



## Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary

NGO in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations since 2013 and with the Department of Public Information since 2013.

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RSHM at the UN

June 2017

### The Ocean Conference



One of the signature events at the UN in June was the first-ever **UN Conference on Oceans** which was held at the UN HQ between **5 – 9 June**. The Conference opened in the General Assembly with a traditional Fijian welcome which highlighted the cultural importance of the ocean for many coastal

peoples. For a 5 day period the focus was on this important theme, highlighting the **implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14** (see p. 2) and the need to conserve and sustainably use oceans, seas and marine resources so as to benefit present and future generations. . As the General Assembly President –Peter Thompson (from Fiji) *noted*, ocean and climate health are “*two sides of the same coin*.” “*The ocean is the lifeblood of our planet, yet we are poisoning it with millions of tonnes of plastic every year*,”



The main areas of work included negotiation of a political **14 point Call to Action**. All **193 Member States of the United Nations** unanimously agreed to a set of measures that will begin the reversal of the decline of the ocean's health. In addition to the formal sessions there were dialogues on partnerships, 150 side events, 41 exhibitions and documentary film showings organized by member states, UN agencies and civil society activists. The importance of increasing voluntary commitments to address some of the major problems threatening the health of the ocean and the wellbeing of the planet was highlighted and by the end of the Conference, 1,328 commitments had been registered.



Watch the [short video](#)



Watch the GA [opening ceremony](#)

#### Fast Facts

- Oceans cover **3 / 4 of the Earth's surface**, contain **97 % of the Earth's water**, and represent **99 % of the living space on the planet by volume**
- **More than 3 billion people** depend on marine and coastal biodiversity for their **livelihoods** and on the oceans as their **primary source of protein**.
- Approximately **750,000 marine species** are yet to be identified.
- As much as **40 % of the world oceans** are heavily affected by human activities, including **pollution, depleted fisheries, and loss of coastal habitats**
- **90% of world's economic waste** is illegally traded or dumped.
- **51 trillion microplastic particles** – 500 times more than stars in our galaxy – **litter the seas**.

**The growing problem of marine waste and the protection of the open seas represent particular challenges. What is needed, in effect, is an agreement on systems of governance for the whole range of so-called “global commons”.** (Laudato Si # 174)

### Deep Sea Mining

Among the delegations attending the Oceans Conference were several advocacy groups from the **South Pacific** who



were vocal about the growing threat of mineral exploration on the ocean seabed. Noting that the last frontier on the planet that we can break through to exploit resources is the seabed, they highlighted the dangers of commercializing this precious area of global commons. An area in the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian Ocean equivalent to the size of Europe - 1.2 million km<sup>2</sup> – has already been licensed for deep sea mining exploration. Concerns focus on the yet unknown effects of toxic minerals released into the sea and the air, and the mounting evidence of disruption of ecological systems. The first experimental deep sea mining project is due to begin in the waters off the coast of Papua New Guinea in 2019. Prominent among the civil society delegation from the Pacific was newly appointed **Cardinal John Ribat**, representing the voices and rights of the coastal communities who will be impacted. He made an impassioned call for a ban on

unregulated, experimental deep sea mining. ➡ [Read more about it](#) ... ➡ watch a [short video](#)





## Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

The Targets to be reached by 2030 include

**14.1** By 2025, **prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution** of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution.

**14.2** By 2020, **sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems** to avoid significant adverse impacts...

**14.3** **Minimize** and address the impacts of **ocean acidification**, including through enhanced scientific cooperation at all levels

**14.4** By 2020, **effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing**, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices...

**14.5** By 2020, **conserve at least 10% of coastal and marine areas**, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information

**14.6** By 2020, **prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies** which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing .....

**14.7** By 2030, **increase the economic benefits to Small Island Developing States** and least developed countries from the sustainable use of marine resources.....

**14.A** **Increase scientific knowledge**, develop research capacity and transfer marine technology...

**14.B** **Provide access** for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets

**14.C** Enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by **implementing international law as reflected in UNCLOS**.... which provides the legal framework....

➡ [Read more](#)....

### Clean Seas Campaign

In order to save the oceans and seas from irreversible damage, the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)** has initiated the **Clean Seas campaign** to eliminate two major sources of marine litter by 2022: single use plastic bags and microplastics in cosmetics. UNEP is urging countries and businesses to take strong steps to stop the excessive, wasteful use of single-use plastic and to ban the use of microplastics in personal care products. UNEP estimates that 8 million tons of plastic ends up in the ocean each year, costing an estimated \$8 billion in damage to marine ecosystems annually. Many countries joined the first 10 in making a commitment to “*turn the tide on plastic*” during the Ocean Conference. ➡ [Read more](#) ➡ [Support the UN Global Campaign](#) ➡ See more : [Art from waste](#)



### RSHM NGO BRIEFS



In early June, **Sr. Sipiwe Phiri RSHM** (center) from the Zambezi Region represented the RSHM at a conference held in Nairobi, Kenya on “**Women and Migration in the African context**”. The Conference was organized by several religious NGOs at the UN to bring together men and women religious to share their experiences, insights, and responses to this present challenge. ➡



● In mid-June, we were sorry to say good bye to **Iman Habib**, our **RSHM NGO intern** who has been **volunteering with our RSHM NGO** since she completed her degree at **Marymount Manhattan College** last December. We are grateful to her for all her support and competent help during these 9 months. We wish her all the best as she returns to Dubai and prepares to do a graduate programme in international human rights law.

*“The conference was very good. We had different speakers, mainly those directly involved with migrants, refugees as well as the survivors of Human Trafficking. The first session was on **Understanding Migration**, refugee dynamics and the urgency of the current situation The second session focused on **African Women’s perspectives on migration and refugees** paying particular attention to the current migration and refugee dynamics The third session focused on **practical responses and local actions** towards the Migrants and Refugees and the fourth session: **Strategies for effective responses – Opportunities for Advocacy and a Plan of Action**. We are grateful to the sponsors who made this conference possible and to my sisters for enabling me to attend. It was very informative and educative and I really appreciated being there”.*

**Sr. Sipiwe Phiri RSHM**

● In late June the NGO Committees wound up their work for the year and prepared for the SDG review in July. Veronica RSHM also participated in a **High Level Stakeholder Consultation on the Global Plan of Action to Combat Human Trafficking**. Enlightening input from more than 30 panelists from Civil society, together with interventions from the floor, will be fed into the High Level meeting evaluating the General Assembly Plan to be held in late September 2017.

#### Distribution:

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