

## **Ensuring Fisheries and Seafood Industry Sustainability through an International Leadership Alliance of Ocean Industries**

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Fisheries and seafood industries depend on healthy, productive marine ecosystems. Unfortunately, the marine environment and its resources are being degraded, destroyed and overexploited at an expanding rate and scale. As the primary users, fisheries, seafood and other ocean industries hold the key to their future in their own hands. Who is better placed than those depending on the ocean for their livelihood to implement sustainability solutions that work for responsible business?

Many companies want to address environmental impacts, differentiate themselves from poor performers, collaborate within and across sectors, and engage other ocean stakeholders. However, in a global, interconnected ocean ecosystem, the actions of one company or even an entire sector are not enough to address cumulative impacts of growing ocean use by a diverse range of industries. At the same time, new ocean management regimes that will significantly affect industry, such as marine protected area networks, are being developed by governments, intergovernmental bodies and NGOs without business input.

There is clearly a need for ocean industries to work within and across sectors to address impacts, reduce conflicts, develop proactive ocean sustainability leadership and constructively engage other stakeholders. The problem is that there has been no structure and process to make this happen.

The World Ocean Council (WOC) is transforming the way ocean sustainability is addressed by bringing together a wide range of ocean industries to catalyze leadership and collaboration in ocean sustainability and stewardship. Companies engaged in this cross-sectoral industry alliance on "Corporate Ocean Responsibility" share the goal of healthy and productive seas and their sustainable use, development and stewardship by a responsible ocean business community.

### **Catalyzing solution-oriented strategies and actions for ocean business**

The WOC is the only international organization created to catalyze cross-sectoral industry efforts on ocean sustainability and is working with the responsible marine industry actors to address these challenges by:

- 1. Creating a vibrant international, cross-sectoral ocean business community that provides private sector leadership towards achieving marine ecosystem sustainability and addresses threats to ocean space and resource access.*

The WOC is a business membership organization that creates a broad, global leadership alliance of like-minded companies and industry associations committed to marine environmental sustainability and stewardship. We are creating a forum for interaction among responsible companies on ocean issues, for example, the WOC "Sustainable Ocean Summit" is planned for June 2009. We work with maritime companies and their management teams to increase the understanding of marine sustainability issues and stakeholders. The WOC serves as a clearinghouse for objective, independent and balanced information on ocean sustainability issues relevant to the ocean business community. We are creating cross-sectoral working groups of leadership companies for substantive collaboration and action on issues and regions of interest in order to address threats to industry access to marine space and resources.

- 2. Ensuring companies are well-informed on ocean policy and decision making processes and constructively engaged on key issues and developments with ocean stakeholders.*

The WOC is working to ensure the responsible ocean industry has the necessary “eyes and ears” on major ocean policy and decision-making processes by monitoring, analyzing and reporting on critical developments, especially those that are not sector specific, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity. Further, we are developing a “voice” for sustainability oriented companies by coordinating industry information and input to these processes and enhancing collective, constructive, sustained engagement of the public and ocean stakeholders by companies involved in the WOC. The result is active monitoring and analysis of major policy developments for WOC members, early industry awareness of critical developments and emerging issues, rapid and effective input to critical policy processes and proactive, positive relations with the public and ocean stakeholders.

- 3. Catalyzing and coordinating cross-sectoral industry collaboration in developing practical, cost-effective, science-based solutions to specific marine environmental issues.*

We are fostering collaboration among companies to determine priorities and develop science programs that benefit from economies of scale in finding cost-effective solutions to shared environmental problems, e.g. the impacts of sound on marine life, shipboard waste discharges, environmentally sound recycling of vessels and marine structures. This will result in practical, cost-effective solutions to address priority shared marine environmental problems and the reduction or elimination of specific industry impacts to the marine environment.

- 4. Working with ocean industries to improve environmental performance by developing and implementing continuous improvement, best practices and standards.*

Companies and sectors need to determine their “ocean footprint” and develop Corporate Ocean Responsibility policies and strategies. We are working with industry to develop best practices on cross-cutting issues, e.g. marine debris, ship strikes on whales. This enables us to document and disseminate case studies and best practices in Corporate Ocean Responsibility, e.g. case studies on creating an ocean sustainability strategy, case studies in best practices for partnerships with ocean NGOs. The most useful ideas on best practices often come from those at the forefront e.g. fishers and vessel captains and crew dealing directly with the problems. Through best practices, specific marine environmental issues can be addressed and impacts reduced. Leadership companies that implement ocean sustainability strategies and actions to minimize their “ocean footprint” and minimize their impacts beyond compliance are improving their brand value and reputation.

