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## Joint Initiative Applauds Progress on Ocean Priorities in Domestic and International Arena

September 16, 2016 (Washington, D.C.) — The historic gathering of world leaders in Washington, D.C., this week to address ocean issues is one in a series of significant recent developments that collectively signify that we may be witnessing a course correction toward a more sustainable ocean future. The Joint Initiative, while recognizing that immense challenges remain, strongly applauds the progress in both domestic and international arenas. Federal leadership has been laudable, but credit is due across multiple sectors and geographies, notably among localities and tribes, state and regional leaders, the private sector, as well as game-changing support and direction from foundations and NGOs. Notable accomplishments include the following:

### **Asserting international leadership**

Secretary of State John Kerry is hosting the third Our Ocean Conference this week, bringing together world leaders and ocean experts to catalyze international actions to protect our oceans and empower a new generation to lead the way toward a healthy and sustainable ocean. [Our Ocean 2016](#) builds on previous commitments and addresses several key ocean issues: marine protected areas, sustainable fisheries, marine pollution, and climate-related impacts on the ocean.

“A call for action from the highest levels is the kind of attention demanded by a dynamic ocean that is increasingly challenged to meet society’s escalating needs.” said Norm Mineta, Co-Chair of JOCI and former Secretary of Commerce and Transportation. “This is encouraging and indicative of the U.S. reestablishing its leadership role in this critical arena.”

### **Protecting marine areas**

This week President Obama announced the establishment of the first protected marine area in the Atlantic Ocean, the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument. This follows the President’s recent action to create the largest ecologically protected area on the planet by expanding the Papahānaumokuākea, a Marine National Monument established by President Bush a decade ago. These reserves are inspired by the same foresight that led to the creation of the national park system and will protect biodiversity and critical habitat for generations to come.

### **Turning a corner on fisheries**

Fishing, both commercial and recreational, is a cultural cornerstone and an important economic driver, generating approximately \$214 billion in sales and \$100 billion in value-added impacts and supporting 1.8 million U.S. jobs. Dozens of fish stocks, recently in peril, are showing promising signs of recovery. Much of this can be traced to the insistence of President George W. Bush that the law governing our fisheries put an end to overfishing, a controversial and courageous measure. Still ahead are challenges to address land-based pollutants draining into our estuaries and oceans, befouling beaches, and creating massive “dead zones.” However, a decade of rigorous, science-based management of our fisheries is yielding results.

### **Illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing**

The United States continues to lead on the effort to tackle illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and seafood fraud. In addition to a series of domestic actions announced over the last year, the U.S. expanded international engagement around its Safe Ocean Network, a global initiative that seeks to unite governments and other stakeholders worldwide in the fight against IUU fishing by focusing global assets and partnerships on identifying, interdicting, and prosecuting IUU fishing organizations and networks. This week, the U.S. announced a series of new initiatives and pilot projects to support and strengthen the capacity of international partners to combat IUU fishing around the world.

### **Addressing the Arctic**

In 2015, the U.S. assumed chairmanship of the Arctic Council, providing an opportunity to address the challenges facing the region, especially with regard to changing ecosystems, national security, commerce, fisheries, and energy. Conditions in the Arctic are changing faster than anywhere else on Earth. One important change is the retreat of Arctic sea ice due to measurable changes in the climate. As a result, companies are beginning to explore for oil and gas. Oil and gas exploration, along with the expansion of commercial fishing, shipping, naval activity, tourism, and other activities, raise numerous questions about how to best manage the Arctic Ocean and its coasts.

“As the Chair of the Arctic Council, the U.S. not only has the opportunity but also the responsibility to engage stakeholders to address the challenging issues confronting this region,” said former New Jersey Governor Christine Todd Whitman, Co-Chair of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative and a member of the Board of Directors of the Council on Foreign Relations. “U.S. leadership is essential to developing practical solutions for our global commons, and nowhere is this more evident than in the Arctic.”

### **Cooperating on regional priorities**

A major milestone was recently achieved with the release of two draft regional ocean action plans in the Northeast and the Mid-Atlantic. These plans are the result of tough, sometimes contentious negotiations among stakeholders to agree on a process and path forward to maximize the benefits of commonly-held ocean resources. When implemented, these plans can promote ocean health and functionality, minimize conflict, improve effectiveness, and support economic growth. They reflect a national policy that seeks to reduce risk to coastal communities from storm damage and sea level rise, feed the nation, fuel our economy, allow for recreational uses, provide national security, and create jobs.

### **Dedicating funds to address the ocean**

Allocating adequate and sustained funding has been a missing component of a coordinated U.S. ocean and coastal strategy. This week, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Walton Family Foundation, the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, and other organizations announced more than a billion dollars in commitments to ocean and coastal priorities. Also encouraging is Congressional action to create the National Oceans and Coastal Security Fund, a major step toward finally capitalizing a dedicated investment fund for oceans; Congress must now identify and dedicate a source of funds to capitalize this account.

For more information on the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative, please visit [www.jointoceancommission.org](http://www.jointoceancommission.org) or contact Laura Cantral at 202-354-6444.

*The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative is a collaborative effort of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and Pew Oceans Commission. The primary goal of the Joint Initiative is to accelerate the pace of change that results in meaningful ocean policy reform.*