



**UN OCEAN
CONFERENCE
NICE 2025
FRANCE**



**DEPARTMENT OF
ECONOMIC AND
SOCIAL AFFAIRS**



OCEAN ACTION NEWSLETTER

**Hoisting the Sails of Sustainability:
From Nice Commitments to Ocean Solutions**

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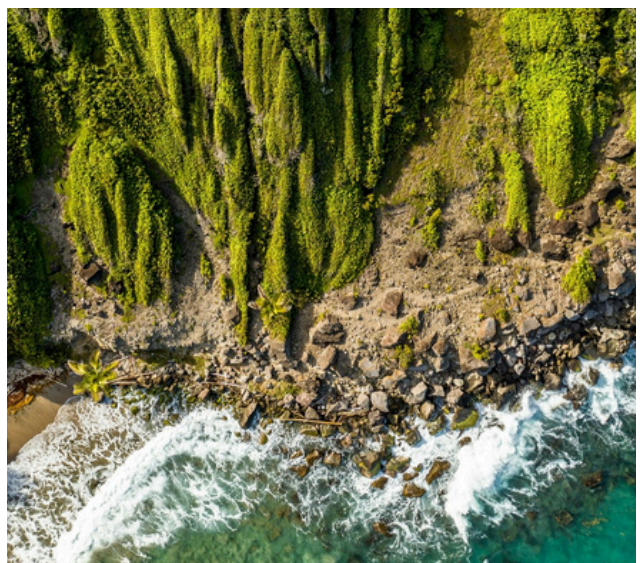
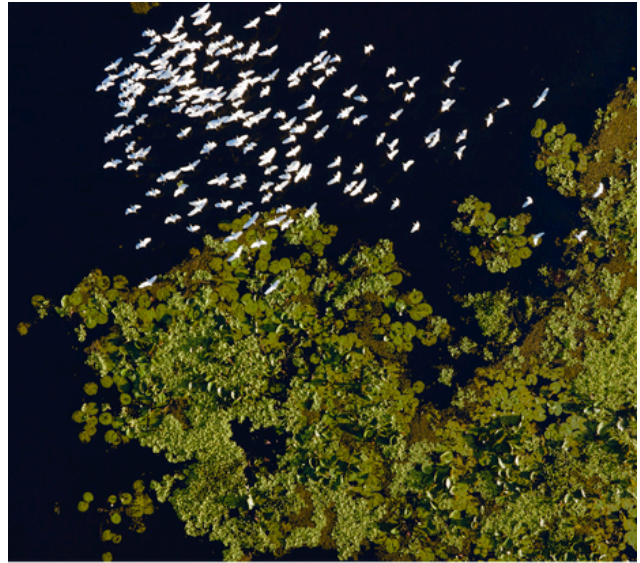
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Introduction

As the summer breeze swept across the Mediterranean in Nice, the third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3), drew to a close with the global ocean community energized and hopeful about the path ahead. Participants departed with a renewed sense of urgency and collective purpose, carrying forward commitments that will shape the sustainable future of the ocean.

UNOC3 marked an important milestone in advancing global ocean action under Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG14). With record participation – 175 UN Member States, 64 Heads of State and Government, and over 12,000 delegates – the Conference successfully mobilized global ambition, resulting in over 800 voluntary commitments from governments, the private sector, civil society and other partners.

The Conference generated strong momentum for the ratification of the BBNJ Agreement, bringing it closer to the 60 required for entry into force. Delegations reaffirmed their commitment to implement the WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement and emphasized the urgency of concluding the Plastics Treaty negotiations. The launch of the One Ocean Finance Facility, co- designed with UN entities and partners to mobilize billions in blended public, private and philanthropic capital, alongside new pledges from development banks and financial institutions, signaled meaningful progress toward closing the persistent financing gap for SDG14 implementation and ocean action.

Commitments advanced marine conservation and biodiversity, with pledges to expand marine protected areas in line with the Kunming– Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, protect vulnerable ecosystems such as coral reefs and the deep sea, and strengthen measures for the sustainable management of sharks and rays. Delegations also emphasized the sustainable blue economy as a driver of resilient livelihoods, pledging support for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, renewable ocean energy, and tourism. UNOC3 critically highlighted the ocean's central role in the climate– biodiversity– sustainable development nexus, with countries committing to the full decarbonization of international shipping by 2050, boosting resilience in coastal communities and small island developing States, and enhancing the use of science, data and inclusive governance to ensure integrated action that leaves no one behind.

Looking ahead, it is imperative to translate the commitments made in Nice into measurable and impactful results. Implementation, monitoring and accountability will be essential to ensure that the ocean continues to sustain people, planet and prosperity for generations to come. Join us as we reflect on the outcomes of UNOC3 and explore how partners worldwide are advancing SDG14.

