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OUR OCEANS, OUR FUTURE

The oceans of the earth are its largest habitats and they are generally a great masses of water in particular areas. They do not differ in too many ways from the lakes, rivers, streams and other small water bodies in the world, as they actually originate from the oceans. Therefore it can be said that the lakes, rivers and streams around us are just little traces of the oceans in the world. Apart from being an unending source of water on the earth, the oceans are also one of the most beautiful and fascinating areas on the planet. The clear crystal water, the light blue pigment and the ripples, tides and waves all contribute to give them their astonishing looks. The oceans are places that one can gaze at for hours and forget all about his or her worries and problems. Even the majority of living organisms are habitants of the oceans. A popular quote by Sylvia Earle says that ‘with every drop of water you drink, every breath you take, you’re connected to the sea, no matter where on earth you live’. This emphasizes on the fact that the ocean is a key player in our daily living.

From the shower in the bathroom, to the flushing of the toilet, to the freezing of food items, to drinking of water and to breathing, the oceans are practically unavoidable necessities to humans. Having know all these, it is true that the popular statement is correct; without our oceans, we have no future, as every human society in the world depends on the oceans for a sustainable future.

Now what exactly are the benefits of our oceans and in what particular ways do they ensure us a good future on earth? Firstly and also most importantly, the oceans provide oxygen for our breathing and without them there would be shortage of oxygen here on earth which would make the earth to be no longer habitable for us. As a matter of fact, it is only the earth among its other planets that has oceans all over it, as the oceans cover a total of seventy one percent of the earth’s surface. After this, there are countless other roles that the oceans play in the world for the benefit of humans. If one takes a close look at the international trade activities in recent times, one would discover that over ninety percent of the trade activities employ our oceans as their conduit, and even in transportation the oceans have helped a lot as great masses of goods can now be moved from one place to another more conveniently than on air. Apart from containing valuable natural resources like oil, natural gas and minerals, the oceans also serve as homes to diverse plant and animal species that cannot survive on land. They also provide plenty of food for us through fishing, since not only water is derived from our oceans. And finally, our oceans play key roles on the economic and social services of the world at large.

All these benefits have emphasized more on the fact that we all need our oceans the same way we need our health, shelter and even the sun itself. Therefore we must try all that in our power to fight for their protection, conservation and prosperity because no oceans, no fortune.

However, in recent years this has not quite been the case, as our oceans and their resources are experiencing deterioration and depletion every single day and this is due to their severe exploitation and pollution. Severe exploitation of the oceans and their resources, in the sense that people no longer care about the welfare of the oceans or how much it matters to the society, rather all they care about is how they are going to make their money from them. Thousands of industries worldwide now make use of modern technologies to exploit valuable mineral deposits in the seabeds and seabed mining is another dangerous hazard to our oceans today.

Disposal of plastic items in our oceans should also give us a lot of concern as those plastic items are non-biodegradable materials and therefore cannot be decomposed immediately and efficiently. Pollution by household and industrial waste, sewage, oil spillage, fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides and so on have also cause problems in our oceans.

Not only do they make the water to lose its purity, but they also endanger the living organisms in the oceans. It has even been discovered that the ocean is quickly losing its self-cleansing ability and soon enough there might be no remedy for our actions. All these threats have been reviewed by researchers as of late and a call has been made to fight for the survival of our oceans, but if we want to make any impact at all and secure our future here on earth, we must first observe, study and understand more about the ocean as research is the key to achieving this.

Several world organization like the UNESCO, the European Union and the BMBF have all embarked in the pursuit of this goal. The BMBF in cooperation with its European partners, is playing a pioneering role in research in a bid to protect our oceans and secure our future. The organization has introduced an initiative called the Joint Programming Initiative on Healthy and Productive Seas and Oceans (JPI Oceans) which holds global cooperation as the key to prosperity of our oceans. Even the German G7 Presidency now holds the future of our oceans as a topic of high priority and for the first time ever, all the G7 states have decided to work together effectively so as to find solutions to the arising problems facing our oceans. A particular agenda concerning their protection is the International Ocean Governance Agenda and it helps in managing the world's oceans and keeping them healthy. Another initiative called the Marine Protected Areas (MPA) has also been introduced with the primary task of providing living organism of the ocean with all they need for their continued existence in refuges that are free from hazardous human impacts.

In conclusion, our oceans are in danger and need dedicated individuals to stand up for it and fight today. Public enlightenment and sensitization is required so that the world can understand more about the ocean and help to secure them. Even the United Nations have special legal protection for the seabeds, as they are seen as common heritages of mankind. If we all work together, we can and we would make a difference in the bid to save our oceans and secure our future.