



# **RAHBAR KISAN INTERNATIONAL**

## **Qatari Wildlife Photographer Azzam Al Mannai makes generous art donation to UN House on International Whale Shark Day**

Published on August 30, 2023

Document Date: Thu, Jan 16 2025 10:10:31 pm

Category: ,Articles,English,Qatar - ,Snippets

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Doha, 30 August 2023, on the occasion of World Whale Shark Day, distinguished Qatari wildlife photographer Azzam Al Mannai has made a profound contribution by donating one of his remarkable artworks to the United Nations House. This symbolic gesture underscores a shared

commitment to ocean preservation and the urgent need to raise awareness about the vulnerability of our oceans to environmental and anthropogenic threats.

The official presentation of the picture took place at the UN House in the presence of UN representatives, the Qatar National Commission for Education, Sciences and Culture, and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change who acknowledged the significance of the conservation of whale sharks and marine life. It is a timely reminder to amplify the message of marine conservation and our collective responsibility in safeguarding marine ecosystems.

Qatar is a constant home to the largest aggregations of hundreds of whale sharks in the country's northeast coast between June and September of every year. "As we celebrate Whale Shark Day, let us not forget our duty to protect these magnificent animals and their habitat", said Azzam Al Mannai.

The donated picture, titled "Into the Blue" is a testament to Azzam Al Mannai's dedication to capturing the beauty and richness of Qatar's nature and marine life and advocating for sustainable development through his creative expressions.

As a visionary artist, his work transcends visual aesthetics, delivering powerful messages about environmental awareness and the interconnectedness of our world.

Azzam Al Mannai, said: “Every time I dive in the ocean, it makes me feel really small and it makes me see my whole life into a different perspective appreciating this beautiful planet that we live in and the importance of our role to protect the oceans and preserve it for the coming generations”.

Mandated by the United Nations, UNESCO’s Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission has been entrusted with the mission of fostering cooperation between states, disseminating and promoting scientific knowledge exchange to safeguard the ocean and build a healthy relationship with our planet’s largest ecosystem, which is crucial for achieving some of the greatest challenges of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Among the many fascinating creatures in the ocean- the whale shark – the gentle giants of the oceans, hold a significant place in the natural world. However, these creatures face an array of challenges that threaten their survival, such as the destruction and degradation of their critical habitats, the impact of climate change on the marine ecosystem, the impact of pollution in the form of plastic waste as well as fishing and tourism activities.

Recognizing the urgent need for concerted action, UNESCO has been working closely with Ministry of Environment and Climate change to support Qatar's initiatives in protecting its natural heritage and promoting sustainable practices.

At the global level, the Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), also known as the Ocean Decade, aims to promote and advance the science necessary to understand, protect, and sustainably manage our oceans and their resources. By focusing on the conservation of Whale Sharks and their habitats, we contribute directly to the goals and objectives of the Ocean Decade. Our joint efforts will safeguard the future of these gentle giants and foster a broader understanding of marine ecosystems and their interconnectedness with human well-being.

Mr. Salah Khaled, Director of UNESCO Regional Office for the Gulf States and Yemen, said: "We are very proud to receive Azzam Al Mannai's generous donation to the UN House. His work stands as a testament to the magnificence and fragility of our ecosystem. It is also a reminder on the pressing need for collaborative action to preserve this delicate equilibrium, ensuring a harmonious existence between people and their natural environment".

Azzam Al Mannai is a distinguished Qatari wildlife photographer celebrated for his ability to capture the essence of the natural world through his art. His work serves as a catalyst for conversations surrounding environmental conservation and underscores the profound

connection between art and advocacy.