

- Selections -

White Paper on the Oceans and Ocean Policy in Japan

2021



**Ocean Policy Research Institute,
Sasakawa Peace Foundation**

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FOREWORD

The Ocean Policy Research Institute of The Sasakawa Peace Foundation presents its 2021 edition of *White Paper on the Oceans and Ocean Policy in Japan* in an effort to support comprehensive and interdisciplinary initiatives on ocean issues at home and abroad. We herein summarize and discuss in a cross-sectional way various events and activities related to the oceans from the perspective of “comprehensive management and sustainable use of the oceans.” The *White Paper* was first published in 2004 and this is the 18th edition.

The *White Paper 2021* mainly covers developments in 2020. We wanted to focus on positive subjects in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. The first chapter’s theme is The UN Decade of Ocean Science. The Decade was declared at the 72nd session of General Assembly of the United Nations in 2017 and it is for the period 2021–2030. The first Decade was established in 1970s and this is the second effort. From now through 2030, initiatives related to the oceans will be implemented and highlighted at home and abroad to achieve UN Sustainable Development Goal 14, which focuses on the oceans. Progress in scientific knowledge is essential to address issues such as climate change and marine plastics. Solutions to these issues through innovations in scientific technology are being called for and Japan’s international contributions are also expected.

Focusing on the seventh of the 7 desired social outcomes of the Decade, “an inspiring and engaging ocean,” an interview with the president of Triton Submarines, a private U.S. company carrying out deep ocean exploration, is featured as a cover story. We hope readers will be fascinated once again by the oceans from their success in 2020 in diving to the deepest points of the world’s five ocean trenches for the first time. Following the lead feature, Chapter 1 showcases initiatives that are representative of Japan’s commitment to the Decade of Ocean Science.

Although we begin the *White Paper* with the theme of the Decade, the year of 2020 cannot be discussed without including the COVID-19 pandemic. In Chapter 2 we look back at 2020, the year of the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing attention on the issue of cruise ships.

In Chapters 3 and 4, we focus on the post-pandemic future. The world is looking for a way out of the Covid-19 crisis, which requires difficult maneuvering. The oceans are no exception. During the Covid-19 pandemic, we were once again forced to ask ourselves the question of how to address the oceans, and the phrase “Blue Recovery” was coined. Economic recovery and conservation of the ocean environment are not mutually exclusive. “Blue Recovery” means our resolve to create a more robust ocean economy which respects biodiversity and overcomes the risk of climate change by promoting and transitioning to environmentally sustainable commerce that maintains healthy oceans.

In the Forward of *White Paper 2020*, published last year, we called the year “the super-year of the oceans” and showcased many ocean-related important international conferences to be held in 2020. While most of them were postponed, there was progress toward sustainable use of the oceans at home and abroad. One of the efforts is the goal of net zero emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050. New innovations, such as the technological development of biodegradable plastics, are emerging. In Chapter 3, issues of climate change and the oceans and marine plastic debris are discussed.

In Chapter 4, the Revised Fishing Act's implementation in 2020 and new efforts of the industry are discussed. Developments in local governments' efforts, such as Blue Resource Project by Yokohama City, is worthy of note.

Lastly, Chapter 5 is about Marine Safety. In the past, the *White Paper* has covered maritime security, safety at sea, and disaster prevention. In the midst of the pandemic, we continue this as Chapter 5 focuses on maritime security around Japan, maritime safety involving the oil spill in Mauritius, and disaster prevention lessons learned from the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake in the ten years since its occurrence.

Many efforts were made on-line in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic at home and abroad. On the international front, many conferences were held on-line in the form of webinars. The oceans connect the world and world leaders shared the importance of international cooperation to address oceans issues through these webinars.

For our children and our children's children to enjoy the benefits of the beauty and richness of the oceans, the common heritage of mankind, it requires cross-sector efforts, participation, and coordination by various stakeholders, including not just national and local governments and international agencies, but also all people in civil society, the business/private sector and scientists/academia. Nothing would please us more than to know that the *White Paper 2021* is helping to raise awareness of the oceans as well as providing the latest information, knowledge, and ideas to those who cherish, think about, and work with the oceans.

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Atsushi Sunami
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