



2022 United Nations Ocean Conference Side Event

Marine megafauna & blue carbon: how protecting charismatic ocean species contributes to climate protection

Wednesday 29th June, 18:00-19:30, Library Room, Pavilhão do Conhecimento, Largo José Mariano Gago nº1, 1990-073 Lisbon

Organized by: Whale and Dolphin Conservation (lead), Ocean Governance Marine Mammal Twinning, Seas at Risk, University of British Columbia, Government of Belgium, Instituto da Conservação da Natureza e das Florestas, Mission Blue, Convention on Migratory Species, Clean Arctic Alliance

Background on the event (one paragraph)

The restoration of ocean biomass and a return to pre-exploitation abundance is in fact climate action. The more we learn about the ecosystem functioning of marine fauna and in particular megafauna such as whales, the more it becomes apparent they demand a renewed focus and urgency for the benefit of multiple SDGs. This side-event showcased how marine megafauna are performing ecosystem services at a vastly reduced capacity due to their intensive over-exploitation. The threats to their recovery were highlighted, along with the actions needed to reverse their decline.

Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)

- The ecosystem functioning role of whales and dolphins – what we know, what knowledge gaps there are but how its increasingly apparent they are playing an important but degraded role in the Ocean due to exploitation by humans.
- The historic impacts on whales such as commercial whaling and the array of modern-day threats from entanglement in fishing gear, ship strike, noise pollution, chemical pollution and climate change.
- The array of threat faced by whales and dolphins from shipping and by extension the manufacturing industries. These industries are project to grow drastically in the coming years, but we know the solutions needed to reduce impacts.
- How subsidies across a whole range of industries end up impacting the ocean and therefore whales and dolphins. Particularly from fishing for fuel, gear, vessel construction, then subsidies for fossil fuel extraction and processing etc. If subsidies were realigned, there would be hundreds of billions available for positive environmental management and redirection.
- How Marine Protected Areas often are managed in isolation from each other and need to function in a more connected way, and to actively consider conservation interventions that would benefit marine mammals. An innovative management tool was presented by Ocean Governance to help protected area managers consider these points holistically.

Key recommendations for action (5 - 6 bullet points)

- Recognise in the relevant fora that oceanic megafauna are playing a climate and biodiversity loss mitigation role using the precautionary principle as the reason to reverse declines.
- Scale up ocean science and research with the aim to fully understand the ecosystem functioning role of whales, dolphins and other ocean megafauna.
- For the shipping and manufacturing industries to drastically reduce the unneeded scale of their operations and reduce impact of the necessary side.
- For other harmful subsidies to be realigned, following on from the WTO fisheries subsidies agreement.
- Creation of new HPMPAs and adaptation of existing MPAs to genuinely work for marine mammals throughout their migratory ranges.

Voluntary Commitments (one paragraph)

No voluntary commitments were announced at this event.