

Name: Chukwudi Innocent

Ugochukwu Vicky

Age: 20

Nationality: Nigerian

*individual participant (graduate
member MUNDUS MARIS FCFMT
LAGOS CHAPTER)*

An Ocean Free of Plastic



Photo: bigpictures.club

"An Ocean Free of Plastic" is not a fantasy, it is a goal that can be achieved, it is a dream that can be made a reality. The essence and importance of the ocean can not be overemphasized. The ocean is a provider of opportunities in diverse ways. Seafarers, oceanographers, fishermen and many sea based professions depend directly or indirectly on the

Ocean. The ocean carries life beyond our imagination.

According to NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) "To date, we have explored approximately five percent of the ocean" and this is nowhere close to a quarter of the ocean. "Even after centuries of effort, some 86 percent of Earth's species have yet to be fully described, according to new study that predicts our planet is home to 8.7 million species" (Traci Watson, National Geographic News published August 25 2011). Why then do we pollute and destroy what we have no idea about?, do we know the harmful effects of having these plastics in the ocean beyond the explored?. There is a need to reeducate ourselves on the adverse effect of our disastrous activities against the ocean. It has been discovered that due to biofouling, fishes mistake plastics for food thereby making them feed on it. Biofouling is when the surface of plastics at sea gets covered by algae. Biofouling takes place within days or weeks. As this fishes consume these plastics it blocks the food space in them and this leads to starvation and death of these fishes. This problem of plastic consumption is also synonymous to sea mammals too.

Birds of the air are not left out as they are also victims of plastic pollution. Birds hover the surface of the sea in search of food but end up

feeding on plastics and also give to their young ones which would lead to starvation and later death.

We should come to a realisation that the ocean is not a dumping site but a Carrier of life which needs to be preserved for our harmonious coexistence.

At this time and age of civilisation there should be a mind shift and self-discipline in our actions reactions and decision as regards the ocean. Talking of mind shift, what has been our thought about the ocean, do we see the ocean as nothing but water around us which doesn't deserve our attention, what are our actions towards the ocean, do we dump refuse into our drainage to be washed into the sea during the rainy season.



Photo:me (PBA akran avenue Lagos state Nigeria)

What is our reaction when we see people polluting the ocean, do we ignore or do we condemn the act.

KICK AGAINST



PLASTIC POLLUTION

What does our laws say about ocean pollution, are they being enforced, do we take bribe from ocean polluters and overlook the damage done to the ocean.

All these questions will never be answered if we do not look inwards for a solution.

The provision of a good waste disposal system will go a long way to reduce the number of plastics that find their way into the ocean.

Establishment of recycling companies has also helped as people now source for these plastic bottles to sell instead of dumping them in the gutters leading to the ocean.

Adequate funding is also required for coastal cleanups. Even the movie industry could help to educate the younger generation through cartoons and comics.

A typical example was the painted lady episode on Avatar the last air bender. This toon really showed the benefits of a healthy ocean.

The ocean connects us, it is a continuously moving and endless road that transports everything or anything in its path.

For this reason a collective effort is required to set the ocean free from plastic pollution. Sitting Idle and Crossing the arms while the ocean is being degraded elsewhere is like sitting on a time bomb, waiting to explode inevitably. Having veered into the maritime sector and a prospective seafarer I could tell you that plastics can be hazardous to ships too. You would wonder, what can a pet bottle do to a sea giant weighing over 5000 tonnes?. In the maritime sector there are water jet engines that takes in water and expels the water for propulsion.

If such engine takes in plastics it would gradually damage its impeller. Even when the suction is protected with a net like hatch it could lead to reduction in suction thereby reducing the ship's speed to half its capacity or zero when fully blocked. This is a limitation and a disadvantage to the manufacturers of this kind of propulsion system as well as the users who benefits from its maneuverability and speed.

For a fact plastics do not beautify our ocean rather it destroys it. Until you and I see "An Ocean Free of Plastic" as our individual responsibility it will never be a reality. THANK YOU.