



United Nations

Department of Economic and Social Affairs



United Nations Global Compact



Virtual briefing - Local and Regional Governments and SDG 14 implementation: Mobilizing commitments towards the 2022 United Nations Ocean Conference

17 February 2022, 9:00-10:30 am EST

[Link to website](#) (recording available)

Welcoming remarks

Lotta Tahtinen, Chief, Outreach and Partnerships Branch, Division for Sustainable Development Goals, UN DESA, opened the virtual briefing organized by UNDESA as the Secretariat of the [2022 UN Ocean Conference](#), in partnership with the Climate Champions team and the UN Global Compact.

Welcoming remarks were delivered by the 2022 UN Ocean Conference co-hosts, Portugal and Kenya.

Ambassador Duarte Lopes, Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations, underlined the compelling need to mobilize new action in preparation for the UN Conference. Ambassador Lopes stressed how all stakeholders, alongside national governments, have a crucial role to play towards the implementation of SDG 14. Especially local and regional governments, who are on the forefront of ocean decline related challenges, may become key players for ocean action through engaging citizens and embedding their efforts in an integrated framework, such as a dedicated ocean plan.

Ambassador Njambi Kinyungu, Deputy Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations, recognized the importance of local and regional governments in the achievement of a sustainable use of ocean resources. Ambassador Kinyungu highlighted that African coastal communities are increasingly threatened by climate change-related disasters and emphasized how ocean-based sector activities represent livelihoods for lots of people. In addition, smart solutions to safeguard the ocean's health, improving budgetary policy and data sharing about ocean issues were mentioned. Ambassador Kinyungu considered the UN Conference to be an opportunity to engage with scientists, investors and other representatives to forge meaningful partnerships and invited local and regional governments to actively participate in the Conference.

The 2022 UN Ocean Conference and importance of city action

Ambassador Peter Thomson, United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean, highlighted several events that are keeping the momentum in terms of ocean action, including the [Our Ocean Conference Palau 2022](#) and the upcoming COP27 in Sharm-el-Sheikh, Egypt. Ambassador Thomson emphasized that a blue economy is the future of humankind and remarked that as cities and regions host a great share of population, they are fundamental to sustainably use ocean resources and conserve marine and coastal ecosystems. Ambassador Thomson emphasized that 2022 is crucial to stop the decline of the ocean and concrete action should be taken, such as by funding ecological and safety projects on our shores and establishing an international binding treaty to end plastic pollution.

The 2022 UN Ocean Conference- logistical preparations

Ms. Lotta Tahtinen, Chief, Outreach and Partnerships Branch, DSDG, UN DESA, provided a brief update of the Conference's programme and opportunities for local and regional governments participation, including through the: attendance of the Conference's events, registration of voluntary commitments, engaging with the Communities of Ocean action (arisen from [2017 UN Conference](#)), organization of side events and participation in the [global online stakeholder consultations](#).

Round table: Challenges and Opportunities for Coastal Cities and regions in the lead-up to the 2022 UN Ocean Conference and the implementation of SDG 14

Mr. Ignace Beguin (Moderator), Ocean lead, Climate Champions Team, invited panelists to intervene on challenges coastal cities and regions face in the implementation of Goal 14, ways to mobilize coastal cities and regions towards the implementation of Goal 14 in COVID-19 pandemic context and expectations and ambitions of coastal cities and regions for the 2022 UN Ocean Conference.

Ms. Joana Balsemão, Councilwoman, Cascais (Portugal), reported that two thirds of SDG 14 targets are not achievable without local parties' contribution and dedication. On the one hand, she asserted that cities are areas where change and innovation can occur. On the other, she acknowledged that cities do not always take action due to lack of knowledge and available means. She recommended carrying out local policies with cooperation of universities and other partners to build resilience of coastal communities.

Dr. Dolapo Fasawe, General Manager Lagos State, Environmental Protection Agency, Lagos (Nigeria), shared the difficulties experienced in building resilience in Lagos, where rising sea levels are still a major problem. Dr. Fasawe highlighted the trade-off between urbanization in developing countries and preservation of ecosystems, plankton and fishes. Ms. Fasawe reminded of the need of establishing platforms where knowledge and technological expertise can be shared, which will also be fundamental to educate local populations on SDG 14 and the 2030 Agenda.

