



## Press Release

### **7 former heads of state to attend the POP Ocean Virtual Summit on World Ocean Day**

On June 8, 2020, to recognize World Ocean Day and underscore collective responsibility, the [POP Ocean Virtual Summit](#) will be organized by the [POP \(Protect Our Planet\) Movement](#) to celebrate voices and amplify advocacy for sustainable protection of marine biodiversity. The 2.5-hour online open event will bring in global leaders and former heads of states, specifically from coastal and small-island nations, to discuss, deliberate, and inspire action on the vast realm of marine conservation. The keynote speakers would include, H.E. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, Former President of Mauritius, H.E. Jose Manuel Barroso, Former President, European Commission and Former Prime Minister of Portugal, H.E. Lawrence Gonzi, Former Prime Minister of Malta, H.E. José Ramos-Horta, Former President of East Timor and Nobel Peace Prize (1996) Winner, H.E. Martha Delgado Peralta, Under Secretary for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, México, H.E. Mike Rann, Former Premier of South Australia, Sir David King, Founder and Chair of the Centre for Climate Repair (Cambridge), former Chief Scientific Advisor and Climate Envoy to the British Government, and others, including the young leaders of the POP Movement from around the world. In view of bringing forth a new generation of ocean advocates, the veteran leaders will participate alongside young people promoting cross-generational solidarity and learning.

Despite the growing prominence of sustainability and climate action in the past decade, there remains a critical need to shape the public dialogue on climate change and underscore the many lesser-known truths, including that the marine biodiversity, the coastlines, and the coastal communities are at the frontline of this crisis, facing disproportional impact. In three segments, the Summit will address the importance of the ocean and the anthropogenic impact, the relationship between the health of the ocean and human health along with its linkages to climate change and the pandemic, and global economic implications of ocean acidification and sea-level rise as well as the conceptualization of Blue Economy and Blue Ecology.

As H.E. Lawrence Gonzi, Former Prime Minister of Malta emphasizes in his pre-event statement, “For us to understand the importance of our Oceans for human survival, perhaps we should remind ourselves that life on Earth began in the Oceans. Let us make sure it does not end there.”



H.E. Mike Rann, Former Premier of South Australia similarly notes, “Our oceans, like our rainforests, are the lungs of our planet. Just as we are witnessing the destruction of our rain forests we are also seeing the heating and poisoning of our seas. Millions of tonnes of microplastics are not only choking our oceans but threatening marine life. The Global Financial Crisis a decade ago distracted the world from the fight against climate change. We must not allow the battle against this dreadful Covid-19 epidemic, and the economic recession that follows, to prevent us from tackling a much bigger threat to our planet. Healthy oceans must be at the core of our environmental credentials if we are to successfully rescue our world.”

Furthermore, H.E. José Ramos-Horta, Former President of East Timor, in his statement, asserts the historical responsibility of the Global North and calls for action towards mitigation. He says, “Europeans who invaded, colonised and looted far-flung nations for centuries, ruled the seas with armadas and merchant ships, bear the greatest responsibility for the extreme harm done to our Oceans. So my sanctimonious Europeans and North American brothers and sisters what are you going to do? Spare me your lectures and expert advice.”

H.E. Jose Manuel Barroso, Former President, European Commission and Former Prime Minister of Portugal aligns the cause of ocean conservation with green economy and the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals. He says, “Blue is green. Blue growth and the economic activities linked to the sea, should conserve and sustainably use the oceans. Blue growth has to respect the principles of Green growth and must be in line with the Sustainable Development Goals Agenda.”

By bringing together world leaders and young ocean advocates who recognize the paramount significance of ocean and Life Below Water, the POP Ocean Virtual Summit will educate and inspire youth-led action, which is fundamental to the mission of the POP Movement. The POP Movement is an international youth-centric organization functioning with the belief that youth leading climate actions on the ground, inspired by knowledge, is the ideal way in building and propagating a sustained environmental movement that will become inclusive of all the stakeholders in society.

The POP Ocean Initiative was founded in this regard during [the Second World Sustainable Development Forum on March 2020, in Durango, Mexico](#), specifically to initiate and stimulate youth-led marine conservation efforts through education and mentorship. Commencing this initiative, the POP Ocean Virtual Summit will amplify advocacy for sustainable protection of marine environments and will launch the Ocean Literacy Mini-Series focused on Ocean Advocacy and Training for youth. As H.E. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, Former President of Mauritius puts forth in her pre-event statement, “The water we drink, the air we breathe underscore our connections to the Oceans. They have defined our past, present and for a very long time to come, they will decide on our survival on this planet.”

Visit <https://bit.ly/POVS2020> to learn more & register

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