

[FEATURE: 'Grandpa Oyster' offers example of sustainable ocean business](#)

30 May 2017 – Shigeatsu Hatakeyama's oyster farm was completely destroyed by the deadly tsunami that hit north-east Japan in March 2011.

"I thought to myself my business was over," says 74-year-old Hatakeyama, who is known as 'Grandpa Oyster,' a nickname given by the schoolchildren in his environmental education programme.

To his surprise, however, the conditions conducive to oyster farming in Kesenuma Bay came back quickly. He believes the recovery can be attributed to the tree-planting movement he and his fishing community initiated decades ago in the upstream of Okawa River that flows into the Bay.

Mr. Hatakeyama is the president of the non-profit organization "Mori wa Umi no Koibito" (The forest is longing for the sea, the sea is longing for the forest), whose activities focus on reforestation and environmental education. He was also one of the recipients of the [UN Forest Hero Award in 2012](#).

Ahead of the United Nations [Ocean Conference](#), Mr. Hatakeyama spoke with *UN News* and explained how the forest environment is interlinked to marine production.

UN News: What led you to start the reforestation movement "The forest is longing for the sea, the sea is longing for the forest?"

Shigeatsu Hatakeyama: The movement started in 1989. Oysters grow in areas of brackish waters where a river meets the sea. You cannot grow oysters just with salt water. Fresh water is necessary. For instance, Hiroshima, a well-known oyster production site, has brackish water areas at the mouth of the Ota River. Okawa flows into Kesenuma Bay, where our oyster farm is situated. Nutrients from upstream forests that a river carries raise phytoplankton, which oysters feed on.



Shigeatsu Hatakeyama speaks to participants at a tree-planting festival.
Photo/Mori wa Umi no Koibito

About 40 years ago, a red tide occurred in the bay. Red tide is caused by human activities on the land side. It does not come from offshore. A shell of oyster inhales 200 litres of water a day. The body of oysters turned red and they were called 'blood oysters,' which were not sellable in markets and had to all be disposed of. This incident was the starting point for our fishing community to launch a campaign to regain the blue sea.

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of the link between forests, rivers and the ocean

I also had a first-hand experience that deepened my understanding of the link between forests, rivers and the ocean. One day, a French scholar visited a research facility in the Kesenuma area. At her invitation, I visited France, a country known for oyster farming. I was very impressed with a variety of seafood produced in the estuary of Loire. There was a huge forest of deciduous broad-leaved trees along the river. I rediscovered the link among forests, rivers and the ocean. A good forest raises a good ocean.

The academic world is vertically divided. Forest, river and sea are placed in different academic fields. There were few scholars who can elucidate the relationship between forest, rivers and the ocean in a holistic manner. American scholar John Martin discovered that plankton does not grow in some waters that lack iron. The sea becomes anaemic if iron is not provided. I found that Hokkaido University professor Katsuhiko Matsunaga was also saying that forests grow a rich ocean. His research gave scientific justification for our movement of planting trees upstream of rivers. Dams stop the flow of iron into the ocean.

Farmers usually do not take the ocean into account when they grow crops. If inhabitants in the river basin do not think about the seas, oyster production sites will vanish.



Oysters growing in Kesenuma Bay. Photo/Mori wa Umi no Koibito

UN News: What impact did the East Japan Great Earthquake and Tsunami of 2011 have on your oyster business?

Shigeatsu Hatakeyama: It was beyond an impact. A 20-metre-high tsunami brought complete destruction and I lost everything, from boats, aquaculture rafts and other equipment like refrigerators. Honestly, I thought to myself 'my business is over.' All living creatures disappeared. But by May (about two months after the disaster), living beings started to re-emerge. When a Kyoto University research team came, I was eager to know the status of plankton in the bay as there was speculation that the sea was dead. A member of the research mission said: 'Mr. Hatakeyama, please rest assured. There are more plankton than oysters can eat.'

