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Promoting Sustainable Development: World Ocean Council - Industry Leadership and Collaboration for Corporate Ocean Responsibility

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The ocean business community has the need and opportunity to advance sustainable development of the ocean. Working with governments, intergovernmental organizations and civil society to achieve the shared goal of a healthy, productive ocean and its sustainable use and stewardship is in the interest of responsible ocean businesses. The World Ocean Council is a unique international, multi-sectoral ocean industry alliance for Corporate Ocean Responsibility

Achieving sustainable ocean development requires a clear understanding of the status and trends in economic use of marine space and resources – as well as the potential new kinds and areas of use. Achieving a balance between ‘blue’ growth, jobs, and a sound maritime environment will largely be based on addressing the opportunities and challenges facing the diverse, extensive set of existing ocean activities. Success in improving ocean governance and sustainable marine development will require coordinated leadership and collaboration by the diverse ocean business community. The World Ocean Council provides industry leadership in “Corporate Ocean Responsibility” to ensure both the long term health of the ocean and responsible industry use of space and resources.

Ocean Industry Sustainability Challenges and Opportunities

Sustainable development of the dynamic, interconnected global ocean presents unique opportunities and challenges for ocean industries. Leadership and collaboration by the diverse, international ocean business community is essential to addressing ocean sustainability issues and maintaining industry access and social license to responsibly use marine space and resources.

As the health of the marine environment declines, ocean industries are often held responsible for their impacts to the ocean by the public, governments, non-government organizations (NGOs), and inter-governmental organizations (IGOs). Advocacy groups are confronting ocean industries on a sector, incident, or local basis (e.g. oil spills, deep sea trawling, port expansion). Moreover, ocean environmental concerns are increasingly being pursued through globally coordinated campaigns (e.g. ocean zoning, marine protected areas (MPAs), ocean noise, marine debris, greenhouse gas emissions).

Ocean stakeholders are pushing for increased regulation in a variety of international venues where international ocean rules are established. Some of the most important ocean governance developments are being pursued through the non sector-specific international policy processes that include oceans, e.g. the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), etc. Balanced, comprehensive information on industry efforts to address marine environmental issues is often not seen in these processes, and there is a need for strategic, coordinated industry participation. Marine industries are often portrayed only as the cause of ocean problems, and the ability unable to create any other perception if they are not “at the table” and constructively engaged in ocean developments.

As a result, private sector access to ocean resources, services and space - even by companies with the best environmental record - is increasingly at risk from the loss of the social license to operate in the seas. There are many efforts by responsible companies to differentiate themselves from poor performers and try to do business more sustainably. However, the efforts of one company or even a whole sector are not enough to address collective global impacts by a diverse range of industries in a shared global ecosystem.

The private sector is well placed to develop and deliver solutions in response to society's demands that marine ecosystem use is responsible and industry impacts are minimized. A cross-sectoral ocean business community of leadership and collaboration is needed to address marine environmental issues, differentiate good performers, create collaboration with like-minded companies within and across sectors, and engage ocean stakeholders and policy processes. Given the size and scope of ocean industries, forward-looking companies and executives have a particular opportunity to provide leadership in collaborative, industry-driven ocean sustainability.

World Ocean Council: Catalyzing International Ocean Business Leadership and Collaboration

Industry leadership in "Corporate Ocean Responsibility" is essential to navigating this critical juncture and ensuring the long term health of both the ocean and responsible industry use of marine space and resources. Responsible industry performers are well positioned to develop and drive business-oriented solutions to marine environmental challenges and collaborate with other ocean industries and stakeholders in ensuring the health and continued economic use of the seas.

Many of the policy, practical and reputational aspects of ocean industry activities are now affected, if not dominated, by environmental concerns. These issues are affecting all industries that use ocean space and resources, e.g. oil and gas, shipping, fisheries, aquaculture, ports, tourism, ocean renewable energy, seabed mining, dredging, etc. This is creating important needs and opportunities for collaboration, synergies, and business benefits among the ocean business community. There is business value in ocean industries engaging in a coordinated systematic approach to addressing the challenges affecting the future of ocean business, creating opportunities for collaboration and economies of scale in developing solutions.

With the marine environment subject to increasing commercial use, ocean industries have much to gain by developing and delivering solutions to sustainability - and much to lose if they continue to be perceived only as the cause of ocean problems.

