

HLPF 2022 SDG 14

An Expert Group Meeting on SDG 14 in preparation for HLPF 2022:
Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Concept Note

1. Introduction

The theme of the 2022 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) is “Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. The 2022 HLPF will conduct a comprehensive review of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 on quality education, 5 on gender equality, 14 on life below water, 15 on life on land, and 17 on partnerships for the Goals. The forum will consider the varied impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic across all SDGs and their integrated, indivisible, and interlinked nature.

In preparation for the review of SDG 14 – and its role in advancing sustainable development across the 2030 Agenda, the Division for Sustainable Development Goals of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA/DSDG), together with other partners, are organizing an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on SDG 14 – and its role in advancing sustainable development across the 2030 Agenda – in support of the HLPF’s in-depth review.

The objective of the meeting is to take stock of progress towards achieving SDG 14, and to assess: what has changed since the SDG was last reviewed in 2017, including in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic; progress and next steps regarding SDG 14 targets that have now expired; and the role of ocean science and technology in achieving this SDG. The meeting will also consider interlinkages with other SDGs and opportunities to leverage synergies and minimize trade-offs; share knowledge about success stories, good practices and challenges; identify particular areas of concern; and suggest ways forward in terms of policies, partnerships and coordinated actions at all levels.

This event will help inform the HLPF, including the planning of its sessions, and contribute to the evidence base for work on life below water going forward from 2022.

2. Progress and gaps in implementation of SDG 14, and its interlinkages with other SDGs¹

¹ This concept note may be also read in conjunction with the 2021 SDG Progress Report:
<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2021/goal-14/>



Setting the scene – the 2017 HLPF and the 2017 UN Ocean Conference

The 2017 HLPF – when SDG 14 was last reviewed – highlighted the multiple impacts of human pressures, including climate change, ocean acidification, overfishing and marine pollution, on biodiversity in the ocean. These pressures were seen as compromising the gains made in ocean conservation, including the effectiveness of marine protected areas (MPAs) and other area-based management tools (ABMTs). While positive gains for oceans and communities had been achieved locally, global trends with respect to increasing pressures on the ocean largely overshadowed those gains.

The July 2017 HLPF was held shortly after the first United Nations Ocean Conference in June of the same year. The Ocean Conference adopted a Call for Action with a comprehensive plan of action to be taken by all actors. The Conference also forged new partnerships for the achievement of SDG 14 through nearly 1400 voluntary commitments that were registered, and that have in the following years risen to nearly 1670 such commitments. The inclusive and collaborative nature of the Ocean Conference highlighted solutions from global to local levels and raised global awareness of problems facing the ocean, while providing a boost of optimism for the future of SDG 14. In particular, the Conference highlighted participatory approaches that included the application of indigenous and local knowledge, and the engagement of indigenous and local communities as stewards of marine ecosystems for the benefit of future generations. The Conference also brought attention to the increasing role of blue economy transitions in national strategies to reach SDG 14, and the potential of promising new economic sectors such as renewable ocean energy and blue carbon in creating closer linkages between ocean and climate action. Concurrently, discussions were advancing, and indeed continue to advance, on the elaboration of the text of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement).²

Summary of progress towards SDG 14 since 2017

Since 2017, the extent of progress made in implementation of SDG 14 varies among countries and regions, and depends on factors such as the availability of science and innovation, capacity-building and financing, as well as the level of intersectoral and interdisciplinary cooperation at the national, regional and global levels. And while progress has demonstrably been made on ocean action (see section 4 of this concept note), as evidenced, for example, by the increase in the number of MPAs globally and the increased attention afforded to the ocean-climate nexus, marine plastic pollution³, and overfishing, existing actions and finance for the implementation of Goal 14 are

² President's Summary of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Online at https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/16673HLPF_2017_Presidents_summary.pdf

³ As evidenced, for example, by UNEA Resolution 5/14 titled End plastic pollution: towards an international legally binding instrument; and by



insufficient to reach its targets. In fact, research by the OECD demonstrates that SDG 14 has received the least funding of all of the SDGs, leaving a massive financing gap for ocean action.⁴

