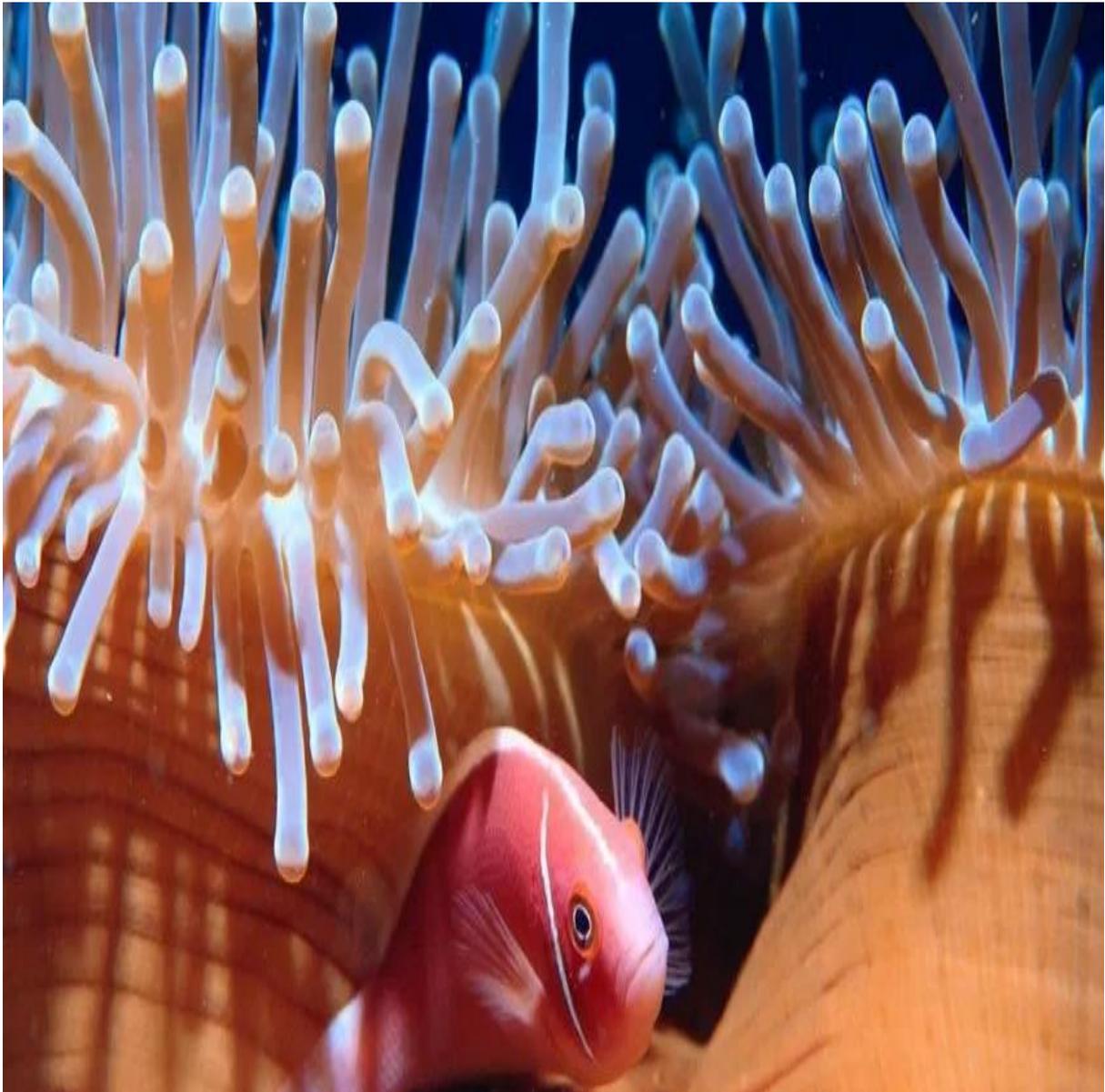


The question of conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas and marine resources (goal 14)



Background

Sustainable Development Goal 14: “Conserve and Sustainably Use the Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources for Sustainable Development “

Over 3 billion people rely on the ocean or marine resources for their livelihood, and the majority of large economic hubs are on the coast for the sake of overseas trade.