To address the ocean sustainability issues and opportunities critical to business, the World Ocean Council (WOC) was established to create an unprecedented global, cross-sectoral industry alliance. The WOC is catalyzing proactive, collaborative efforts towards "Corporate Ocean Responsibility" by bringing together the diverse mix of ocean industry sectors. Cross-sectoral leadership and collaboration can result in significant business value for the operators committing to the vision of a healthy and productive ocean that supports sustainable use by the responsible ocean business community.

The UN Secretary-General's 2010 report on oceans and the law of the sea noted there is a need to "create awareness and understanding among industry of the ecosystem approach, marine biodiversity and marine spatial planning; develop regional ocean business councils; and strengthen efforts to create a global cross-sectoral industry alliance to constructively engage in United Nations and other international processes relevant to oceans, through organizations such as the World Ocean Council."

Progress in Ocean Sustainable Development

The World Ocean Council (WOC) is harnessing this potential for global leadership and collaboration in ocean stewardship by responsible ocean companies that are well placed to develop and drive solutions. Many companies do want to address marine environmental issues, differentiate themselves from poor performers, collaborate within and across sectors, and engage other ocean stakeholders – and now there is a structure and process for companies to work on complex, intertwined, international ocean sustainability issues.

A multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approach can result in cost-savings (e.g. collaborative research to develop best practices in sustainability and find science-based solutions to shared issues) and reduce the risk of costly, unplanned and unnecessary restrictions to responsible business operations in the marine environment. Protecting the seas to protect your business makes good business sense, e.g. through the economies of scale that can be achieved in joint research on shared problems. Identifying problems and developing solutions must be based on good science, credible risk assessment, performance monitoring and the best available technology - and must be tackled at the scale at which the impacts are accumulating.

Companies with a long-term view of their ocean business are looking to collaborate within and between industries on solutions through participation in the WOC. This not only applies to the companies that directly operate use marine space or resources, but also to the wide range of industries linked to, or dependent on, those direct ocean users. This includes marine technology, mining, manufacturing and many sectors. In fact, any company that transports its products by sea is part of the associated marine environmental impacts.

A growing number and range of companies share the WOC vision of a healthy and productive global ocean and its sustainable use and stewardship by responsible companies. They are distinguishing themselves by becoming WOC Members and are calling on others to join. WOC Members to date include over 80 leadership organizations from a wide range of ocean industries: oil and gas, shipping, fisheries, seafood, mining, seabed mining, offshore renewable energy, ocean technology, maritime law, marine environmental services and other areas. In addition, the WOC has created a network of almost 35,000+ ocean industry stakeholders worldwide.

WOC “Ocean Platforms” for Collaboration

The WOC has created an international, multi-sectoral structure and process for leadership companies from the diverse ocean business community to work together shared challenges. This unique composition and scope makes the WOC different from national or sectoral industry associations and makes the WOC uniquely positioned to serve as a portal for the ocean business community to work with other clusters and research institutions and consortia.

Ocean business representatives have identified priorities to advance ocean industry leadership on key marine environmental issues. The WOC is forming cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder “ocean platforms” as the forums to address priorities for ocean sustainable development:

- Ocean policy and governance, e.g. Convention on Biological Diversity (CDB), Law of the Sea, etc.
- Marine spatial planning (MSP), including marine protected areas (MPAs).

- Operational/technical issues, e.g. invasive species, marine debris, marine sound, marine mammal impacts, etc.
- Regional interests, e.g. the Arctic, Western Indian Ocean, Southeast Asia
- Smart Ocean-Smart Industries, i.e. voluntary collecting of ocean, weather and climate data from “ships of opportunity”.
- Adaptation of ports and coastal infrastructure to sea level rise/extreme weather events.

Sustainable Development Goals and the Ocean Business Community

The World Ocean Council (WOC) is working with industry to develop meaningful, practical targets that can link the realities of responsible ocean business operations to the broad, aspirational Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Adopted by the U.N. in 2015, the SDGs provide 17 ambitious goals to guide global development from 2016 to 2030. One of the goals - the “*Ocean SDG*” - aims to “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”.

