



2022 United Nations Ocean Conference Side Event

Creating a Blue Society: Innovative solutions for sustainable ocean and coastal management action

Thursday, June 30, 2022, 10:00 AM - 11:15 AM, Side Event Room 2, Altice Arena Convention Center, Lisbon, Portugal

Organized by: Global Ocean Forum; Nausicaa National Sea Center, France; World Ocean Network; One Ocean Hub; Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States; African Union Development Agency; Global Fund for Coral Reefs; United Nations Development Programme; Acadia University; Envirostrat; Urban Coast Institute, Monmouth University

Background on the event

This side event addressed ways by which scientific and innovative approaches to ocean-based socio-economic development based on the idea of a Blue Society could effectively integrate long standing concepts of coastal management, ocean planning and ecosystem-based management; and how these approaches could be especially beneficial for small island developing States and other developing countries. Additionally, this side event aimed to contribute to information sharing and discussion towards raising the profile of oceans in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and advancing the implementation of SDG14 Life below water in an interlinked manner through cross-cutting initiatives that also address other SDGs including: 7 Affordable and Clean Energy; 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities; 13 Climate Action; and 17 Partnerships for the Goals, among others.

Key Issues discussed:

- A series of evolving coastal and ocean management frameworks over the last 50 years have too often lacked meaningful public engagement and been limited by insufficient scientific data.
- A more comprehensive understanding of ocean ecosystems and a solid basis for restoring impaired ecosystems (e.g., wetlands and other blue carbon ecosystems) are needed. The UN Decades of Ocean Science and on Ecosystem Restoration could help provide both.
- Significant efforts are underway to build capacity at the local and regional levels in order to implement ocean management approaches, most recently the concept of a Blue Economy.
- One key aspect of capacity building is to ensure better coordination and networking among stakeholders at all levels, including financing (e.g., financing for reef-positive solutions).

- Innovation in all sectors is needed to accelerate the implementation of sound ocean management and the United Nations Development Programme's Ocean Innovation Challenge is expected to spawn new advances.
- Regional ocean ecosystems are prime targets and maybe the right scale for enhancing ocean ecosystems and economy. The Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal in the US can serve as a working model for such an approach.
- Along with better quality scientific data and the Blue Economy framework, civil society must be front and center for the needed transformation to a Blue Society.
- Innovative approaches to ocean-based, socio-economic development in the context of climate change are imperative moving forward. Building upon the success of the Oceans Action Days at UNFCCC COP meetings, the Roadmap to Oceans and Climate Action (ROCA) reports, and the Virtual Ocean Pavilion at COP 26, the Global Ocean Forum's future agenda and activities will focus on such approaches.

Key recommendations for action:

- Meaningful engagement of citizens must be central to the implementation of comprehensive ocean management approaches including the Blue Economy / Blue Society.
- Aquaria Networks could provide the means to reach 600 million people around the world each year with the necessary messages and inspiration to create that involvement.
- Creating centers of excellence in ocean education (like Nausicaa, the National Sea Center, France) could be instrumental in raising public awareness and educating individuals about the ocean and their role in its management.
- The UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and Decade on Ecosystem Restoration as well as the UNDP Ocean Innovation Challenge can step up the provision of scientific and technical basis to advance ocean management.
- The UNFCCC COP 27 will be an excellent opportunity for African nations to feature their growing efforts to better manage their abundance of ocean and coastal resources.
- De-risking and unlocking reef-positive private investment would aid in closing the coral reef funding gap to finance an integrated ecosystem approach to reef-positive solutions.
- Cutting the annual loss and fostering the restoration of blue carbon ecosystems (wetlands) could provide protection from storms, flooding, and sea level rise as well as human health benefits.
- The Global Oceans Forum will continue to advance and promote the importance of oceans and coasts in the UNFCCC and the UN Sustainable Development Agenda, and foster a growing global network and collaborative initiatives across the many ocean and coastal organizations and initiatives around the world.

Voluntary Commitments: The Global Ocean Forum has committed, along with its many colleagues and partner organizations, to continue to provide the highly successful Virtual Ocean Pavilion that served the wider coastal and ocean communities so well at COP26 in Glasgow, Scotland. The VOP is expected to link upcoming ocean and climate events such as those planned for Africa Climate Week to the COP27 conference in Egypt.