PRESS RELEASE

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Stop our oceans souring – a new guide calls for action against ocean acidification

Copenhagen, Denmark, 10 December 2009 (IUCN) – Deep and immediate cuts in emissions are needed to stall ocean acidification and prevent mass extinction of marine species, food insecurity and serious damage to the world economy, according to IUCN.

Released today at UNFCCC COP 15 in Copenhagen, 'Ocean acidification – the facts' takes stock of the latest science on oceans acidification and spells out the steps that are urgently needed to stop its acceleration.

Increased release of CO_2 in the atmosphere is making seawater more acidic and is threatening ecosystems and species precious for our food and economy. It is also reducing the ocean's ability to absorb CO_2 and regulate climate. Previous episodes of ocean acidification were linked to mass extinctions of some species, and it is reasonable to assume that this episode could have the same consequences. There can be little doubt that the ocean is undergoing dramatic changes that will impact many human lives now and in coming generations, unless we act quickly and decisively.

"Ocean acidification can be best described as the evil twin of climate change," says **Dan Laffoley, lead editor of the guide, Marine Vice Chair of IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas** and **member of Natural England's Chief Scientist's team.** "*We have used story-telling to paint a picture of the many ways in which ocean acidification may alter how the ocean works – given the possible far-reaching consequences we hope this guide acts as a wake-up call to decision makers to place the ocean centre stage in climate discussions and conclusions"*

The ocean provides about half of the Earth's natural resources and humankind takes direct advantage of this through our fisheries and shellfisheries. The ocean also absorbs 25 percent of all the carbon dioxide we emit each year, and produces half the oxygen we breathe.

Ocean acidity has increased by 30 percent since industrialization began 250 years ago. If CO_2 levels in the atmosphere continue to rise, sea water acidity could increase by 120 percent by 2060 – greater than anything experienced in the past 21 million years. By 2100, 70 percent of cold water corals may be exposed to corrosive water.

Given the lag between CO_2 emissions and a stabilisation of acidification, it could take tens of thousands of years before the ocean's properties are restored and even longer for full biological recovery. This demands immediate and substantial emissions cuts and technology that actively removes CO_2.

"There is an increasingly real and very urgent need to dramatically cut emissions. The ocean is what makes Earth habitable and different from anywhere else we know in our solar system and beyond – now's the time to act to minimise the impacts on our life support system while we still have time," says **Carl Gustaf Lundin, Head of IUCN's Marine Programme.**

Notes to editors

Ocean Acidification: The Facts, a special introductory guide for policy advisers and decision makers, is a product of the Ocean Acidification Reference User Group, an Initiative of the European Project on Ocean Acidification (EPOCA).
Production of the guide was sponsored by Natural England, Scottish Natural Heritage, EPOCA, IUCN and leading scientists and organisations worldwide who freely gave their time and expertise.

Download the guide at http://www.epoca-project.eu/index.php/Outreach/RUG/

B-Roll will be available at the press conference in Copenhagen from Antinea Foundation.

For more information or to set up interviews, please contact:

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About IUCN
IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges.

IUCN works on biodiversity, climate change, energy, human livelihoods and greening the world economy by supporting scientific research, managing field projects all over the world, and bringing governments, NGOs, the UN and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice.

IUCN is the world's oldest and largest global environmental organization, with more than 1,000 government and NGO members and almost 11,000 volunteer experts in some 160 countries. IUCN's work is supported by over 1,000 staff in 60 offices and hundreds of partners in public, NGO and private sectors around the world.
www.iucn.org

About EPOCA
The EU FP7 large-scale integrating project EPOCA (European Project on Ocean Acidification) was launched in May 2008 with the overall goal to fill the numerous gaps in our understanding of ocean acidification and its consequences. The EPOCA consortium brings together more than 100 researchers from 27 institutes and 9 European countries. The research of this four-year long project is partly funded by the European Commission.
www.epoca-project.eu

About Natural England
Natural England is the UK government's independent advisor on the natural environment. Established in 2006, its work is focused on enhancing England's wildlife and landscapes and maximising the benefits they bring to the public..
www.naturalengland.org.uk

About Antinea Foundation (B-Roll provider)
The Antinea Foundation, an NGO based in Switzerland, contributes to better protection of the oceans. In 2009 it launched the Changing Oceans Expedition which will visit 100 of the world's most important marine eco-regions over the next 10 years. In partnership with IUCN and UNESCO research carried out onboard its flagship "Fleur de Passion" will allow gathering data on the gradient of human impact on the oceans.
http://www.antinea-foundation.org/