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Executive Update: Clear Targets for a Clean Ocean

New York, United States of America

The following is an article by [Lise Kingo, CEO & Executive Director, United Nations Global Compact](#), originally posted on [GreenBiz](#) on 30 October 2019.

By the time the 2020 UN Ocean Conference takes place in June, we will be well underway to record another 8 million tons of plastic litter entering our ocean. Another marine species will become extinct threatening the fragile ecosystem. And more glacier melt will raise sea levels even further to threaten our coastal fishing regions. This is what we know.

So it's time to evolve the current conversation. From these risks, what now is the opportunity – What is the new playbook?

As we approach the decade of delivery for the Sustainable Development Goals, time clearly is not on our side and we have fewer options left on the table to reverse the rapid deterioration.

Creating a healthier ocean is one of the biggest challenges of our time - and all sectors of society need to play a role. But sadly as a global community, we are so very far from where we should be.

Make no mistake, we are in dangerous and uncharted territory. We see changes in our climate; dead zones in our ocean, caused mainly by pollution; unsustainable fishing practices and unprotected marine areas, in which ecosystems are at risk.

This is the sad reality in which we now live.

The role of the ocean as a provider has been underestimated and its time to course correct. We are seeing the devastation now from years of neglect and misuse. The ocean is a provider for food, energy, jobs and economic benefits for people in every country – even those that are landlocked. It is a crucial buffer against climate change and a massive resource for sustainable development.

Climate change threatens our livelihoods in the near term, but also our entire existence in the long term. So it's up to us to take shared responsibility and accountability – to take every possible action to change the current path. The investment that we now make determines our future livelihoods, our future economy and our future society.

We already have the knowledge, technology and means necessary to choose a more sustainable path – so we must decide – and act now. Since launching the UN Global Compact Sustainable Ocean Principles, companies from different industries have already signed on. These Principles provide the private sector a level playing field, enabling market forces to drive development in the right direction.

But we all need to go further. At the United Nations Global Compact, the private sector arm of the UN, we launched five Tipping Points for the business community to use as a primary guide to take targeted action. Over 300 stakeholders worldwide from the business community, civil society and Governments worked to identify these five tipping points to reflect what is achievable. These will now serve as the basis to spur action to preserve the health of our oceans.

Each of the five tipping points – “Fully Traceable Seafood”, “Set Sail for Zero”, “Ocean Electricity”, “Mapping the Ocean” and “Zero Plastic Entering the Ocean” – set well-defined guidelines where the business sector can take immediate action.

The business sector is onboard... excuse the pun. It is this sector, with its capacity to invest, innovate and operate that is best placed to bring about change that is needed. Taken with the Sustainable Ocean Principles, these Tipping Points should serve as the industry's new playbook.

But business cannot do it alone. Governments and civil society play an equally important role in creating a framework to allow the Tipping Points to be fully realized. Furthermore, local and national initiatives will be required for an urgent, coordinated international effort.

The ocean's future productivity is a business-critical issue that threatens all our livelihoods.

We need more commitment and faster scale-up from the business sector to create a more sustainable ocean and deliver on the 2030 Agenda. In June 2020, UN Secretary-General António Guterres will host the second UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon. It is here that we will commit to the goals that we have all agreed upon and are achievable now – but it will require us all to do our part. At this point, we have little margin for error and through our lack of action in the past, we now find ourselves with fewer options.

By not taking the required action now will cost us dearly in the future.

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