2022 United Nations Ocean Conference Side Event

Seabed mapping & marine data supporting multifunctional spatial planning

28 June 2022, 11:30-12:45, Side Event Room 2

Organized by: Stockholm Environment Institute and the International Hydrographic Organization, in partnership with IOC-UNESCO, Sweden, the African Union Commission, and the United Kingdom

Background on the event (one paragraph)

Multifunctional marine spatial planning – through the co-location of offshore activities, co-use of resources, or coexistence of physical structures – could lead to a more sustainable blue economy which has less of a negative impact on the marine environment. To achieve this, there is an urgent need to better understand marine ecosystems as most of our ocean remains largely unmapped, unobserved, and unexplored. Only a small fraction of the seafloor has been systematically mapped by direct measurement. To gain a better understanding of this, the International Hydrographic Organization and the Stockholm Environment Institute organized a side-event on seabed mapping and marine data to support multifunctional spatial planning.

Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)

- The event looked at the role of marine data to help address the competing needs of a broad range of ocean stakeholders. Participants discussed activities, innovations and challenges, as well as technologies and monitoring systems. It examined how improved data could inform the organization of the marine space to ensure a more sustainable use of ecosystems.
- Several panellists including the representative of Belize provided real world examples of how they used data obtained from hydrographic surveys: to set the boundaries of Marine Protected Areas, where to lay cables, to improve safety of entries to ports, to avoid groundings off of the coral reef in Belize…
- The OECD provided an overview on how to assess the value of ocean data. They presented a survey which showed how publicly available data stored in open access

repositories was used by a variety of fields beyond the original intended purpose, including fields beyond the usual ocean sciences.

- Sweden highlighted the importance of marine data to steer the blue economy towards regenerative and multifunctional approaches that could help guide the multiple demands in our seas, including shifting away from single-activities and structures, to instead create incentives in favour of interventions that can provide multiple services.
- The United Kingdom highlighted gaps in our knowledge and how resources are wasted on replicating data collection efforts. Also, where data has been collected, it is not always done so according to international standards, and the onward sharing of data for other purposes doesn't always happen as widely as it should be. We have not yet fully adopted the principle of "collect once, use many times".
- The African Union discussed access to data in the region and the creation of regional hubs to collaborate on the gathering of data and the creation of databases. Existing African and international cooperation through for instance WIOMSA, could provide the institutional frameworks for expanding such partnerships.
- IOC UNESCO discussed their partnership with the IHO on the GEBCO programme and the work to map 100% of the ocean by 2030 as part of the Nippon Foundation GEBCO Seabed 2030 project.

Key recommendations for action (5 – 6 bullet points)

1. Increasing involvement of hydrography in initiatives to map the ocean.
2. Increased cooperation and sharing of data regionally and internationally
3. Increased funding in order to improve seabed mapping, increase available data related to marine ecosystems as well as the blue economy.
4. Gather ocean data according to international standards in order to increase its use by different domains
5. Use ocean data to inform multifunctional and regenerative marine spatial planning
6. A multifunctional marine spatial planning should lay the grounds for an expanding blue economy

Voluntary Commitments (one paragraph)

In order to increase the coverage, quality of and access to seabed mapping data through collaboration, anywhere in the world, the United Kingdom announced during the event the creation of the UK Centre for Seabed Mapping (UK CSM)