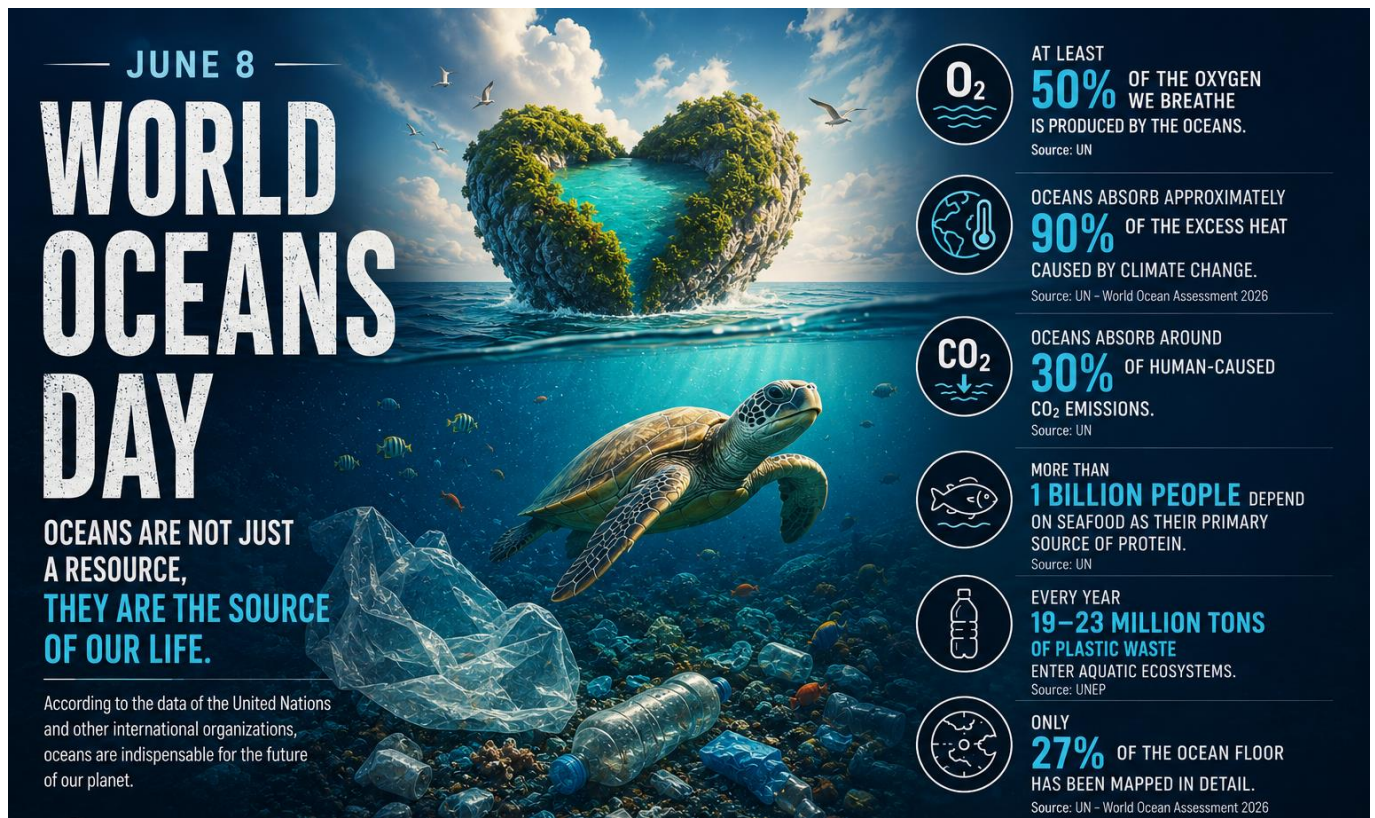




Protecting Our Blue Planet Means Protecting Our Future

Celebrated every year on June 8, World Oceans Day is a global awareness day supported by the United Nations to highlight the vital importance of oceans for humanity and all life on Earth, while drawing attention to the environmental threats they face.

Viewed from space, Earth is often called the “Blue Planet.” This is because more than 70 percent of our planet’s surface is covered by oceans. However, oceans are much more than vast bodies of water; they are among the most critical natural systems sustaining life on Earth. According to United Nations data, oceans produce at least 50 percent of the oxygen we breathe, absorb approximately 30 percent of the carbon dioxide generated by human activities, and store around 90 percent of the excess heat caused by climate change.

Life Without Oceans Is Impossible

Today, more than one billion people rely on seafood as their primary source of protein. Oceans also constitute the largest reservoir of biodiversity on Earth and provide habitats for millions of species. The United Nations estimates that by 2030, ocean-based sectors will employ approximately 40 million people worldwide.

These figures demonstrate that oceans are not only the foundation of environmental sustainability but also a cornerstone of economic and social sustainability.

Alarming Indicators

Unfortunately, scientific reports published in recent years reveal that oceans are under severe pressure.

According to the World Ocean Assessment Report published by the United Nations in 2026, the rate of sea-level rise has doubled over the last decade. Before 2015, sea levels were rising by approximately 2 mm per year; by 2023, this rate had increased to 4.3 mm per year. The same report also indicates that 16 percent of all ocean heat accumulated since 1955 has occurred only after 2018.

Even more striking is the fact that humanity still knows very little about the depths of the oceans. Today, only 27 percent of the ocean floor has been mapped in detail. The vast majority remains unexplored.

Plastic Pollution: The Invisible Threat

One of the greatest challenges facing the oceans is plastic pollution.

According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), between 19 and 23 million tons of plastic waste enter aquatic ecosystems every year through rivers, lakes, and seas. This amount is equivalent to approximately 2,000 garbage trucks dumping plastic waste into nature every single day.

It is estimated that between 75 and 199 million tons of plastic have already accumulated in the oceans. If current trends continue, the amount of plastic entering aquatic ecosystems could triple by 2040.

Microplastics are now being detected not only in marine organisms but also in drinking water, the atmosphere, and even the human body. This demonstrates that ocean pollution has become not only an environmental issue but also a significant global public health concern.

Protecting the Oceans Means Protecting the Climate

In the fight against climate change, oceans are our greatest natural ally. However, rising temperatures, ocean acidification, overfishing, habitat loss, and pollution are placing these critical ecosystems under increasing stress every year.

As United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has stated, “We cannot continue to treat the ocean as an unlimited resource.” Scientists around the world emphasize that protecting oceans is essential for achieving climate goals, preserving biodiversity, and leaving a livable planet for future generations.

Our Responsibility as Maltepe University

A sustainable future requires not only the protection of terrestrial ecosystems but also the conservation of the oceans—the blue heart of our planet.

Universities play a vital role in this transformation through scientific research, education, awareness-raising activities, and projects that encourage youth engagement in sustainability initiatives.

On the occasion of World Oceans Day, it is crucial to support efforts aimed at reducing plastic consumption, promoting waste separation at the source, encouraging sustainable consumption habits, and protecting marine ecosystems at both individual and institutional levels.

Let us remember: every sea we protect is a breath we preserve for the future.

Maltepe University Sustainability Office