SDG Action Segment for Goal 14

Partnerships to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

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ECOSOC Chamber, UNHQ

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SDG ACTION SEGMENT

2025

Organized by

- UN Environment Programme
- UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission
- Scientific and Technological Community Major Group
- Major Group for Children and Youth
- Indigenous Peoples Major Group

ECOSOC Partnership Forum

Background

The ocean is vital to all life on Earth, it regulates our climate and provides food sources for billions of people. Almost two-thirds of the planet's surface is ocean, and the seas make up 95% of the Earth's total habitat by volume.

However, ocean health is measurably in decline due to threats such as acidification, warming, deoxygenation, overfishing, pollution and coastal and infrastructure development. The cumulative impact of these stressors puts ocean health, biodiversity and ecosystem services at risk.

The ocean is absorbing more than 90% of the excess heat generated by human activities, leading to unprecedented rates of warming. According to UNESCO State of the Ocean Report 2024, the rate of ocean warming has doubled over the past 20 years. This warming is a significant driver of global sea-level rise, as expanding seawater and melting ice caps continue to threaten coastal communities and ecosystems. In addition to warming, the ocean is becoming increasingly acidic. The ocean absorbs approximately 25-30% of the carbon dioxide emissions produced by human activities. Deoxygenation further compounds these challenges. Since the 1960s, the ocean has lost about 2% of its oxygen content due to warming temperatures and pollution from sources such as agricultural runoff and untreated wastewater. This loss of oxygen has led to the creation of roughly 500 "dead zones" worldwide—areas where marine life struggles to survive due to insufficient oxygen levels. These dead zones disrupt marine ecosystems, reduce biodiversity, and affect human communities that rely on fishing and tourism.

Pollution is another critical concern. The State of the Ocean Report underscores that marine species are facing increased extinction risks, and without immediate, science-informed policy interventions, the ocean's capacity to support life will be severely compromised.

Despite these daunting challenges, there are reasons for hope. Blue carbon ecosystems, such as mangroves, seagrass meadows, and salt marshes, offer tremendous potential for carbon sequestration, storing carbon at rates up to five times higher than terrestrial forests. These ecosystems not only act as carbon sinks but also provide critical habitats for marine species and protect coastal communities from storm surges and erosion. However, nearly 60% of countries have yet to incorporate the conservation and restoration of these ecosystems into their national climate plans.

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) represent a beacon of hope for conserving marine biodiversity and bolstering the resilience of ocean ecosystem, as the higher the level of regulation and management in an MPA, the more effective it is at protecting local ecosystems and endangered species. Nevertheless, only a small fraction of MPAs are adequately enforced and managed, highlighting the urgent need for stronger governance and investment which includes ensuring that the Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) of Indigenous Peoples is implemented and that they are meaningfully engaged in decision making processes.

The ocean cannot keep sustaining us unless we come together through ambitious, action-oriented partnerships to reverse its current decline. We need to put in place effective policies and management with lasting positive effect on ocean health and enable a transformative shift in the volume and type of investment in ocean science, including critical ocean science infrastructure.

Targeted solutions for more sustainable use of the ocean can be enabled by a better understanding of ocean processes and its functioning, as well as coherent knowledge of the impacts of human activities on the ocean. With its vision of the 'science we need for the ocean we want', and its broad adopted definition of ocean science that encompasses all forms of ocean knowledge, the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030 (Ocean Decade) is an agile framework that convenes diverse

stakeholders to co-create and co-deliver the science and knowledge that is needed for decision making providing a framework to generate scientific knowledge and build the partnerships needed to develop innovative strategies and solutions for a well-functioning, productive, resilient, and sustainable ocean. In addition, the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration is a rallying call for the protection and revival of ecosystems all around the world, for the benefit of people and planet. It aims to halt the degradation of ecosystems restore them and put in place nature-based solutions to achieve the sustainable development goals.

In the last three years, ambitious international agreements to advance the protection, conservation and sustainable use of our ocean were adopted, including the Kunming Montreal Biodiversity Framework, in particular the coastal and marine targets, the Ocean-Climate Dialogue under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement). Other relevant processes are ongoing, including the negotiation of a legally binding agreement on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. Momentum on protecting and restoring the ocean is increasing, and public-private collaboration has become central to accelerate the contributions of ocean solutions, including transformative ocean science solutions, with a view to achieve the international agreed goals, including SDG 14.

In September 2024, the UN General Assembly adopted the Pact for the Future, in order to turbocharge and accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement on climate change. Through the Pact, Member States decided to take ambitious action to improve the health, productivity, sustainable use and resilience of the ocean and its ecosystems, and conserve and sustainably use and restore seas and freshwater resources, as well as forests, mountains, glaciers and drylands, and protect, conserve and restore biodiversity, ecosystems and wildlife. They also agreed to accelerate efforts to address the pollution of air, land and soil, fresh water and the ocean, including the sound management of chemicals, and work towards the conclusion of an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment.

Objectives of the Segment

The SDG 14 Action Segment of the 2025 ECOSOC Partnership Forum will focus on the theme of **Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for leaving no one behind**, highlighting concrete actions and partnerships to drive the achievement of SDG 14. This includes demonstrating how holistic policy, investment in ocean sciences, inclusive capacity and knowledge sharing, and sustainable management of ocean ecosystems and public-private partnerships can deliver more sustainable, resilient and equitable blue economy approaches that halt the triple-planetary crisis facing our ocean.

- Highlight partnerships that employ innovative approaches to accelerate action, including transformative ocean science solutions, to protect, conserve and sustainable use the ocean, contributing to the implementation of the Pact for the Future, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement, the Kunming Montreal Biodiversity Framework, and other international agreements related to the ocean.

- Make recommendations for the STI Forum, the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2025 and the 2025 UN Ocean Conference.

Follow-up processes

The conclusions and recommendations from the segment will inform the STI Forum, the High-Level Political Forum 2025 and the UN Ocean Conference.

Resources

The United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030): Implementation Plan

- The United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. Strategy
- Becoming #GenerationRestoration: Ecosystem Restoration for People, Nature and Climate
- State of the Ocean Report 2024
- Ambition, Action, Impact: The Ocean Decade Pathway to 2030 An Ocean of Life: How the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development is supporting implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
- 2024 Ocean Decade Conference – The Barcelona Statement
- Ocean Decade Data & Information Strategy
- Ocean Biodiversity Information System
- MSP Global policy briefs and toolkits
- UNEP Regional Seas Programme
- Co-producing Sustainable Ocean Plans with Indigenous and traditional knowledge holders https://oceanpanel.org/publication/indigenous-knowledge/
- Indigenous peoples' customary fishing rights – Key issues and entry points for advocacy https://www.humanrights.dk/publications/indigenous-peoples-customary-fishing-rights-key-issues-entry-points-advocacy
- Sasi: A Traditional Natural Resource Conservation and Management System https://d3o3cb4w253x5q.cloudfront.net/media/documents/ILC_Case_Study_0145__Indonesia_EN.pdf
- Reflections on Goal 14: https://www.facebook.com/unpfii/videos/reflections-on-goal-14-indigenous-peoples-and-the-oceans/1608709039142122/