



WORLD OCEAN COUNCIL®

The International Business Alliance  
for Corporate Ocean Responsibility

# United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

## WOC Briefing Report

## 2015

## Executive Summary

The United Nations (UN) is in the process of launching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These 17 aspirational goals, which replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), seek to alleviate poverty and promote sustainable development from 2015 to 2030. **This report provides background information on the proposed SDGs and outlines potential issues and opportunities for ocean industry involvement.** Under the proposed SDG Framework, there is a stand-alone goal on oceans.

*Specific Targets of the Ocean SDG include:*<sup>1</sup>

- “Prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds”
- “Sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid adverse impacts”
- “Minimize and address the impacts of ocean acidification”
- “Conserve at least 10% of coastal and marine areas”
- Restore fish stocks by “effectively regulating harvest and ending overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing”
- “Prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies that contribute to IUU fishing”
- “Increase the economic benefits to small-island developing states (SIDS) and least developed countries (LDCs)”

With an Ocean SDG and several SDGs that address marine related issues, it is important for the ocean business community to understand the opportunities and risks associated with this ongoing global policy process. This report evaluates the opportunities for business associated with the SDGs in the following areas:

1. Ensuring access to sea-space and marine resources
2. Participating in multi-disciplinary dialogues
3. Ensuring a sound business environment
4. Supporting long-term business viability
5. Improving risk management
6. Addressing risks of engagement and non-engagement

The final component of the report is a brief overview of the SDGs applicable to the ocean business community. This section identifies key aspects of the applicable SDGs and notes which ocean industry sectors will be most affected by these goals.

It is important to recognize that members of the ocean business community are not equally affected by the SDGs. Under the proposed framework for the SDGs the Renewable Living Resources, the Tourism and Recreation, the Marine Construction and Facilities, and the Energy and Mining sectors are among the ocean industries most impacted by the SDG’s aspirational goals. As these sectors are impacted by multiple SDGs, as well as the Ocean SDG, they are more likely to experience changes in government policy as a result of the SDGs. While other sectors, such as the Business Support and Professional Services Sector, are less likely to face changes in government regulations, since they support other ocean industries that are impacted by the SDGs, there are consequences for these industries should they opt not to address these global goals.

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). (2014). Report of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. A/68/970. <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1579SDGs%20Proposal.pdf>

Ultimately, ocean industry engagement in policy developments that may affect business activities is essential to successful ocean governance.<sup>2,3</sup> As the SDGs have the potential to significantly influence the use of marine space and resources, it is in the interest of the ocean business community to develop and implement solutions for responsible ocean use.

Potential courses of action that ocean industries may choose to pursue in order to address this approach include:<sup>4,5</sup>

- Understanding and managing direct environmental impacts
- Engaging in global dialogues on climate change, marine pollution, fisheries management, and other topics directly addressed by the SDGs
- Supporting and contributing to the collection of ocean scientific information
- Sharing responsible ocean business standards and practices
- Investing in product and process innovation
- Supporting technology development and transfer
- Advocating for full international participation of all states in United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)

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<sup>2</sup> Global Ocean Commission. (2014). From Decline to Recovery: A Rescue Package for the Global Ocean. Global Ocean Commission

<sup>3</sup> Holthus, P.F. (1999). Sustainable Development Of Oceans And Coasts: The Role Of The Private Sector. *UN Resources Forum Journal*. Vol 23 (2):169-176

<sup>4</sup> Nelson, J., & Prescott, D. (2008). Business and the Millennium Development Goals: A Framework for Action: International Business Leaders Forum and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

<sup>5</sup> Lucci, P. (2012). Post-2015 MDGs What role for business?. London, Overseas Development Institute (ODI).