

SPEECH ON SULU SULAWESI SEAS
for THE NATIONAL COUNCIL – WWF US
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Delivered by Vince Perez

[must click: SLIDE 0 - Title Slide: Seas of Life]

[click: SLIDE 4 – Three Significant Developments in 1960s]

There were **3 significant events** that occurred in the **1960s** which greatly **shaped how man relates** to his environment: the first **manned descent to the deepest spot** on the ocean floor, the Marianas trench located off the Philippines, [click] the **first manned flight into space**, and of particular note [click] the **founding of World Wildlife Fund**.

[click: SLIDE 1 – the Nebula]

Yet since the 1960s, it has always been **somewhat of a puzzle** to me that our **society has been more captivated by outer space** than by the inner space of our oceans.

[click: SLIDE 3 – Image of the Oceans]

I **also find it puzzling** that so much of the **global conservation** efforts over the past half century, have **focused more on the land** versus the sea.

This **seems especially strange** when you consider that **70%** of our earth's **surface lies beneath** the oceans [click: SLIDE 2 – Oceans] – our ultimate **life-sustaining** resource – providing a great proportion of our planet's **oxygen, water and food**.

[one click: SLIDE 5 – Various Corals and the Coral Triangle]

In our world, there is one great expanse of Ocean that **stands tall** above the rest. This **IS** the **Coral Triangle** – the **epicenter** of marine biodiversity in the world.

At the **apex** of the Coral Triangle is [click: SLIDE 6] the Sulu Sulawesi Seas.

The Sulu Sulawesi Seas spans an area of **400,000** square miles, an area **3 times the size of California**, and lies within 3 countries in Southeast Asia:

[click] Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines.

[click once: SLIDE 7 - coral reefs]

Fringed by more than 10,000 miles of coastline – the distance from **Chicago to Hongkong**, the Sulu Sulawesi **nourishes** more than **1,200 species** of fish and **harbors 70% of the world's coral** species.

This is more than **10 times** the number of coral species found in the Carribean.

[click SLIDE 8 – Manta]

Just **last Sunday I dove on Apo Reef**, one of the marine protected areas where WWF is working in the Sulu Sulawesi, and I encountered a school of **some 30 mantas**.

I was **mesmerized** by their beauty and **graceful elegance**.

[\[click:Turtles\]](#) The Sulu Sulawesi Seas is home to **5 of the 7 species of sea turtles** found in our oceans, and it is one of the **very few places** on earth where the **rare coelacanth** can be found.

The coelacanth for you who are not aware of this unique fish, is a living fossil first discovered in the 1930's in the coast of South Africa and **long believed to be a link in the evolution** from sea to land.

And I happen to know there are several specimens of the coelacanth right here in **Chicago at the Field Museum.**)

[\[click SLIDE 9 – whale sharks\]](#)

Within the Sulu Sulawesi Seas, we also find the **greatest known concentration of whale sharks** on the planet.

It also boasts of a **myriad species** of [\[click: SLIDE 10 – marine mammals\]](#) **marine mammals** such as spinner dolphins, sperm whales, humpbacks, and killer whales.

[\[one click: SLIDE 11 – Photos of yellow fin tuna\]](#)

The Sulu Sulawesi Seas is the **spawning habitat** for great schools of **yellow fin tuna** that range the Western Pacific. There are very few areas in the world that can **SURPASS the productivity** and marine biodiversity of this **TRULY REMARKABLE region** in Southeast Asia.

SLIDE 12 – Photos of Tourism and Fisheries

As a conservationist and an **investment banker myself**, [\[click Slide 12 photos of tourism\]](#) I consider the biodiversity of the SULU SULAWESI SEAS as **its most valuable capital**.

Its **tourism** and **fisheries** sectors are valued at more than **1.5 billion dollars** per year, and it supports the economic well being more than **35 million** people living along its shores (or **3 times the population** of the state of Illinois.)

I can tell you that after **serving four years as Energy Secretary**, I can now **fully appreciate the complexity** of politics, but nothing is **more complex than the politics of conservation**.

[\[click: SLIDE 13 – Conservation is a complex endeavor\]](#)

The SULU SULAWESI is a **complicated political, social and economic arena** that requires us to make **skillful use** of existing **bonds among the diverse stakeholders** in 3 countries.

WWF has long recognized that **implementation must be founded on long term** partnerships.