None of the targets that matured in 2020 (targets 14.2, 14.4, 14.5 and 14.6) have been reached globally, although local progress towards them has been made. Target 14.5 is within reach, with 7.93%⁵ of the ocean worldwide currently covered by MPAs, and the area target has been reached or even exceeded in some countries. Only 2.4% of these MPAs are classified as being in no-take marine reserves that offer a high degree of protection. While MPA coverage has grown significantly in the last decade, the geographical distribution is very uneven. Most of the area covered is within a small number of countries. Moreover, there is still an overall failure to achieve holistic, integrated and coordinated planning and management of the multiple human pressures on the ocean and handle their cumulative impacts. In particular, many MPAs and related spatial management schemes, such as those implementing marine spatial planning (MSP) and integrated coastal zone management (ICZM), lack management plans, management capacity and resourcing for enforcement – a problem that has, in many cases, been made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic. The lack of global progress mirrors that seen with respect to the 20 Aichi Biodiversity targets under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), none of which were fully reached, on a global scale, at their maturation, although six were partially achieved. The lack of achievement of global ocean and biodiversity targets brings us to a point of stocktaking, where critical assets for economic recovery and sustainable growth are made vulnerable, and where the action that needs to be taken is both urgent and cross-disciplinary. That action includes the mainstreaming SDG 14 priorities into the implementation of other SDGs.

Declining ocean health and gaps in ocean science

The multiple pressures driving the decline in ocean health are intensifying, and as a result compromising the ability of the ocean ecosystem to support the benefits derived from it. The Second World Ocean Assessment, published in 2021, highlights the pressures from human activities degrading the ocean as “those associated with climate change; unsustainable fishing, including illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; the introduction of invasive species; atmospheric pollution causing acidification and eutrophication; excessive inputs of nutrients and hazardous substances, including plastics, microplastics and nanoplastics; increasing amounts of anthropogenic noise; and ill-managed coastal development and extraction of natural resources.”⁶ The quantification of these impacts, and understanding of the way in which they act together in complex and often non-linear ways to create cumulative effects, is still not fully understood. There is limited understanding of the extent to which changing conditions could contribute to shifts in marine ecosystem structure and functioning, and the subsequent impacts on marine life, productivity and human communities.⁷

⁴ OECD (2020) [Sustainable Ocean for All : Harnessing the Benefits of Sustainable Ocean Economies for Developing Countries](https://www.oecd.org/sdg-14/) and OECD database of SDG funders at <https://sdgfunders.org/sdgs/goal/life-below-water/lang/en/>

⁵ As of 23 April 2022. See Protected Planet (2022). Marine Protected Areas. <https://www.protectedplanet.net/marine>.

⁶ United Nations (2021) Second World Ocean Assessment, Volume I, p. 5.

⁷ United Nations (2021) Second World Ocean Assessment, Volume I. Online at <https://www.un.org/regularprocess/sites/www.un.org.regularprocess/files/2011859-e-woa-ii-vol-i.pdf>



Multiple threats continue to impact vulnerable ecosystems, including coral reefs, which have shown the most rapid increase in extinction risk of all assessed groups.⁸ Polar regions, including polar seas, have experienced significant impacts from climate change, compounded by other pressures. Pollution, including from excess nutrients, pesticides, plastics and other waste, continues to be a major driver of biodiversity loss, with plastic pollution accumulating in the ocean severely impacting marine ecosystems.⁹ While substantial progress has been made by some countries and regions in sustainable fisheries management, this progress has not been sufficient to reverse the global trend in overfished stocks.¹⁰ Many fisheries activities still also have unsustainable levels of bycatch of non-target species and are damaging marine habitats.¹¹ Climate change is driving ocean warming and more frequent marine heatwaves, as well as decreasing oxygen concentrations in the ocean, with deoxygenation projected to last for thousands of years. Ocean acidification has increased globally over the past four decades, with impacts observed in many parts of the world. Global mean sea levels are also continuing to rise.¹² All of these impacts collectively result in an enormous human and economic toll, with the most vulnerable ocean-dependent communities often bearing the worst impacts.

Although our understanding of the ocean has increased since the last HPLF, gaps in data and knowledge still exist as well as in the science and technology needed to close such gaps. The areas in which knowledge gaps exist include, though are not limited to, understanding the marine ecosystem diversity, structure and function, and its tipping points, quantifying the cumulative effects of multiple pressures on marine and coastal environments, developing integrated and adaptive management and governance approaches and making them more operational, and encouraging broader consideration and integration of local, traditional and indigenous knowledge in marine ecosystem assessment and management. The human component of the ocean also presents a knowledge gap, given that data on economic, social and cultural aspects of the ocean is not currently collected under most global ocean observation networks.¹³

Other knowledge gaps relate to observing and monitoring changes occurring due to climate change, particularly in deep water or remote locations, and the consequences of those changes for ocean ecosystems and human communities. There are even more fundamental gaps in understanding deep-sea processes and climate impacts on them, and in the ability to project change

⁸ Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2020) Global Biodiversity Outlook 5 – Summary for Policy Makers. Montréal.

