



2022 United Nations Ocean Conference Side Event

The case for territorial seas in achieving 30x30: Conserving coastal ecosystems for locally led livelihoods

Tuesday, June 28 at 1:00pm – 2:15pm WEST: PT Center, Auditorium II

Organized by: Rare, Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), and Blue Action Fund

Background on the event

What if we could equitably safeguard most of the ocean's natural treasures, and in the process, benefit 500 million of the planet's most climate-vulnerable people by safeguarding their livelihoods and food security and by helping protect their communities from the worst impacts of climate change? And what if this transformative solution already existed? The high-level event dove into what is needed to protect and sustainably manage the world's territorial seas to achieve global biodiversity goals and 30x30 commitments. The event also brought together local leaders, government officials, and public and private funders to discuss challenges, opportunities, solutions, and a vision for scaling a community-led strategy for biodiversity conservation and sustainable coastal fishery management.

Key Issues discussed

- In discussions about achieving national targets or global goals, making sure to engage local communities, small-scale fishers, municipal governments, and other stakeholders at the outset is key to ensuring the needs of people are met while also addressing biodiversity loss and climate change.
- Fishing cooperatives at a local and regional scale are vital to bring fisherfolk voices to the decision-making table, and ensure the collective needs are understood and implemented.
- The youth constituency, including those from SIDS, is an increasingly powerful and forceful voice for sustainable and meaningful change as they are witnessing irreversible changes in their backyards and alarmed by the current state of inaction.
- The value of science in identifying the most important areas for biodiversity, such as Bloomberg Philanthropies' Vibrant Ocean Initiative's 50 Reefs Initiative, is absolutely necessary, as this can have a greater effect on ecosystem integrity, community benefits and climate resilience.
- In a world where it has become imperative to reduce the rate of biodiversity loss, build resilience to climate change and enhance food and job security, protecting territorial seas and ensuring healthy, productive coastal ecosystems needs to be a priority, as they are among the

most threatened ecosystems as well as among the most important for livelihoods, food and nutrition, and climate action (blue carbon and resilience).

Key recommendations for action

- Ensure the voices, perspective, and needs of local communities are fully integrated into local, national, and global discussions about sustainable management or protection of their coastal ecosystems, given that they are the most impacted and reliant on those healthy ecosystems.
- Use a science-based approach to identify areas important for biodiversity protection while also taking a human approach to ensure the needs of people and nature are met while ensuring ecosystem integrity, community benefits and climate resilience.
- Engage municipal governments and other local leadership in coastal communities in conservation and sustainable use efforts leveraging their knowledge and experience of the area to better understand the needs and realities of the coastal community members, small-scale fishers and their families.
- All relevant stakeholders - governments, NGOs, resource users - should amplify the need for increased financial and technical resources to flow to the local level for better effective implementation of locally-led MPAs in coastal, territorial waters.
- Support a 30x30 target and national commitments, particularly those that integrate a 100% sustainable management of the ocean areas approach into their goals and measures.