

World Ocean Council

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NEWS RELEASE

World Ocean Council Creates Global Ocean Business Community For Sustainability Of The Seas

Ocean industries form cross-sectoral alliance on Corporate Ocean Responsibility

Honolulu, 30 September, 2008 – Ocean industries from around the world gathered at the United Nations in New York for the inaugural World Ocean Council (WOC) meeting to develop an unprecedented global alliance on sustainability. UN Global Compact Executive Director, Georg Kell, and UN Division of Ocean Affairs and Law of the Sea Director, Vaclav Mikulka, opened the workshop. “The World Ocean Council efforts to bring together the global ‘ocean business community’ to develop leadership and collaboration for ocean sustainability and stewardship are critical to the future of the oceans.” Mikulka said.

Participants from the shipping, oil and gas, fisheries, aquaculture, mining, maritime salvage and other ocean industries met on 24/25 June to identify priorities and strategies for the WOC to create a global cross-sectoral industry coalition on sustainable seas. Paul Holthus, WOC Executive Director highlighted, “The extraordinary growth in ocean use is resulting in cumulative impacts to the marine environment at a global scale, perhaps even affecting the ocean’s crucial role in regulating climate. Private sector leadership and collaboration on ocean sustainability is essential to the health and future of the global marine ecosystem - and can lead to business benefits for responsible companies.”

The ocean is becoming crowded, as more activity and new kinds of ocean use compete, leading to user conflicts and negative impacts on ocean-based businesses. Tony Mason, Secretary General, International Chamber of Shipping, noted that the global shipping industry “...greatly welcomes the efforts of the World Ocean Council to improve dialogue and understanding between those industrial sectors whose livelihood depends on the responsible and sustainable use of the world’s oceans.”

The principle business driver for constructively addressing sustainability is reducing risk --especially the threat of losing access to ocean space or resources-- stressed industry representatives. The WOC will coordinate efforts to reduce risk and increase stable and responsible ocean use by facilitating industry engaging in international ocean policy processes and collaborating on practical solutions. Mike Boots, Director, Seafood Choices Alliance, stated, “Collective efforts to share responsibility for the sustainable management of the seas are essential. The World Ocean Council is bringing together multiple sectors of ocean users to develop solutions that can lead to lasting improvements in ocean health.”

Business representatives at the meeting --including major oil companies and global industry organizations-- recommended that the WOC: be established as an association of businesses committed to ocean sustainability, expand the number and kinds of ocean industries involved, monitor and report on key ocean policy processes, coordinate constructive industry participation in policy developments, facilitate collective industry engaging of ocean stakeholders, develop cross-sectoral projects to address shared marine environmental issues and catalyze industry advocacy for improved ocean science.

On June 25, the WOC also organized the first-ever industry side event on sustainability at the annual UN ocean consultations. Industry representatives discussed their efforts to address marine environmental issues with governments, international agencies, and NGOs. As Carleen Lyden-Kluss, Executive Director, North American Marine Environment Protection Association summarized, “The World Ocean Council has the opportunity to develop a committed, collective and objective effort from all ocean industry sectors dependent on the global ocean. Through this important new alliance, we will be better positioned to promote balanced sustainable development of the seas that serves the both the marine environment and ocean industries.” A copy of the New York meeting report is available from the WOC.

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