The 5th Meeting of the Global Ocean Commission (GOC 5), took place in New York, US, on 17 May 2015, in part to discuss the outcome of the GOC Report ‘From Decline to Recovery: A Rescue Package for the Global Ocean.’ Twelve high-level Commissioners, including former Heads of State, and ministers and leaders in the private sector and of international organizations, gathered to: provide updates on progress and developments since the release of the report; solicit Commissioners’ input into the strategy and get their active participation and input for the work going forward; and discuss ways by which a Global Ocean Accountability Board (GOAB – working title) could be established and managed once the Commission ceases to exist at the end of 2015. A high-level working lunch took place with the recently established Group of Friends of Ocean and Seas (GoFOS).

This report summarizes the presentations and discussions during the meeting. GOC 5 was held under the Chatham House Rule and this report therefore does not identify the speakers during the discussion sessions.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GOC

The GOC was launched in 2013 as an independent international commission addressing major threats to areas beyond national jurisdiction, also known as the high seas. The GOC was an initiative of The Pew Charitable Trusts, with Oceans 5 (a consortium of five philanthropic foundations), the Adessium Foundation and The Swire Group Charitable Trust. The GOC Secretariat was established at Somerville College, Oxford University, in the UK.

The Commission’s objective is to make politically and technically feasible recommendations regarding: overfishing; large-scale habitat and biodiversity loss; effective management and enforcement; and high-seas governance. The Commission also focuses on: examining key threats, challenges and changes to the ocean and identifying priority issues; reviewing the effectiveness of the existing legal framework for the high seas; and engaging with interested parties around the world, including those with specific interests in oceans issues.

The GOC is jointly chaired by José María Figueres (Costa Rica), Trevor Manuel (South Africa) and David Miliband (UK). The other members forming the GOC are: Carol Browner (US), Victor Chu (China), Obiageli “Oby” Ezekwesili (Nigeria), Luiz Furlan (Brazil), Vladimir Golitsyn (Russian Federation), Robert Hill (Australia), Yoriko Kawaguchi (Japan), Pascal Lamy (France), Paul Martin (Canada), Sri Mulyani Indrawati (Indonesia), Cristina Narbona (Spain), Ratan Tata (India), Foua Toloa (Tokelau) and Andrés Velasco (Chile). John Podesta (US) also served on the Commission in 2013. All Commissioners participate in their personal capacity.

Prior to issuing its report in June 2014, the GOC held four plenary meetings, in: Cape Town, South Africa in March 2013; Long Island, US in July 2013; Oxford, UK in November 2013; and Hong Kong, China in March 2014.

The GOC Report, ‘From Decline to Recovery: A Rescue Package for the Global Ocean,’ was released in New York, US, on 24 June 2014. The report contains eight proposals on: adopting a stand-alone Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on ocean issues (SDG 14); outlining steps to end fisheries subsidies that contribute to fishing overcapacity; closing seas, ports and markets to illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing; preventing plastics from entering the ocean; establishing binding global safety and liability standards for offshore oil and gas installations; establishing a GOAB; and creating a high seas regeneration zone if monitoring shows after a period of five years that insufficient progress has been made.

SUMMARY OF THE MEETING

On Sunday, 17 May, José María Figueres (Costa Rica), Global Ocean Commission (GOC) Co-Chair, opened the Fifth Meeting of the Global Ocean Commission (GOC 5). GOC Executive Secretary Simon Reddy presented on progress made since the June 2014 launch of the report ‘From Decline to Recovery: A Rescue Package for the Global Ocean.’ He highlighted significant support received, including, media coverage consisting of, *inter alia*, over 30 million social media impressions, as well as the delivery of a global petition containing over 288,000 signatures to the UN, calling for a
new international agreement to protect the high seas. He invited Commissioners to provide input and support in order to continue the momentum through the next seven months of the GOC mandate.

