

Ocean Action Panel 1:

Conserving, sustainably managing, and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems including deep-sea ecosystems

*An extract of the Global Online Stakeholder Consultation:
Inputs to Ocean Action Panels Concept Papers*

About this Paper

This paper is an extract from the report of the Global Online Stakeholder Consultation: Inputs to Ocean Action Panels Concept Papers, which summarizes inputs received from stakeholders to a global online stakeholder consultation organized by UN DESA in connection with the 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference which will be held from 9 June to 13 June in Nice, France.

The main Report can be found [here](#), including links to all responses and all inputs to the ten Ocean Action Panels, as well as detailed background information and a summary.

This paper presents summaries of key messages for Ocean Action Panel 1: Conserving, sustainably managing, and restoring marine coastal ecosystems including deep-sea ecosystems.



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Under this topic, 240 contributions were received, and more detailed inputs are available [here](#).

Main Challenges

Stakeholders across various sectors highlighted key challenges in achieving sustainable ocean management, with a particular focus on accessibility, governance, and inclusion. One major concern is the **limited access to marine research and deep-sea exploration** for countries in the Global South and other low-income regions. Financial constraints restrict these nations' participation in crucial scientific research, creating a knowledge gap that negatively impacts effective policymaking and conservation efforts.

Many respondents raised concerns about the growing interest in deep-sea mining, with multiple stakeholders calling for a **ban or moratorium** due to the potential risks to fragile deep-sea ecosystems. However, some stakeholders expressed support for **regulated deep-sea mining**, provided that strict environmental monitoring and safeguards are in place.

Illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing also emerged as a pressing issue, with stakeholders alarmed by its devastating impact on marine ecosystems. **Overfishing, bottom-trawling, turtle poaching, and bycatch** were identified by stakeholders as destructive practices contributing to biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation.

"We believe that fixing overfishing is the single most powerful thing we can do to overcome the ocean emergency. And we believe that this has to start with tackling the industrial-scale fishing methods that do the most damage." (Transform Bottom Trawling Coalition by Blue Ventures)

Transformative Actions

One of the transformative actions proposed by stakeholders is the establishment of a **global network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)**. This initiative would aim to enhance marine conservation by ensuring that MPAs are subject to **strict protection measures and robust monitoring**. By creating a more comprehensive and coordinated network, nations can work together to safeguard critical marine ecosystems and biodiversity on a global scale. Stakeholders emphasized the need for MPAs to be effectively managed through a **collaborative effort between governments and local communities**.

"One transformative action is the establishment of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) with strict enforcement, led by national governments in collaboration with local communities and international organizations. These MPAs should include deep-sea ecosystems and prioritize both conservation and sustainable use. Local communities must be actively involved in the management and monitoring of these areas" (World Environment Council)

The creation of **an international platform for data collection and sharing** was also highlighted as essential to improving marine research, monitoring, and enforcement. Such a platform would enable the **exchange of vital information, facilitate collaborative research, and support the fight against illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing**. This would be a significant step toward making marine conservation efforts more efficient and effective worldwide.

“One transformative action... is the establishment of a "Global Marine Data Sharing and Monitoring Network" (GMDMN). This initiative, spearheaded by the United Nations in collaboration with international scientific organizations, governments, and private stakeholders, would develop a centralized platform integrating data from satellites, underwater drones, buoys, research vessels, and citizen science projects. By providing real-time monitoring and data collection on marine health, biodiversity, pollution levels, and human activities, the platform would ensure that the data collected is openly accessible to researchers, policymakers, and the public.” (Alliance for Climate Innovation and Ecological Action)

Inclusive governance was another central theme, with stakeholders calling for **stronger participation from local communities, including women, indigenous groups, and youth**, in marine management. By integrating traditional knowledge and local expertise into decision-making processes, conservation efforts can become more

culturally appropriate and sustainable, reflecting the needs and perspectives of those most directly impacted by marine resource management.

“We need to take action to empower communities and offer them sustainable finance mechanisms so that they can conserve and restore their local ecosystems... Governments, NGOs, and other organisations need to use their power and capacity to support communities and provide them with options to be able to sustainably manage their marine resources. To be able to make managing and restoring marine ecosystems sustainable, communities need to be fairly compensated (financially or otherwise) for their conservation and restoration efforts and provided with clear alternatives to sustain (and improve) their livelihoods and quality of life.” (Association for Coastal Ecosystem Services)

To address disparities in research capacity, stakeholders advocated for **enhanced technology transfer and capacity-building efforts**. Improving access to marine research and exploration technologies, especially for least developed countries and small island developing states, would ensure that these nations are better equipped to participate in global ocean science and contribute to the sustainable management of marine resources.

Partnership Spotlight

Malaysia’s Reef Care program appoints local island stakeholders as guardians of Marine Protected Areas. On Tioman Island in 2023, the Tioman Marine Conservation Group (TMCG) removed 6,191 kg of ghost nets, controlled Crown-of-Thorns starfish outbreaks by addressing 1,498 starfish, and rehabilitated 1,590 damaged coral fragments. This initiative demonstrates effective local involvement in marine conservation, contributing to the protection and restoration of marine ecosystems and advancing SDG 14 goals. (Submitted by Reef Check Malaysia, Malaysia)