- 5. Developing operational ocean industry leadership alliances in priority regional or national or sub-national sea areas.*

The WOC is working to develop cross-sectoral industry leadership groups for critical geographic ocean areas, e.g. the Arctic, Mediterranean, Caribbean, and coordinate industry inputs to regional processes and participation in specific processes. This leads to operational alliances addressing ocean sustainability issues in priority geographic areas and participation in regional solutions implemented that reduce inter-industry conflicts and/or stakeholder conflicts and ensure access to ocean space and resources.

- 6. Facilitating interaction among sectors to improve mutual understanding, create cross-sectoral dialogue and reduce ocean use conflicts.*

Opportunities for dialogue, exchange of information and developing mutual understanding among like-minded companies are being created through the Sustainable Ocean Summit and other means to increase cross-sectoral information exchange on ocean sustainability issues and challenges. Better understanding among industries of each other’s ocean requirements leads to

improved collaboration and participation in ocean spatial planning at local, national and international levels to avoid and resolve user conflicts.

*7. Developing collective industry support for, and participation in, improved ocean science, especially on climate change.*

The WOC is developing and coordinating cross-sectoral calls for expanded, improved and better coordinated ocean science, especially regarding climate change. This will improve the understanding of the oceans, create a more predictable ocean operating environment and increase the use of science for safe, responsible industry operations and marine ecosystem management. Related to this are efforts to develop ocean industry participation in programs to improve ocean science, e.g. participation in ocean observation programs, interaction with intergovernmental ocean database programs.

*8. Undertaking proactive outreach and communication to the media and public on ocean industry efforts and progress in addressing marine environmental issues.*

We are working to raise the awareness of the public and media of the positive efforts by fisheries and other ocean industry members to address environmental issues by providing factual and science-based information about real results. Media and public recognition of proactive industry efforts to tackle marine environmental impacts will be achieved through increased outreach to these audiences. WOC press releases, web content and other materials will ensure the “good news” about industry programs and progress are generating positive attention and improved reputation with the media, public, governments, inter-governmental bodies, NGOs, for responsible ocean companies.

### **Progress in Developing Industry Leadership in Corporate Ocean Responsibility**

The WOC is achieving considerable progress in bringing together the multi-sectoral ocean business community to catalyze global leadership and collaboration in ocean sustainability and “Corporate Ocean Responsibility”. The involvement, in-kind support and membership of companies and associations with WOC are growing. Relationship building with the UN Division on Ocean Affairs and Law of the Sea (DOALOS) and other UN ocean agencies have resulted in strong partnerships and endorsements. Major NGOs are also supportive of the WOC mission and efforts.

In mid-2008, the WOC organized a cross-sectoral industry meeting at UN offices on “Global Ocean Industry Leadership and Collaboration on Sustainable Development of the Marine Environment” (New York, June 24-25, 2008). The workshop brought together representatives of the oil and gas, shipping, fisheries, aquaculture, and other sea-based industries to identify the priorities for leadership and collaboration, determine the strategy and mechanisms for working together and develop the action plan for moving forward.

### **Sustainable Ocean Summit**

One of the key recommendations from the industry representatives to the WOC meeting in New York was to hold a major cross-sectoral international industry conference on ocean sustainability. The “Sustainable Ocean Summit” (Belfast, 16-17 June 2009), the first high level, multi-industry conference on ocean sustainability developed by and for the ocean business community.

### **The Future: Industry Leadership in Ocean Sustainability and Stewardship**

Leaders in the fisheries, seafood, shipping, aquaculture, offshore oil, and other marine industries can and should be guiding ocean stewardship and ensuring the oceans remain healthy, productive and able to support responsible economic use. This is especially true for the fisheries and seafood industries that are directly reliant on healthy, productive marine ecosystems.

The World Ocean Council is the international business alliance for individuals, companies and associations committed to a healthy ocean that supports their industry. This unprecedented cross-sectoral effort is creating private sector leadership and collaboration in tackling ocean environmental issues in a way that generates business benefits and reduces the threats to continued responsible use of marine resources.

Contact the WOC for more information on becoming a part of this innovative effort to bring together the sustainability leaders of the ocean business community. See [www.oceancouncil.org](http://www.oceancouncil.org) for more information, or contact [paul.holthus@oceancouncil.org](mailto:paul.holthus@oceancouncil.org)