

Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development



The world ocean, in a general sense, is the largest body of water on the planet. It unites the world's oceans and seas, connected directly or through straits: the Pacific, Atlantic, Indian, Southern and Arctic Oceans, as well as smaller water areas connected to them.

In itself, however, the World Ocean is not just a large area of water – it is much more. On the one hand, it is **home to billions of organisms** of different types and species, but it is also extremely important for the overall **climate**. That's why we start with...

Important facts about the world's oceans

Did you know that the World Ocean is the reason Earth is nicknamed the "**Blue Planet**"? It covers as much as 71% of the surface of our cosmic home. It is also said that it was from him that the first signs of life arose - the **microorganisms**, which subsequently developed into animals, which gradually came out on land and began their terrestrial journey.

And if these are not enough impressive facts to make us preserve it, its importance in modern times is no less. The climate of the entire planet depends on the **currents in the World Ocean**. They are **hot** and **cold**, and a change in direction or temperature of even one of them can decide the fate of many a coastal settlement.

What's more, the world's ocean absorbs most of the **heat** that reaches our planet from the Sun. By absorbing it once, it subsequently gives it away and thus plays a large role in balancing the Earth's climate. In many cases, regions that border the World Ocean are much more pleasant to live in and there are no sharp temperature fluctuations.

The world's oceans are also home to the largest number of organisms on the planet. The list includes millions of known species of mammals and fish, single-celled organisms and corals. To this day, the discovery of new species continues as technology advances.

Last but not least, let's not forget that many cities depend on the levels of the World Ocean. This is the case both from the point of view of **livelihood methods** - fishing and extraction of various materials, as well as for local and regional **tourism**. However, facts and statistics indicate that for recent years ocean levels have been rising by an average of **3.66 millimeters/year**. Much of the reason is due to the melting of the planet's glaciers and ice caps. Their disappearance, however, has a direct connection with global warming, caused by the general pollution of nature - indirectly also of the World Ocean.

A major pollutant

14 billion tons of waste are thrown into the world's oceans every year. Yes, you read that right – 14,000,000,000. Much of it is plastic.

Many experts go so far as to predict that if pollution continues at the same rate, in 30 years there will be more waste than life in the oceans. And this is tantamount to an eco- **catastrophe**.

We have already mentioned that the most common pollutants of the World Ocean are **plastic waste**. The reason for this is that the material is cheap, easy to shape into different products and at the same time, it is very light and relatively durable. However, it is the last factor that makes it extremely **harmful to nature**. It is recyclable, but not in all its forms. Along with that, when burned, it emits many gases harmful to the atmosphere. When it gets into nature, its degradation takes place as follows:

- Plastic for making **straws**: about 200 years
- Plastic **plates** and **cups**: about 450 years

- **Diapers** made from materials related to the production of plastic materials - between 500 and 800 years old.
- **Plastic bags** - depending on the thickness - from 50 to 200 years
- Plastic **bottles** - between 180 and 200 years old

And that's just part of the list. The plastic we find in technology also takes a long time to break down. Unexpected plastic waste that is very often found in the ocean is ear sticks, product packaging, caps, balloons...

Other serious ocean pollutants

The next major polluter of the world's oceans is abandoned or sunken **marine facilities** - more than 600,000 tons of waste of this type decompose and release harmful compounds into the world's oceans.

In third place is **rubber waste**. Rubber is one of nature's most sustainable wastes. Your car tires, for example, take between 120 and 140 years to decompose in nature. Apart from them, however, a huge amount of rubber waste from children's toys, household appliances and many others fall into nature.

Let's not forget **chemical waste** either - it does a lot of harm to ecosystems in the seas and oceans and has a catastrophic effect on species, regions and even the coastline. This category includes all fuel and oil spills, **as well as** chemicals **poured** into the ocean as a result of the extraction of various types of materials from the sea depths.

Inhabitants of the world's oceans and waste - how much of it reaches our table

At first glance, the answer to this question is simple - the **fish**.

There are extremely many species that can reach our table and, respectively, be accepted by our body with **food**. World health organizations claim that with every intake of marine organisms, we are ingesting tiny pieces of plastic. And while in small quantities the substances are not so dangerous for us, with accumulation over time they could have harmful consequences. What's more, research claims that fish in the oceans have the highest **metal content** of any other food we eat. Once inside the fish, the harmful substances are transferred to the **caviar**.

Apart from that, however, the most dangerous for our health are **mussels**. Also known as the **purifying organisms of the seas**, they filter the water. That is why particles of rubber, plastic and other types of waste often fall into them. Taking a bite of the sea temptation, even after heat treatment, they get into our body.

What can we do to reduce pollution in the world's oceans?

In the last two decades, more and more measures have been taken to protect the environment - including the oceans.

A number of **new technologies** are focusing on a cleaner future for the planet. However, each of us can make our own contribution. An important element of this is changing our daily habits and above all - **reducing the amount of plastic we use on a daily basis** and recycling more. Less demand will reduce its supply, and therefore less harm to the oceans, seas and organisms in them.

