



Around the world, people celebrated World Environment Day 2017, heeding the call to connect with nature. Oceans are an important feature of the natural environment but sadly, they are sometimes overlooked or abused. Yet, according to the UN Secretary General, oceans are critical to development and security internationally. As such, this fact is celebrated on World Oceans Day every year on June 08 to raise awareness and spur positive ocean actions worldwide.

Oceans help to sustain life on earth, since together they form the largest source of oxygen for living things. Together, oceans also form the largest carbon sink, continually removing excess carbon dioxide from the air. This service helps to avoid an even bigger buildup of carbon dioxide gas in the atmosphere and thus help to stabilize earth's mean temperature. Other ocean services support many economies and livelihoods worldwide, serving as a basis for tourism, agriculture, and transportation.

The Atlantic Ocean borders Guyana's northeastern coast and supports our marine fishing industry as well as the transportation of goods to and from our shores. Unfortunately, this ocean like all others are impacted by human activities which threaten its ability to provide the very essential services for humans and the planet. Among the threats to oceans are overexploitation of fish stocks exacerbated by illegal and unsustainable fishing practices. Marine life is also affected by pollution from land-based sources which often lead to the destruction of marine habitats. Marine life and ecosystems are further threatened by climate change and ocean acidification. It is no surprise therefore, that ocean protection is a part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As Guyana pursues the SDGs and its goal of becoming a Green State, ocean protection will be an important component consideration.

SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources

This year's World Oceans Day celebrations centered on taking action against plastic pollution and cleaning the ocean of marine litter. Pollution of our oceans begins with a single person disposing of their litter improperly. Even tiny items like cigarette butts dropped to the ground may make their way to the shores of another continent and can take several years to biodegrade. Even when litter biodegrade, dangerous chemicals can be released into the water becoming dangerous for humans and other organisms. Plastic litter is especially problematic in our oceans because they typically take

hundreds of years to decompose. Some animals mistakenly ingest plastic and other debris which can release toxins in their bodies causing death. It is also a misconception that pollution in the ocean comes from ocean related activities, however, research has shown, that marine litter are mainly from land-based sources.

Take action NOW against pollution of our oceans!

- ✓ Promote good policies for ocean protection.
- ✓ Make your trash your responsibility.
- ✓ Secure your garbage while on land or out on the water; It's ok to wait to dispose of it properly when you get back on land.
- ✓ Practice Reducing, Reusing and Recycling.
- ✓ Encourage your family and friends about the importance of proper waste management
- ✓ Take part in the annual International Coastal Cleanup in September or organize your own cleanup



Ms Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, states that *“Business-as-usual is not enough to deliver the future we want by 2030. Achieving SDG14 calls for new science-based solutions and their transformation into informed policies and decisions...World Oceans Day is an*

opportunity for all of us to take measure of the global sustainable development challenges we face and to unite for the ocean we need for the future we want.”

You can share your ideas and questions by sending letters to: “Our Earth, Our Environment”, C/O EIT Division, Environmental Protection Agency, Ganges Street, Sophia, GEORGETOWN, or email us at: eit.epaguyana@gmail.com.

Why Celebrate World Oceans Day

- To remind everyone of the major role the oceans have in everyday life. They are the lungs of our planet, providing most of the oxygen we breathe.
- To inform the public of the impact of human actions on the ocean.
- To develop a worldwide movement of citizens for the ocean.
- To mobilize and unite the world's population on a project for the sustainable management of the world's oceans. They are a major source of food and medicines and a critical part of the biosphere.
- To celebrate together the beauty, the wealth and the promise of the ocean.