



SOS: SAVE OUR SEAS

Coral, clouds and dolphins: Witnessing the impact of humans on the oceans

Day 4, Marseille: Thursday 23rd October 2008

Moderator : **Roger Bingham**, Director, Salk Institute – The Sciences Network, USA.

Speakers : **Jean-Michel Cousteau**, President, Ocean Future Society, USA
Yves Jégo, Secretary of State for the Overseas Territories, France.
Patricia Ricard, Chairwoman, Paul Ricard Oceanographic Institute, France.
Richard Somerville, Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, USA

This session took a step back from the detailed discussions that have been going for the past four days at BioMarine to remind participants how truly wonderful our world's oceans are. Richard Somerville, Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in the USA, began on a sombre note and reminded all present just what a real and present danger unchecked global warming poses to our planet. "We need to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels not by one or two percent but by 50, 60, 70 percent," he warned.

A business-as-usual scenario by which we made no efforts to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions but continue, as we are doing now, to allow them to increase would have catastrophic results, he stressed. Sea levels would rise as ice caps melted, acidity levels in the oceans would increase dramatically, hurricane activity would almost certainly get worse and more violent, he said. "We will end up with a planet we really don't want to see," Somerville continued.

The scientific evidence to support what he was saying was now about as conclusive as it could ever be, he added, pointing out that over 90 percent of the scientific community now recognizes that uncontrolled climate change is a serious global threat.

Jean-Michel Cousteau, son of France's world famous ocean explorer Jacques Cousteau and President of the Ocean Future Society in the USA explained the work he had been doing to study killer whale or orca communities around the world. Killer whales had many things in common with humans, he argued. They can be found across the globe, live in complex social groups and are highly intelligent. Understanding these marine mammals can help us to understand ourselves, he suggested. "The toxins that go into the oceans end up on our plates through our food and they also go into the food the orcas eat," he explained.



He then showed a short film about how he and his team had helped to rescue a killer whale that had been stranded on a beach in New Zealand. This was followed by another film, presented by Patricia Ricard, Chairwoman of France's Paul Ricard Oceanographic Institute. The video showed whales, dolphins and other sea creatures in their natural marine environments. It finished with a warning that if we did not act to save the world's seas, images would be all we had left of such species.

Ricard argued that films like these mattered as they showed why it was so important to protect marine environments. "Why save something you don't care about?," she asked. She added that when she went to talk to children about the need to protect the oceans she often described whales as, "monuments to evolution". If an historical monument like an old cathedral or castle were in danger, there would be no question about the need to save it, she suggested.

Yves Jégo, French Secretary of State for the Overseas Territories, announced that after such heartfelt interventions he was not going to read out the speech that had been prepared for him back at his ministry.

Instead, he said he would try to speak with the same sense of urgency. "We have seen what the result would be if we do nothing," he said. "The sea is a new territory to discover, to conquer and protect. The planet's reservoir of life is in the water," he added as he pledged to do all he could to help save the world's oceans.

Picking up on this promise in the question and answer session that followed, one audience member asked why it had been possible in recent weeks to find trillions of euros to save the world's financial system but that there did not seem to be a tiny fraction of that sum available to help protect the world's seas.

Jégo replied that not everything was about money and added that if people came to him with well thought-out projects, he would find the funds they needed. "It is not the lack of money that's important. If we have a good project that is properly explained we will always find the means to make it happen," he said.

Speaking from the floor, BioMarine President and Founder Pierre Erwes agreed that willpower and a desire to make things happen was often just as important as funding. "With a small team of people we convinced all of you to come here. We can do it. You need to create networks, come up with initiatives and then everything will come together," he said.
