

World Ocean Initiative 2018: Blancpain and *The Economist* step up their cooperation

In line with its commitment to the exploration and preservation of the oceans, Blancpain has supported the *World Ocean Summit* since its first edition in 2012. The 5th Summit is taking place from March 7th to 9th 2018 at Riviera Maya in Mexico and marks the beginning of a new phase in the cooperation between the watch Manufacture and *The Economist*. This prestigious international conference is indeed taking on a new dimension this year with the launch of the *World Ocean Initiative*. As the founding partner, Blancpain is proud to broaden its contribution to this project which reflects its core values: long-term vision, optimism and innovation.

Organized by *The Economist*, the *World Ocean Summit* has established itself over the past six years as the most influential multilateral forum for global governance of the oceans. It brings together more than 360 leaders from governments, companies, international organizations, NGOs and universities with the aim of discussing and suggesting solutions for a future in which sustainable development and blue economy are balanced. In 2018, the Summit is expanding into a wider and more ambitious *World Ocean Initiative* with an agenda focused on accelerated measures and tangible results on behalf of viable stewardship of the oceans.

It is within the framework of this new initiative that the Manufacture Blancpain – creator of the first modern diving watch – and *The Economist* have set up *The Protectors* program. This is designed to support six individual projects which contribute in an innovative and significant manner to the objective of having 30% of the planet's oceans classified into marine protected areas by 2030. Over a 24-month period, the public will have an opportunity to discover the work and achievements accomplished by six key figures through a series of short movies, discussion panels and an interactive digital campaign. This new program was presented at the opening of the *World Ocean Summit* with the screening of the documentary *Ocean* (Season 2)ⁱ, produced by *The Economist Films* with the exclusive support of Blancpain.

Given its involvement in protecting the oceansⁱⁱ, Blancpain is particularly delighted with the choice of Mexico as the host country for the Summit. In fact, an expedition supported by the brand encouraged the recent decision made by the Mexican government to create the largest marine protected area in North America, in the Revillagigedo Archipelago. Extending over some 148,000 km², this new reserve will contribute to the protection of the hundreds of species that inhabit or pass through this archipelago, which consists of four volcanic islands.

An early announcement in London

On December 12th 2017, Blancpain and its President & CEO Marc A. Hayek hosted 230 guests at the Natural History Museum in London for an evening dedicated to the links between the Manufacture and the world of the sea. This was a unique occasion for members of the press, collectors and VIP clients to discover the historic heritage of the brand in this field, as well as receiving advance information regarding Blancpain's progress and new partnerships in support of the oceans.

The event began with the announcement of a first year of support for the Museum in its role as a center for scientific research, as well as its ability to raise public awareness of the importance of sustainable management of the oceans and marine species. The second key intervention during this evening was led by Laurent Ballesta – underwater biologist and photographer –, who revealed the initial images and results of his fourth *Gombessa* expedition, a scientific, technical and artistic project that has been actively supported by Blancpain since 2012. His exceptional photographic work was in fact rewarded in 2017 by the London Natural History Museum's *Wildlife Photographer of the Year* competition (in the "Earth's Environments" category).

Finally, to conclude the ceremony, Paul Rossi, President of *The Economist Group Media Businesses*, gave a preview of the enhancement of the partnership with Blancpain through the implementation in 2018 of the new *World Ocean Initiative*: “We are proud of the collaboration undertaken with Blancpain that is designed to drive the debate and change on what is probably one of the greatest challenges that our future generations will have to deal with [...] In 2018, we are launching a new initiative with the goal of discussing how we can convert 30% of the oceans into marine protected areas, which appears to be the lowest limit that we need to achieve.” An innovative and demanding approach which is perfectly in line with the efforts undertaken by the brand, as Marc A. Hayek emphasized: “In light of recent technological developments and the major challenges facing the oceans today, Blancpain remains strongly motivated in pursuing its commitment to the oceans in new ways.”

The Blancpain Ocean Commitment

Ever since the launch of the *Fifty Fathoms* – the first modern diving watch – in 1953, Blancpain has invested in fostering the exploration, preservation and improved knowledge of the world of the oceans. Over the past 65 years, this commitment has intensified and diversified through multiple initiatives and partnerships, since 2014 united under the *Blancpain Ocean Commitment* global concept. As such, the Manufacture provides support to major scientific expeditions, oceanographic exploration projects, environmental fora, and underwater photography exhibitions, as well as the production of documentary publications and films. It is within this context that Blancpain is renewing its association with *The Economist* as main sponsor to the *World Ocean Summit*.

ⁱ To view the full *Ocean* documentary: <http://films.economist.com/blancpain-ocean>

ⁱⁱ Blancpain has contributed to the protection of more than four million square kilometers of ocean, in other words, doubling the area of marine protected reserves around the world.