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UN-OHRLS



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2022 United Nations Ocean Conference Side Event

Scaling up action and building effective partnerships for SDG14: the essential roles of higher education and business

Monday 27 June, 16:00-17:15, Side Event Room 2, Altice Arena, Lisbon, Portugal

Organized by the Government of Ireland, UN DESA, UN OHRLS, the International Association of Universities (IAU), The Partnering Initiative (TPI) and the University of Bergen (UiB)

Summary

Background

This side event aimed to raise the capacity of different stakeholders in forging effective partnerships for Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG14): Life below water, to conserve and sustainable use the ocean and marine resources for sustainable development. The event brought together policymakers, industry, academia, civil society, the UN system and ocean enthusiasts with a global outlook on how to save our ocean by working together more effectively and easily.

Universities are crucial for the acceleration of action for the SDGs, with SDG 4: Quality Education, often seen as key to other SDGs and training the experts needed in the different fields. Specifically for SDG 14, the main areas of impact are Research (on Ocean, Climate), Teaching (Ocean Literacy and Partnerships) and Engagement of the different community groups at and around campus for this important topic. Several initiatives are already underway at universities, and partnerships such as the IAU Global HESD Cluster accelerate action and foster cooperation further. For example, in 2021, the IAU and its SDG14 Cluster Leader the University of Bergen published a collection of papers on Higher Education and SDG14 entitled: [HIGHER EDUCATION AND SDG 14: Integrating Ocean Research for The Global Goals](#). This publication shows how inter- and transdisciplinary activities at faculties, research centres, and actors outside of universities can work together to reach shared goals. Two-thirds of the ocean economy's annual 'gross marine product' comes from assets that rely directly on healthy ocean conditions. Both public and private sector interests can agree that without sustainable industry and a culture of conservation, these assets will evaporate. The private sector therefore has a vested interest as a partner in the delivery of SDG14, both to ensure its own sustainability and as a driver of new business opportunities. Potential partnerships include everything from financing new renewable energy infrastructure in tourist areas, through to developing new technologies and sector practices to reduce marine pollution from shipping and from plastic use. However, in many parts of the world, there is little tradition of corporate responsibility,



and few mechanisms or capacity to engage with business to collectively develop such win-win partnerships.

The side event shows how multi-stakeholder partnerships centred around the SDGs can be put into practice by finding common goals and denominators. However, there is no 'one size fits all' approach to partnerships. The path towards transformation for a more sustainable future starts with collaboration and discussion, therefore, this session invites the participants in the room to engage and will conclude with a call to action.

Ms. Lotta Tahtinen, Chief, Outreach and Partnerships, Division for SDGs, UN DESA, opened the side event with an impassioned statement regarding the need to seek science-based innovative solutions for global ocean action. The Division for Sustainable Development Goals of UN DESA strongly emphasizes the importance of high education and partnerships for all SDGs, including SDG 14. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a far-reaching impact on the education sector, requiring the sector to adapt quickly and dynamically.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is built on a fundamental shift in approach to development as it seeks to engage the unique roles and resources of all sectors in partnerships to reach the goals. Partnerships require time, resources, dedication, skills and an enabling environment with policies that are supportive of collaboration. The Division for SDGs have partnered with The Partnering Initiative and several UN entities to run the [2030 Agenda Partnership Accelerator](#) to support governments and stakeholders to obtain the necessary skills for successful partnerships for sustainable development at all levels.

Ms. Margareth Hagen, Rector, University of Bergen, further welcomed the participants of the side event. Ms. Hagen underscored the importance of partnerships for sustainable development and the ways that higher education institutions can be forerunners of such partnerships.

Professor Øyvind Fiksen, Marine Dean, University of Bergen and SDG14 HESD Cluster Lead for IAU, shared the findings of the report [Higher Education and SDG 14: Integrating Ocean Research for the Global Goals](#), published by the International Association of University and the University of Bergen. The report focuses on examples of good practices in which higher education institutions incorporate SDG 14 into their curriculum.

