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[www.mission-blue.org](http://www.mission-blue.org)



Dear CIS Forum Delegates and Guests,

I am honored to welcome this distinguished group of lawyers on behalf of Mission Blue and the Sylvia Earle Alliance. Thank you for being caring members of the world community and sharing your time to support the world's oceans – the major part of our ecosystem.

More has been learned about the ocean since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century than during all preceding history. At the same time, more has been lost. Global warming, ocean acidification, sea level rise and shifting weather patterns are stressing natural systems above and below the ocean's surface.

Many commercially exploited species of fish have declined by 90%; about half of the coral reefs have disappeared or experienced serious decline; hundreds of coastal "dead zones" have developed. Destructive deep-sea mining activities are moving forward.

The good news is that 10% of the sharks, swordfish, tunas and other depleted species remain. Half of the coral reefs are in reasonably good shape. Many coastal areas have been spared lethal pollution, some with healthy marshes, mangroves, and sea grass meadows. It isn't too late to shift from the swift, sharp decline of ocean systems in recent decades to an era of steady recovery.

There is time, but not a lot, to take care of the ocean that takes care of us. The next ten years may be the most important piece of time in the next ten thousand years. Opportunities to save the ocean, and ourselves, are slipping away.

Presently, a small fraction of 1% of the ocean is fully protected nationally and internationally. The Sylvia Earle Alliance seeks to ignite public support for a global network of Marine Protected Areas ~*Hope Spots*~ large enough to save and restore the blue heart of the planet.

The ocean and those who inhabit it do not know nationalities – nearly half of the planet is made up of the High Seas, which is beyond national jurisdictions. We all need to join forces to protect and preserve our ocean for ourselves and for the future generations.

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