



2022 United Nations Ocean Conference Side Event

Scaling up coastal conservation and restoration for humans and biodiversity – plans for a multistakeholder science and evidence-based World Coastal Forum

[June 30th 2022; 12:30 - 14:00, Online]

Organized by: [BirdLife International, Eco Foundation Global, Ministry of Natural Resources, P. R. China]

Background on the event (one paragraph)

This event brought together representatives of relevant treaties, governments, international, national & subnational organisations & experts/academics with a stake in coastal conservation to discuss and seek guidance, support and engagement in shaping the World Coastal Forum (WCF). The WCF is being established as an innovative new independent platform focused on catalysing, facilitating and upscaling from to local and global, evidence-based conservation efforts on coastal ecosystem protection, management and restoration, as called for by resolutions/decisions of CMS, Ramsar, CBD & IUCN. It will also help implement SDG 14, UN Decade of Restoration, UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, 2021 CBD COP15 Kunming Declaration, 2021 UNFCCC COP26 Glasgow Climate Pact, and the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework to be adopted by CBD COP15 Phase Two in 2022.

Key Issues discussed

- The UN Ocean Conference is very important in the context of accelerating action to halt and reverse the current deteriorating marine and coastal environment including in the face of climate change. It highlighted the particular **challenge of the thin coastal zone** between the terrestrial and marine environments which is especially threatened due to exceptionally fragmented governance and threats from both marine and terrestrial zones. The WCF aims to support concerted, cooperative action to address the challenges faced in the coastal zone, raising awareness and strengthening protection, sustainable management and restoration. .
- As an example of rapid progress in coastal ecosystem conservation, **Yancheng** City, China introduced the ecological importance of Yancheng's Yellow Sea coastal wetlands, its efforts and achievements in protecting them via a World Heritage site — the Migratory Bird Sanctuaries along the Coast of Yellow Sea-Bohai Gulf of China (Phase I) and introducing future plans for coastal wetland conservation and development .

- Support and recognition were expressed for the work of the **WCF Establishment Group**, in response to calls from CMS/Ramsar/CBD/IUCN resolutions/decisions for establishment of a global multi-stakeholder platform to accelerate coastal ecosystem protection, sustainable management and restoration including by sharing, and ensuring filling of gaps in knowledge in evidence-based solutions. Plans for launch of the WCF in November 2022 were announced.
- Cooperation from local to global level, at scale, is urgently required. Participation of **local governments** is vital as the fundamental unit for on the ground delivery. The WCF is expected to facilitate the specific conservation and restoration plans of stakeholders like local governments to help showcase success stories as an inspiration to others, and funnel knowledge of what works to where it is needed to avoid wasted effort in reinvention of the wheel or use of methods known to be ineffective .
- The WCF aims to identify problems and solutions through **scientific** work and help fill the urgent need to collate information and then disseminate **guidance on evidence-based solutions** through cooperation with experts and institutions around the world.
- It is proposed that the WCF will be an **independent, voluntary multi-stakeholder partnership** fostering cooperation, concerted action and capacity building between governments, conservation organizations and other stakeholders levels.
- Awareness needs to be raised of the plight facing our coastal ecosystems, of the challenges that need to be met in managing them sustainably, and of the opportunities for **win win solutions** that resulted in ecosystem services for people - local communities, visitors, and more widely thanks to the blue carbon storage potential. For example working coastal wetlands such as salt pans, shellfisheries and aquaculture can be managed sustainably for a wide range of benefits.

Key recommendations for action

- Suggestions were put forward for the future development of the WCF, supporting its **institutionalization** with a Charter defining the mission, vision and objectives, and a long-term strategic plan with a work plan to deliver it, involving states, governments, government agencies, international organizations, and the business sector.
- The focus is proposed to be facilitating on the ground **delivery of international commitments** on coastal ecosystem protection, sustainable management and restoration, while benefiting local communities, through, for example enhanced communication and cooperation, developing and widely disseminating public products to enhance effective actions, launching action initiatives and facilitating common action more generally.
- WCFEG will organize a **side event at the Ramsar Cop 14** in November 2022, as well as participating in several other international conferences this year to promote WCF.
- Stronger institutional links with IUCN were proposed and will be investigated further, for example as regards inviting IUCN members to join the WCF and collaborating on holding a side event at Ramsar COP14 in and CBD COP15.

Voluntary Commitments (one paragraph)

The WCF will be an independent international multistakeholder platform to facilitate implementation on coastal ecosystem protection, management and restoration, and will further define its mission, vision, work objectives, flagship products, action initiatives and operational model, and the outcomes of the WCF's future formal meetings which will be held regularly.