⁹ Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2020) Global Biodiversity Outlook 5 – Summary for Policy Makers. Montréal.

¹⁰ FAO (2020) State of the World's Fisheries and Aquaculture 2020

¹¹ Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2020) Global Biodiversity Outlook 5 – Summary for Policy Makers. Montréal.

¹² IPCC, 2021: Summary for Policymakers. In: Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Masson-Delmotte, V., P. Zhai, A. Pirani, S.L. Connors, C. Péan, S. Berger, N. Caud, Y. Chen, L. Goldfarb, M.I. Gomis, M. Huang, K. Leitzell, E. Lonnoy, J.B.R. Matthews, T.K. Maycock, T. Waterfield, O. Yelekçi, R. Yu, and B. Zhou (eds.)].

¹³ United Nations (2021) the Second World Ocean Assessment, Volume I. Online at <https://www.un.org/regularprocess/sites/www.un.org.regularprocess/files/2011859-e-woa-ii-vol-i.pdf>



in both the coastal and deep ocean under different emissions scenarios.¹⁴ Gaps in science capacity and technology also persist, preventing many countries from undertaking the research required for sustainable management of their ocean resources and to effectively benefit from different sectors of the blue economy.

3. COVID-19 impacts on SDG-14

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused profound suffering and loss worldwide, but its specific impacts on the achievement of SDG 14 targets have been diverse. Those impacts include reduced funding for marine conservation and research, increases in marine litter, increased vulnerability of many fishing communities and seafarers, and postponement of planned ocean management action as governments have re-focused their priorities on pandemic relief. Blue economies have been further impacted by the loss of tourism jobs and revenue.¹⁵ The pandemic has highlighted the importance of having a diversified sustainable ocean economy, as over-reliance on one economic sector can cause severe economic and social impacts if that sector is affected. For example, SIDS were deeply affected when tourism, on which they heavily rely, was severely impacted by COVID-related travel restrictions.¹⁶ Some impacts have been positive, though in the short term, for life under water, such as temporary reductions in atmospheric pollution and ocean noise from decreased transportation, the latter benefiting marine mammals in some locations.¹⁷ The temporary, but unprecedented, reduction in carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions has not, however, been sufficient to reduce the rate of ocean acidification in a discernable way based on ocean observations.¹⁸

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of sustainable and shock-proof financing for ocean conservation and research. During the pandemic, MPA management, conservation initiatives and ocean science have suffered, with visitors staying away from MPAs and funders shifting priorities.¹⁹ The reduction in finance is particularly serious given the already low level of funding allocated to SDG 14 globally.²⁰ The pandemic has negatively impacted target 14.1 on marine pollution, with increased marine litter from disposable masks, plastic gloves and hand

¹⁴ Multiple authors (2021) Assessing Progress on Ocean and Climate Action 2020-2021. A Report of the Roadmap for Ocean Action (ROCA) Initiative. Online at https://rocainitiative.files.wordpress.com/2021/11/roca-progress-report-2020-2021.final_.pdf

¹⁵ UN/DESA Policy Brief #64: The COVID-19 pandemic puts Small Island Developing economies in dire straits. 2020

¹⁶ UN DESA (2020) The COVID-19 pandemic puts Small Island Developing economies in dire straits. UN/DESA Policy Brief #64. Online at <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/un-desa-policy-brief-64-the-covid-19-pandemic-puts-small-island-developing-economies-in-dire-straits/>

¹⁷ Ocean Networks Canada (2020) Hushed Seas: monitoring underwater noise during COVID-19 online at <https://www.oceannetworks.ca/hushed-seas-monitoring-underwater-noise-during-covid-19>

¹⁸ Rizvi, A., Forsythe, M., Steen, J., Bhavsar, D. and Mardon, A.A., 2021. How have reductions in global carbon dioxide emissions during the COVID-19 pandemic influenced aquatic ecosystems through ocean acidification. *Academia Letters*, p.2.