Hearing that, I was convinced that I could revive my oyster farming business. The researcher attributed the quick comeback of the sea's condition to the forests upstream. This experience proved the legitimacy of our reforestation movement. In the following year, I received the UN Forest Hero Award.

UN News: As a recipient of the UN Forest Hero Award, what kind of outcome do you expect from the UN Ocean Conference to be held in June?

Shigeatsu Hatakeyama: Research on the relationship between the ocean and forest is progressing. As you know, waters off Japan's Sanriku Coast form one

of the world's top three fishing grounds. In fishery high school, I was taught that the condition for the fertile waters was created by the collision of Black and Parental currents. But new studies suggest that the forests – five times larger than Japan's land – around the Amur River, which runs along the border of eastern Russia and northern China, produce iron that does not oxidize. The Amur carries this type of iron into the Sea of Okhotsk, and iron flows via the Bussol Strait of the Kuril Islands into the northern Pacific Ocean, where the Sanriku fishing ground is situated.



Overview of floating oyster farms in Kesenuma Bay. Photo/Mori wa Umi no Koibito

It has become clear now that the source of iron in the waters off Japan's Sanriku Coast is the forests in the Russian-Chinese border. Many fishery and ocean experts are expected to participate in the UN Ocean Conference. But it is meaningless to hold the meeting if they forget to discuss the link between the forest and the ocean.

It is important to teach children how forests, rivers and the ocean are connected

UN News: Please share your thoughts about the importance of human resource development and youth education.

Shigeatsu Hatakeyama: If you don't share the values with people living in the river basin, the sea will get contaminated. This is not a matter of natural science but a problem created by humans. It is important to teach children how forests, rivers and the ocean are connected. We started educating children one year after our reforestation movement began. We planted trees not only in the mountains, but also in the minds of boys and girls. We have educated more than 10,000 children.

UN News: How do you feel about being nicknamed 'Grandpa Oyster?'

Shigeatsu Hatakeyama: I could not use water for two months after the 2011 tsunami. My beard grew unkempt and I probably looked like Colonel Sanders, the founder of the Kentucky Fried Chicken fast-food chain. Elementary school children enrolled in our on-site environmental education programme started calling me 'Grandpa Oyster.' Now at 74, I feel I have reached an appropriate age to be called a grandpa.



Shigeatsu Hatakeyama teaches children about environmental conservation. Photo/Mori wa Umi no Koibito

UN News: What kind of contributions does your movement make to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals?

Shigeatsu Hatakeyama: Because I am just a fisherman, I cannot say big things. But I say this. The four major civilizations in the world originated in river basins. Civilization will perish if you destroy the river basin environment. In Japan, 35,000 rivers are flowing into the Sea of Japan and the Pacific Ocean. However, many river basins are sick. This is not sustainable. We need to restore the original condition. When the ocean gets better, you can reap more fish for sushi. Then, sushi prices will go down. So, it's good for food security and for the economy of the local communities.

UN News: What is your dream?

Shigeatsu Hatakeyama: My father started our family's oyster business. My three sons are now running it. If my grandson, who is in high school now, succeeds, our business will have lasted 100 years. This is sustainability to the letter, isn't it? If the river basin environment is preserved, a sustainable life will continue even in remote seaside areas. I hope to prove that and continue communicating these linkages through my real-life example. .

[Tobacco's killer toxins also wreak havoc on the environment, UN health agency warns](#)

30 May 2017 – Stamping out tobacco use can save millions of lives and combat poverty, the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) said today and spotlighted for the first time the ways in which tobacco affects human well-being from an environmental perspective – caused by production, distribution and waste.

[“Tobacco threatens us all,”](#) WHO Director-General Dr. Margaret Chan said, explaining: “Tobacco exacerbates poverty, reduces economic productivity, contributes to poor household food choices and pollutes indoor air.”

The UN health chief's assessment comes on the eve of [World No Tobacco Day](#), marked annually on 31 May, and which targets the threats tobacco poses to global development worldwide. WHO is calling on governments to implement strong tobacco control measures – such as banning tobacco marketing and advertising, promoting plain product packaging, raising excise taxes and making indoor public places and workplaces smoke-free.

