

March 15, 2004

The Honorable William H. Frist
Majority Leader
United States Senate
U.S. Capitol, S-230
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Frist:

We write to urge you to schedule a vote on the resolution of ratification for the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (the Convention) at the earliest opportunity. Ratifying the Convention is of both substantive and symbolic importance in protecting and restoring the health of our oceans.

Numerous recent studies and reports, including the report of the Pew Oceans Commission, on which we served, have articulated serious concerns about the state of our living oceans. The increasing, and often conflicting, demands human society places on the oceans have resulted in problems ranging from polluted beaches to collapsed fisheries to disrupted coastal and ocean ecosystems.

Fortunately, there are solutions at hand for these problems. Their implementation will require strong leadership and commitment. An important step in exercising U.S. leadership would be ratification of the Convention, as recommended by the Pew Oceans Commission and the congressionally chartered U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy.

The United States is the world's greatest maritime power, with strong international interests in military and commercial navigation, communications, research, stewardship of living and non-living marine resources, and marine environmental protection. We exercise jurisdiction over the world's largest exclusive economic zone—an area more than 20 percent larger than our nation's land area. Yet the United States has not acceded to the treaty that provides the fundamental framework for international ocean governance.

The Convention secures the United States' rights to protect, manage and utilize the resources of its EEZ. The establishment of 200-mile EEZs, combined with nations' rights and obligations under the treaty for management and conservation of marine resources, promote international cooperation in fisheries management. Its regime for access for scientific research supports our efforts to understand the oceans, including their significant role in regulating weather and climate.

The Honorable William H. Frist
March 15, 2004

The oceans are a public trust and we believe it is our ethical and civic responsibility to provide for their stewardship. Ratifying the Convention would affirm the United States' commitment to protection and management of the oceans and reassert our leadership on international ocean policy. We urge the Senate promptly to provide its advice and consent to ratification of the Convention.

Sincerely,

Leon E. Panetta
Chair, Pew Oceans Commission

On behalf of:

John Adams
President, Natural Resources Defense Council

Eileen Claussen
President, Pew Center on Global Climate Change

Carlotta Leon Guerrero
Co-Director, Ayuda Foundation

Mike Hayden
Secretary, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks

Geoffrey Heal, Ph.D.
Garrett Professor of Public Policy and Business Responsibility, Columbia Business School

Charles F. Kennel, Ph.D.
Director, Scripps Institution of Oceanography

Tony Knowles
Former Governor, Alaska

Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D.
Wayne and Gladys Valley Professor of Marine Biology, Oregon State University

Julie Packard
Executive Director, Monterey Bay Aquarium

Pietro Parravano
President, Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations

Joseph P. Riley, Jr.
Mayor, Charleston, South Carolina

David Rockefeller, Jr.
Vice Chairman, National Park Foundation

Roger T. Rufe, Jr.
President & CEO, The Ocean Conservancy

Kathryn Sullivan, Ph.D.
President & CEO, COSI Columbus

Patten D. White
CEO, Maine Lobstermen's Association

cc: Hon. Thomas A. Daschle
Hon. Richard G. Lugar
Hon. Joseph R. Biden, Jr.