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Message of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew On World Oceans Day 2020

On World Oceans Day 2020, we renew our call to the global community to work collectively in addressing the threats to our planet’s oceans, seas and rivers.

Since 1995, we have initiated nine inter-religious and inter-disciplinary symposia throughout the world, assembling international scientists and environmentalists, politicians and economists, as well as activists and journalists to meet with religious leaders and theologians in order to address the plight of our world’s waterways and water.

We have learned that the biological diversity of life in our oceans is one of the most imperative and effective solutions to the ecological crisis. Only in 2019, the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has demonstrated how the oceans have protected our planet against the severest impacts of climate change. Indeed, the present pandemic has taught us that healthy ecosystems are paramount for mitigating health risks to humans.

Nevertheless, the ocean’s life and ecosystems continue to suffer from the excessive and destructive footprint of unsustainable human activity, such as by depletion through overfishing or contamination through fossil fuels. Moreover, the

ongoing use and thoughtless waste of plastic results in a devastating pollution of our oceans and threat to marine life.

This is why we commend nations that create marine-protected areas, while cautioning others that reverse environmental regulations. All of us have a significant role to play: from politicians and corporations that should promote clean water over private profit to industries and individuals that can advocate for single-use plastics or volunteer for cleanups. Together, we can all make a substantial difference.

Protecting God’s creation is a moral duty; but it is also our only hope for survival. “For the one God in Trinity is glorified in the heavens, proclaimed in the earth, magnified in the sea and extolled in every physical and immaterial creature.” (From the Liturgy of St James).

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