In ensuing discussions, one Commissioner lauded the value of focusing on a small number of priorities and the “remarkable commitment” of the Secretariat, noting that positive progress has been made by the GOC in multilateral systems. The Commissioner raised the challenge of mobilizing people globally and expressed concern over the lack of significant traction in emerging economies, noting the need for political champions.

Another Commissioner asked how the GOC can actively engage the UN system and the private sector to further mobilize action to fulfill the GOC mandate. One Commissioner underscored the value of a coordinating mechanism within the UN system to integrate the efforts and progress made in various institutions. A Commissioner suggested coordination with the chemicals processes, specifically in the priority area of plastics, to help gain momentum.

Commissioners strategized on opportunities presented by upcoming forums to generate high-level engagement, specifically by developing countries, and to strengthen political leadership. Opportunities to engage the African Union and further engage coastal countries in Africa were discussed.

Focusing on the second “Our Oceans Conference” taking place in Chile in October 2015, one Commissioner underscored that the agenda needs to incorporate the voice of developing nations. A participant shared efforts to address the connection between oceans and climate change, indicating that these special issues will attract the interest of developing countries. One Commissioner noted that the task of moving from process to outcomes and engaging champions to raise the profile of oceans issues on the international agenda is a long-term journey.

1ST WORKING SESSION – PHASE TWO WORK PLAN

GOC Deputy Executive Secretary Rémi Parmentier presented the ‘Report on the Implementation of the GOC’s Phase Two Work Plan,’ outlining actions that can be taken by Commissioners on the eight proposals contained in the GOC report in the areas of: SDG 14; high seas governance; fisheries subsidies; IUU fishing; plastics; offshore oil and gas; the GOAB; and the high seas regeneration zone. Commissioners then responded to the proposed actions to be taken.

On SDG 14, Parmentier outlined the need to continue to engage in the process of indicator development, as well as with the proposal by the Group of Friends of Ocean and Seas (GoFOS) to establish a set of triennial ocean summits to follow implementation of SDG 14. One Commissioner highlighted that within the post-2015 development agenda process, development of indicators has been much more controversial than development of the goals and targets.

Parmentier reported that the GOC’s proposed indicators had been well received on the margins of the most recent post-2015 negotiations in March 2015, and that discussions on the UN Statistical Division (UNSD) proposed indicators would require further work. Another Commissioner highlighted the importance of engaging specific countries to champion the development of ocean indicators in line with GOC recommendations.

On high seas governance, Parmentier noted possible work related to the UN General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution on Marine Biological Diversity in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ), which aims for entry into force of a UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) implementing agreement by 2022, and appointment of a UN Special Ocean Envoy. Several Commissioners and participants emphasized the importance of appointing a strong chair to oversee the BBNJ negotiations, as well as working to keep the pressure on for quick negotiations, with high-level engagement.

On fisheries subsidies, Parmentier outlined recent and upcoming GOC engagement with the World Trade Organization (WTO). Some Commissioners underscored that the GOC should not engage exclusively with the WTO, as the Doha Agenda is still stalled. Several outlined successful examples of framing the unfairness of subsidies, including the case of cotton subsidies, and noted the need to construct narratives that resonate and tie into conversations on global inequality to anchor action.

One Commissioner noted fisheries subsidy provisions in regional trade deals under negotiation, including the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, underscoring the need to engage with these.

On IUU fishing, Parmentier proposed action advocacy with key Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA) countries and seafood supply chains, formation of a Group of Friends of PSMA, and outlined advocacy planned at upcoming meetings. Several Commissioners stressed the need to engage with the private sector to put pressure on supply chains, including in emerging markets.

One Commissioner noted the need to link overfishing in the high seas to impacts on local and coastal fisheries. Others said forest and palm oil certification schemes could be used as a model to develop a certification system for sustainable fisheries.

One participant highlighted the efforts of the Global Trust standards system for certification to develop uniform standards to which all seafood certification schemes should adhere. Another Commissioner noted the challenge of traceability and stressed the need to increase the awareness of consumers on issues surrounding overfishing.