¹⁹ C. Phua et al. (2021): Marine protected and conserved areas in the time of COVID, *Parks*, Vol 27 (Special issue), March 2021

²⁰ OECD (2020) [Sustainable Ocean for All : Harnessing the Benefits of Sustainable Ocean Economies for Developing Countries](#) and OECD database of SDG funders at <https://sdgfunders.org/sdgs/goal/life-below-water/lang/en/>



sanitizer bottles ending up in the ocean.²¹ A decrease in waste recycling has also been observed.²² Impacts on fisheries included short-term declines in the demand for seafood in some places, following closure of restaurants, decreases in prices, labor shortages, and supply chain disruptions that have highlighted the vulnerability of food systems²³ and the people working within them.²⁴ In other places, due to the decline in tourism, more seafood was accessible to local communities at reasonable prices, emphasizing the value of fisheries for local food security and nutrition rather than solely as a commodity for visitors.²⁵

The short- and long-term effects of COVID-19 risk further marginalizing many small-scale fishers and coastal communities, including women, who are already particularly vulnerable to the impacts of a variety of social and environmental changes.²⁶ Shipping operations and seafarers, and as a result global trade flows, have also been negatively impacted.²⁷ There have been severe social and human rights impacts for those working at sea and for fishing communities.²⁸ This has highlighted the need for social protections for seafarers, including their recognition as key workers,²⁹ as well as for small-scale fishers and other vulnerable ocean-dependent communities.

4. Achievements

While the multiple pressures on the ocean continue to accelerate, there have also been many important achievements with respect to ocean protection and sustainable management at the local, national, regional and global levels, providing multiple benefits for people, nature and climates. There is, for instance, an increasing number of MPAs, locally managed marine areas³⁰ and MSP efforts being undertaken by countries; new national regulations on marine litter and single-use

²¹ See, for example, CTV News (2020) Single-use plastics ban likely delayed due to pandemic: Environment minister. CTV News May 15, 2020. <https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/single-use-plastics-ban-likely-delayed-due-to-pandemic-environment-minister-1.4941518>

²² Klemeš, J.J., Fan, Y.V., Tan, R.R. & Jiang, P. (2020). Minimising the present and future plastic waste, energy and environmental footprints related to COVID-19. *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews*, 127(C), 109883; and Zambrano-Monserrate, M.A., Ruano, M.A. & Sanchez-Alcade, L. (2020). Indirect effects of COVID-19 on the environment. *Science of the Total Environment*, 728, 138813. 264 How is COVID-19 affecting the fisheries and aquaculture food systems, FAO, April 2020.

²³ How is COVID-19 affecting the fisheries and aquaculture food systems, FAO, April 2020.

²⁴ The role of social protection in the recovery from COVID-19 impacts in fisheries and aquaculture, FAO, 2021

²⁵ Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research. 2020. SciTalk: Food security and oceans during COVID: A case study from the Galápagos. <https://www.iai.int/index.php/en/post/detail/SciTalk:-Food-security-and-oceans-during-COVID>

²⁶ Bennett, N.J., Finkbeiner, E.M., Ban, N.C., Belhabib, D., Jupiter, S.D., Kittinger, J.N. et al. (2020). The COVID-19 pandemic, small-scale fisheries and coastal fishing communities. *Coastal Management*, 48(4), 336–347.

²⁷ UNCTAD (2021) COVID-19 and maritime transport: Impact and responses. Online at <https://unctad.org/webflyer/covid-19-and-maritime-transport-impact-and-responses>

²⁸ Sowman, M., Sunde, J., Pereira, T., Snow, B., Mbatha, P., & James, A. (2021). Unmasking governance failures: The impact of COVID-19 on small-scale fishing communities in South Africa. *Marine Policy*, 133, 104713.

²⁹ ILO Resolution concerning maritime labour issues and the COVID-19 pandemic (8 December, 2020):

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_760649.pdf

³⁰ According to IPBES, a Locally Managed Marine Area (LMMA) is an area of nearshore waters and its associated coastal and marine resources that is largely or wholly managed at a local level by the coastal communities, land-owning groups, partner organizations, and/or collaborative government representatives who reside or are based in the immediate area. (<https://ipbes.net/policy-support/tools-instruments/locally-managed-marine-area>)



plastics with a circular economy lens being put in place; and good fisheries management policies being introduced, involving stock assessments, catch limits, and enforcement, leading to maintenance and rebuilding of fish stocks locally. Progress has also been made on availability of data to monitor fishing vessels that can support enforcement of regulations. Increasingly, countries are in the process of visioning and planning a transition to sustainable, resilient, and equitable blue economies, with increasing focus on the foundational role of the ocean in sustainable economic development. Understanding of the ocean continues to improve through increased observations and innovations in sensors and observing platforms.³¹ International ocean acidification observation and monitoring networks also continue to expand their collaborative work.

