

Urgent International Call for Action to Reduce Human Noise in the Ocean

Vilanova i la Geltrú, Spain

As representatives of diverse sectors and organisations committed to the well-being of our planet's marine ecosystems, we call today upon governments around the world to address a matter of high environmental importance for marine ecosystems.

From 22 to 26 May 2023, international experts, including regulators, industry representatives, researchers and NGOs, convened in Vilanova i la Geltrú, Spain. This gathering marked the third edition of the respected international conference OCEANOISE, where thought leaders from around the world shared their latest findings on the effects of human-generated sounds on marine life.

The data presented during the conference shed light on the effects of anthropogenic noise throughout the entire marine food web, encompassing aquatic plants, plankton, invertebrates, fishes and marine mammals. These findings provide compelling evidence that, in conjunction with many other pressures, human-generated noise poses a substantial threat to marine ecosystems and biodiversity. Furthermore, noise pollution is intensifying alongside the growing volume of global shipping activities and the rapid development of riverine, coastal and offshore energy infrastructure.

In light of this evidence, OCEANOISE entreats governments around the world to act swiftly and decisively to mitigate the escalating burden of human noise in our oceans. We cannot afford to wait until the delicate equilibrium of our marine environments is damaged. The time for action is now.

Technological solutions are available to start tackling this planetary emergency head-on. Through the deployment of advanced acoustic technologies and innovative strategies, we can effectively work towards improving the acoustic balance of our oceans. By doing so, we fulfil humankind's obligation to give back to the ocean, a vital entity upon which our shared future depends.

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To facilitate this urgent global effort, we respectfully call upon governments to take the following actions.

1. Foster international collaboration: Initiate and support collaborative platforms enabling public administrations, industry leaders, scientific communities and NGOs to unite their expertise, resources and perspectives in developing effective noise reduction strategies.

2. Enforce existing or establish needed regulatory frameworks: Enact and strengthen legislation that addresses noise pollution in maritime sectors, setting clear guidelines, standards and enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance and accountability.

3. Invest in research and innovation: Allocate substantial funding and resources to advance research into the impacts of anthropogenic noise and the development and implementation of cutting-edge technologies that minimise noise emissions from shipping, wind farms, oil and gas exploration, and other human activities in marine environments.

4. Raise public awareness: Launch comprehensive educational campaigns to enhance public understanding of the detrimental consequences of human noise on marine life and the urgent need for collective action. Encourage responsible behaviours and sustainable practices among individuals, communities and industries.

5. Support sustainable practices: Promote and incentivise sustainable practices, such as alternative shipping routes, noise-reducing vessel designs and the use of low-noise technologies in energy infrastructure, to minimise the impact on marine ecosystems.

We eagerly await a swift and determined response to this call for action. The world is watching, and the time to act is now. Let us leave a legacy of responsible stewardship and be the catalysts for positive change that our planet so desperately needs.

OCEANOISE Conference Series Science Advisory Committee

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