

An underwater photograph of a sea turtle swimming over a vibrant coral reef. The water is clear and blue, and the coral is diverse in color and shape. The text is overlaid on the upper half of the image.

Key findings from an analysis of UNOC 2 voluntary commitments and their impacts

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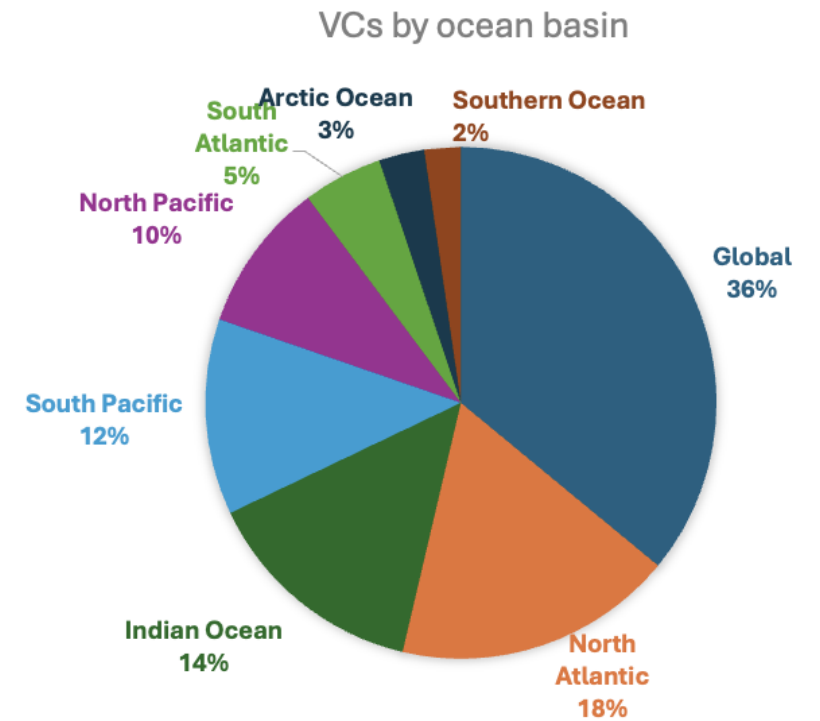
University of Edinburgh – Nippon Foundation Ocean Voices Programme

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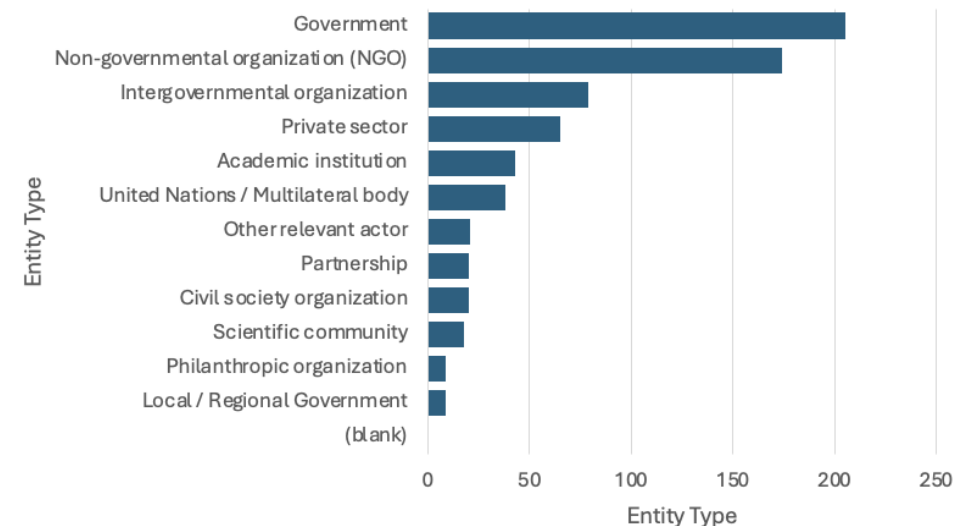
Coastal Policy and Humanities Research

Introduction

- **VCs were major outcomes of 1st and 2nd Ocean Conferences**
- UNOC 1: 1406 commitments
- UNOC 2: 741 commitments
- 3rd analysis of VCs – follows previous ones from 2017 and 2021- relies on multiple sources of information
- **Overall findings:**
- VCs cover all ocean basins, regions, and entity types
 - **Entities:** Private sector and academia participation has increased; UN agency and civil society participation decreased
- VCs contain a rich array of actions from local to global
- 225 countries and 532 lead organizations involved