At the global level, there has been notable progress that is demonstrated, for example, by the historic resolution 14 of the 5th United Nations Environment Assembly in 2022 to end plastic pollution by developing an international legally binding agreement by 2024.³² The resolution addresses the full lifecycle of plastic, including its production, design and disposal. The negotiations for the elaboration of a new BBNJ instrument are continuing. The United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) has been launched and is already supporting actions to build ocean science capacity globally. Meanwhile, the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030) has brought further attention to restoration of coastal and marine ecosystems, such as coral reefs, seagrasses and mangroves.

Further progress has also been made on the ocean-climate nexus through an increasing focus on the ocean in activities taking place under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This focus has included the publication by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 2019 of its *Special Report on the Ocean and the Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*, and the convening by the Chair of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technical Advice of an Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue in late 2020, which will be convened annually from 2022. The dialogue has paved the way for a growing understanding that “ocean action is climate action”, as reflected in the increasing number of countries committing to advancing ocean-climate solutions in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), including through nature-based solutions for climate change mitigation and adaptation, and reliance on blue carbon as elements of their mitigation strategies.

Maritime transport is moving towards reducing carbon intensity per transport work by at least 40% by 2030, following adoption in 2018 of the Initial International Maritime Organization (IMO) Strategy on reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from ships. Industry innovation is also playing an important role in the development of alternative fuels and less carbon-intensive methods of transport.

³¹ United Nations (2021) the Second World Ocean Assessment, Volume I. Online at <https://www.un.org/regularprocess/sites/www.un.org.regularprocess/files/2011859-e-woa-ii-vol-i.pdf>

³² The resolution called for the convening of an intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, which could include both binding and voluntary approaches, based on a comprehensive approach that addresses the full lifecycle of plastic. Source: UNEP (2022). United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme. Resolution adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly on 2 March 2022: 5/14. End plastic pollution: towards an international legally binding instrument.



States Parties to the CBD are currently in the process of negotiating a post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, which will contain a new set of global goals and targets for biodiversity, including with respect to marine and coastal biodiversity, as well as systems and indicators to measure, monitor, and review progress towards their achievement. The Framework is expected to be adopted by the CBD Conference of the Parties in 2022. For ocean areas, the Framework will include generalized targets relating to all aspects of biodiversity, but also specific targets for 2030 relating to integrated spatial planning for all sea areas (proposed Target 1); restoration of 20% of degraded marine ecosystems (proposed Target 2); and conservation of 30% of marine areas (proposed Target 3), among others. These new targets may influence the debate around the matured Goal 14 targets. In addition, new ocean-related indicators for the post-2020 Framework can assist in better monitoring progress towards the achievement of SDG 14 targets.

5. Importance of considering interlinkages between SDG 14 and other SDGs

Drivers that have the greatest influence on the sustainability of the marine environment (see section 2) cannot be influenced through SDG 14 alone. Thus, integrating concerns related to SDG 14 and its targets into the implementation of other SDGs is vital for the ultimate achievement of a healthy and sustainable ocean. For example, SDG 15 (also to be reviewed by HLPF in 2022) is closely interlinked with SDG 14 due to the close interlinkages between the marine, coastal and terrestrial ecosystems including wetlands, rivers, and lakes. With the ocean downstream of land-based activities and their impacts, integrated ecosystem-based “ridge to reef” management is required to jointly address both SDGs. Ultimately, the achievement of SDG 14 is not possible without coordinated action towards SDG 15 as well as SDG 13 on climate action to address the many cross cutting impacts a threats a changing climate poses. This need for integration presents a challenge to the often sectoral and siloed nature of SDG implementation and requires unprecedented coordination and collaboration not only amongst multiple and diverse ocean stakeholders and institutions, but also amongst those working on the implementation of other SDGs.

The ocean can also suffer, in some countries, from an “out of sight, out of mind” problem, making it seem distant from urgent daily priorities. While this is not true for every region or country, a 2018 survey of 3,500 global leaders found that they consider SDG 14 to be the least important of the SDGs, while jobs, education and strong institutions were viewed as the most important development challenges.³³ Thus, accelerating action to deliver effectively on SDG 14 depends on building synergies between SDG 14 and other goals, where the implementation of those goals provides mutual benefits, and where new jobs, for example, depend on a healthier ocean and a sustainable and equitable blue economy, providing opportunities and mentoring for young female scientists, leaders and innovators (SDG 5 on Gender Equality – also under review by HLPF this year). In many instances women, as integral actors in the sustainable management and use of ecosystems, are also the stewards of a clean environment and thus pivotal for the achievement of

³³ McDonnell, T. (2018). The U.N. goal that doesn't get a lot of respect. National Public Radio, May 31 2018. Online at <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2018/05/31/614493772/the-u-n-goal-that-doesnt-get-a-lot-of-respect>

