

PRESS RELEASE

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A Photo Exhibition "Let's Discover the Turkish Seas"

The Turkish Marine Research Foundation (TUDAV) is proud to organize a photo exhibition entitled "Let's Discover the Turkish Seas" at the UN Headquarters, NYC, on 19-23 August 2019, under the auspices of the Permanent Mission of Turkey. While depicting different aspects of the Turkish seas, the exhibition coincides also with the "Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction".

Seas and coasts are among the most threatened ecosystems of the world. No marine area is unaffected by human activities. We know that the demand for seafood continues to grow as the world population increases, fish catch continues to increase and aquaculture has a growing trend. We need to support blue growth to halt poverty and encourage prosperity for all societies.

As a peninsula country surrounded by four different seas, over 30% of the Turkish population lives in the coastal areas and depends heavily on seas and coastal resources for survival. Besides, Turkey has offshore deep seas important for biodiversity, fisheries, and blue growth.

In recent years, however, the Turkish Seas are under the threat of overfishing, climate change, alien species, degradation of habitats, various sources of pollution and so on. Only healthy, well-managed and productive marine and coastal ecosystems can support a stable economy and livelihoods in the coastal areas of Turkey. The seas are also connecting Turkey and neighboring countries. That's why the preservation of the Turkish seas has a vital importance not only for Turkey but also for the adjacent areas.

The Mediterranean Sea is characterized by high diversity of life, ecosystems and physical features, ranging from shallow, near-shore ecosystems to the deepest and remote features such as canyons and abyssal plains, both within and beyond the areas of national jurisdiction. Biodiversity hot spots can be found in the deep sea, including seamounts. For example, deep and cold water corals are also known from the Mediterranean Sea, but they are now under severe threat due to overexploitation and temperature increase. They need much more stringent protection.

The Black Sea is another body of water that Turkey embraces. Due to the temperature increase in the Mediterranean Sea, some of the marine creatures have started to migrate to the Black Sea.

About 85% of the Mediterranean and Black Sea fish stocks have been fished at biologically unsustainable levels. The volume of fishery discards, including sea turtles, sharks and sea birds, in the Mediterranean sums up to 18% of total catch, of which bottom trawls are responsible for more than 40%. The historical biodiversity of the Mediterranean is under siege and we need concerted actions to combat loss of biodiversity.

Marine Biodiversity in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ): High Seas

High seas have recently been revealed to host vulnerable unique habitats and biodiversity, such as seamounts, hydrothermal vents and cold water corals. The scientific knowledge and the impacts of human activities on them, however, are still limited at this stage.

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are one of the effective tools for the conservation and protection of marine environment when they are managed effectively. TUDAV strongly supports the establishment of high sea MPAs all over the world, including the Mediterranean Sea. Adequate management in such areas beyond national jurisdiction, mainly for highly migratory fish species, is essential for the sustainability of the fisheries.

International cooperation and harmonized action plans are essential to increase knowledge of vulnerable habitats and biodiversity in waters beyond national jurisdiction to protect them before it becomes too late.

TUDAV has been a partner of the High Seas Alliance (HAS: www.highseasalliance.org) whose mission is to build a strong common voice and constituency for the conservation of the high seas, comprising 64 % of the global ocean and containing some of the most biologically important, least protected, and most critically threatened ecosystems in the world.

For more information, please contact TUDAV (Turkish Marine Research Foundation).

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WHO ARE WE?

The Turkish Marine Research Foundation (TUDAV) is a leading environmental NGO in Turkey with a mission to protect and conserve marine biodiversity through scientific research and education. Its educational activities focus on increasing the awareness of the public and on capacity building in the Mediterranean, Marmara, Aegean and Black Sea. However, its activities are not limited to the seas surrounding Turkey. TUDAV takes pride in tackling issues within the environmental nexus: namely climate change, food security, IUU fishing, and loss of biodiversity. TUDAV also publishes a scientific journal titled "Journal of Black Sea/ Mediterranean Environment" triannually since 1995 (<http://blackmeditjournal.org>).