Dr. Sergi Tudela, DG for Maritime Policy and Sustainable Fisheries, Government of Catalonia (Spain), shared current practices of the Government of Catalonia in the implementation of SDG 14. Since 2016, Catalonia has been developing an integrated maritime policy for the protection of ecosystems and biodiversity. As many policies require an adapting and participatory government, local authorities established a legal framework regulating fishing and maritime co-management, bringing together political administration, scientific community, NGOs and fisheries. The new framework represented a revolution of power for all stakeholders in maritime issues. Mr. Tudela emphasized that the Government of Catalonia is eager to offer lessons learned to others.

Ms. Marta Pontes, Councilwoman, Matosinhos (Portugal), provided that because of a long coastal line and a commercial port, the ocean is an essential resource for the development of Matosinhos. Ms. Pontes noted that cooperation and inclusive participation at national, sub-national and local level is key to reach SDG 14 targets. Moreover, support to the decarbonization of the port area, which aims to turn it into the first self-efficient port in terms of energy supplies, was highlighted. Furthermore, Ms. Pontes encouraged local authorities to work together with academia. The Seamar Research Centre was highlighted as a good example of academic research and SDG 14.

Mr. Florian Lux, Project Manager of the Go Blue Project, UN-Habitat Regional Office for Africa, highlighted the [Go Blue Project](#), a special project with partners from Italy, Germany, France, Portugal, the private sector and UN- Habitat. The project addresses many themes, including coastal security, marine protection, wastewater management, the establishment of a data centre, urbanization and

innovative and sustainable infrastructure. The Go Blue Project aims to be established in 2024, and hopes to inspire other like-minded projects during the 2022 UN Ocean Conference.

Ms. Norliza Hashim, Chief executive Officer, Urbanice Malaysia, informed that management of the quality and vulnerability of coastal areas in disaster risk prevention and mitigation is critical in Malaysia. Ms. Hashim shared a pivotal project, supported by UN-ESCAP and Japan, aimed at reducing plastic pollution and scaling up ocean innovation. Even though Kuala Lumpur is not a coastal city, the city's commitment has been valuable, involving four different ministries in technical committees. The project prompted active participation of stakeholders and developed plans for action aimed at avoiding mainly plastic leakages.

Interactive Dialogue

Naiara Costa, Senior Sustainable Development Officer, Outreach and Partnerships Branch, DSDG/UN DESA (Moderator), moderated the Interactive Dialogue, where attendees had the opportunity to share their experiences and pose questions to panelists.

Ms. Kate Strachan, Senior Professional Officer, ICLEI Africa, stressed the urgent need to restore coastal ecosystems. All stakeholders can learn from each other on how to carefully manage global resources and ensure a sustainable future through lessons learned, practices and data sharing. Ms. Strachan affirmed ICLEI's eagerness to engage in partnership and collaboration with others.

Mr. Stewart Sarkozy- Banoczy, Senior Advisor for North America region, Resilient Cities Network, stressed the importance of participation of local and regional governments in SDG 14 implementation. He emphasized that ocean challenges cannot be addressed unless all cities engage as it encompasses issues related urbanization, economy and plastic pollution. He clarified that even though coastal cities are the first targets of ocean challenges, all communities are affected by consequences of ocean decline and pollution. A common challenge requires a common effort.

Mr. José Sanchez, Director of Agenda AIVP 2030, Projects and Content, AIVP, highlighted the need for territorial actors to take consideration of ocean issues. Above all, he pointed that port authorities, which are responsible for infrastructure investments, must be involved in the debate around resilience, decarbonization of transports and preservation of biodiversity. The forthcoming 17th World Conference of Cities and Ports was highlighted as a crucial moment to promote the role of port-city interaction for SDG 14 implementation.

Mr. Théophile Bongarts, Project Manager, Ocean and Climate Platform, shared [the Sea' ties Declaration](#) and informed that a selection of 30 cities will be conducted to promote their participation in the 2022 UN Ocean Conference.

Closing remarks

Ms. Emilia Saiz, Secretary General, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), acknowledged that the responsibility of ocean action is shared by all local and regional governments, not only coastal communities. SDG 14 is about the way we live, produce and consume, both far from and near the coast. Ms. Saiz noted the importance of multilevel governance to approve and enforce maritime law and highlighted the importance of ocean health and derived nutrition, sustainable fishing, and new cities design, among others. Ms. Saiz reminded that the Global Taskforce of Local and regional governments is meeting in Barcelona and urged participants not to lose this extraordinarily needed momentum for ocean action.