we can to speak truth to power.

An Embarrassing Moment for the US

It is clear that the decision to remove the United States from the Paris Climate Accord is one that has dealt a harsh blow to the credibility of the United States on the international stage. At an event on the Arctic Ocean which was held during the Ocean Conference, a former White House official, Dr. Michael Armstrong, spoke with great emotion as he apologized on behalf of his country, saying that he was tremendously embarrassed by the current administration's lack of interest in our changing climate. The Finnish Ambassador, Mr. Kai Sauer, also expressed his extreme dismay and lack of understanding regarding the President's decision. The facts presented at the event reinforced the need for the United States to be actively involved in mitigating climate change. By 2050, there will be no ice on the polar ice caps. The Arctic Ocean is already the most acidic of the oceans, a situation created by human activity that is gravely



disrupting the ecosystem. In Alaska, indigenous peoples have already been relocated due to rising sea levels and the destruction of permafrost.

Small Island Developing States Matter!

At an event on the Pacific Islands and their responses to climate change, the President of



Palau, Mr. Remengasau, called upon President Trump to “*get on board*” with the rest of the international community in its efforts to deal with global warming. The former President of Iceland, Mr. Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, said, “*Perception is everything in politics, as the current president of the United States has proved.*” He went on to describe the power for good that [Small Island Developing States](#) (SIDS) have in the midst of this global crisis.

According to international maritime law, these countries have sovereign control over their economies, which include the oceans. In fact, twenty SIDS actually have sovereignty over far more ocean space than either the European Union, the United States, Russia, and China. Mr. Grímsson stressed that the international community cannot be bullied by a handful of governments. He said that the Small Island Developing States must stand up and be the “*Large Island States*” that they are, in order to

protect the precious resources that they have.

Despite President Trump’s decision, there are efforts being made around the world to mitigate the risks that climate change poses to our oceans. Numerous countries, including Antigua and Barbuda, East Timor, and Kenya, have already banned or are planning to ban plastic bags and styrofoam. The Democratic Republic of Congo, along with several other African states, has created a “[Blue Fund](#)” for the Congo Basin. Saudi Arabia’s representatives cited a “religious call” to care for the oceans. Cardinal Peter Turkson, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, urged member states to abandon selfishness and carelessness to care for our



common home. Governments around the world are, indeed, responding to the troubling signs of these times.

So in conclusion, let's return to the words of President of the General Assembly Peter Thomson, who reminds us that *"We are here on behalf of humanity to restore sustainability, balance and respect to our relationship with our primal mother, the source of all life, the Ocean."* What will your role be in this process?

Perhaps this will give you something to think about as you enjoy the sun and surf this summer!

OCEANIC ART IN NYC!

["La Mer Wave Walk"](#) - *Safeguarding the beauty of the sea – one work of art at a time.*



[Washed Ashore](#) – *Turning plastic ocean pollution into sea-saving art.*



Upcoming International Days

[11 July](#) – World Population Day

[15 July](#) – World Youth Skills Day

[18 July](#) – Nelson Mandela International Day

[30 July](#) – International Day of Friendship

[30 July](#) – World Day against Trafficking in Persons

[9 August](#) – International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

[12 August](#) – International Youth Day

[19 August](#) – International Humanitarian Day

[23 August](#) – International Day for the Remembrance of Slave Trade and Its Abolition

[29 August](#) – International Day Against Nuclear Tests

[30 August](#) – International Day for Victims of Enforced Disappearance

Dominican Leadership Conference

246 E. 46th Street
New York, NY 10017
ngo@domlife.org

Margaret Mayce, OP
NGO Representative

Katherine Maloney
Dominican Volunteer

[Facebook](#)/[Twitter](#)



“Leave No One Behind”