



Forum *for* Future Ocean Floor Mapping

Titanic wreck discoverer speaks at Ocean Floor Forum

Among keynote speakers at a major conference on the comprehensive mapping of the ocean floor in Monaco, 15-17 June, is Dr Robert Ballard, who discovered the wreck of the Titanic in 1985.

Dr Ballard is Director of the Center for Ocean Exploration at the Graduate School of Oceanography, University of Rhode Island and President of the Ocean Exploration Trust that operates one of America's dedicated ships of exploration.

In the years following the discovery of the Titanic, he found many other shipwrecks around the world, such as Bismarck in 1989, the Yorktown in 1998 (sunk in the World War II Battle of Midway), and the wreck of John F Kennedy's PT-109 off the Solomon Islands in 2002 as well as over 50 ancient shipwrecks in the deep water regions of the Mediterranean, Aegean, and Black Seas including ones in a high state of preservation dating back to the Iron Age.

The conference, the Forum for Future Ocean Floor Mapping is being held jointly by the General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO), and The Nippon Foundation, a private philanthropic foundation with its headquarters in Tokyo. The Nippon Foundation is funding the Forum which will bring together over 150 senior representatives, scientists and scholars from major ocean-related and international organisations, to discuss the importance of understanding the shape of the ocean floor. This will enable them address, more accurately, critical issues such as tsunamis, coastal change, undersea resource extraction, marine ecology and degradation, ocean warming, acidification, and the impact of global climate change. The Forum will culminate in the development of a Roadmap for Future Ocean Floor Mapping.

While finding famous wrecks has captured the imagination of the public, Dr Ballard believes his most important discoveries were of hydrothermal vents and "black smokers" in the Galapagos Rift and East Pacific Rise in 1977 and 1979 along with their exotic life forms living off the energy of the Earth through a process now called chemosynthesis.

His discoveries also include sunken remains of ships along ancient trade routes in the Mediterranean Sea; two ancient Phoenician ships off Israel, the oldest shipwrecks ever found in deep water; and four 1,500-year-old wooden ships, one almost perfectly preserved in the Black

Sea. Dr Ballard's Black Sea project sought evidence of a great flood that may have struck the region thousands of years ago – perhaps the location of the great Biblical Flood.

Dr Ballard has 22 honorary degrees and six military awards. He was also a Commander in the U.S. Naval Reserve, serving in the Navy from 1967 to 1997. He received the National Geographic Society's prestigious Hubbard Medal in 1996 for "extraordinary accomplishments in coaxing secrets from the world's oceans and engaging students in the wonder of science." In 2014, he was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Dr Ballard has published numerous books, scientific papers, and a dozen articles in National Geographic magazine. Dr Ballard also has been featured in several National Geographic television programs, including the record-breaking "Secrets of the Titanic."

Ends

Notes to editors:

GEBCO is a joint project of the International Hydrographic Organisation (IHO) and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO – the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – which was founded by Prince Albert I of Monaco in 1903.

The International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) was established in 1921 as the International Hydrographic Bureau (IHB). The present name was adopted in 1970 as part of a new international Convention on the IHO adopted by the then member nations. The former name, International Hydrographic Bureau, was retained to describe the IHO Secretariat, which coordinates and promotes the IHO's programmes and provides advice and assistance to Member States. The IHO has 85 member states with 8 others in various stages of applying to join.

The UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) was established by the General Conference of UNESCO in 1960. It first met in Paris at UNESCO Headquarters in 1961. There are currently 148 Member States. The IOC promotes international cooperation and coordinates programmes in marine research, services, observation systems, hazard mitigation and capacity development in order to understand and effectively manage the resources of the ocean and coastal areas.

The Nippon Foundation, a private, non-profit foundation, was established in 1962 for the purpose of carrying out philanthropic activities, using revenue from motorboat racing. The Foundation's overall objectives include social innovation, assistance for humanitarian activities and global ocean management. Its philanthropic ideals embrace social development and self-sufficiency, and it pursues these principles by working to improve public health and education, alleviate poverty, eliminate hunger and help the disabled.

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