SDG 14.³⁴ There is also a long way to go towards building ocean awareness through mobilizing public concern, including by fostering ocean literacy and an understanding of the human connection to the ocean. In this way, ocean action depends on education, interlinking SDG 14 with SDG 4 (which is also under review by the HLPF this year). While interest in the ocean economy is growing according to the OECD, ocean literacy is falling behind, compromising both ocean sustainability and equity.³⁵

6. Moving towards the 2nd UN Ocean Conference and the role of the present meeting

The 2022 United Nations Ocean Conference will take place in Lisbon, Portugal, from June 27 to July 1, co-hosted by the Governments of Kenya and Portugal. Under the theme: “Scaling up Ocean Action Based on Science and Innovation for the Implementation of Goal 14: Stocktaking, Partnerships and Solutions”, the Conference seeks to take stock of achievements, impacts and lessons learned, including from the pandemic, with the ultimate goal of propelling further global ocean action through much needed science-based innovative solutions. These actions are aimed at addressing the threats to health, ecology, economy and governance of the ocean, including from acidification, marine litter and pollution, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and the loss of habitats and biodiversity. Solutions will involve green technology, innovative financing mechanisms (such as blended ‘blue’ finance) and innovative uses of marine resources. Concurrent with the starting phase of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, there will be a focus on ocean science and science capacity, as well as science to support policymakers and bridge the science-policy interface.

The UN Ocean Conference and the HLPF Review of SDG 14 are mutual complementary processes. The UN Ocean Conference will provide an important basis for the work of the HLPF in reviewing Goal 14, including through providing information on lessons learned, reflections on actions taken, and proposed new directions and innovations for scaling up implementation. Likewise, the HLPF review of SDG 14 and its Targets will serve to guide the efforts of the action oriented Voluntary Commitments stemming from the UN Ocean Conference as these move towards implementation.

Key questions

Stocktaking:

1. What is the current status of progress on SDG 14 and its targets?

³⁴ World Bank. 2022 (forthcoming). Building a Future for Women in South Asia’s Plastics Waste Management. Washington, DC.; and, UNDP. 2022. “Waste Not, Want Not: Women leaders in Viet Nam Address urban waste through innovation and advocacy.” Small Grants Programme 25TH Anniversary Stories. United Nations Development Programme. <https://undp.shorthandstories.com/gef-sgp-waste-not-waste-not/>

³⁵ OECD (2016) The Ocean Economy in 2030. Online at https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/economics/the-ocean-economy-in-2030_9789264251724-en



- a. What has changed since SDG 14 was last reviewed by HLPF in 2017 (including achievements and success stories)
 - b. How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted progress on SDG 14?
 - c. What is the best course of action relating to SDG 14 targets that have now expired (Targets 14.2, 14.4, 14.5 and 14.6)?
2. What obstacles have arisen with respect to the implementation of SDG 14?
3. What opportunities exist in terms of implementation, including opportunities to leverage interlinkages with other SDGs and connections with other intergovernmental processes?
4. Are there any new and promising methods for tracking progress towards the achievement of SDG 14, including from additional data sources?

Challenges:

1. Based on your experience and expertise, what are the greatest challenges in accelerating progress towards SDG 14? Do these vary by target?
2. How can we increase the financing available for ocean management and conservation? Are there successful models that can be scaled up?
3. How can we enhance monitoring and enforcement of ocean regulations?
4. What other capacity gaps exist in achieving SDG 14?
5. What is the role of the private sector in achieving SDG 14? How could collaboration with the private sector be increased to assist in the achievement of SDG 14?
6. What science is urgently needed to accelerate progress towards SDG 14?
7. How can countries operationalize policy coherence for sustainable blue economies in reality?

Opportunities

1. What opportunities do the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and the Paris Agreement implementation processes offer to promote more impactful, large-scale change for the protection and sustainable management of marine ecosystems, biodiversity and resources?
2. What opportunities exist for advancing policy-relevant marine science and technology in the context of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development? Do scientific and technological solutions exist that, if scaled up, could promote substantial action on SDG 14?
3. How can we operationalise natural capital accounting to guide cohesive ocean and coastal policy-making and implementation and measure future progress?
4. Are there opportunities to promote the achievement of SDG 14 as part of the processes to:
a) develop a BBNJ Agreement and b) an internationally legally binding agreement to end plastic pollution by 2024?
5. Are there any underutilized opportunities to leverage the interlinkages between SDG 14 and other SDGs, in particular SDGs 15, 4 and 5, which are being reviewed by the HLPF in 2022, but also with respect to other closely-linked SDGs?



