

Preamble

Ocean covers approximately 70% of the Earth's surface, or 360 million km². It is estimated to have around 97% of water volume on the Earth. Its average depth is about 3,800m, and 55% of the planet's surface, or approximately 77% of the ocean, is deep sea of more than 3,000m in depth¹.

The extensive ocean plays an important role in circulation of water, heat, organic and inorganic materials on the planet. In addition, the ocean significantly affects local climate/weather around the globe. The ocean is, thus, essential to support various terrestrial and aquatic organisms on the Earth. The fact that the ocean around the world is indispensable component to sustain lives on the Earth was clearly stated in Agenda 21 adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, Earth Summit) in 1992, and also in the "Basic Act on Ocean Policy" enacted in April 2007 for the comprehensive and integrated progress of Japan's policies on the ocean.

In addition, the ancient ocean is thought to be where the first forms of life were created 4 billion years ago. And today, humans survive on various blessings from diverse organisms and ecosystems of the ocean. For the survival of human beings while continuously enjoying such blessings from the ocean, promotion of the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity is a prerequisite.

¹ Ministry of the Environment (1999) Interim report of the round-table conference on the future of marine environment conservation