



Statement by OceanCare and the International Ocean Noise Coalition

Nineteenth Meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea on “Anthropogenic Underwater Noise”, New York, 18-22 June 2018

Distinguished Co-Chairs and Delegates,

I have the honour to address you on behalf of OceanCare and the International Ocean Noise Coalition (IONC), which consists of more than 150 non-governmental organisations deeply concerned about the impacts of human-made ocean noise pollution on marine ecosystems and on their living resources. We have participated at ICP meetings since 2004 and commend the UNGA for having chosen to address “**Anthropogenic Underwater Noise**”. We look forward to discuss the impact of ocean noise pollution on marine life and the socioeconomic effects on fisheries and other sectors. We particularly welcome the opportunity that this meeting presents to advance actions to prevent, reduce and control this form of transboundary pollution.

Oceans are our oxygen. They feed us with fish, shellfish and seaweed. Their waters cover over 70 per cent of the Earth’s surface. This vast environment is home to a broader range of higher animal taxa than exist on land. Most ocean species rely on sound for their vital life functions, including communication, orientation, prey and predator detection, and for sensing surroundings. Yet, levels of noise in the ocean have doubled every decade, in some regions, for the past 60 years. Increasing anthropogenic underwater noise is a trend now threatening many ocean species and populations.

Studies have shown that fish catch rates can drop substantially, with larger fish leaving an area coincident with ocean noise events. By-catch rates have also been observed to increase and fish abundance decreases in the presence of noise. Across the world, unchecked propagation of ocean noise is now undermining efforts to achieve healthy, sustainable oceans and restore fish stocks, as prioritised through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with serious implications for human livelihoods and food security.

OceanCare and IONC propose the following important actions to reduce the alarming problem of anthropogenic underwater noise:

1. UNCLOS includes the introduction of energy into the marine environment under the definition of pollution in Article 1 (4). Hence, ocean noise should be recognised as a serious and pervasive form of transboundary pollution that should be mitigated and addressed under SDG14.1. Also, it is crucial to advance a global strategy that seeks to reverse the trend of rising ocean noise levels.

2. Support the incorporation of measures to manage ocean noise into the new international legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.
3. Require robust, comprehensive and transparent Environmental Impact Assessments prior to applications for noise generating activities. The CMS Guidelines for Environmental Impact Assessments prior to marine noise-generating activities shall be applied and put into national legislation and species management plans not only by the 120+ CMS Parties, but also Non-Parties are encouraged and called upon to make use of this tool.
4. Adopt a precautionary approach, by carefully assessing all future ocean noise-generating activities and legislating for Best Available Technology and Best Environmental Practice to be used for any activities given approval.
5. Take into account previous, simultaneous, on-going, and planned activities in the same or adjoining areas of proposed ocean noise-generating activities to consider potential cumulative or synergistic impacts, both from other noise and non-noise threats.
6. Establish 'quiet zones, using scientific evidence contained in Areas of Interest for Important Marine Mammal Areas and Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas to assist with prioritising and focussing efforts.
7. Support and encourage the Food and Agriculture Organization to conduct studies on the impacts of ocean noise on fish, invertebrates and fish catch rates, as well as associated socioeconomic effects.

We thank you for your attention and look forward to the dialogue with all stakeholders in order to achieve the UN objective towards healthy oceans.

Sigrid Lüber
President OceanCare and Focal Point of International Ocean Noise Coalition

European Ocean Noise Coalition - Europe, Middle East and Africa (Sigrid Lueber - slueber@oceancare.org)

North American Ocean Noise Coalition (Marsha Green - mlgreen@pacifier.com)

Central American Ocean Noise Coalition (Yolanda Alaniz - alanizy@yahoo.com)

South American Ocean Noise Coalition (Elsa Cabrera - info@ccc-chile.org)

Pacific Islands Ocean Noise Coalition (Susan Millward - susan@awionline.org)