Mr. Paul Holthus, Founding President & CEO, World Ocean Council, presenting key findings of the report [Private Sector Partnerships in Small Island Developing States](#), published by the World Ocean Council, the SIDS Global Business Network (SIDS-GBN) and the United Nations Office of the Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLS). The report highlights examples of effective partnerships for sustainable blue economies in SIDS, with case studies in the Caribbean, Pacific and AIS. The report underscores the need for private sector partnerships to support sustainable development for in SIDS, primarily to achieve SDG 14. The report further outlines 10 Sustainable Partnership Goals for building better collaboration with the private sector.

Following these remarks, **Dr. Amund Maage, Marine Director at the University of Bergen and Senior Scientist at Norway's Institute of Marine Research**, facilitated a panel discussion among **Mr. Paul Holthus, Professor Anya Waite, Scientific Director, Ocean Frontier Institute and Associate Vice-President for Research, Dalhousie University; Mr. Martin Exel, Managing**



Director, SeaBos; Professor Martin Visbeck, Head of Research Unit Physical Oceanography, GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Reach Kiel, Germany. The following questions were asked of the panelists:

1. What skills and knowledge (both partnering and technical) do all sectors need to deliver on SDG14?
2. How do we more systemically engage business and academia towards partnering for the SDGs?
3. What are the needs for change in higher education and industry to better engage with the SDGs- and SDG14 in particular? How can the voluntary commitment from universities and partners contribute to this?
4. Given how critical the private sector's role is in achieving SDG14, what is holding back stronger engagement and how can we far more systematically align business, societal and environmental interests to unlock the power of the private sector through win-win collaborations?

The panelists agreed that it is essential to take a partnership approach and whole-sector approach to sustainable development, using SDG14 as a common connecting point. It was further discussed that to fully implement the SDGs, partners should work to find common goals and denominators between academia and business. Furthermore, it was noted that higher education should be strengthened to improve ocean literacy. The panel underscored the importance of including research-based knowledge when policymakers are implementing SDG14 targets and policies to achieve the SDGs. Finally, the panel discussed the need to equip industry leaders with knowledge and tools to increase their awareness of the ocean's key role in climate change.

Ms. Lotta Tahtinen announced the 2030 Agenda Partnership Accelerator introductory course on partnership effectiveness to the Ocean Community. Supported and funded by the government of Ireland, the one-week online course will provide a basic introduction to partnering for SDG 14. The course will help attendees understand the range of partnerships that can deliver towards SDG 14, develop the knowledge of the Building Blocks for effective partnerships and have access to a range of tools and cases to support their future partnering activities. Registration for the course will be announced shortly [here](#).

Voluntary Commitments

The University of Bergen with partners the University of the South Pacific, the University of the West Indies and the University of Cape Town presented the voluntary commitment [SDG200](#) as part of the [One Ocean Expedition](#), a circumnavigation of Earth on board the tall ship Statsraad Lemkuhl. The commitment includes an MA course on the ocean-climate nexus taking into account SDGs 4, 13, 14 and 17.

The University of Bergen with partners presented the voluntary commitment the [SEAS postdoctoral fellowship programme](#). The programme consists of 37 postdoctoral positions at the university, funded by the EU's Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions reference programme for doctoral education and postdoctoral training. SEAS is a career and mobility programme aiming to train future European research leaders of marine sustainability.



The Ocean Frontier/ Dalhousie University presented the [Ocean Graduate Excellence Network \(OGEN\)](#), which united excellent graduate training with industry and government in order to build a unique research nexus.

Finally, a presentation of the [Digital Twins of the Ocean \(DITTO\) Programme was presented](#), which aims to establish an international framework for digital twins of the ocean to explore and design ocean futures was given. DITTO will establish and advance a digital framework on which all marine data, modelling, simulation, AI algorithms and specialized tools can be shared. The Programme will quantify benefits and environmental change to provide powerful visualizations of marine environments.

Mr. Ralph Victory, Ireland's Ambassador to Portugal, closed the side event by reiterating Ireland's commitments to the sustainable development goals, including SDG 14.