On plastics, Parmentier emphasized the need to: make the economic case for reusing plastic waste in a circular economy; develop a private sector roadmap; and catalyze funding by donor agencies. He noted the Commission’s collaboration...
with the Prince of Wales’s International Sustainability Unit, and ongoing work with the Ocean Conservancy, McKinsey & Company, and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation on this issue. One participant reported that the Global Environment Facility (GEF) will be initiating a project to address plastics in emerging markets.

Several Commissioners called for engaging high-level advocates for the oceans on the issue and mobilizing key private sector players to agree to take action. Another Commissioner emphasized this issue will not be solved without engagement by governments, industry and consumers. One questioned how to hold countries responsible for transboundary plastic pollution, suggesting that the UNCLOS Tribunal might be an appropriate forum.

On the high seas regeneration zone, Parmentier said work is continuing to further develop the scientific, economic and policy arguments to address this issue.

2ND WORKING SESSION – OPERATIONALIZING THE GOAB (WORKING TITLE)

In the morning and afternoon, Commissioner Carol Browner (US) moderated the session on operationalizing the GOAB, remarking that this endeavor aimed to engage a wider range of players and has already received suggestions for alternative names that could better capture the objective of monitoring progress on ocean recovery.

Kelly Rigg, the Varda Group, presented the scoping paper ‘Operationalizing the Proposal to Create a GOAB,” stressing that an ambitious approach is a pragmatic approach at this time. She highlighted that the proposal extended the original five-year timeframe to 15 years in order to keep parallel with the SDGs and post-2015 development agenda process.

Rigg outlined a strategy to engage high-level influencers from both the private sector and government in the mission to reverse the decline of the oceans and ensure recovery through the continued assessment of their status. She described the proposed structure of a governing board, advisory committees and council.

Rigg emphasized that the GOAB could build legitimacy by being science-led, similar to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), with a closer focus on “real time reporting.” She also presented funding options to hire a core development team who would work to further harness resources required.

Commissioners explored the proposed model, together with variations such as: a science-led mechanism to provide standards, combined with self-reporting by member states and companies; a reporting body that would rank compliance by entities and “shame” bodies with low-ranking achievements; and an autonomous institution to support UN processes.

Commissioners provided feedback on the proposals, noting that governments may be more likely to adhere to standards if they are ranked against one another in published indexes. Commissioners agreed that it would be helpful to compare alternative structures for the GOAB, requesting further details on comparative missions, goals, structures and budget requirements.

Several Commissioners and participants voiced concern about gaps in available data on oceans and considered which body or bodies should be responsible for collection of information. Some Commissioners preferred that existing scientific research bodies, such as the IPCC or the International Programme on the State of the Ocean, remain the authority on science, allowing the emerging GOAB to focus on tracking actions and supporting the efficiency of such actions. Others expressed concern that if the GOAB does not take action to fill the data gaps, advancement of a legacy instrument could be compromised.

Another added that providing the “best” science would be one way for the GOAB to gain legitimacy. Commissioners agreed that although science underpins all proposals, it does not require the GOAB to be a science-producing body.

Commissioners also debated the value of housing the GOAB within the UN system or independent of it, with one Commissioner questioning if these two options were exclusive. Commissioners noted the opportunity presented by the proposed UN triennial ocean summits to bring attention and legitimacy to ocean issues.

Commissioners and participants discussed how to champion the GOC’s proposals on the SDG indicators to better mainstream concepts, measure outcomes and gain further support. One Commissioner emphasized the importance of maintaining a relationship with the multilateral process, underscoring that the GOAB should seek engagement with the UN, without developing a formal dependence on the UN system.

Considering that the original mandate for the GOC included a limited life span of three years, Commissioners explored how to, in the future, use the earned legitimacy and brand value of the GOC to create effective mechanisms for implementation and measurement of progress.