6. Are there lessons to be learned from our experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic that should be further utilized in the implementation of SDG 14 and what measures should be promoted in COVID recovery investments/policies?



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



Expert Group Meeting: Sustainable Development Goal 14 – “Life Below Water”

Marine and coastal ecosystems as key assets for building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

May 10 and 11, 2022, 9:00 AM EST to 12:30 PM EST - New York

EVENT FORMAT

To encourage a rich and dynamic discussion, day one of the event will feature two blocks of ‘breakout sessions’ (i.e., parallel working groups) each lasting one hour and covering various themes. The different groups will reconvene to report back in a ‘plenary’ format.

Suggested format for the parallel working groups:

Brief presentations led by one or two experts to outline the key points [as per the objectives of the EGM and the key questions outlined in the concept note], followed by an open discussion or panel as appropriate. Each session will also feature brief “comments from the floor” and reactions from individual experts present. Annex 1 below will soon feature the names of the experts nominated across areas.

PROGRAM

Moderating team:

- Facilitator: Ms. Madhushree Chatterjee, Chief, Natural Resources and Interlinkages Branch (NRIB), Division for Sustainable Development Goals, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)
- Supporting role: Mr. Jorge Barbosa, Sustainable Development Office, Division for Sustainable Development Goals, UN DESA



Day 1: Tuesday May 10, 2022	
Time: 9:00 am to 12:30 pm	Session
9:00 am to 9:10 am [10 minutes]	Welcome remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs (Video Message) - Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares, Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and UN Legal Counsel (Video Message)
9:10 am to 9:20 am [10 minutes]	Setting the stage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Alex Trepelkov, Director, Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG), UNDESA
Examining the Status and trends in SDG 14 Targets	
Parallel working groups: 9:20 am to 10:35 am [one hour 15 mins each]	Parallel working group 1: Fisheries and Aquaculture Moderator: Mr. David Jose Vivas Eugui, Legal Officer, Trade, Environment, Climate Change & Sustainable Development Branch, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead Presenter: Mr. Manuel Barange, Director, Fisheries and Aquaculture Division, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) <p>Target 14.4: By 2020, effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices and implement science-based management plans, in order to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible, at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield as determined by their biological characteristics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead Presenter: Mr. Matthew Camilleri, Senior Fishery Officer, Fisheries and Aquaculture Division, FAO <p>Target 14.6: By 2020, prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, eliminate subsidies that</p>



	<p>contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and refrain from introducing new such subsidies, recognizing that appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing and least developed countries should be an integral part of the World Trade Organization fisheries subsidies negotiation.</p>
	<p><i>Parallel working group 2: Marine Pollution</i></p> <p><i>Moderator:</i> Mr. Andrew Birchenough, Technical Officer, International Maritime Organization (IMO)</p> <p><i>Lead Presenters:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Heidi Savelli-Soderberg, Programme. Officer, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) • Mr. Mark Sutton, Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, Edinburgh, United Kingdom <p>Target 14.1: By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution</p>
	<p><i>Parallel working group 3: Biodiversity and Conservation</i></p> <p><i>Moderator:</i> Mr. Kim Friedman, Senior Fisheries Resources Officer, FAO</p> <p><i>Lead Presenters:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Joseph Appiott, Coordinator for Marine, Coastal and Island Biodiversity, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) • Mr. Neville Ash, Director, World Conservation Monitoring Centre, UNEP <p>Target 14.2: By 2020, sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration in order to achieve healthy and productive oceans.</p> <p>Target 14.5: By 2020, conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information.</p>



<p align="center"><i>-- Coffee Break: 10 minutes --</i></p>	
<p>Parallel working groups continued:</p> <p>10:45 am to 12:00 pm [one hour 15 mins each]</p>	<p><i>Parallel working group 4: Climate Change Impacts</i></p> <p><i>Moderator:</i> Ms. Laura Patterson, World Meteorological Organization (WMO) representative to the United Nations</p> <p><i>Lead Presenters:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Joanna Post, Programme Management Officer, UNFCCC Secretariat • Ms. Ashley Bantelman, Associate Project Officer, Ocean Acidification International Coordination Centre (OA-ICC), International Atomic Energy Agency • Mr. Kilaparti Ramakrishna, Senior Advisor to the President and Director on Ocean and Climate Policy, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute <p>Target 14.3: Minimize and address the impacts of ocean acidification, including through enhanced scientific cooperation at all levels.</p>
	<p><i>Parallel working group 5: Sustainable Blue Economy and SIDS</i></p> <p><i>Moderator:</i> Mr. Sai Navoti, Senior Economic Affairs Officer, UNDESA</p> <p><i>Lead Presenters:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Audun Lem, Deputy Director, Fisheries and Aquaculture Division, FAO • Mr. Riad Meddeb, Director, Global Centre for Technology, Innovation and Sustainable Development; Senior Principal Advisor for SIDS, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) • Ms. Cary Anne Cadman, Caribbean Blue Economy lead, World Bank <p>Target 14.7: By 2030, increase the economic benefits to Small Island developing States and least developed countries from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism.</p>