“Many governments are taking action against tobacco, from banning advertising and marketing, to introducing plain packaging for tobacco products, and smoke-free work and public places,” noted Dr. Oleg Chestnov, WHO's Assistant Director-General for Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs) and Mental Health.

Scarring the environment and those in it

For the first time, a WHO [report](#) links the impact of tobacco to nature and the environment, pointing out that tobacco waste contains over 7,000 toxic chemicals that poison the environment, including human carcinogens with smoke emissions contributing thousands of tons of human carcinogens, toxicants and greenhouse gases.

Moreover, the report underscores, tobacco waste is the largest type of litter by count globally. Up to 10 billion of the 15 billion cigarettes sold daily are disposed of in the ecosystem and cigarette butts account for 30 to 40 per cent of items collected in coastal and urban clean-ups.

“But by taking robust tobacco control measures, governments can safeguard their countries’ futures by protecting tobacco users and non-users from these deadly products, generating revenues to fund health and other social services, and saving their environments from the ravages tobacco causes,” Dr. Chan stressed.

VIDEO: Tobacco threatens us all, endangering our health, increasing poverty and damaging the environment. But tobacco control helps communities be stronger and healthier, and enables countries to develop more sustainable futures. Tobacco control is also a critical element of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development.

Health, wealth and the economy

Tobacco use kills more than seven million people annually and costs over \$1.4 trillion in healthcare expenditure and lost productivity, indicated WHO.

All countries have committed to eradicate poverty through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, key elements of which include implementing the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control ([FCTC](#)). By 2030, the Convention and the Global Goals aim to cut premature deaths from noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) by one-third, including those tobacco-related, namely heart and lung diseases, cancer and diabetes.

“Tobacco is a major barrier to development globally,” says Dr. Douglas Bettcher, Director of WHO’s Department for the Prevention on NCDs.

The report highlights that some 860 million adult smokers live in low- and middle-income countries. Many studies have shown that in the poorest households, tobacco spending often represents more than 10 per cent of total household expenditure – leaving less money for food, education and healthcare.

Tobacco farming inhibits education, as 10–14 per cent of children from tobacco-growing families miss class to work in tobacco fields.

Additionally, the report points out, tobacco contributes to 16 per cent of all NCDs deaths. Women constitute 60–70 per cent of tobacco farm workers,

putting them in close contact with often hazardous chemicals.

According to Dr. Bettcher: "Tobacco-related death and illness are drivers of poverty, leaving households without breadwinners, diverting limited household resources to purchase tobacco products rather than food and school materials, and forcing many people to pay for medical expenses."

AUDIO: Smoking "threatens us all" and, increasingly, the planet's poorest communities, UN health experts said on Tuesday ahead of World No Tobacco Day 2017 on 31 May.

Turning to taxes, Dr. Chestnov noted that one of the least used, but most effective, tobacco control measures to help countries address development needs is through increasing tobacco tax and prices.

Governments collect nearly \$270 billion in tobacco tariffs annually, but, the report identified, this could increase by over 50 per cent, generating \$141 billion more by globally raising cigarettes taxes by 80 cents per pack, or one international dollar. Strengthening domestic resource mobilization, this would create funds needed to meet the 2030 Agenda development priorities.

[Recent tragedies at sea highlight urgency for safe pathways to Europe – UN refugee agency](#)

30 May 2017 – Against the backdrop of more than 1,700 people having perished this year while undertaking perilous crossings across central Mediterranean Sea to reach mainland Europe, the United Nations refugee agency has appealed for "credible alternatives" to ensure accessible and safe ways for people in need of international protection to reach the continent.

According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), since the beginning of the year, more than 60,000 people have used the route, with close to 9,500 migrants and refugees having been rescued over the past week and disembarked in various Italian ports.