Several Commissioners proposed extending the existing GOC mandate to maximize progress made rather than seeking to create a new body. There was general agreement on following through on the already formulated proposal to establish the GOAB. Several Commissioners agreed that continuing the GOC in its current form would require discussion and support from donors.

WORKING LUNCH WITH THE GOFOS

GOC Co-Chair Figueres welcomed Ambassadors from the GoFOS to the working lunch.

The Ambassadors outlined that the GoFOS was established at the beginning of 2015 to address all issues related to ensuring the integrity of delivery of all facets of SDG 14, noting priorities including: increasing coherence within the UN system on oceans and seas, and making the system more accountable; raising awareness of oceans issues; and working
on oceans issues in the post-2015 development agenda to ensure resources for implementation and engagement on indicators, and to drive implementation between 2016-2030. They welcomed the GOC report and several called on the GOC to continue in some form to capitalize on the strength of the brand and its legitimacy.

The Ambassadors then presented the GoFOS proposal for triennial ocean summits to provide accountability in the implementation of the proposed SDG 14. They said the summit will bring together all ocean-related organizations, including intergovernmental organizations and bodies, governments, the private sector and civil society, to establish benchmarks for the implementation of the SDG 14, review achievement of previously set benchmarks and then submit new ones.

One Ambassador explained that a UN resolution will be brought for adoption by UNGA on creation of the triennial summits process in late fall 2015 and that the first summit is envisaged to take place in 2017, in Fiji. Several Ambassadors stressed the importance of quality indicators and of timely assessment of whether ocean decline is reversing during the implementation of SDG 14.

**3RD WORKING SESSION – CLIMATE OCEAN OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS, AND THE ROLE OF THE COMMISSION**

GOC Co-Chair Figueres introduced the session.

Teresa Ribera, Director, Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations, presented on links between oceans and climate change, identifying five challenges for the GOC: communication and public awareness; opportunities to engage on oceans and climate in 2015; use of non-traditional answers such as blue carbon; the need to fill knowledge gaps on oceans and climate; and how to move the issue of oceans and climate beyond the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP 21) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), to be held in Paris, France, in December 2015.

Ribera noted that despite knowledge about ocean warming, acidification and sea level rise and their cascading effects, there is broad lack of awareness around these issues. She stressed the need to consider whether there will be concrete actions from the UNFCCC COP 21 outcomes on the interactions between oceans and climate. She outlined opportunities in the area of adaptation, while noting that the climate regime is probably not the ideal place to address ocean governance.

Ribera proposed a declaration on ocean and climate that, while not formally linked to the climate negotiations, could increase the visibility of the ocean community during UNFCCC COP 21 and capture momentum. She suggested building an “Ocean and Climate Club” that could be mobilized beyond 2015.

Ribera said that blue carbon, built on the REDD+ (reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation in developing countries, including conservation) model could be a means of inserting marine ecosystem protection into the UNFCCC process, but stressed this would not be an easy task. She highlighted a proposal made by Monaco for an IPCC special report on oceans.

Commissioners agreed to work towards a groundswell of support for the proposed IPCC special report on oceans through UNFCCC COP 21. One participant emphasized the importance of identifying donors to pledge financial support for the report.

Commissioners and participants queried how to best frame ocean issues in the context of UNFCCC COP 21. Within the process, they identified that they could either try to follow the REDD+ model to insert blue carbon into the agenda of the UNFCCC or make space for oceans in any new global adaptation goal. Outside of the formal negotiations, Commissioners and participants suggested they try to find a way to “rise above the background noise” in Paris to effectively engage on the margins of the meeting through the ocean pavilion, ocean declaration and/or coordinated messaging with other ocean organizations. Commissioners agreed that Paris presents an opportunity to raise awareness about oceans and climate issues.

**MAPPING OUT THE NEXT SEVEN MONTHS – EVENTS AND COMMISSIONERS’ AVAILABILITY**

GOC Executive Secretary Reddy presented activities related to promoting the eight goals outlined in the GOC report.

