International Press Release

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To protect Oceans and people who depend on them, we MUST stabilize CO2 concentration around 350 ppm !

The planet's seas and oceans cover 70 percent of Earth's surface. They are essential for life: they produce oxygen, absorb CO_2, provide food and regulate climate and temperature. Sixty percent of humanity live less then 60 km away from a coast. Since 1750, 30-50% of the global CO_2 emissions have been absorbed by the oceans. This has helped slowing down climate change but it entails a disturbing change in the chemistry of sea water: acidification. Ocean acidity has increased by 30% since the industrial revolution, and will rise by 150% by 2050 if we don't react. It would be a modification 100 times faster than any of the changes in acidity that occurred in the last 20 million years, leaving very little chance for biological systems to adapt. Many marine species such as the planktonic pteropods which are the basis for many food chains, and corals could disappear, causing major ripple effects throughout ecosystems and food webs and ultimately affecting even the largest animals, as well as many fisheries.

We are entering the final days of COP 15 and the oceans are severely under-represented. But their ecosystems are major Carbon sinks and are confronted to profound impacts, from sea level rise and increased storm intensity to acidity, habitat shifts and receding coastlines. These changes are already causing severe impacts to vulnerable coastal communities, sometimes resulting in loss of life, damage to infrastructure and economy, and possible displacement and resettlement of populations. We strongly support the position of the Alliance of the Small Island States (AOSIS) and the efforts of the movement 350.org. They are all really fighting hard to impose in the agenda a limit of no more then 1.5 degrees C rising / 350 ppm. They have been joined by over 100 countries including 49 members of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

To protect a huge part of the ocean diversity, including major ecosystems such as coral reefs, and the people that depend on them, we MUST stabilize CO2 in our atmosphere below 350 ppm. The longer we remain in the danger zone—above 350—the more likely that we will witness irreversible climate impacts. Achieving this is a hard but reachable goal but it needs a genuine and quick green industrial revolution. But as far as science and coastal and small Islands communities are concerned, anything else could just be a short first step[1] ! An ambitious agreement will most likely not come out from Copenhagen, but the growing number of states calling for a real resolution of the Climate crisis is giving us hope.

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[1] See the Scientific Synthesis of the Impacts of Ocean Acidification on Marine Biological Diversity, CBD Technical Serie N°46, 2009.