

PRESS RELEASE:

## DIVERSE SPEAKERS SET TO DELIVER POSITIVE MESSAGE ON FUTURE OF THE OCEANS AT THE 4TH INTERNATIONAL MARINE CONSERVATION CONGRESS

by Eilidh Gilbert

St. John's, Newfoundland & Labrador (March 30th) — What do an environmentalist from Haiti, a Sri Lankan National Geographic blogger, a University of Minnesota research ecologist, and a social scientist at Memorial University of Newfoundland have in common? They are all leading marine conservationists and will all be delivering the opening keynote talks at the 4th International Marine Conservation Congress (IMCC4) in Newfoundland & Labrador, Canada, this August. These plenary speakers are from diverse backgrounds, disciplines, and different regions of the globe. They'll be imploring congress attendees at the Delta Conference Centre in downtown St. John's to look beyond conventional approaches to conservation and marine research to *Make Marine Science Matter*.

IMCCs are not new to fostering uncommon and hopeful ocean conservation messages. "At our first meeting in 2009, we asked our delegates to move beyond writing obituaries for the oceans," explained Edward Hind, Communication Chair of IMCC4. "As scientists, we know they are in trouble, but dismissing hope for their salvation wasn't going to solve anything."

This message has gained strength from IMCC to IMCC. In 2014, at IMCC3, five female and two male keynote speakers inspired one of the largest gatherings of marine scientists to support a new message of 'ocean optimism.' They told stories of how some coral reefs can survive climate change, and informed delegates of how to make sure this story was a global one. They illustrated how leaders of industry could become the saviors of marine life, rather than those driving them to extinction. They praised citizens for rising up to save seahorses in the Philippines and anchovies in Peru. They urged delegates to replicate the same actions in their own communities. At IMCC4, a diverse new set of keynote speakers will convey their own calls to support marine conservation.

IMCC4 attendees can look forward to opening-day plenary sessions by award-winning Haitian conservation researcher, Jean Wiener, University of Minnesota research ecologist and science communicator, Michelle LaRue, activist, artist and Assistant Professor at Memorial University of Newfoundland, Max Liboiron, and pioneering Sri Lankan marine biologist Asha de Vos. They'll be speaking on issues such as reducing plastic pollution, the greater involvement of women in ocean conservation, tropical coastal and marine biodiversity, community development issues, conservation in the Southern Ocean, and the protection of the blue whale.

"We are proud to showcase many women, as well as men, and speakers with distinct backgrounds and perspectives," enthused Samantha Oester, IMCC4 Chair. "They'll be letting our delegates know how

they can spark and facilitate change using their own research and experiences. Our delegates usually leave the keynote speeches inspired, and IMCC4 may be the most exciting yet.”

In addition to plenary speeches, scientists from around the world will present the latest in marine conservation research and practice during symposia, focus groups, workshops, special events, contributed sessions, and more. IMCC4 will take place July 30 - August 3, 2016 in St. John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. To learn more, visit the [IMCC4 website](#), [Facebook page](#), or follow [#IMCC4](#) on Twitter.

#### About the International Marine Conservation Congress

The [Society for Conservation Biology's IMCC](#) brings together conservation professionals and students to develop new and powerful tools, further marine conservation science and policy and catalyze change. Organized by the Society’s [Marine Section](#), IMCC is recognized as the most important international meeting for marine scientists, marine conservation professionals and students. IMCC delegates include marine conservation professionals from every sector of the field around the world, including biological and social sciences, management, policy, planning and communications. Universities, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, private foundations, and other organizations from numerous countries will be represented. Delegates can register on the IMCC4 [website](#).

#### Contact

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