"[However] the total number of dead and missing since the beginning of 2017 has now reached over 1,720," Babar Baloch, a spokesperson for the agency, told the press at a regular media briefing at the UN Office in Geneva (UNOG) today.

"A total of 50 bodies were disembarked over the past few days in Crotona, Palermo and Catania following an undetermined number of incidents, in which

dozens of others are feared dead or missing at sea.”

Last week alone, at least 116 people died or went missing in shipwrecks in the region.

In one such tragedy, early morning on 24 May, 33 people – including 13 women and seven children – lost their lives and dozens more feared missing when a wooden vessel carrying somewhere between 700-900 passengers sunk. 593 persons (from Sudan, Eritrea, the Comoro Islands, Egypt and Morocco) – many are deeply traumatized by the ordeal – were rescued.

Furthermore, on 23 May, some 82 people died or went missing when a dinghy carrying 126 people, mostly from Nigeria, Ghana, Sudan and Cameroon capsized. The others were rescued by an Egyptian fishing boat that came to their aid.

Also, on 27 May, the Tunisian Coastguard rescued a boat carrying 126 people, including 48 women, a five-year old boy and three babies, and took them to the port of Zarzis. A Nigerian woman, however, lost her life.

“UNHCR praises the Italian Coastguard for their constant efforts in coordinating rescue operations as well as the Tunisian Coastguard and the crew of all the ships involved for saving so many lives,” said Mr. Baloch, reiterating the UN agency’s call for alternatives to such dangerous crossings, including accessible and safe ways to reach Europe such as family reunification, resettlement and private sponsorship.

Attacks on [refugees and migrants](#) further complicate situation

Further compounding the challenges for refugees and migrants, there are reports of attacks on refugees and migrants at during crossings as well as in places where they embark.

“Survivors disembarked in Salerno last Saturday told our staff that their boat was approached by criminals who stole their belongings and took their engine off, shooting in the air on several occasions,” noted the UNHCR spokesperson, and “luckily, nobody was wounded in the incident.”

However, several refugees and migrants landed on the Italian island of Lampedusa over the week-end had gunshot wounds and reported having witnessed friends being fired at or killed.

“One man told our staff that he was shot in the leg by members of Libyan militias who also stole his belongings. Another man was shot in the arm and tortured by a trafficker to extract money from him,” he added.

UN rallies support for displaced amid fresh violence in Central African Republic

30 May 2017 – United Nations agencies are seeking to rally support for the people fleeing escalating violence in the Central African Republic (CAR), while the Organization's human rights office has called for the establishment of a strong justice system in the country.

Since fighting flared in May between rebels, more than 68,000 people have fled their homes within CAR, while more than 20,000 have sought refuge in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), according to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), or the UN refugee agency.

More funds are urgently needed to aid more than 88,000 people who have been forced to flee an upsurge in violence, [said](#) UNHCR spokesperson Babar Baloch at today's press briefing in Geneva.

Significant rebel activity on towns along the DRC border as well as rumours of possible attacks are pushing people to flee in the Haute Kotto and Mbomou prefectures inside CAR, he noted.

UNHCR is calling for urgent support to its funding appeal of \$209.2 million for the CAR situation, which is only 6 per cent funded.

For its part, the International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)), or the UN migration agency, has tracked more than 19,000 displaced people in the nation's sub-prefecture of Bangassou in Mbomou Prefecture, which is situated at the border with the DRC. More than 13,000 of those displaced are children.

More than 80 per cent of the displaced persons are living with host communities and not in camps, [said](#) Yoko Fujimura, IOM's expert on displacement tracking. Host families are sharing the little that they have with displaced people and therefore should also be supported to avoid tensions over limited resources, [she added](#).

As of May 2017, there were more than 500,000 internally displaced persons nationwide, a figure that had not been reached since August 2014.

Meanwhile, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)) has released a report that maps [13 years of violence and impunity](#) in the CAR.

Mass killings and other serious human rights violations have been documented in the report covering the multiple conflicts in the Central African Republic between 2003 and 2015.