In February last year, [\[click: SLIDE 14 Signing\]](#) at the 7th Conference of Parties of the Convention on Biodiversity, the governments of Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines signed a **tri-national agreement** **proclaiming** to the world that the Sulu Sulawesi Seas is their **home**, their **responsibility** and their **future**.

[click: SLIDE 15 – Images of Successes]

Today, the Sulu Sulawesi Seas is much **more than just a plan.**

It has **taken flesh.**

With our partners, we are now **reaping success.**

How did it all began?

[one click: SLIDE 16 - Map showing pictures of Turtle Islands]

Ten years ago a group of conservationists from the US and Philippines **met in the Turtle islands,**

a meeting which resulted in the **establishment of WWF Philippines** as well as the establishment of the **first transnational marine turtle park, the Turtle Islands Heritage Protected Area.**

Today, in these islands straddling Malaysia and the Philippines, as well as in the Derawan islands of Indonesia, marine **turtle conservation is making great strides.**

[one click SLIDE 17 - Map showing location, pictures of Tubbataha]

In 1998, I first visited the **Tubbataha** Reef, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and spent several days diving with the WWF US and WWF Philippines Board.

We found parts of the reef in pristine condition while other parts were heavily damaged by dynamite fishing.

WWF immediately **launched a campaign to save** Tubbataha by undertaking **extensive biological surveys** and providing support for **marine enforcement** activities.

Today, I am happy to report that Tubbataha is a **mecca for divers**, and the **fish abundance** there has increased by **300%** greatly benefiting the nearby fishing communities.

[click: SLIDE 18 - Map and pictures of Donsol]

Since we first heard reports of **large aggregations of whale sharks** in Donsol in the Philippines, WWF helped the communities to **conserve the largest fish in the world**, and at the same time develop ecotourism in Donsol.

Over the last 3 years, we have seen a dramatic increase in tourism arrivals, from **800 to over 3,000** visitors last year.

Among its 75 neighboring towns, Donsol's municipal income used to rank a **lowly 72nd**. **Today, it has risen to 17th place**.

In 2004, **TIME magazine** chose the Donsol Whale Shark experience as the **best wildlife encounter** in Asia.

(Leigh and I had 10 encounters in a span of only 2 hours).

[one click: SLIDE 19 - Map and pictures of East Kalimantan]

In **Indonesia**, the government has moved forward in its commitment to **declare 20% of its marine waters as protected**.

By the end of this year,

another 1.5 million hectares will be declared protected in the **Derawan group** of Islands in East Kalimantan.

This includes the area where **turtle egg collection**, **worth US\$100,000 annually**, was successfully stopped two years ago and World Wildlife Fund is now developing tourism in the area.

[one click; SLIDE 20 – Photos of Malaysian scenes]

In **Eastern Malaysia**, the government now **boasts of six marine parks** while three additional parks are being established.

OUR task, however, is not finished.

It would be a **MISTAKE** for us to **sit back** and leave behind these “**islands of success**”.

[one click: SLIDE 21 – threats and success]

The **onslaught of extraction and degradation has NOT BEEN STOPPED.**

ON THE CONTRARY, it must be reversed!

We need to **continue investing in a portfolio** of successes along a triple bottom line – biological, economic and social gains.

WE HAVE STARTED SOMETHING GOOD.

WE MUST SEE THIS THROUGH.

[one click: SLIDE 22 – Photo of elderly men and women in Indonesia and Malaysia]

Many developing Asian societies today **still remain ecologically-dependent.** For them, the **environment is the social security system** of the poor.

In this part of the world, **sustainable development must, therefore, be anchored on environmental conservation.**

This goal draws from an old Asian concept – attributed to Buddhism – that **one requires balance in order to survive.**

I would like to end by **quoting Buzz Aldrin**, the Apollo 11 Astronaut, who **saw our Living Planet for the first time** while orbiting the moon:

[click SLIDE 23– Image of Planet Earth]

"The soft, glowing presence of planet Earth in the black abyss had a pristine clarity ... the Earth seemed fragile, drifting like a lost balloon on the black velvet of space. We gained more ... by seeing Earth not as an extension of man, but man as an extension of Earth."

All of us in this room tonight,
by **virtue of our being here** as supporters of WWF
certainly share this vision of Earth and **understand** that
humanity is **merely an extension of this fragile** world.

[click: sitting Turtle] **We thank you** for your unwavering **belief**
in our vision of a Living Planet and
urge you to continue your support,
so that, **sometime in the foreseeable** future,
we can finish what we started four decades ago.

[click: "thank you WWF"] On behalf of this sea turtle, Thank you.