



## **Towards a New Future for Ocean Security**

Monday 20th October 2008

**Moderator : Maria Livanos Cattai**, Member of the Board of Directors, Petroplus Holdings AG, Switzerland

**Speakers :** **Alexis Bautzmann**, Editor-in-Chief, Areion Group, France  
**Biliana Cicin-Sain**, Co-Chair, Global Forum on Oceans, Coasts and Islands, USA  
**Karin Roth**, State Secretary of Germany at the Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Affairs  
**Lee Stein**, Founder, Prize Capital LLC, USA

"We're living in the period of the greatest extinction since Noah," warned Lee Stein, striking an urgent note from the outset of this debate. A general consensus emerged that the question of ocean security was a key element of the broader crisis in humanity's relationship to the planet that sustains us.

"On a worldwide basis, our interaction with nature just doesn't work," Stein said. Likening modern humanity to an "aggressor," his innovative proposal was to establish a "peace treaty" with nature, the victim of the aggression. This was essential to the survival of both, he stated, adding that "humans will pursue growth at any cost. This is not sustainable forever."

Stein's proposed peace treaty would involve designating an area, a "State of Nature," where new rules of "natural capitalism" would replace those of a that normally apply to a capitalist economy. Ocean security would be a necessary part of this, because with the combination of climate change and overexploitation of marine resources, we may be reaching "the tipping point," he said. "What happens when one day a fisherman drops his hook into the sea, and there's nothing there?" he asked.

Biliana Cicin-Sain began by congratulating BioMarine, which she called "a great new mobilization of many interests on behalf of the ocean." She proposed making integrated coastal and ocean management in all coastal areas a global goal in the context of climate change, which she called "the greatest threat to ocean security."

"The poorest of the poor in developing countries will be those most affected, and we will see many environmental refugees," she said. This represented a threat to geopolitical security as well, she pointed out. "Climate change's effect on oceans and coasts is a now problem."



Cicin-Sain's organization is a worldwide network of NGOs who work on marine questions. It had come up with multiple proposals, she said. These included incorporating ocean issues into climate change negotiations and developing policy responses to counter the effects of climate change on the oceans such as acidification and polar cap melt. Other efforts include addressing the "climate divide" to help those most at risk, encouraging new international regulatory frameworks to mitigate those risks and promoting alternative energy sources such as harnessing the power of ocean currents.

German State Secretary Karin Roth focused on carbon dioxide emission reduction as a priority for ocean security as well. She suggested that prior to next year's conference on the Kyoto Protocol, the EU raise the proposed 30 percent reduction target by another 10 percent. It was also important that the shipping community discuss CO<sub>2</sub> emission reductions, she said, preferably under the aegis of the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

Roth advocated stepping up the development of the ocean's potential as "a means of survival," for example as a source of energy. "We should launch international agreements within the economic debate on climate change that integrate the seas as part of the problem but also as part of the solution," she said.

Alexis Bautzmann brought up another aspect of ocean security: the safety of commercial shipping and the security of telecommunications, in particular since they depend massively on undersea fibre optic cables. "Global trade and communications depend on the security of the seas. Our complex geopolitical context makes this security essential, and we need a legal framework to safeguard it," he said.

He also reiterated the need to confront the security risks that could result from population displacement due to climate change and rising ocean levels. "An immigration flow may cause demographic tensions that could redraw the geopolitical map," he warned.

Finally, Roth suggested there was an important lesson to be learned from the response to the global financial crisis. "We've seen that when it's needed for financial survival, we can act very quickly on an international level. This could be done for the environment, which is a question of the survival of humanity," she said, to warm applause.

Stein cautioned that the natural world was a system over which humans had considerably less control. "We can apply financial engineering to the financial crisis because we wrote the rules. But we didn't write the rules of nature," he said.

---