

New panel to scrutinise ocean governance

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A pelican rests near an oil slick boom on June 14, 2010, in Grand Isle, Louisiana. Senior politicians on Monday launched an independent panel into management of the world's oceans, which are facing unprecedented overfishing, pollution and habitat loss.

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The Global Ocean Commission is spearheaded by former British foreign

secretary David Miliband, ex-Costa Rican president Jose Maria Figueres and South African cabinet minister Trevor Manuel.

The goal is to place the spotlight on the threats facing seas that lie beyond national jurisdictions.

These are regulated by the UN Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS), a loose-woven treaty that is now 30 years old.

Critics say it has been overtaken by the globalised economy and technological advances.

Other members of the panel include former Canadian prime minister Paul Martin, Indian business magnate Sir Ratan Tata, former Australian environment and defence minister Robert Hill and Yoriko Kawaguchi, previously Japanese foreign minister and environment minister.

Their aim is to publish recommendations for overhauling [ocean](#) governance early next year, when the UN General Assembly launches talks on protecting [marine biodiversity](#).

"The world urgently needs to find better ways of managing the oceans, to stop abuse of its precious resources and ensure its protection for present and future generations," said Figueres.

"The [global ocean](#) is essential to the health and wellbeing of each and every one of us.

"It provides about half of the oxygen we breathe and absorbs about a quarter of our [carbon dioxide emissions](#). But we are failing to manage it in ways that reflect its true value."

The initiative is a collaboration between the US green organisation the

Pew Environment Group; Oxford University's Somerville College; a Dutch environmental awareness group called the Adessium Foundation; and Oceans 5, a collaboration of philanthropists concerned about the health of the seas.

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