Many of the violations may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity, the mapping report states, as it sets out a strategy to fight pervasive impunity in the country.

The history of the country has been marked by deep-rooted poverty, ethnic tensions, pervasive political instability, corruption and nepotism that led to a succession of armed conflicts, the mapping report states. After gaining independence, the Central African Republic was subjected to a succession of authoritarian regimes that committed, condoned and were unable to prevent serious violations and abuses.

Regional instability and internal conflicts in neighbouring countries have fuelled the volatile conditions in the country, particularly through the flow of arms and rebel groups across its porous borders, the report adds.

The mapping report on the Central African Republic lays bare the staggering suffering of the people of this mineral-rich country which is among the poorest in the world, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said.

In documenting the violations and abuses of the past, we hope to galvanize national and international efforts to protect and bring justice to the victims of these crimes, said Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, the UN Special Representative for the CAR and head of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic ([MINUSCA](#)).

The report sets out recommendations, such as having a sequenced and comprehensive approach to transitional justice, creating a prosecution strategy for the Special Criminal Court, and establishing a truth and reconciliation commission.

[With 'blue helmets' in harm's way every day, peacekeeping reforms and resources needed – UN chief](#)

29 May 2017 – Marking International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today said that peacekeeping must have the tools and rules it needs to adapt to the dangerous and challenging environments they face.

In an [opinion piece in the Boston Globe](#), the Secretary-General wrote that "too often, United Nations peace operations face a gap between our goals and the means we have to achieve them."

He noted that peacekeepers, known also as 'blue helmets' for their iconic headgear, are deployed to many places where warring parties show little commitment to peace, and are themselves increasingly targeted by parties to conflict and violent extremism.

Dealing with this near reality requires a serious strategic reform on our part, based on an analysis of the mandates and capacities of our missions and our partnerships with governments and others," he said.

Mr. Guterres noted that significant reforms in peacekeeping have already reduced costs and made deployments faster and more flexible.

Peacekeeping is already "cost-effective," he said, noting that its budget is less than half of one per cent of global military spending and shared by the 193 UN Member States.

VIDEO: What is UN Peacekeeping? A quick guide on why UN peacekeeping is an investment in global peace, security and prosperity.

Referencing studies in the United States which show that UN peacekeeping missions are estimated to be eight times more cost-effective than when the US acts alone, Mr. Guterres wrote that "investment pays off many times over when we consider the economic growth and prosperity that follow from increased stability and security after successful peacekeeping missions."

UN blue helmets have helped to stabilize and strengthen the development and economics in countries ranging from El Salvador to Namibia, and from Mozambique to Cambodia.

So far, 54 missions have completed their mandates and closed, with two more "Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia" expected to do so in the coming months.

These missions have left a legacy that includes the dedication and courage of those serving, and of those who died in duty.

Since the first peacekeeping operation in Palestine in 1948, more than 3,500 UN staff have died in the service of peace "including 117 military, police and civilian peacekeepers from 43 countries who died in service last year."

"United Nations peacekeepers place themselves in harm's way every day, between armed groups that are trying to kill each other and to harm civilians," Mr. Guterres wrote, noting in particular the situation in the Central African Republic where a number of UN colleagues have been killed recently.

Peace is an abstract concept, he said, but peace on the ground depends on "gruelling hard work, every day, under difficult and dangerous conditions."

Mr. Guterres noted that despite heroic efforts every day, the reputation of peacekeeping has been tarnished by "appalling" cases of sexual exploitation and abuse.

To tackle this scourge, he recently presented a plan to all Governments which aims to end impunity and create victims' rights advocates at UN Headquarters and in peacekeeping missions.

On 29 May in 1948, the first UN peacekeeping mission began operations in Palestine. In 2002, the UN General Assembly designated 29 May as the [International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers](#). The annual observance was marked this past Friday at Headquarters, where the Secretary-General presided over a wreath-laying ceremony in honour of all peacekeepers who lost their lives while serving under the UN flag.