

LOCALIZING ACTION FOR THE OCEAN: LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS SPECIAL EVENT

25 JUNE 2022

10:00 – 17:30 (WEST)

Local Ocean Action Session 1: The clock is ticking: How can coastal cities build resilience and incorporate nature-based solutions to protect local populations?

Co-leads: ICLEI, OCP

Forwards

This session will focus on the importance of investing in innovative sustainable solutions - such as nature-based solutions - to provide long-term defenses against the impacts of climate change, including flooding, coastal erosion and rising sea-levels. Speakers will be invited to share innovative nature-based solutions implemented by cities and regions including co-benefits associated.

Located at the interface between land and sea, coastal cities are centers of innovation and economic productivity, concentrating large numbers of people and assets. By 2025, nearly 6 billion people will live within 200km of a coastline.

Yet coastlines have never been a more dangerous place to be.

They are where the greatest number of people, very high levels of investment in built infrastructure, and perhaps the most ecological resources are in danger from global climate change. Rising sea levels, increasing storm intensity, and warmer temperatures stress ecosystems upon which millions depend, degrade outdated infrastructure, and upend economic stability. Climate risks also compound existing pressures. In many cities around the globe, rapid urbanization is outpacing infrastructure development – including housing and waste management.

A growing number of cities are stepping up to the challenge of climate change. Most of them literally have no choice.

The good news is that coastal cities are not starting from scratch – most of them have deep stores of knowledge and expertise. For centuries, cities and states bordering ocean and waterways have had to contend with local sea-level fluctuations and periodic storms. Many coastal cities have experimented with a combination of measures for hundreds of years. But past successes do not necessarily guarantee future safety. Today's cities are different from their predecessors. Many of them are of an unprecedented size and complexity. Complicating matters, climate related events are happening more frequently than in the past, in some cases overwhelming local capacities to respond.

A growing number of states and cities are making massive investments in technical solutions to keep seas at bay. Large infrastructure schemes including barriers and break-walls can at least temporarily reduce the risks of losses. But an overreliance on concrete walls and pump systems to beat back rising tides, storm surges and downstream floods can only go so far.



Recognizing both the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and the UN Decade on Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, this session will showcase innovations and best practices in coastal cities from around the world to safeguard people, their livelihoods, and to build a more resilient future. This session will bring together front-running leaders who are leading working in their respective cities and regions to build local resilience in ways that offer new insights of relevance to the world. The lesson from the most successful cities is that a combination of approaches is essential. What is more, environmental-based solutions to reinforce the existing ecology's protective capacities are not only effective, but lower cost.

Objectives

- Proposing a synthesis of scientific knowledge allowing to define a sustainable approach of coastal adaptation responses to climate change;
- Harnessing nature-based and innovative solutions to reduce community vulnerabilities and promoting blue biodiversity;
- Highlighting how coastal cities adaptation is addressed in international climate and biodiversity governance bodies.

Guiding questions

- What are the main threats facing coastal cities today and what does scientific knowledge tell us about sustainable responses?
- How can ecosystem-based adaptation represent a concrete alternative to hard solutions, and what other benefits do they offer?
- Where and how are issues related to cities, climate resilience and the ocean addressed in international negotiations? How can the different agendas dedicated to climate and biodiversity issues converge?