

“Communities of Ocean Action: Sustainable Blue Economy:”

14 July 2021, 10:00 AM-12:00 PM New York

United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs

CONCEPT NOTE

BACKGROUND

There is a huge potential in a sustainable blue economy or an ocean-based economy. The total value of ocean assets has been estimated at \$24 trillion and the ocean economy is valued around \$1.5 trillion a year, and this number is expected to double by 2030 to \$3 trillion¹. While the composition of the ocean-based economy is diverse, from established ocean industries, such as fisheries, tourism, and maritime transport, to emerging and new activities, such as offshore renewable energy, aquaculture, and marine biotechnology, the pandemic has taken a toll in most of these areas. Tourism and international shipping have been particularly hit and this had a disproportionate effect on vulnerable countries such as SIDS and developing coastal states which depend on the ocean economy for their economic livelihood, food security, and nutrition, etc.

Nevertheless, the potential benefits of a sustainable blue economy present an important opportunity to build back better from the pandemic by transitioning to a blue-green recovery path and growth. At the same time, the ocean-based economy also presents an opportunity to tackle some of the biggest challenges of the century; global warming from greenhouse gas caused by human activities and loss of biodiversity. A sustainable blue economy can play a critical role to greatly accelerate advances to a net-zero carbon world by 2050 through measures such as green shipping, nature-based solutions to climate change, innovative carbon sequestration methods such as blue carbon. The integration of area-based conservation tools such as marine protected areas can provide viable solutions to address the biodiversity crisis.

Despite well documented benefits of a sustainable blue economy, various challenges to blue economy implementation such as access to affordable long-term financing at scale, lack of capacity and technology, developing enabling conditions and addressing environmental concerns remain. One of the ways to help overcome these challenges is not only to ensure participation of all related stakeholders in the policy making processes, but that such process is aligned with various related international and UN processes. Such alignment will ensure an integrated approach to halt the declining health of the ocean address climate change and indeed facilitate a holistic implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The Voluntary Commitments (VC) of the Communities of Sustainable Blue Economy (SBE) emerging from the 2017 Ocean Conference provide important ideas and offer potential solutions to the international community’s common concerns on SBE and related issues. As of date,² 420 VCs have been submitted since the first UN Ocean conference in 2017. This webinar will look at some of these commitments that have been successful in making progress towards the common objective of implementing SDG 14 and its related priorities.

Objectives

¹ <https://bluecharter.thecommonwealth.org/action-groups/blue-economy> (figures estimated before the pandemic)

² As of 14th of June 2021

The objectives of the webinar are as follows:

- To explore and discuss how the sustainable blue (or ocean-based) economy can provide a viable global response to build back better from the pandemic through blue-Green blue recovery.
- To discuss ways to ensure that the concept and the principle of blue economy give equal weight to social sustainability as much as to that of economic and environmental sustainability
- To discuss ways how ocean related intergovernmental processes can be aligned with upcoming conferences and on-going international initiatives such as COP 26, CBD in the short term as well as the UN SDG Action Decade, UN Decade for Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and the Decade for Ecosystem Restoration, taking into account the Ocean-Climate-Biodiversity nexus.
- To share few successful examples of VCs in the SBE COA and further identify ocean actions or solutions that can be replicated in other places and scaled up as a regional or global initiative to help achieve SDG 14
- To mobilize new Voluntary Commitments.

FORMAT

The webinar will have a brief opening session with “Welcome Remarks” / “Setting the stage” by Mr. Alexander Trepelkov, Officer-in-charge, Division for Sustainable Development Goals. This will be followed by Opening Remarks Mr. Liu Zhenmin Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs also in his capacity as Co-focal Point for the Community of Ocean Action on Sustainable Blue Economy. A keynote address on “Promotion and Strengthening of Sustainable Ocean-based Economies” will be delivered by Dr. Major Vierros, Director, Coastal Policy and Humanities Research. This will be followed by a panel discussion with voluntary commitment holders. Closing remarks will be delivered by the United Nations Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for the Ocean, H.E. Ambassador Peter Thomson.

Mr. Trepelkov, in his capacity as OIC Division for Sustainable Development Goals of UNDESA will serve as Master of Ceremonies and Moderator for the Panel Discussion.

PROGRAMME

| PROGRAMME | |
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| Time | Session |
| 9:30 –10:00 am | Opening of the virtual platform and technical testing (For speakers and panelists only) |
| 10:00–10:15 am | OPENING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome/Setting the stage: Mr. Alexander Trepelkov, OIC Division for Sustainable Development Goals, UNDESA • OPENING REMARKS: Mr. Liu Zhenmin, Under Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs and Co-focal Point, Community of Ocean Action on Sustainable Blue Economy (pre-recorded video) |
| 10:15– 10:35 am | KEYNOTE ADDRESS: Presentation on “Promotion and Strengthening of Sustainable Ocean-based Economies” by Dr. Marjo Vierros, Director, Coastal Policy and Humanities Research |

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| <p>10:35 – 11:50 am</p> | <p>PANEL (Moderated by Mr. Alexander Trepelkov, OIC, DSDG, UNDESA)</p> <p>Ms. Marie Bourrel-McKinnon, Senior Policy Officer & Special Assistant to the Secretary-General, International Seabed Authority, VC holder of “The Abyssal Initiative” (7-8 mins)</p> <p>Mr. Francis Munyeki, VC holder of “Information Technology in Marine life for Kenya” (7-8 mins)</p> <p>Dr. Kirsty Nash, University of Tasmania, VC holder of “Creating a vision to guide development of a sustainable ocean future: the Future Seas 2030 initiative” (7-8 mins)</p> <p>Dr. Alasdair Harris, Founder of Blue Ventures, VC holder of “Empowering communities to monitor and manage their marine resources, and diversify local livelihoods” (7-8 mins)</p> <p>Dr. James Kairo, Pew Fellow (2019) and Chief Scientist at the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute, “Follow-up to the Sustainable Blue Economy Conference, Nairobi, Kenya, 2018” (7-8 mins)</p> <p>Q&A (Moderated by Mr. Trepelkov, OIC, DSDG/UNDESA)</p> |
| <p>11:50am– 12:00pm</p> | <p>CLOSING REMARKS</p> <p>H.E. Ms. Charlotta Schlyter, Ambassador for Sustainable Development, Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations</p> <p>H.E. Ambassador Peter Thomson, Special Envoy for the Ocean (pre-recorded video)</p> |

PARTICIPATION

The webinar will be open to all and conducted in English.