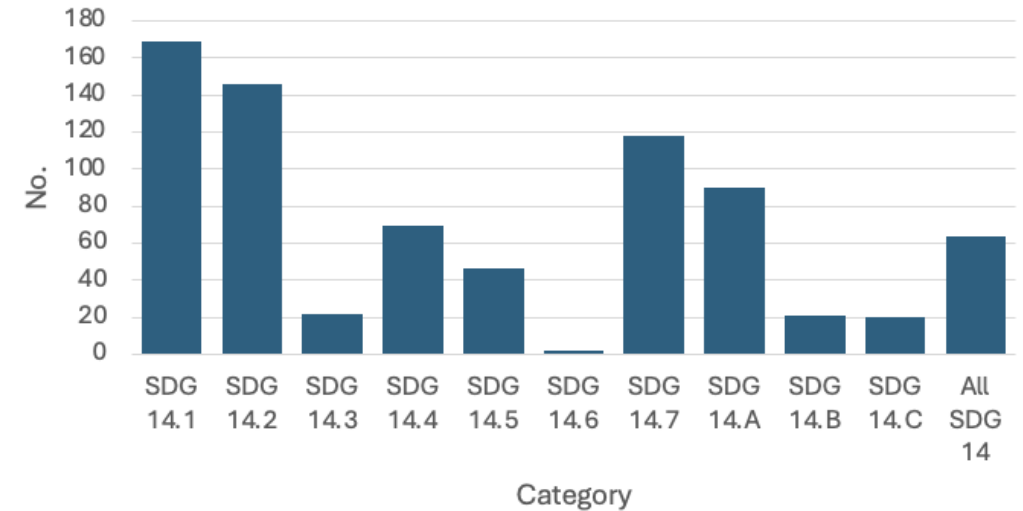
Distribution of entity types for all VCs



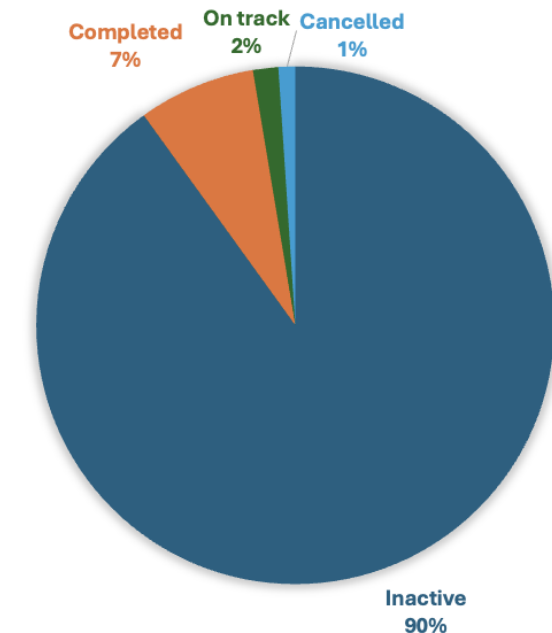
Introduction

- SDG 14 targets unevenly covered in the VCs
- However, the number of targets is not necessarily a measure of impactful action
- **Low reporting hinders impact assessment: 24% reported in 2021, only 10% in 2024**
 - Difficult to assess impacts of VCs – individual or collective
 - Makes it more difficult to assess why VCs succeed or fail
 - Loss of knowledge: We may be missing out on effective solutions that have positive impacts on ocean health and people
- **This presentation cannot cover the entire report, but I will highlight some impact stories, with some suggestions at the end**

No of SDG 14 targets in VCs



Reporting status of targets



Impact stories – plastic pollution

- Plastic pollution in the ocean increasing dramatically – crisis level around adoption of Agenda 2030
- **2017 Ocean Conference:** 170 VCs on plastic pollution (52% of VCs related to SDG 14.1)
- **2022 Ocean Conference:** 70% of VCs related to 14.1 on plastic pollution
- Largely grassroots action and early adopter governments
- **Momentum building – everyone can do something to solve the crisis – grassroots action to global policy**
- December 2017 UNEA ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics (UNEP/EA.3/Res.7)
- **2022: UNEA Resolution 5/14** “End plastic pollution: Towards an international legally binding instrument”
- Negotiations for treaty underway
- VCs provide provide a knowledge base that can built upon for eventual treaty implementation
- Also demonstrate how soft law processes like SDG 14 can build momentum towards treaty development



