



2022 United Nations Ocean Conference Side Event

Ocean Science Capacity as a Condition to Achieving SDG 14: Perspectives and Solutions

30 June, 18:00 - 20:00, Myriad Crystal Center

Organized by: The Ocean Foundation, United States Department of State, The Pacific Community (SPC), The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission The Ocean Foundation, Eduardo Mondlane University, and the University of Rhode Island Coastal Resources Center

Background on the event (one paragraph)

Ocean science capacity is geographically unequal, with a small number of countries operating the majority of ocean monitoring and research programs. This inequitable distribution of capacity threatens the ability to achieve SDG 14, given that marine resources, pollution, and changing ocean conditions are not beholden to States' borders. Limited in-country access to finance, physical infrastructure, and human resources reduces climate resilience, increases likelihood and risk of detrimental activities, and shuts off markets from emerging blue economy opportunities. This event offered critical perspectives towards achieving more equitable ocean science capacity throughout SDG 14 implementation. A range of ocean leaders discussed what barriers are preventing equity and what strategies should be employed across SDG 14 activities to ensure equity.

Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)

- Publications such as IOC-UNESCO's Global Ocean Science Report indicates unequal ocean science capacity and the impact of these gaps on our understanding of the ocean.
- Activities that may involve capacity development may not always meet local needs or fill gaps if they are not co-designed and intentionally designed.
- Capacity-building requires an interaction; it's not simply talking and telling. It's about sharing.

- Capacity development is more than just training. Training is only one component of a robust strategy, which must include investments in infrastructure, equipment, and long term funding.
- We don't just need ocean science capacity; we also need educational capacity in ocean conservation, which can meaningfully drive behavioural change.

Key recommendations for action (5 - 6 bullet points)

- Build time into the project to develop trust with partners. A one-year timeframe in which everything has to be completed does not allow for this. This means multi-year funding is critical to successful capacity development.
- Carefully select partners. Partners that challenge and drive efforts in new directions while maintaining respect and value for the relationship are important.
- Bring social sciences into the work to heighten movement towards action and overall ocean benefit.
- Learn from mistakes. Continue to become a better partner and reflect critically on prior activities.
- Have fun! Building relationships, especially in-person, should not necessarily be limited to strict work activities. Exploring ocean environments together can be one way to get to know each other.

Voluntary Commitments (one paragraph)

The Ocean Foundation submitted multiple commitments, including “Addressing systemic inequity in ocean science capacity through EquiSea.” This commitment relates to capacity development activities like those discussed during this event and will improve equity in ocean science by establishing a philanthropic fund to provide direct financial support to projects, coordinating capacity development activities, fostering collaboration and co-financing of ocean science between academia, government, NGOs, and private sector actors, and supporting the development of low-cost and easy-to-maintain ocean science technologies. These activities are aligned with the best practices discussed by panellists.