



2022 United Nations Ocean Conference Side Event

From the Southern Ocean to the Arctic – a Call to Action via the UN Ocean Decade

Monday, 27th June, 1300 - 1500, Virtual

Organised by: European Polar Board (EPB); Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences (RBINS); Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR); Southern Ocean Observing System (SOOS); Scientific Committee on Oceanic Research (SCOR); World Climate Research Programme (WCRP); Climate and Ocean - Variability, Predictability, and Change (CLIVAR); Integrating Climate and Ecosystem Dynamics in the Southern Ocean (ICED); Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation (PA2F)

Background on the event (one paragraph)

This is the first time the two Polar Ocean initiatives of the UN Decade of Ocean Sciences were brought to the audience together, raising cross-cutting issues from both the Southern Ocean and the Arctic Ocean. This side event brought together leading experts on both polar regions under the auspices of the UN Ocean Decade. Based on the recommendations in the Implementation Plan of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, the Southern Ocean community undertook a stakeholder-oriented process to develop the Southern Ocean Action Plan, similar to the Arctic Community. Both the Southern Ocean and Arctic processes engaged a very broad community, which included the scientific research community, the business and industry sector, governance and management bodies, NGOs, and, for the Arctic, Indigenous stakeholders. Cross-cutting issues from both polar regions were identified and these (amongst others) provided a direct call to action that has come through from all relevant stakeholders through their participation in the polar processes towards the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)

- The Arctic Initiative and associated Action Plan, and the Southern Ocean Initiative and associated Action Plan

- Cross-cutting issues from the two polar region, including (1) the need to identify and connect with all relevant stakeholders, across disciplines and for undertaking societally relevant research (2) improve coverage of data to be collected, ensure data collected is fully utilised (3) improve and ensure a diversity of voices at the table; build global capacity in polar research; improve technology for safe polar regions, reducing the need for human presence, and increasing the access to knowledge.
- Perspectives of large research initiatives such as Integrating Climate and Ecosystem Dynamics in the Southern Ocean (ICED) were presented, including relevant associated actions such as the Marine Ecosystem Assessment for the Southern Ocean.
- UN Ocean Decade from a bottom-up perspective by research community led initiatives like Climate and Ocean - Variability, Predictability, and Change (CLIVAR).
- UN Ocean Decade from the perspective of NGOs, including increasing awareness of the importance of polar oceans; addressing funding and research gaps; increasing transparency in management of the polar oceans; and increasing diversity (including gender, geography, career stage, etc) and building capacity globally; building partnerships with all stakeholders; and utilising a precautionary approach to managing the polar oceans.

Key recommendations for action (5 - 6 bullet points)

- Improve global understanding of the importance of polar oceans for the planet.
- Expand and strengthen established polar research networks such as SCAR, SOOS, IASC, EPB, ICED, and many others, who are uniquely placed to contribute to the UN Ocean Decade.
- Forge stronger connections involve stakeholders at all levels, including at local levels (through 'gateway communities' in the south and local and indigenous communities in the north), regional, national and international.
- Enhance links between the scientific community, industry, policymakers, and society and work to overcome barriers to communication and collaboration between these.
- Strongly underline the need for diversity in the polar science community, create additional networking opportunities, build global capacity for polar research.
- Utilise the UN Ocean Decade as a framework for the advancement of transformative ocean science solutions and addressing ocean-related data gaps.