Many of the world’s oceans are in a state of crisis due to overfishing, pollution, unsustainable tourism, and global warming, amongst a variety of other issues. This led to nations agreeing on a Sustainable Development Goal to do entirely with the conservation of the oceans and marine species. This goal is one of the less controversial ones as almost all countries recognise the importance of maintaining marine populations for food and other resources, as well as for the sake of maintaining marine biodiversity.

90% of the world’s fisheries are depleted or lacking enough fish for the population that they provide for, but countries around the world continue to overfish their waters. As populations have grown so has the demand for fish, and this has driven down fish populations despite fuelling population growth, creating a vicious cycle of damage to marine ecosystems.

The UN has repeatedly recognised the importance of conserving and maintaining the conditions of our oceans, and has put into practice World Oceans Day, and hosted an Ocean Conference between the 5th and the 9th of June 2017 at the UN headquarters in order to foster cooperation in tackling the problem of the deterioration of marine environments,

A/RES/71/123 is the most recent resolution passed concerning marine conservation and therefore SDG 14, and is about sustainable fisheries. This resolution was adopted without a vote on the subject, as was a resolution concerning World Tuna Day submitted at a similar time. Remember to look back at resolutions that have passed through the General Assembly for ideas on how tackle this issue effectively.

Solutions

A particular issue concerning marine conservation is the fact that so many people rely on the ocean for their entire livelihood but are not allowed to reap the oceans rewards due to the intervention of large companies often based in rich countries. It is worth noting that by giving more authority to local fishermen in areas more sustainable fishing would take place, which would help with the issue of overfishing. Traditional methods of fishing that remain in place across the world are often much better from an environmental standpoint, but the trade-off is the lack of efficiency, which is a factor that should definitely be taken into consideration when writing this resolution.

An obvious solution would be to subsidise sustainable fishing companies, and environmentally friendly fish farms in developing nations to allow countries to feed their citizens without threatening the security of ocean populations. Allocating specific funding to nations that want to change their fishing patterns and invest in more sustainable practices is also a valid pathway.

Whilst the UN cannot force any nations to change their laws it can be strongly advised that they do so in order to regulate fishing. Fishing in international waters can be regulated by the UN, and establishing more effective and implementable laws on these areas could aid in stopping overfishing.

In a lot of areas tourism is drawn in by coral reefs, but this often leads to their destruction. An effort should be made to educate tour guides and locals in these regions not only to improve their livelihoods but also to allow for the continuation of these reefs existence.

An effort to ban trawling should be taken by as many governments as are willing to do so, with UN funds backing them if necessary. Take the example of the Chinese government; who banned trawling around Hong Kong but compensated the people who worked on these ships to ensure the solution was effective. We must remember when making methods of fishing illegal or stripping people of their right to use of parts of the ocean that this is their entire livelihood, and every effort must be taken to ensure that they are compensated for their losses and not made redundant as this could create a huge problem concerning illegal fishing in the future.

Implementing a 'catch-share' system in international waters is a tested method that works and is already in practice in many places around the world. It works by creating a scientific database of fish stocks in a given fishery and then creating a sustainable program for fishing in that area around it. Countries should be looking to implement these programs in their own waters, but this could be done in international waters with the help of the UN or a UN body created in a resolution.

A huge part of the problem is plastic pollution and eutrophication, both of which are issues that are caused by the way in which people on land act. Charging for plastic bags has been an effective deterrent in China and the UK, and it is necessary to tackle unsustainable farming practices and packaging habits in country as part of an effort to clean our oceans.

Key Nations

China

Despite being an incredibly large producer of plastic waste that ends up in the oceans China has repeatedly reaffirmed her commitment to keeping the world's oceans clean, and has taken direct action to prevent overfishing and to reduce the amount of plastic waste they produce.

New Zealand

New Zealand has recently created a marine reserve with an area of 260,000 Square Kilometres within their exclusive economic zone where all types of fishing are banned, as well as searching for natural resources under the ground.

United Kingdom

Since the introduction of the 5p plastic bag charge in the United Kingdom the number of plastic bags has reduced by almost 80%, representing a huge boost to the economy of the United Kingdom as well as a brilliant contribution to the fight against plastics which often end up in the ocean.