

# Rio+20: Making it Happen

Newsletter of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development  
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## Conference Dates

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) will be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil  
20 - 22 June 2012

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Oceans are threatened by acidification, oil spills, climate change and other pollutants today (UN Photo/ Milton Grant)

## Seeking Sustainable Oceans for a Changing Planet

It is estimated that 3 billion people obtain at least 15 per cent of their animal protein from fish, according to a 2011 UN report on the Oceans and the law of the sea. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reports that fish and aquatic plants generate \$106 billion for about 540 million people, who earn a living from that sector. Today, oil is one of the greatest resources from the sea. With approximately one-third of the world's oil reserves coming from offshore.

Nonetheless, human activity has significant negative impact on the environment and marine resources in general. Over the past

decade, it is estimated that an average of 600,000 barrels of oil a year is spilled accidentally into the oceans from ships, resulting in hazardous pollution of the marine environment. Up to 1 million sea birds, 100,000 sea mammals and countless fish are killed each year by harmful plastic waste, which has compromised the stability of our ecosystem for years. This problem seriously threatens the sustainability of our oceans and marine resources, especially given the effects of an ever-growing world population and of climate change.

It not surprising, therefore, that Rio+20 preparatory meetings and side-events have identified the sustainable management of the oceans and marine resources (blue economy) as one of the seven priority areas to be addressed by world leaders at the Conference next year. Besides the two main themes for Rio+20 (a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and institutional framework for sustainable development), the seven priority areas, where the Conference will also assess progress for sustainable development are as follows:

- Combating poverty, including through green jobs and promoting social inclusion;
- Advancing food security and sustainable agriculture;
- Sound water management;
- Energy access including from renewable sources, as well as efficiency and sustainability;
- Sustainable human settlements;
- Management of oceans; and
- Improving resilience and disaster preparedness.

To facilitate discussions at Rio+20 preparatory meetings, the Secretariat recently published an on-line Brief highlighting the vital role that the oceans and marine resources play in achieving sustainable development. The Brief indicates that progress in implementing international decisions to increase the sustainable development of marine resources has been slow, despite the fact that the oceans comprise 72% of the Earth's surface (a major part of the planet that supports life).

In addition to the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the recent Secretariat Brief identifies twelve other international initiatives, recognizing the important role that the oceans play in achieving sustainable development. However, the brief also underlines major implementation gaps in those agreements. It notes for example that the target of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development "to restore fish stocks to their maximum sustainable yields by 2015" is a commitment that is unlikely to be met.

Furthermore, the Brief highlights significant challenges and emerging issues that currently threaten the sustainable development of the oceans and marine resources, including overfishing and destructive fishing, loss of biodiversity, ocean acidification, and ocean warming. The Brief encourages delegates to use the opportunity of Rio+20 to speed up the implementation of agreements and to take action on ocean-related issues, especially as "the Conference will coincide with the thirtieth anniversary" of the adoption of UNCLOS.

In a related development, four UN agencies (FAO, IMO, UNESCO and UNDP) presented on 1 November 2011, in Paris, a "Blueprint for Ocean and Coastal Sustainability," which seeks to limit the degradation of the oceans and to improve oceans governance at the national and international levels.

## Quote

*"Climate change is the defining human development challenge of the 21st century and one of the most challenging threats to sustainable development in Africa."* -  
President of GHANA  
John Evans Atta Mills



Nikhil Chandavarkar (left) addressing a group of Swedish Parliamentarians. With him is Ambassador Staffan Tillander of Sweden (Photo UN-DESA)

## Major Groups Briefings

### Seeking Media and Civil Society Support for Rio+20

In our ongoing efforts to better engage major groups and other civil society organizations in raising awareness of the Conference, the Rio+20 Secretariat conducts regular briefings for the media, other interested organizations and the general public on issues relating to the Conference.

Last week, two such briefings took place at the UN Headquarters in New York. The Secretariat briefed a group of Palestinian journalists attending a UN-DPI Arabic media skills course, as well as a team of Swedish parliamentarians on 9 and 11 November, respectively.

Nikhil Chandavarkar, Chief, Communications and Outreach Branch, encouraged the journalists and the parliamentarians to share the Conference themes and objective with their readers/constituents and to garner grassroots support that will impress Heads of States to attend next year's Conference in person. "At Rio+20, we want you to help redefine the next generation of partnerships that will help monitor progress and implement the sustainable development agenda," he stressed.

### Launch of Rio+20 Communications Strategy

22 November 2011, UN Headquarters, New York - The UN Department of Public Information (DPI), in collaboration with UN-DESA and other UN entities, will launch a global communication strategy for Rio+20 entitled "**Rio+20: The Future We Want**" campaign. The campaign will entail a variety of activities to engage major groups and the public to help support the sustainability agenda.

Another campaign also being launched at the event is "a global conversation," will enable people around the world to engage in a discussion on the kind of world they want in 20 years and how to achieve that vision.

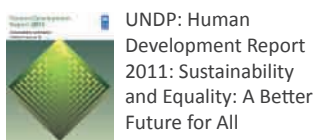
Participating in that global conversation will be UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Rio+20 Secretary-General Sha Zukang, DPI Under-Secretary-General Kiyo Akasaka, as well as representatives of the Brazilian Government and civil society organizations. Further details of the event will be posted on our website.



**LAUNCHING ON 22 NOVEMBER**

[www.un.org/sustainablefuture](http://www.un.org/sustainablefuture)

## Publications



UNDP: Human Development Report 2011: Sustainability and Equality: A Better Future for All



Report on Options for Broader Reform of the Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development, Steven Bernstein with Jutta Brunnée



Earth System Governance: Policy Brief: Transforming Governance and Institutions for a Planet under Pressure, Revitalizing the Institutional Framework for Global Sustainability



ILO: Towards a Greener Economy: The Social Dimensions



UNESCO: From Green Economies to Green Societies



UNEP: Keeping Track of our Changing Environment: From Rio to Rio+20

## Conference Modalities

On 22 November 2011, the 2nd Committee of the General Assembly is expected to adopt a conference modalities resolution that will among several things, confirm the new dates of the conference, 20-22 June 2012.

Please visit our website for more information.

## Upcoming Events

### UNEP High-Level International Forum on Ecosystem Management and Green Economy

18 November 2011

Beijing, China

[more information]

### Sustainable Development in the Arab World: Rio+20 and Beyond

25-26 November 2011

Beirut, Lebanon

[more information]

### High Level Expert Meeting on the Sustainable Use of Oceans

28 - 30 November 2011

Principality of Monaco

[more information]

### UNIDO General Conference 14th Session

28 November - 9 December 2011

Vienna, Austria

[more information]

### 17th United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

28 November - 9 December 2011

Durban, South Africa

[more information]

### International Conference on Groundwater Resources Management

30 November - 3 December 2011

California, USA

[more information]

### Rio+20 Regional Preparatory Meeting for ECE Region

1 - 2 December 2011

Geneva, Switzerland

[more information]

### High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development

7 - 8 December 2011

New York, USA

[more information]

Complete listing of meetings and events available at [www.uncsd2012.org](http://www.uncsd2012.org)