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The 14th goal of the SDGs and involving youth in the environmental protection.

The oceans... They seem infinite, rich and inviolable but actually, they are under great threat.

The 14th goal of the SDGs (the Sustainable Development Goals of The United Nations) devotes to the protection of one of the most planet's precious treasure – the blue oceans. It does not matter how far from the oceans you live; people's existence depends on them. Oceans ensure half the oxygen we breathe, provide food for more than three billion people on Earth and help them to sustain their livelihood. Moreover, they are home to billions of marine animals, from small plankton to unbelievable ones such as a flying fish or a basket star.

However, after centuries of overuse and pollution our home humanity should pay more attention to changing the way we see our oceans. From a thing that should provide us with food and freshwater to a fragile pearl which we ought to protect and value.

The truth is we have already lost half of our planet's wonders, especially ones that lie in the depth of our blue homes. There are some problems that the oceans face every day. The first one is overfishing which leads to the loss of millions of different fish as well as sea turtles and whales. What is more, the damage does not only affect on marine life but also on human beings. Billions of people eat fish for protein and sustain their livelihood.

The second one is dying coral reefs. They are one of the most diverse ecosystems on Earth. A wonderful array of marine animals finds shelters in the reefs, many people depend on them too, but actually, they are in crisis because of us.

And the most long-standing problem is pollution, from plastics to agrochemicals. It is not a secret that plastic pollution is the most acute problem linked to the oceans. There are some reasons for that, pollution damages coastal areas and contaminates food chains which lead to the destruction of many natural places and the life they support.

Today our oceans are calling for help. No one else, only we, youth, can protect our oceans and marine life. Everyone knows that youngsters are the future of our planet. Therefore, they should be taught how to value the planet they live and how to protect it.

«Everything starts with you. Every small step is important». I think this phrase can be a motto for young people who is not indifferent to the world around them. If we teach our youth to be more initiative and aware of the problems which our oceans face it can boost the environmental protection to a new level.

In my opinion, the easiest way how young people can help to protect the oceans and increase awareness of its problems among others is to create more social projects and events, spread out information about ecotourism and volunteering and motivate locals to become more interested in protecting the places where they live.

For instance, I take part in such an activity. I am a member of AIESEC in Russia, the international young-run organization which provides youth with leadership experience, cross-cultural exchange internships and volunteering across the globe. In my city of Kazan, our team consisting of only students, created a project named «EcoLife»¹ which helps foreign trainees (now we have 30 approved trainees) to be more involved in ecology and health, get cross-cultural ecology experience and learn more about Russia and its wonderful nature. The project will be in a quest format. The trainees will interact with the city and its citizens helping to increase awareness of local ecological problems in Kazan among its inhabitants. I think this is a good example of how young people can be involved in the environmental protection.

All things considered, the future of our oceans and marine life in our hands. As a young woman I can say that if I want to make the world a better place, to protect our planet's treasures I should start with changing myself: stop using plastic bags, sort out rubbish, take part in eco-protecting events more and most important, stop thinking about our oceans as a resource, but as a precious jewel.

¹ <http://ecolifekazan.info/> - there is a website of our project.