

Despite the fact that our planet is habitable only because most of it is composed of water, it is the oceans that are the most immediately threatened part of the earth.

It was in the oceans that life first began to stir, shielded by the waters from the sun's irresistible radiation. It was from the oceans that plants and animals emerged to colonize the land surface of the planet. It is the oceans today that provide the water vapour which, drawn up by the sun, falls upon the earth in harvest-bringing, life-sustaining rain. The ocean is a major provider of the oxygen released by its plankton for the benefit of all the species of land, air and sea – breathing with lungs and gills.

Without special qualities for holding heat, much of the earth would be uninhabitable.

The oceans are the coolants of the tropics, the bringers of warm currents to cold regions, the universal moderators of temperature throughout the globe.

The oceans are also indispensable to man because they first created the worldwide currents of sea-borne trade which have steadily drawn our planet into a single economic system. They still produce protein. In 1996, sixty-three million metric tons of fish came from the sea, estimated to be approximately one-fifth of the ocean's production.

Fish, if turned directly to human use, could make up a large part of the protein diet required for the world's children, especially those in developing countries, at a very low cost. But, in one of the world economy's most unacceptable diversions of resources, fifty percent of the harvest from the oceans is converted to fish meal which today ends up feeding pigs and chickens in developed countries. It is very sad that 'developed' animal pets have the chance of a better diet than very many 'developing' babies.