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**SARGASSO SEA ALLIANCE HONORED WITH ESTEEMED 2013 INTERNATIONAL
SEAKEEPERS AWARD**

**Accolade Bolsters Urgent Need for Greater Stewardship of High Seas Marine
Ecosystems like the Sargasso Sea**

WASHINGTON D.C., Sept. 10, 2013 – In recognition of its ongoing work to secure international protection for the Sargasso Sea's unique and vulnerable open ocean ecosystem, the executive committee of the Sargasso Sea Alliance (SSA) has been named "2013 International SeaKeepers of the Year" by The International SeaKeepers Society. This prestigious, annual award is granted to those who have made exceptional contributions to the protection of world's oceans. Previous honorees have included Dr. Sylvia Earle, Prince Rainier of Monaco, Prince Albert II of Monaco, Mikhail Gorbachev, Walter Cronkite, and Jean Michele Cousteau.

Committee members who received the award included: David Evans Shaw, SSA founding chair and managing partner of BlackPoint Group; Dr. Richard Rockefeller, executive committee chair; Professor Howard Roe, science advisory committee chair and former director of the National Oceanography Centre, Southampton; Kristina Gjerde, High Seas policy advisor for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN); Dr. Derrick Binns, permanent secretary for the Ministry of Environment and Planning, Government of Bermuda; and Dr. David Freestone, SSA executive director. The International SeaKeepers Society honored the award recipients at the 2013 Bal de la Mer event held Monday evening in San Francisco.

"We believe that a protection declaration for the Sargasso Sea can become an island of hope, inspiration and exemplary stewardship in a vast sea of perilous complacency and ominous threats," said David Shaw. "We are grateful to the many people, organizations and nations who are working hard on solutions, and to the SeaKeepers for giving ocean protection a hopeful voice."

Since 2010, the Sargasso Sea Alliance, in collaboration with the government of Bermuda, has been mobilizing efforts to protect the Sargasso Sea, a unique two-million-square nautical mile ecosystem in the North Atlantic. Called by Dr. Sylvia Earle "the golden floating rainforest of the ocean," the Sargasso Sea is named after the *Sargassum* (pelagic drift algae) that accumulates in the North Atlantic Subtropical Gyre. It is the world's only sea without coasts, and is a critical habitat for marine wildlife, including tuna, bill fish, eels, turtles, marlin and more, providing resting, feeding and breeding areas and migration paths for many species. Because of the lack of effective governance of high seas areas, the Sargasso Sea and other oceans beyond national jurisdiction are threatened by diverse human activities including over-fishing, pollution, ship traffic, and even harvesting of Sargassum. The efforts of the Sargasso Sea Alliance are aimed at providing protections similar to those afforded to key land preserves such as Yellowstone, the Serengeti, and others worldwide.

About The Sargasso Sea Alliance

The Sargasso Sea Alliance was formed in 2010 under the leadership of the Government of Bermuda, in collaboration with scientists, international marine conservation groups and private donors, who all share a vision of protecting this unique and vulnerable open ocean ecosystem — a two million square nautical mile ecosystem in the North Atlantic primarily located in the high seas - areas that the UN now calls areas beyond national jurisdiction.

The Sargasso Sea Alliance seeks to:

- build an international partnership that will secure recognition of the ecological significance of the Sargasso Sea and the threats that it faces;
- use existing regional, sectoral and international organizations to secure a range of protective measures for all or parts of the Sargasso Sea to address key threats; and
- establish its process as a roadmap to guide similar institutions in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

For more information, visit us online at <http://www.sargassoalliance.org/>; and follow us on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/SargSeaAlliance>.

For more information about the International SeaKeepers Society and SeaKeepers award, visit <http://www.seakeepers.org/>.

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In Support of Sargasso Sea Alliance

“The Government of Bermuda is proud to be recognized as a marine conservation champion in our leadership of the Sargasso Sea Alliance. As an island positioned in the crossroads of the Atlantic, we are delighted to be bringing together the international community to protect the global resource of the Sargasso Sea.” – Hon. Minister Sylvan Richards Jr., JP, MP, Ministry of Environment and Planning, Government of Bermuda

“Environmental protection has been a key component of my work for human security and peace over the past 35 years. Having followed, with admiration, the pioneering ocean protection work of the Sargasso Sea Alliance, I am especially heartened to see their important work recognized by the International SeaKeepers Society and many others. A protection declaration for the Sargasso Sea will be a historic step towards better governance and conservation needed for the world's vast and vital high seas.” – Queen Noor of Jordan

“The Sargasso Sea Alliance is tackling head-on the daunting challenge of protection of the high seas, and doing so with fresh thinking, innovation and collaboration. I'm delighted they are being recognized with the Seakeepers Award at the prestigious Bal de la Mer celebrations.” – Jane Lubchenco, distinguished professor at Oregon State University and former administrator of the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)