On **SDGs**, the Commissioners agreed to, *inter alia*, actively advocate the GOC proposed ocean indicators for SDG 14 in the post-2015 development process, and for a UNGA resolution to establish the triennial ocean summits.

On **governing the high seas**, Commissioners agreed to maintain support for the UNGA BBNJ Resolution, and to actively advocate the entry into force of the new UNCLOS implementing agreement by 2022 and for a UN Special Ocean
Envoys starting in 2017. Reddy also noted that Commissioners had agreed during discussions to advocate for a strong chair to lead the negotiations.

On *subsidies*, Reddy outlined engagement at upcoming WTO meetings. He highlighted additional activities to be undertaken by the GOC from deliberations, including engaging with countries negatively impacted by fisheries subsidies and raising awareness on the harmful effects of fisheries subsidies, particularly on African coastal states, following the “cotton model.”

On *IUU fishing*, Commissioners agreed to engage with key countries and with the seafood supply chain, and encourage the formation of a Group of Friends of PSMA. During discussions, they also agreed to: engage with countries in the process of adopting the PSMA; work on standardizing seafood certification schemes; and actively link illegal high seas fisheries and coastal fisheries depletion within the IUU narrative.

On *plastics*, Commissioners agreed to highlight the economic case for preventing plastics waste from reaching the ocean, engage with the private sector to commit to preventing plastics from entering the ocean and with donor agencies to provide direct investment. Additional items agreed on during discussions included exploring whether a group of states could present a case before the UNCLOS Tribunal and write a letter to major players in the plastics industry to engage further on this issue.

On *oil and gas*, Reddy highlighted that no further action is necessary at this time.

On *GOAB*, Reddy outlined results of the discussions, including that: if triennial ocean summits occur, they should be based on strong science and high quality data; the triennial summits would provide a focus point in time that should be taken advantage of; the GOAB should not have a subordinate relationship to the triennial summits, but could have a working relationship with them; and the GOB brand and the legitimacy built should be used, including through possible continuation of the GOC or transfer of brand value, with an emphasis on continuity and not reinventing the wheel.

Reddy reported that the next step will be development of the alternative GOAB models explored during the meeting, including outlining the mission, goals, structure and budgets, both with and without a major scientific component to GOAB work, as well as a dialogue with donors to see if there is demand for either continuation of the GOC or different possible GOAB functions. Reddy explained that the GOC Secretariat hopes to have GOAB scenarios ready for Commissioners’ input by late June 2015.

On the *high seas regeneration zone*, Commissioners agreed to highlight the need for science to support regeneration zones.

On *climate and oceans*, Commissioners agreed on the need to highlight the links between oceans and climate, and agreed to: advocate for an IPCC special report on oceans; and engage at UNFCCC COP 21 in a manner that rises above the background noise, possibly through an oceans declaration.

Reddy highlighted that the GOC would produce a final report providing an update on the Phase Two Work Plan, identifying how the proposals from the GOC report will be taken forward and how these issues are being handed off to whom, when the GOC ceases to exist.

**CLOSING OF THE MEETING**

GOC Co-Chair Miliband thanked Commissioners and the Secretariat, and closed the meeting at 4:57pm.

**UPCOMING MEETINGS**

**48th Meeting of the GEF Council:** The GEF Council meets twice a year to approve new projects with global environmental benefits in the GEF’s focal areas, and to provide guidance to the GEF Secretariat and Agencies. **dates:** 2-4 June 2015 **location:** Washington DC, US **contact:** GEF Secretariat phone: +1-202-473-0508 fax: +1-202-522 3240/3245 **email:** secretariat@thegef.org **www:** http://www.thegef.org/gef/node/10938

