

**MANIFESTO BY THE ROYAL EUROPEAN ACADEMY OF DOCTORS**  
**FOR THE DEFENCE OF THE OCEANS**

***GALAPAGOS MANIFESTO***

The Galapagos Islands are a World Heritage Site and unquestionably one of the most protected biodiverse areas in the world, thanks to a strict conservation policy, a series of research initiatives and a strong sense of awareness on the part of their inhabitants. This is the result of years of education, awareness-raising and actions with the ultimate aim of taking care of this ecological treasure and allowing it to continue to be the great laboratory from which Charles Darwin was inspired to change the history of biology and the concept of evolution with his work, *On the Origin of Species*. The Government of Ecuador has strictly regulated 97% of the archipelago since 1959 and has managed to protect this unique habitat from anthropogenic pressures. The rest of the world must contribute to these efforts.

The seas, as well being as a means of cultural and economic connection throughout history, are providers of food and elements that guarantee life on Earth, as well as generators of the onset of atmospheric phenomena that provide fresh water. As such, they cannot be the dumping ground for our waste products.

One of the main problems affecting the islands in particular, due to their fragile biodiversity, is the accumulation of plastics and microplastics in the surrounding waters; these pose a serious threat to the survival of marine life, with all the ensuing consequences. Plastic pollution is perpetual, persistent and omnipresent. It is a growing global concern, particularly for isolated islands. Despite being one of the most virgin and rigorously protected areas worldwide, the Galapagos archipelago is not immune to this increasingly severe threat.

The invention of plastic is one of humanity's greatest technological achievements and it has enabled significant progress in industrial, healthcare, domestic and social spheres. Its use has become so widespread that it has become a feature of daily life and it continues to be essential in certain sectors. However, management of plastic waste is now a significant problem, with microplastics in particular ending up in the oceans and being eaten by marine wildlife. The Galapagos Islands are also affected by this problem, which is having a serious impact on their marine and land fauna and flora, including 53 species to date. Since humans are the cause of the problem, we are also responsible for finding a way to mitigate its impact.

We will obviously not be able to resolve this situation in the short term. It is also clear that we must intensify efforts aimed at educating the new generations. Therefore, it is increasingly the youth of the world who are committing seriously to combating this threat and participating actively in the search for solutions. Achieving this objective will require efforts on all levels and in all domains.

Since it was from these Enchanted Islands that Darwin took his inspiration, it is from here that we are launching this manifesto to ask the world to figuratively take an evolutionary leap from being *Homo sapiens* (although we are increasingly less *sapiens*, given the problems we have caused to the planet) to being *Homo galapagensis*, a term that would represent respectful and

harmonious coexistence between human beings and the natural environment. We need this to be a new process in our evolution as a species to recover a more sustainable society that is more respectful of the environment and more conscious of the risks we run in light of global warming and the consequent climate crisis and in light of the overexploitation of the seas, illegal fishing and overpopulation. It is essential to move from anthropocentrism to biocentrism in order to take action while respecting other species. We owe it to the planet and to future generations.

For all of these reasons, we, the group of Nobel Prize winners, academics, artists and members of civil society, who have travelled to the Galapagos Islands to find out about these problems and think about possible solutions to them, having analysed and identified the various situations affecting the islands and therefore, to a greater or lesser extent, our habitat,

**Hereby declare:**

1. There is a need for integral management of drinking water in populations, especially those of islands, which comprise a significant amount of a region's geodiversity and must have the capacity to manage their resources, with an emphasis on solving problems that affect least developed countries, harnessing existing technologies to help mitigate a problem that clearly threatens our survival.
2. Education is the cornerstone to preserve our biological wealth. Educational programmes must be maximized at all levels, particularly in countries with fewer resources, through international aid and the technology and communication tools available to us, using strategies that have been successful in the past for other social awareness campaigns, including considering the universal use of the Internet as a fundamental human right for free access to culture and training, without these depending on economic variables.
3. The fields of culture, science, the humanities, new technologies and the arts must do their utmost to highlight the universal problem of plastic in the oceans, and these means of communication should be used effectively to raise awareness among the new generations about the need for substantial changes to certain daily practices that contribute to destroying our environment.
4. The natural capital of the seas and oceans should be protected as stringently as possible by way of international treaties. In particular, we urge the United Nations, non-EU European countries, Latin American countries, multilateral organizations and, in particular, the European Union (through the competences conferred on it by the Lisbon Treaty) to make every effort during the negotiations already under way so that they may promptly culminate in an international treaty that will be an effective instrument for protection and control, since the time we have to find solutions is running out at the same rate as the resources we are consuming.
5. Philanthropic organizations, governments and international institutions must immediately promote all kinds of initiative that stimulate humans' innate creativity to find effective and viable solutions for the preservation of the seas and oceans. These solutions must include technological tools that enable us to clean our seas (which



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- represent 70% of the Earth's surface) so that tides bring life rather than rubbish to our coasts. Prevention is key to this. The most effective way to reduce the effects of plastic pollution and its impact on human and animal health is by preventing it from reaching the ocean. Using science is essential to find effective solutions.
6. “Glocal” efforts are more necessary than ever. This means taking immediate local action with global repercussions, as has been done in the Galapagos Islands to mitigate the effects of those pollutants and waste in the oceans which have a gradual impact on the preservation of biodiversity. Doing so will ensure that our descendants can pass on to their offspring a more alive, bluer and sustainable planet than the one our generation inherited and has unarguably worsened.
  7. An international commitment in the form of a treaty is vital, including all of the legal instruments required to enforce existing environmental protection laws and any that may later be adopted should the problems described above be identified. It is essential that a global commission be created to mitigate the effects of plastic pollution in our oceans.
  8. As such, we suggest that the European Union establish a special office for the preservation of the seas and drinking water sources to channel, supervise and coordinate those efforts that need to be undertaken now and in the future, in order to steer clear of the storm we are now heading straight into, the consequences of which may seriously compromise our future and that of subsequent generations.

Signed at the University of San Francisco de Quito, Ecuador,  
5 September 2022