12:00 pm to 12:25 pm [25 minutes]	<p><i>Plenary: reporting on parallel working groups and drawing conclusions</i></p> <p><i>Moderator:</i> Ms. Madhushree Chatterjee, Chief, Natural Resources and Interlinkages Branch (NRIB), Division for Sustainable Development Goals, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Moderators report back on the parallel working group discussions.
12:25 pm to 12:30 pm	<i>Wrap up and closing</i>
-- END DAY 1 --	

Next page for day 2 program...



Day 2: Wednesday May 11, 2022	
Time: 9: 00 am to 12:30 pm	Session
Assessing the means of implementation: the role of science, technology, and education	
9:00 am to 9:10 am [10 minutes]	<p><i>Outlining the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ms. Marjo Vierros, Director, Coastal Policy and Humanities Research: Impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic on the achievement of SDG 14 in light of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda
9:10 am to 9:50 am [40 minutes]	<p><i>Science, technology, and education</i></p> <p><i>Moderator:</i> Ms. Madhushree Chatterjee, Chief, Natural Resources and Interlinkages Branch (NRIB), Division for Sustainable Development Goals, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)</p> <p><i>Lead Presenters:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Vladimir Ryabinin, Executive Secretary, UNESCO-IOC Ms. Marie Bourrel-McKinnon, Senior Policy Officer – Special Assistant to the Secretary-General, International Seabed Authority (ISA) Mr. Martin Visbeck, GEOMAR Helmholtz-Centre for Ocean Research <p>Target 14.A: Increase scientific knowledge, develop research capacity and transfer marine technology, taking into account the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission Criteria and Guidelines on the Transfer of Marine Technology, in order to improve ocean health and to enhance the contribution of marine biodiversity to the development of developing countries, in particular small island developing States and least developed countries.</p>



<p>9:50 am to 10:30 am [40 minutes]</p>	<p><i>Supporting Small Scale Fisheries communities' access to resources, capacity, and knowledge</i></p> <p><i>Moderator:</i> Mr. Jorge Barbosa, Sustainable Development Office, Division for Sustainable Development Goals, UN DESA</p> <p><i>Lead Presenters:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Nicole Franz, Fishery Planning Officer, Fisheries and Aquaculture Division, FAO • Ms. Jennifer Cruickshank-Howard, Chief Fisheries Officer, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines <p>Target 14.B: Provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets.</p>
<p><i>-- Coffee Break: 10 minutes --</i></p>	
<p>10:40 am to 11:20 am [40 minutes]</p>	<p><i>Supporting the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)</i></p> <p><i>Moderator:</i> Ms. Alison Clausen, Programme Specialist, Marine Policy and Regional Coordination Section, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission – UNESCO</p> <p><i>Lead Presenters:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Michael W. Lodge, Secretary-General, International Seabed Authority (ISA) • Mr. Vladimir Jares, Director, Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS) <p>Target 14.C: Enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in UNCLOS, which provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources, as recalled in paragraph 158 of The Future We Want.</p>



<p>11:20 am to 12:00 pm [40 minutes]</p>	<p><i>Maintaining the momentum and action beyond the Ocean Conference and HLPF 2022</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Maximilien Pardo Y Fernandez, Inter-Regional Advisor, SIDS Branch, Division for Sustainable Development Goals, UNDESA <p>Building on the efforts of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and the SIDS Conference 2024, among others.</p>
<p>12:00 pm to 12:30 pm [30 minutes]</p>	<p><i>Closing remarks</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - H.E. Mr. Peter Thomson, UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean (video remarks) - H.E. Mr. Sérgio Carvalho, Counsellor and Legal Adviser, Permanent Mission of Portugal to the United Nations - H.E. Ms. Lily Mwanjila, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kenya to the United Nations
<p>-- End of EGM --</p> <p>Thank you all! – we welcome your written inputs post discussion.</p>	