More plastic than fish in the sea by 2050, says Ellen MacArthur

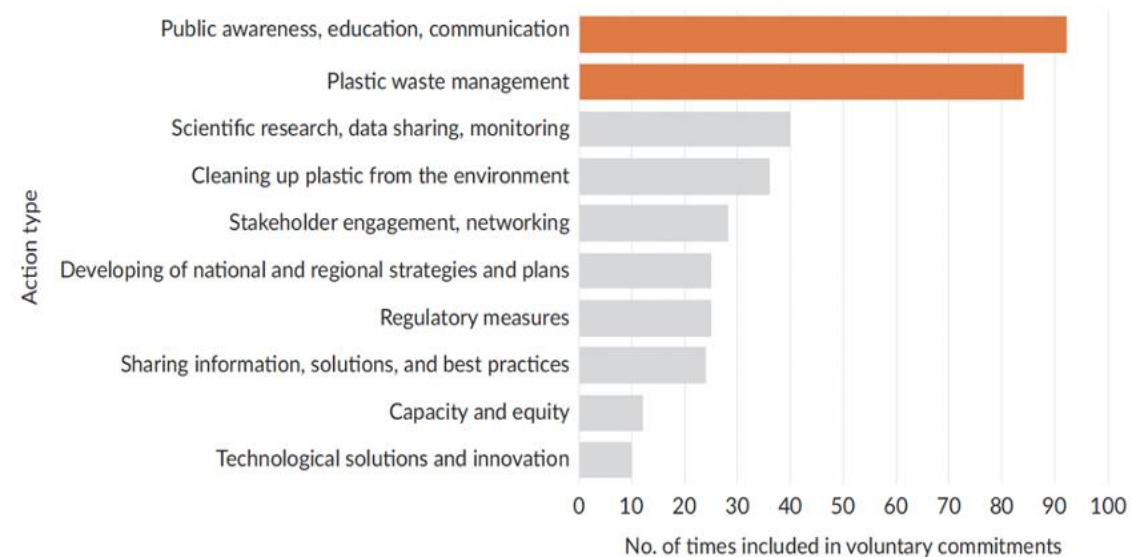
One refuse truck's-worth of plastic is dumped into the sea every minute, and the situation is getting worse



Just 5% of waste plastic is effectively recycled, at plants like this one in Indonesia. Photograph: Hotli Simanjuntak/EPA

