

Press release for 14th June 2018

The United Nations take a look beyond the surface of the world's Oceans

New York/Wädenswil, 14th June 2018: Honking car drivers on 5th Avenue, rock concerts or cheering audiences in Madison Square Garden, after-work parties and dance-clubs; these might be images people think of when being told that increasing noise levels and disturbance are being tabled at an international Meeting at the United Nations' headquarter in New York, USA, 18th to 22nd June. But the noise levels that will be addressed and discussed by experts from around the world are far beyond imagination. Talks will be centred on human-made noise in a world where sound travels five times faster than in air ... in our oceans.

Oceans are human's oxygen, provide food for millions of people and are home to marine biodiversity – much of which still remains unknown. But what makes marine animals so special is that many of them rely on sound for vital life functions, including communication, prey and predator detection, orientation, and for sensing surroundings. It is obvious that the louder it gets, problems arise. Levels of human-generated ocean noise have increased dramatically in recent decades. Shipping and industrial activities are constantly emitting noise into the blue vastness. But it is the intensive impulsive sound which is of increasing concern.

Explosions generated by so-called airguns carried by research vessels, fired every 10 to 15 seconds for several weeks or even months reaching up to 260 dB, are used when searching for oil and gas resources at the seabed. Experts are concerned about such noise as a recent study has shown the lethal consequences on zooplankton, heart of the marine food-web.

"Noise can pose a serious threat not only to whales, but also to fish, squid or even krill. Physical injury, hearing loss, lower reproduction rates and cellular damage are just a few among the various serious consequences" says Sigrid Lüber, president of the international marine conservation organisation OceanCare. Her concerns are backed by a commissioned literature review undertaken by researcher Dr. Lindy Weilgart, Dalhousie University, who reviewed 115 studies that deal with the impact of underwater noise sources on 66 species of fish and 36 species of invertebrates.

It was Sigrid Lüber who first addressed the issue of ocean noise at the United Nations in 2004 and she has great expectations for the meeting in New York. "The concerns about the impacts of underwater noise reached the highest political level. The Meeting provides a unique opportunity to recommend concrete action to the General Assembly. Now is the time to turn down the volume in our oceans," Lüber says.

The Meeting

The 19th United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (ICP19) takes place 18th – 22nd of June 2018 and is dedicated to the issue of



“Anthropogenic Underwater Noise”. Experts from around the world are invited to find ways to regulate and limit the harmful impacts on marine wildlife.

OceanCare will be represented by President, Sigrid Lüber, Co-Director International Relations, Fabienne McLellan, as well as Ocean Policy Experts Nicolas Entrup and Joanna Toole. Sigrid Lüber will report in a blog about their experience and – hopefully! – success stories from the five days in New York: oceancare.org/blog

Media contacts

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Links and further information

- Weilgart, L. 2018. The impact of ocean noise pollution on fish and invertebrates. Report for OceanCare, Switzerland. 34 pp. https://www.oceancare.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/OceanNoise_FishInvertebrates_May2018.pdf
- Brochure by OceanCare “A Way Forward: Twelve Important Actions to Reduce Ocean Noise”: <https://www.oceancare.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/a-way-forward-web.pdf>
- Opening Statement OceanCare: https://www.oceancare.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/OceanCare-Statement-ICP-19_11.06.2018_final.pdf
- Images, videos and graphics are available upon request

Side Events

- Monday, 18 June, from 1:45 pm to 2:45 pm, Conference Room B: A joint side event by OceanCare and the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), co-sponsored by the Government of Monaco: “The Role of Environmental Impact Assessments in Managing the Impacts of Noise on the Marine Food Web and Higher Trophic Levels”
- Tuesday, 19 June, from 1:45 pm to 2:45 pm, Conference Room B: A joint side event by OceanCare and NRDC: “Managing Ocean Noise Pollution through the new BBNJ Instrument under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea”

About OceanCare

OceanCare has worked to protect oceans and marine life, worldwide, since 1989. Through research and conservation projects, environmental education campaigns, and significant involvement in inter- governmental and United Nations bodies, OceanCare engages in solution-oriented strategies to improve life in the oceans for the benefit of wildlife and the



people who depend on them. In 2011, OceanCare was granted Special Consultative Status on ocean issues with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations and, in 2015, was accredited as a Major Group to the United Nations Environment Assembly. OceanCare has active partnerships with a number of multilateral environment agreements.
www.oceancare.org