

Ocean Action Panel 3:

Mobilizing finance for ocean actions in support of Sustainable Development Goal 14

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10 June 2025

At the Third United Nations Ocean Conference, the United Nations Secretary-General emphasized the urgent need to mobilize investment for safeguarding marine ecosystems and coastal communities. Significantly, he called for “*bold models to unlock private capital*.” In response, a collective of United Nations organizations and partners has come together around a shared priority: advancing a new approach to ocean finance that addresses one of the most persistent and underfunded gaps in the 2030 Agenda.

Despite enabling over 80 percent of global trade and supporting the livelihoods of more than three billion people, the ocean receives only a fraction of the financing it requires. The economic value of the ocean is projected to exceed USD 3 trillion by 2030—making it equivalent to the world’s fifth largest economy. Yet, just 1.4 percent of the estimated USD 175 billion needed annually to achieve SDG14 has been mobilized. Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs)—those most reliant on ocean resources—receive less than two percent of total ocean finance.

The message from the current ocean finance landscape is clear: traditional approaches are not delivering at the necessary scale or speed. To respond to the urgency of the crisis, we need new financial mechanisms—mechanisms that are agile, accessible, and capable of engaging the private sector from the outset. These must be rooted in a unified vision of triple-win outcomes: restoring ocean ecosystems, supporting resilient island and coastal communities, and strengthening long-term economic prosperity.

Public finance—including ODA—remains foundational, particularly for SIDS and LDCs, but it cannot bear the burden alone. We must broaden the base by mobilizing new contributions from ocean-dependent industries.

To reach the scale required, finance must be deployed through blended structures that de-risk sustainable ocean economy solutions and attract a diverse range of investment—from large-scale infrastructure projects to community-led MSMEs. This finance must be fair and flexible: enabling equitable access for those most affected by ocean degradation, aligning with country-led priorities, and avoiding additional debt burdens. Strengthening domestic financial systems is equally important. Mobilizing local resources and building inclusive, resilient institutions will ensure that capital can be absorbed, retained, and managed at the national level.

Strategic de-risking is critical—not only to enable individual transactions, but to generate multiplier effects by structuring instruments such as blue bonds to meet investor risk mandates and by redeploying public resources from debt-for-nature swaps through blended finance approaches to amplify impact.

Achieving maximum impact through blended finance requires sequencing across capital providers—linking concessional capital, local financial systems, development banks, and private investors in a coherent progression where each plays a catalytic role. The goal is to build a coordinated and resilient ocean finance architecture that works from both the bottom up and the top down.

UNCDF, whose mandate is to unlock finance where it is hardest to reach, is playing a central role in this effort. Drawing on its experience deploying catalytic capital, supporting domestic financial ecosystems, and aligning blended finance with national systems, UNCDF is working with partners to design a mechanism that can scale impact in the most vulnerable contexts.

Building upon this foundation, a focused and inclusive process toward this vision is now underway. A collective of United Nations entities and global partners—including UNCDF, UNDP, UNEP, UN Global Compact, UN DESA, UNCTAD, UNESCO-IOC, UNWTO, IUCN, and WRI—has launched the co-design process for the One Ocean Finance Facility: a bold new effort to unlock billions in financing from ocean-dependent industries toward sustainable ocean economy. Initiated at the 2025 UN Ocean Conference, this inclusive co-design process aims to deliver an agile, scalable, and fit-for-purpose global platform by the Fourth United Nations Ocean Conference.

One Ocean Finance is being designed to move beyond fragmented models—enhancing coordination, unlocking non-traditional capital flows, and scaling investment in solutions that are accessible to those most in need. From the outset, it will engage the private sector, deploy blended finance at scale, and prioritize triple-win outcomes: sustainable industry transition, ocean health, and resilient coastal communities.

The Call for Engagement is now open. UNCDF joins its partners in inviting Member States, industry leaders, investors, and civil society to help shape a One Ocean Finance Facility that responds to country needs and drives systemic change for a healthy ocean.