The Guardian, 2016

Categories of plastic pollution action in VCs



Impact stories – marine protection and management

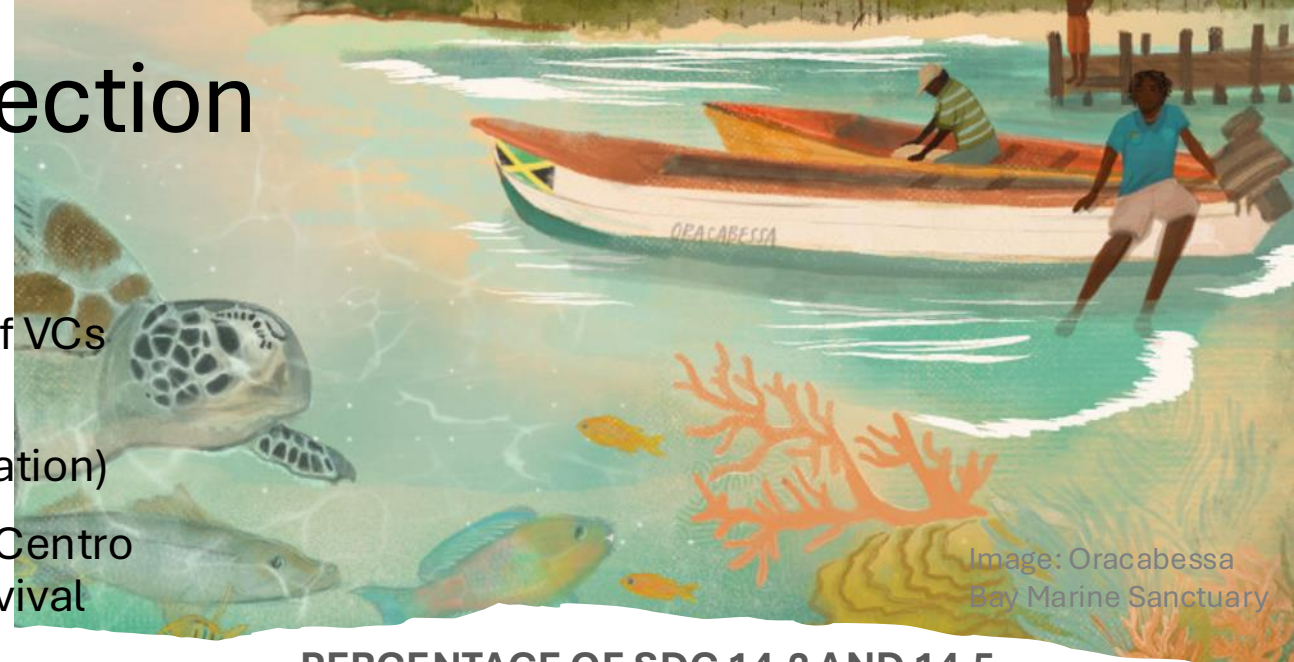
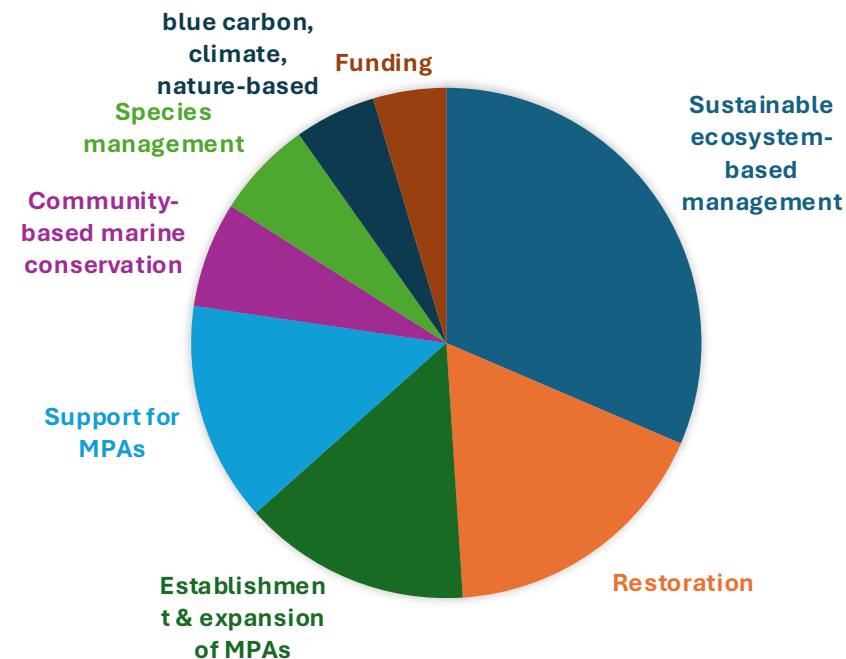