The “Economist” Group World Ocean Summit: The Economist Group is convening more than 250 ocean leaders from various sectors with direct interests in ocean affairs, for its third “World Ocean Summit” under the theme “Blue Economy – Blue Growth.” **dates:** 3-5 June 2015 **location:** Cascais, Portugal **contact:** Sue Toomey, Director, Events & Conferences, The Economist Group **email:** conferencesasia@economist.com **www:** http://www.economistsights.com/sustainability-resources/event/world-ocean-summit-2015

**World Oceans Day 2015:** World Oceans Day has been celebrated annually on 8 June, since the UNGA adopted Resolution 63/111 in December 2008. The Day seeks to: remind everyone of the major part the oceans play in everyday life; inform the public on the impact of human actions on oceans; develop a worldwide movement of citizens, towards the oceans; and mobilize and unite the world’s population on a project for the sustainable management of the world’s oceans. **date:** 8 June 2015 **location:** worldwide **www:** http://www.un.org/en/events/oceansday/

**Conference on Ocean and Climate:** The International Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) will be hosting on 8 June, a special event on Ocean and Climate
to, *inter alia*, mobilize the international community to work together on the ocean’s role in the climate system to better inform the UN institutional representatives, Member States, and decision-makers in the lead up to the UNFCCC COP 21.

date: 8 June 2015  
location: Paris  
contact: UNESCO IOC Secretariat  
phone: +33 (0)1 45 68 10 00  
email: r.herve@unesco.org  

28th Session of the IOC Assembly: The 28th Session of the IOC Assembly, under the UNESCO, will convene to review the work of the Commission and formulate a work programme for the coming biennium.  
dates: 18-25 June 2015  
location: Paris, France  
contact: IOC Secretariat  
phone: +33 1 45 68 39 84  
www: http://ioc-unesco.org/ioc-28

Nairobi Convention COP 8: COP 8 will convene on the theme “Conserving the Marine and Coastal Environment for the Western Indian Ocean for the Next 30 Years.”  
dates: 22-24 June 2015  
location: Mahe, Seychelles  
contact: Nairobi Convention Secretariat  
email: Hellen.Ojiambo@unep.org  
phone: +254 20 762 1250  

UN Summit to Adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda: The summit is expected to adopt the post-2015 development agenda, including: a declaration; a set of SDGs and targets including SDG 14; their means of implementation and a new Global Partnership for Development; and a framework for follow-up and review of implementation.  
dates: 25-27 September 2015  
location: UN Headquarters, New York  
contact: UN Division for Sustainable Development  
fax: +1-212-963-4260  
email: dsd@un.org  

**Second Our Oceans Conference:** At the conclusion of the June 2014 Our Oceans Conference, which was convened by the US State Department in Washington, DC, Chile offered to host the second meeting.  
dates: 5-6 October 2015  
location: Valparaiso, Chile  

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**GLOSSARY**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>BBNJ</td>
<td>Marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction</td>
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<td>COP</td>
<td>Conference of the Parties</td>
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<td>GEF</td>
<td>Global Environment Facility</td>
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<td>GOAB</td>
<td>Global Ocean Accountability Board</td>
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<td>Global Ocean Commission</td>
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<td>Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change</td>
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<td>REDD+</td>
<td>Reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation in developing countries, including conservation</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDG</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goal</td>
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<td>SIDS</td>
<td>Small island developing states</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNFCCC</td>
<td>United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change</td>
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<td>UNGA</td>
<td>United Nations General Assembly</td>
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<td>UNSD</td>
<td>United Nations Statistics Division</td>
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<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Trade Organization</td>
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GOC Commissioners. L-R: (Back Row) Carol Browner (US); Andrés Velasco (Chile); Luiz Furlan (Brazil);  
Co-Chair David Miliband (UK); Vladimir Golitsyn (Russia); Ratan Tata (India); GOC Executive Secretary Simon Reddy;  
Pascal Lamy (France); and Robert Hill (Australia). (Front Row) Victor Chu (China); Obiageli “Oby” Ezekwesili (Nigeria);  
Co-Chair José María Figueres (Costa Rica); and Yoriko Kawaguchi (Japan)