

Under embargo until 10.30 am (GMT), Friday 30 January

Leading scientists from all over the world call for immediate action to stop ocean acidification

Paris, 29 January - More than 150 leading marine scientists from 26 countries are calling for immediate action by policymakers to reduce CO₂ emissions sharply so as to avoid widespread and severe damage to marine ecosystems from ocean acidification. They issued this warning in the Monaco Declaration, released on 30 January.

The scientists note that ocean acidification is already detectable, that it is accelerating. They caution that its negative socio-economic impacts can only be avoided by limiting future atmospheric CO₂ levels.

Prince Albert II of Monaco has urged political leaders to heed the Monaco Declaration as they prepare for climate negotiations at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen this year. "I strongly support this declaration, which is in full accord with my efforts and those of my Foundation to alleviate climate change," he said.

The Monaco Declaration is based on the Research Priorities Report developed by participants at last October's 2nd international symposium on The Ocean in a High-CO₂ World, organized by UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, the Scientific Committee on Oceanic Research (SCOR), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the International Geosphere Biosphere Programme (IGBP), with the support of the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation and several other partners.

"The chemistry is so fundamental and changes so rapid and severe that impacts on organisms appear unavoidable," said James Orr of the Marine Environment Laboratories (MEL-IAEA) and chairman of the symposium. "The questions are now how bad will it be and how soon will it happen. The report from the symposium summarizes the state of the science and priorities for future research, while the Monaco Declaration implores political leaders to launch urgent actions to limit the source of the problem."

"In order to advance the science of ocean acidification, we need to bring together the best scientists to share their latest research results and to set priorities for research to improve our knowledge of the processes and of the impacts of acidification on marine ecosystems," explained Patricio Bernal, Executive Secretary of UNESCO IOC. "The Ocean in a High-CO₂ World Symposia Series provides this forum to scientists every four years, and the Research Priorities Report it produces represents an authoritative assessment of what we know about acidification impacts."

The Declaration and Report will be presented by James Orr, Jean-Pierre Gattuso, coordinator of the European Project on Ocean Acidification (EPOCA), and Denis Allemand of the Prince Albert II Foundation, at a press conference on 30 January (10.30 a.m GMT, Acropolis Convention Centre, Nice, France).

Contacts: Lina Hansson for information about the press conference: +33(0)624828718.

Sue Williams, UNESCO Bureau of Public Information: +33 1 45 68 1706

THE Monaco Declaration and Research Priorities Report will be available from 10.30 am GMT Friday, 30 January at : www.ocean-acidification.net