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## **Global leaders commit to tackling ocean acidification at Our Ocean Conference**

SAN GILJAN, MALTA (6. October, 2017) – Today the [International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification](#) (OA Alliance) announced at the [Our Ocean conference](#) in Malta that its members will work to enhance action on ocean acidification (OA) through the UNFCCC at COP23 and COP24, and ensure that steps to mitigate the harmful effects of OA are included in future OA Action Plans.

Founding members of the OA Alliance, which include Chile, France, the Canadian Province of British Columbia and the U.S. West Coast states of Washington, Oregon and California, will work to include new language on ocean acidification mitigation and adaptation commitments in international climate decisions, as part of the OA Alliance's [voluntary commitment](#) at the Our Ocean Conference.

The OA Alliance also announced a goal of developing 15 new member Ocean Acidification Action Plans by 2019. Ocean Acidification Action Plans will include a range of government and civil society actions to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and other contributors to ocean acidification, as well as address impacts of ocean acidification by including actions governments can take to adapt and build resilience locally to the ongoing changes in ocean conditions.

“The OA Alliance's emphasis on action plans to address both the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions and regional actions for adaptation and resiliency are critical,” said Chilean Ambassador Isauro Torres, speaking on behalf of Chile and the OA Alliance. “For us ocean acidification is a high concern, taking into consideration the economic, environmental and social consequences for a country that has more than 4000 kilometres of coastlines, home of many species and ecosystems that need to be protected. The ocean is also home to key economic activities. Chile is one of the 10 main ocean economies of the world, employing more than 100,000 people in direct jobs in the fisheries sector both industrial and artisanal. Action at the highest levels cannot wait.”

The OA Alliance was first announced at the 2016 Our Ocean Conference and today has grown to 48 members, including national governments ranging from Chile to France to Iceland, New Zealand and Tuvalu, as well as states like California and New York, tribal nations, cities, researchers and other NGOs. The OA Alliance's purpose is to increase awareness of the real impacts of ocean acidification on coastal communities, advance action to reduce OA and mitigate the effects of OA through political commitment and resources, acknowledging the significant economic threat OA poses to countries that depend on coastal resources like fish and shellfish.

“As a new member of OA Alliance, New Zealand looks forward to increasing its international collaboration to strengthen resilience and build awareness of this emerging threat to the ocean,” said New Zealand Ambassador Patrick Rata. “We will work with experts within New Zealand to develop our own action plan, building on work already being undertaken. We also continue to provide support to the coastal communities in the Pacific region who depend on the ocean's resources for their survival and

livelihoods, through the New Zealand Pacific Partnership on Ocean Acidification, led by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme.”

Ocean acidity has increased by 30 percent since the Industrial Revolution and is expected to double over pre-industrial levels by the end of this century as a result of the ocean absorbing one-third of the atmospheric carbon dioxide generated by human activities. More alarming, based on extensive laboratory and field studies conducted worldwide, significant impacts on fisheries and marine ecosystems have already been documented due to ocean acidification and will worsen in the future. From juvenile oyster die-offs in the Pacific Northwest to coral reef bleaching in the Caribbean and South Pacific Ocean – impacts are already being felt by coastal communities around the world.

“We know that ocean acidification is a major problem for coastal businesses on the West Coast of the United States – we also know that it’s likely to severely impact communities ranging from New Zealand to Norway, Tuvalu to Madagascar,” said Susan Ruffo, managing director of international initiatives at Ocean Conservancy, a founding member of the OA Alliance. “The good news is that we now have a group of countries, states, and other actors dedicated to sharing information on how they can respond to acidification in a way that protects businesses, communities and the environment. Alliance members can also come together as a strong influential voice, putting solutions to ocean acidification squarely at the center of international climate negotiations.”

At today’s meeting of OA Alliance members, Ambassador Torres discussed actions to reduce or mitigate OA in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) associated with the Paris Agreement.

Other recommended actions for member countries include:

- Develop national inter-agency working groups on ocean acidification with experts from different fields (e.g., fisheries and aquaculture, conservation, tourism, finance);
- Evaluate socio-economic vulnerabilities and potential impacts of OA on fish- and shellfish-dependent communities and tourism sectors;
- Mandate risk assessments for species at risk;
- Build ocean resilience and protect marine biodiversity as a means to safeguard marine ecosystems from the impacts of ocean acidification (e.g., establish MPAs);
- Identify and protect key habitats that play a crucial role in climate change mitigation and adaptation (e.g., mangroves and seagrass beds), and;
- Reduce local sources of acidification (e.g., improve wastewater treatment, minimize non-point source runoff, inform farmers of best practices for nutrient management).

Representatives from the OA Alliance in attendance at the Our Ocean Conference are available for interviews and can speak to:

- Business and fisheries impacts that their regions have already, or are anticipated to experience due to ocean acidification.
- Collaborations of cities, states, provinces, countries, Tribes, researchers, businesses and NGO’s that have banded together as the OA Alliance to work collaboratively to combat OA.
- United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goal 14.3, which addresses ocean acidification and the threats it poses, and in-region plans for addressing ocean acidification. Of note, Washington State developed an OA Action Plan in 2012 – the first jurisdiction worldwide to do so – and is investing in research and monitoring, and implementation of actions to address OA.
- International climate agreements and the importance that they include meaningful targets to

reduce carbon emissions – the number one cause of ocean acidification – and plans for including oceans language in future climate decisions, including COP23 and 24.

For more on the International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification, including its full list of government, industry and NGO members, please visit <https://www.OAlliance.org>

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