



UNITED NATIONS OCEAN CONFERENCE NICE, FRANCE 2025

UNOC3 Conference Side Event

Bridging Academia and Action Advancing Partnerships for SDG 14, Knowledge-sharing, and Ocean Literacy

Friday, 13 June, 2 pm CEST, online

**Organized by: International Association of Universities, University of Bergen,
University of the West Indies, University of Cape Town, Ocean University of China,
the International Science Council (ISC), University of Costa Rica, OceanX**

Background on the event (one paragraph)

After previous engagement at the Lisbon and Barcelona UNOCs, IAU and the University of Bergen, with partners from the IAU HESD Cluster Network on SDG 14, organized an online event open to academics and practitioners working on ocean literacy and partnerships for the ocean with science and education. The event demonstrated that Higher Education stakeholders are committed to drive meaningful progress toward SDG 14 and are already actively fostering collaboration between academia, policymakers, industry, and civil society. This webinar on higher education and ocean literacy highlighted the need for inclusive, dynamic learning environments to address global challenges.

Key Issues discussed (5-8 bullet points)

Prof. Sigrunn Eliassen, Vice-dean for education, at the University of Bergen, gave some opening remarks and introduced the moderator **Isabel Toman**, IAU. Speakers shared their initiatives, providing **examples of good practice from higher education for the Ocean** (many UN Ocean Decade Actions):

- **Prof. Liang Yantao** from the Ocean University China discussed China's focus on renewable energy and marine culture technology. He stressed the need to educate students early at secondary level, and build capacity further through initiatives with youth such as their [summer school](#) about marine based solution for climate change.

- **Dr. Awneesh Singh**, Assistant Professor at University of the South Pacific (USP) and part of the ISC UNOC3 expert group, emphasized the [Pacific Ocean Climate Crisis Assessment](#) and the development of a climate change degree. He shared some learnings from the [Norway-Pacific Ocean-Climate Scholarship Programme \(N-POC\)](#) for PhD students between the University of Bergen and USP.
- **Dr. Louise Gammage**, Researcher, University of Cape Town detailed the new collaborative, high-quality, interdisciplinary, inclusive and internationally-recognised [South African Marine Ocean Sciences Program \(SAMOS\)](#).
- **Dr. Deborah Villarroel-Lamb**, Lecturer in Coastal Zone Engineering & Management, University of the West Indies stressed the importance of undergraduate research in coastal resilience, and their [ongoing work on nature-based solutions](#).
- **Mattie Rodrigue**, Science Programme Director, OceanX highlighted their [educational programs](#) and putting science into practice aboard the OceanX Explorer. The session underscored the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and evidence-based teaching to prepare future ocean leaders.

The input presentations were followed by a discussion facilitated by **Øyvind Fiksen** UiB. Overall, universities are **building capacity and sharing knowledge** to enhance ocean literacy and build partnerships, while using research to shape ocean science education.

Key recommendations for action / voluntary commitments (5-6 bullet points)

- **Develop more structured pathways for climate and ocean leadership**, including undergraduate degree programs that integrate science, indigenous knowledge, policy, and experiential learning.
- **Inform policymakers and advocate to transform education** in ocean science and related sectors.
- **Continue to strengthen partnerships** between universities, communities, traditional knowledge holders, and the private sector to root ocean science education in local ownership and trust.
- **Show pathways to ocean related careers** to students, and support early career researchers and professionals, for instance through the [Early Career Ocean Professional \(ECOP\)](#) Network.

Dr. Hilligje van't Land, Secretary General of the IAU stressed the need for more collaboration and action, undermined by data on Marine Science degrees extracted from [IAU's World Higher Education Database](#). She invited all to participate in the [IAU's voluntary ocean commitment for SDG 14](#), which is currently in preparation, and in [UNESCO's call to action for ocean literacy](#) “From Venice to Nice to Belem”.