The World Ocean Council (WOC) was the only ocean business organization consistently engaged in the SDG process and produced a report for WOC Members analysing the SDG’s business implications and opportunities. The WOC SDG report reviews the SDGs applicable to the ocean business community, identifies key aspects of the relevant SDGs and notes which ocean industry sectors will be most affected by them. Ocean industries received an insider briefing on the SDGs at the 2015 WOC Sustainable Ocean Summit (SOS).

The WOC is fostering and facilitating industry determining what the SDGs mean for the ocean business community, especially the Ocean SDG and its broad, cross-cutting aims, e.g. reduce pollution, avoid ecosystem impacts, increase marine protected areas. The work will determine how ocean industries can provide leadership and collaboration to ensure the SDGs for the ocean are practical, implementable and measurable, support responsible economic activity, and advance development that can be sustained. These efforts will advance the efforts for governments, industry and other ocean stakeholders to best collaborate on ocean sustainable development.

WOC Ocean Investment Platform

Many of the environmental and sustainable development challenges facing the ocean industries can be addressed by innovative solutions. The WOC has been working to create business opportunities for companies that are developing solutions by raising awareness among the large ocean industry operators of these solution providers and bringing the parties together.

The WOC is launching the “*Ocean Investment Platform*” in 2016 to bring together: 1) Investors, 2) Leadership companies from major ocean use sectors, e.g. shipping, fishing, aquaculture, offshore energy, etc. and 3) Enterprises that provide the solution innovations, technology or services. The global, cross sectoral Ocean Investment Platform will catalyse interaction among investors, ocean industries and solution providers. The platform will provide a common process to identify, articulate and evaluation of ocean industry investment opportunities and risk.

The Ocean Investment Platform will provide 3rd party information that characterizes the issues affecting major ocean users, identify the kinds of technology solutions needed, elaborate and evaluate the investment opportunities and foster and facilitate investment community interaction with the ocean users and the technology developers/providers. Initial investment portfolio areas under consideration

for the Platform include: port infrastructure adaptation to climate change, port reception facilities (for shipborne plastics and other wastes), sustainable aquaculture, and offshore renewable energy. Additional areas will be evaluated, e.g. technology for ocean data collection, solutions for biofouling and invasive species.

The WOC is pulling together a growing cadre of individuals from across the investment community to collaborate in the design and set up of the Ocean Investment Platform. We will convene this group of interested parties and begin the work of developing the Platform in 2016. The Ocean Investment Platform will be a major feature of the 2016 Sustainable Ocean Summit (SOS), Rotterdam, 30 Nov-2 Dec, 2016.

WOC Sustainable Ocean Summit: Convening the Ocean Business Community

The WOC Sustainable Ocean Summit (SOS) - 2010 (Belfast), 2013 (Washington DC), 2015 (Singapore) - is a unique gathering of the diverse ocean business community. The SOS has become recognized as the preeminent international ocean business community conference on Corporate Ocean Responsibility. The SOS is a source of value for companies - as there are not otherwise structured opportunities to meet and engage with colleagues from other sectors and develop collaboration around shared ocean sustainable development issues.

The 4th WOC Sustainable Ocean Summit (SOS), Rotterdam, 30 Nov-2 Dec 2016 - with its theme of "Ocean 2030: Sustainable Development Goals and the Ocean Business Community" - will focus on the shared future for both a healthy ocean and healthy ocean businesses. The SOS is the only global gathering of the multi-sectoral ocean business community around the challenges and opportunities for growing the responsible ocean economy – including investment.

World Ocean Council: The Ocean Industry Leadership Alliance for the Future

As the global ocean continues to be home for an ever-increasing kind, level and extent of economic activity, industry is key to ocean health and sustainable development. The private sector needs to ensure its access and social license, reduce risk, and implement solutions. The business value for the ocean business community coming from collaboration on sustainable development, stewardship and science is compelling.

The WOC, the international multi-industry leadership alliance of ocean companies, has created a leadership opportunity for responsible ocean companies to address risks and opportunities. The growing ranks of WOC companies are finding direct business benefits in the synergies and economies of scale in collaborating with like-minded peers in other companies on these shared ocean industry challenges. As a result, an increasing number and range of ocean industry companies from around the world are distinguishing themselves as leaders in "Corporate Ocean Responsibility" by joining the WOC in support of a safe, sustainable Blue Economy.