Image: Oracabessa Bay Marine Sanctuary

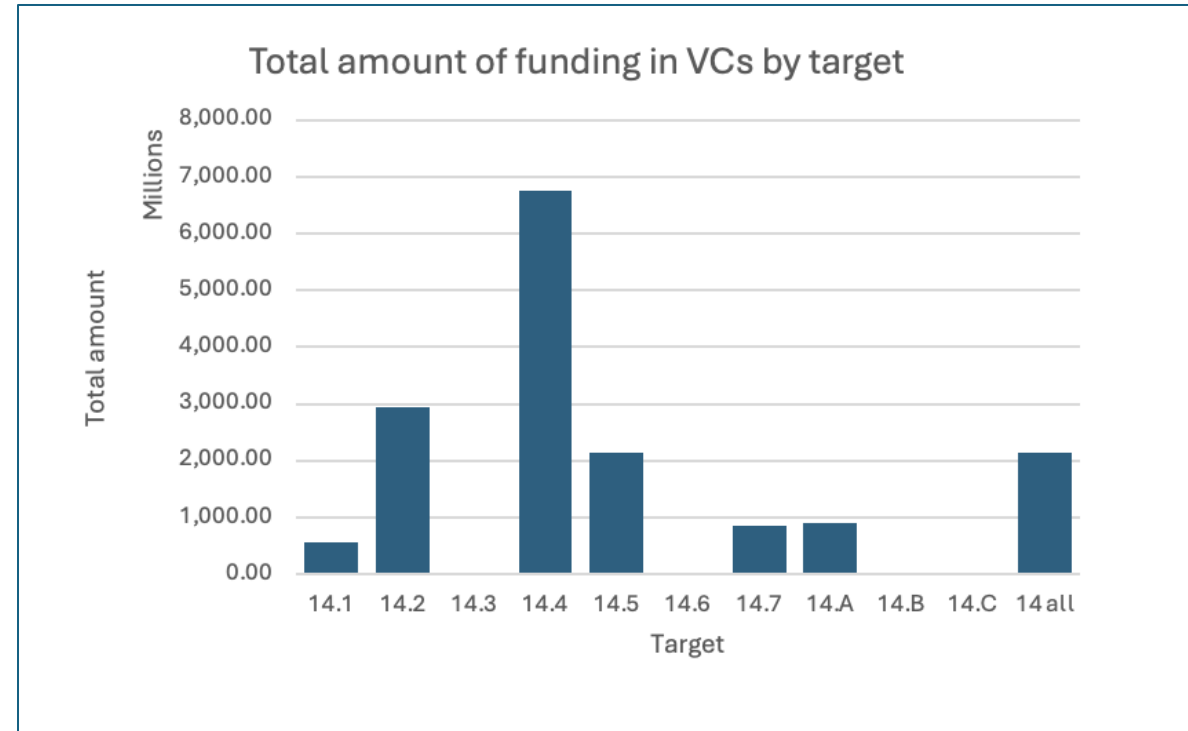
- Targets 14.2 and 14.5 have the combined largest number of VCs (192)
- **Restoration** largest increase in VCs (new: coral reef restoration)
- **Some projects site encouraging initial results:**. Mexico (Centro Universitario de la Costa, Universidad de Guadalajara) survival rate of 89% – can it be done at scale?
- **Out of the 35 MPA VCs**, 5 have been completed and 14 are on track, leading to MPA coverage expansion
- **Local action has been impactful:** Oracabessa Bay Fish Sanctuary (Jamaica) has seen 564% increase in the mass of living fish per area; 153% increase in coral cover; and improved livelihoods for fishers
- **Promising regional marine protection initiatives:** Mediterranean PSSA, OSPAR MPA expansion, Eastern Tropical Pacific Marine Corridor with 4 countries to conserve 31.3 million hectares in the Pacific
- **VCs are moving into the high seas:** SARGODOM project will provide new governance models for the BBNJ treaty

PERCENTAGE OF SDG 14.2 AND 14.5 VCS BY ACTION CATEGORY



Impact stories: VC finance reaches considerable amounts

- Roughly 1/3 or 244 VCs reporting on available funding (though in variable ways, currencies, and years covered)
- **Largest commitments around or exceeding US\$1billion** (World Bank, governments, IGOs, Philanthropic – e.g. Protection our Planet Challenge, highlighting importance of coalitions)
- **Smallest commitments around \$500 to a couple of thousand** (NGO, civil society – numerous VCs with small commitments often for grassroots action)
- **Multiple sources:** grants and loans; ODA, IGO, UN and multilateral agency funding; philanthropic and NGO funding, private sector funding, and – in a few cases – innovative funding sources, including blended finance, impact investment and a venture capital fund
- Targets 14.4, 14.2, 14.5 and all SDG 14 targets reported most funding
- Targets 14.B, 14.C and 14.3 reported least funding
- **Because variable ways of reporting, it is difficult to provide an estimate of total funding available**
- **If directly summed up, the collective amount reported was roughly US\$ 2.4 trillion, spread over multiple years, and consisting of both grants and loans**
- However, only indicative figure covering 1/3 of VCs



Conclusions, opportunities and ways forward

CONCLUSIONS

- Many VCs have had real world impact, bringing forward new ideas and solutions
- **However, without effective monitoring and accountability we miss an opportunity for collective learning and potential scaling up of solutions**
- Some gap areas still exist, particularly regarding target 14.6 on fisheries subsidies, but also broader considerations to leaving no one behind

OPPORTUNITIES (UNOC 3)

- **Building momentum towards BBNJ treaty ratification** – with VCs providing early experiences for implementation (targets 14.2 and 24.5 particularly)
- **Building momentum towards plastic pollution treaty** - plastic pollution VCs provide valuable experience towards implementation
- **Building momentum towards ratification/implementation of the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies**, and the further rules under negotiation – encourage more VC
- **New and innovative ideas – often local action**

OPPORTUNITIES FOR COAs

- Identify promising solutions and priorities to take forward to UNOC 3
- Could COAs produce policy briefs/presentations/analyses for UNOC 3 on priorities?

