

## Press Release: Coalition for South Africa's Oceans

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A celebratory World Oceans Day event, hosted by **WILDOCEANS** and the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), was held at uShaka Marine Worlds' Aquarium on the evening of the 8<sup>th</sup> of June. The event, which featured a key note address from the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) Deputy Director General Judy Beaumont – celebrating South Africa's oceans and their importance for our prosperity, was used as a platform to announce an exciting coalition hoping to advance the protection of our oceans.

“Funded by Oceans 5 in partnership with Ocean Unite, WWF-SA, The Green Connection, Centre for Environmental Rights and the South African Association for Marine Biological Research (SAAMBR), this coalition hope to gain strategic wins for marine conservation in African waters that will catalyse action across the region,” said Dr Jean Harris of **WILDOCEANS**. “We hope to build support amongst public and ocean stakeholders for Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) by creating awareness of their value for provision of ecosystem services, ocean risk mitigation, food security, ecotourism benefits, moderation of climate change, and improving resilience to impacts of other global stressors.”

“DEA welcome the support afforded by this coalition,” said DEA DDG Judy Beaumont. “We appreciate any work being done that profiles the many social, economic and environmental benefits of a dynamic and relevant MPA network. This communication is key to bridging the gaps between government departments, as well as civil society and conservation entities. The drive to achieve a 10% (and more) MPA target aligns with South Africa's National Development Plan outcomes and international commitments. We are all connected to the ocean in some way and therefore all have a responsibility to protect and preserve our oceans for future generations.”

An exciting advocacy and awareness social media campaign called “Only This Much” is also aligned with the coalition. “We hope to mobilise a regional movement for increased protection across all African national waters and Africa's Southern Ocean territories, aimed at meeting the current MPA target of 5% before the end of 2018 and 10% by 2020, but paving the way to African states supporting a global target of 30% strongly protected by 2030,” commented **WILDOCEANS'** Lauren van Nijkerk. “Please join the campaign online to help us share updates, photos and news stories across South Africa – and the world!”

Alex Benkenstein of the South African Institute of International Affairs observed: “The inclusion of ocean protection concerns as part of the Sustainable Development Goals underscores the global nature of the challenges and opportunities we face in the maritime domain. For this reason, our Institute seeks to promote cooperative responses towards developing a truly sustainable Blue Economy, and a strong MPA network, both within South Africa and beyond our borders, is an essential component of that.”

“Given the role of healthy oceans in supporting an ocean economy, it's critical that we address the fact that we're currently only protecting a tiny fraction of our ocean space. We urgently need to scale up our MPA network to secure the underlying marine ecosystems which underpin economically and ecologically sustainable development,” said John Duncan, Senior Manager of the Marine Programme at WWF SA.

Judy Mann, Conservation Strategist at SAAMBR: “We are pleased to be a part of this unprecedented collaboration between organisations committed to marine conservation. The challenges facing our oceans are enormous and it is only by working together that we will be able to address them, to help people and the ocean.”

Saul Roux, Legal Campaigner at the Centre for Environmental Rights, said: “The Centre for Environmental Rights (CER) is a proud partner in this campaign for increased marine protection. Marine protected areas will safeguard our natural heritage and the ecosystems that underpin our growing marine economy. More than two years ago the Minister of Environmental Affairs published notices and regulations, for public comment; for an ecologically representative network of 22 marine protected areas. These should be declared as a matter of urgency. This will ensure South Africa is on track to meet our international obligations and will contribute to the realisation of our Constitutional right to have the environment protected for the benefit of present and future generations.”

“The Green Connection believes that sustainable development can only be truly sustainable if all affected are involved in decisions that affect them,” said Green Connections’ Liz McDaid. “GC is alarmed at how little of our ocean is protected for future generations and how much appears to have been allocated for extractive industries like oil and gas. GC is part of this campaign to ensure that our oceans are protected to provide livelihoods for future generations and we support at least 30% MPA goal – and all of South Africa’s affected stakeholders must be involved in such decisions.”

Karen Sack, Managing Director of Ocean Unite, concludes: “We purchase insurance for our homes, our cars, our lives. We even buy death insurance. Marine Reserves are the insurance policies we need to buy for our Ocean planet. They don’t cost anything but political will while they bring countless benefits to people and nature. They help build resilience to climate change and bring back marine life, securing our food, water, and air supplies. They provide job security. Given South Africa’s location at the confluence of two of the world’s great Oceans, the President and Cabinet have an opportunity this World Oceans Day to begin to meet and then exceed South Africa’s international commitments to protect at least 10% of her waters by 2020, underwriting and safeguarding marine life for the benefit of all South Africans.”

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**On this World Oceans Day we wanted to share 5 easy ways you can kick - start your journey of ocean protection:**

- 1). Join the “Only This Much” campaign and spread awareness in your community
- 2). Reduce your carbon footprint and energy consumption at home
- 3). Make ethical and sustainable seafood choices - follow WWF SASSI to check.
- 4). Stop buying and using plastic products OR ask your local supermarket why they haven't banned plastic bags yet?
- 5). Don't buy items that exploit marine life

#### **PHOTOGRAPHER JORDAN MILTON**

- For more information - [laurenvn@wildtrust.co.za](mailto:laurenvn@wildtrust.co.za) ; 0833994665
- **WILDOCEANS** is a programme of the **WILDTRUST** – [www.wildtrust.co.za](http://www.wildtrust.co.za)
- Only This Much – Social Media Campaign ([www.onlythismuch.co.za](http://www.onlythismuch.co.za))  
<https://www.facebook.com/OnlyThisMuchSA/>; <https://twitter.com/OnlythismuchSA>;  
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- About the Centre: The [Centre for Environmental Rights](#) is a non-profit organisation and law clinic based in Cape Town, South Africa. We are activist lawyers who help communities and civil society organisations in South Africa realise our Constitutional right to a healthy environment by advocating and litigating for environmental justice.