

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

Martha's Vineyard Youth Leadership Initiative
P.O. Box 4551
Vineyard Haven, Massachusetts 02568

Dear Youth Delegates:

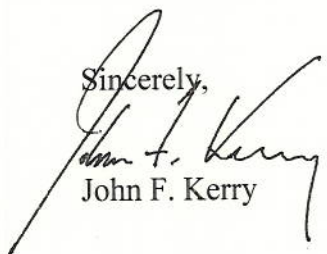
It is an honor for me to welcome you to the twelfth annual Youth Leadership Summit for Sustainable Development. I am very pleased to learn that this year's Summit will again be dedicated to the ocean. Our ocean is absolutely essential for life itself – not just the food, but the oxygen and weather cycles of the planet all depend on the ocean.

There are many challenges that are currently facing our ocean and we must all work together to protect this important resource. That is why I have encouraged leaders from around the globe to come together and participate in the Our Ocean Conferences that we've held -- first in Washington DC and the second in Chile. These Conferences have resulted in commitments to protect nearly 6 million square kilometers of the ocean and partnerships and initiatives worth more than \$4 billion. We need to work together to stop illegal fishing, end pollution that is flowing into the ocean, and address climate change, which is making the ocean more acidic and having profoundly negative effects on marine life. We must create marine protected areas in order to let our marine environment take a break from humans. The ocean is resilient and together we can do more to protect it. I am excited to continue the momentum of this work by hosting the 2016 Our Ocean Conference in Washington, in September. I hope to bring the next generation of ocean leaders into this conversation to help drive forward fresh, ambitious ideas to save our ocean.

We need as many voices as possible in this ongoing discussion and the voice of youth is especially important. I applaud all of you for stepping up to take action on these important issues. I encourage you to continue to seek out opportunities to make your voices heard and to present your ideas for sustainable development of the ocean.

I hope you enjoy meeting with the crew from the Hokulea's Worldwide Voyage. The Hokulea landed in Washington, DC as part of its voyage and its crew advocates for the ocean. We greatly appreciate all of their efforts. I wish you all great success with the Leadership Summit and want to thank you for all that you are doing to help protect our ocean.

Sincerely,


John F. Kerry