Celebrating 10 years of the DSCC

In the late 1990s a number of deep-sea scientists began raising concerns in international bodies over the threats to barely explored, poorly understood deep-ocean ecosystems from a fishing practice known as deep-sea bottom trawling. This practice was on the increase as a result of new technology that enabled fishing vessels to go deeper and further out to sea in pursuit of fish. With the introduction of bottom gear with names such as ‘canyon busters’, scientists were alarmed by the prospect of losing species and unique habitats before they had even been discovered by science.

Responding to this concern, international policy experts from the International Union for Conservation of Nature and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Greenpeace, WWF, the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Marine Conservation Institute took up the issue. In 2004 a meeting held in the offices of the JM Kaplan Fund in New York led to the establishment of the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition.

Several of the early members of the DSCC issued a report in 2004 which analyzed the extent of bottom-trawl fishing on the high seas, the countries involved, the volume and value of the catch, the management regime for these fisheries, and scientific concerns. It called for a moratorium on bottom-trawl fisheries on the high seas until they could be managed consistent with obligations under international law requiring sustainability and the protection of the marine environment.

Using strategic analysis as the basis for its campaign, the DSCC decided to work through the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to prompt international action to bring bottom trawl and other deep-sea fisheries on the high seas under control. The Coalition identified two overarching goals for its work: to substantially reduce the greatest threats to life in the deep sea and to safeguard the long-term health, integrity and resilience of deep-sea ecosystems.
2004
- DSCC founded
- Over 100 scientists call for UNGA moratorium on high seas bottom trawl fishing
- International community failing to protect deep-sea habitats
- DSCC holds press conferences in major cities

2005
- First UNGA Resolution calling for urgent action adopted
- 59/25 calls on high seas fishing nations and RFMOs to take urgent action to protect the deep sea
- UK Royal Commission calls for prohibition of deep-sea bottom trawling on high seas and in EU waters
- Science tours
- DSCC organizes a global science tour
- Greenpeace’s Rainbow Warrior takes action again bottom trawling on high seas
- International Council on the Exploration of the Sea calls for a complete overhaul of EU deep-sea fisheries
- New study reveals deep-sea species targeted for commercial fishing are endangered in Northwest Atlantic
- Captain Roughy visits the UN
- DSCC campaign gathers pace ahead of negotiations
- DOALOS review of implementation
- UN report confirms that deep-sea protection is inadequate
- Sigourney Weaver joins DSCC call for new UN action
- UNGA adopts new Resolution
- 61/105 commits all countries fishing on high seas to protect deep-sea ecosystems from destructive impact of bottom fishing or else stop bottom fishing by 31 Dec 2008

2007-2008
- DSCC works with RFMOs and countries deep-sea fishing on the high seas in North and South Pacific and North and South Atlantic to begin adopting regulations to implement UNGA Resolution 61/105

2007
- 05 DSCC organizes a global science tour
- 06 Greenpeace’s Rainbow Warrior takes action again bottom trawling on high seas
- 06 Captain Roughy visits the UN
- 06 DSCC campaign gathers pace ahead of negotiations
- 07 DOALOS review of implementation
- 07 UN report confirms that deep-sea protection is inadequate
- 07 Sigourney Weaver joins DSCC call for new UN action
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Dense mass of the anomuran crab Kiwa.

**Oceans inc** is a multimedia platform dedicated to transmitting news about the ocean. It was conceived to increase coverage for the ocean and provide a unified platform for its reporting. It began broadcasting on World Oceans Day 2012 and now covers key ocean events around the world, issuing TV and written news as well as live coverage via social media. In addition, **Oceans inc** reports marine news generally and specifically promotes the work and findings of marine scientists.

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**2011 SOS**

The deep sea is sending out a distress call.

High seas fishing nations have five years to implement UNGA resolutions to protect the deep sea from destructive fishing. So far most have failed to do so. Is it acceptable that some countries are ignoring the will of the international community and destroying the extraordinary life in the deep sea that is our common heritage?

The vulnerable ecosystems of the deep sea can’t afford to wait any longer. It’s time for action to protect the Roundnose Grenadier and the many thousands of other species at risk.

Are they worth saving?

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**61/105**

Get a MOVE ON!

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**08.08** UN FAO adopts guidelines on deep-sea fisheries

**06.09** DSCC publishes report reviewing implementation of UNGA resolutions and holds events at UN

**09.09** GET A MOVE ON – 61/105 or bust! DSCC campaigns at UN

**12.09** New UNGA Resolution adopted 64/72 calls on high seas fishing nations to take stronger actions to protect deep-sea life

**09.11** DSCC publishes ‘Unfinished Business: a review of the implementation of UNGA resolutions 61/105 and 64/72’ Presents findings at UNGA meeting to review the effectiveness of previous UNGA resolutions

**12.11** New UNGA Resolution adopted 66/68 calls on states and RFMOs to do more to effectively manage deep-sea fisheries

**05.12** New species discovered on voyage to deep

**06.12** DSCC joins high seas campaign at Rio+20

**07.12** European Commission proposes phase-out of deep-sea bottom trawling by EU fishing fleets in the Northeast Atlantic

**03.13** Environment Committee of the European Parliament votes for total reform of the EU’s deep-sea fishing regulation

**12.13** European Parliament votes on deep-sea regulation

*EP agrees that all deep-sea fisheries should be subject to environmental impact assessment and VMEs must be protected; narrowly rejects proposal to prohibit deep-sea bottom trawling and gillnet fishing

**12.13** New species reported discovered in deep water off Scotland

**05.14** Portugal bans bottom trawling in over 2 million km² of high seas of the North Atlantic

**2009–2014**

DSCC continues working with RFMOs in Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans to better implement UNGA resolutions
Today, and into the future

As a result of the DSCC’s work and that of its member organizations and cooperating partners, the UNGA process has successfully committed high seas fishing nations and regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) to implement a series of actions to protect the deep sea from the harmful impacts of fishing. Although much more still needs to be done, this momentum has led to increasing action by states and RFMOs to regulate deep-sea fishing on the high seas, in particular bottom trawling and deep-sea gillnetting.

It is critical that the UNGA continues to exercise oversight with regard to deep-sea life, lest it becomes a case of ‘out of sight, out of mind’. The UNGA has agreed to hold a review of the implementation of the resolutions in 2016, and the DSCC will work towards this at every level to ensure that the unique and vulnerable habitats and ecosystems of the deep sea are protected from harmful bottom fisheries.

Deep-seabed mining
Since 2012 the DSCC has also taken on board concerns around deep-seabed mining and has begun work aimed at ensuring the deep ocean is protected from its harmful impacts. The Coalition is proactively building capacity on this issue and is now actively engaged at the International Seabed Authority and in other arenas.

The collective work of NGOs at the Rio+20 Summit led to an agreement by the international community to enshrine the kinds of protection and conservation advocated for by the DSCC within a new treaty for the protection of biodiversity on the high seas. The DSCC will continue to work hard to make this a reality within the next decade.

FACT: Deep-sea species tend to be slow growing, late maturing and highly vulnerable to disturbance or even extinction