Message from H.E. Mr. Olivier Poivre d'Arvor, Ambassador for the Poles and Maritime Issues, Special Envoy of the French President for the 2025 UN Ocean Conference (UNOC3)



From 2 to 13 June 2025, in Nice, France hosted the Third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3) with ground breaking results for the preservation of our Ocean and achieving SDG 14 and large participation from countries and civil society.

France and Costa Rica decided UNOC3 had to mark a turning point and give the ocean the same political ambition that we were able to mobilize for the Earth's climate in Paris in 2015. 175 UN Member States, included 64 Heads of State and Government and 12 000 delegates, came from all over the world, including leaders of SIDS who feel the brunt of the climate crisis and rising sea levels that are the result of global warming. The Green Zone, called "The Whale", welcomed 130 000 visitors during 10 days to learn more on the ocean challenges and solutions.

Diplomatically, UNOC3 enabled to reach global objectives: UNOC3 gave a decisive boost to the "BBNJ" Treaty and we finally went over 60 ratifications at UNGA80, triggering the entry into force of the "BBNJ" Agreement for 2026. The fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing took centre stage with countries pledging to ratify ILO's C188, IMO's Cape Town Agreement and WTO's Fish 1 agreement. Fish 1 came into force on September 15.

The coalition of countries calling for a moratorium or precautionary pause on deep-sea mining expanded to 38 countries after UNOC3, marking growing opposition to this destructive activity which will ruin ecosystems we have no idea about. In order to pursue the influence on this urgent matter, the "Ocean Pioneers" Coalition was launched to bring together the States that have both ratified "BBNJ" and positioned for a precautionary pause.

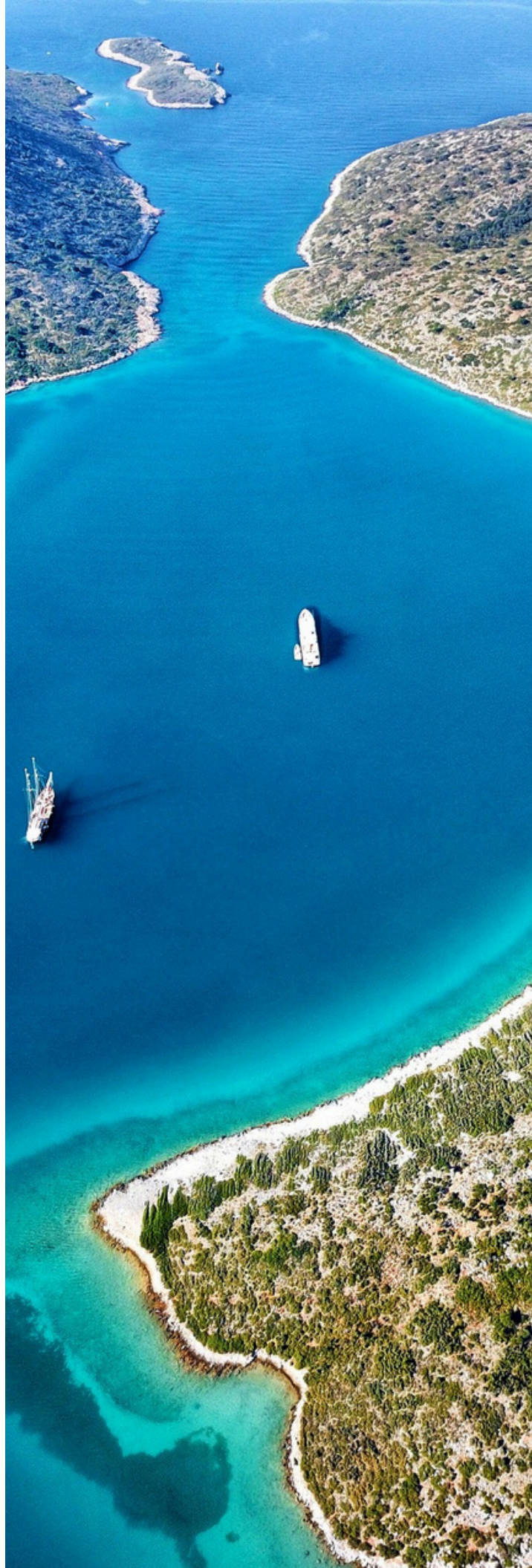
On the crucial issue of plastic pollution, France mobilised a coalition of 88 countries around concrete commitments to reduce plastic waste and support a binding international treaty on plastics. Marine life needs this treaty if it is to survive.

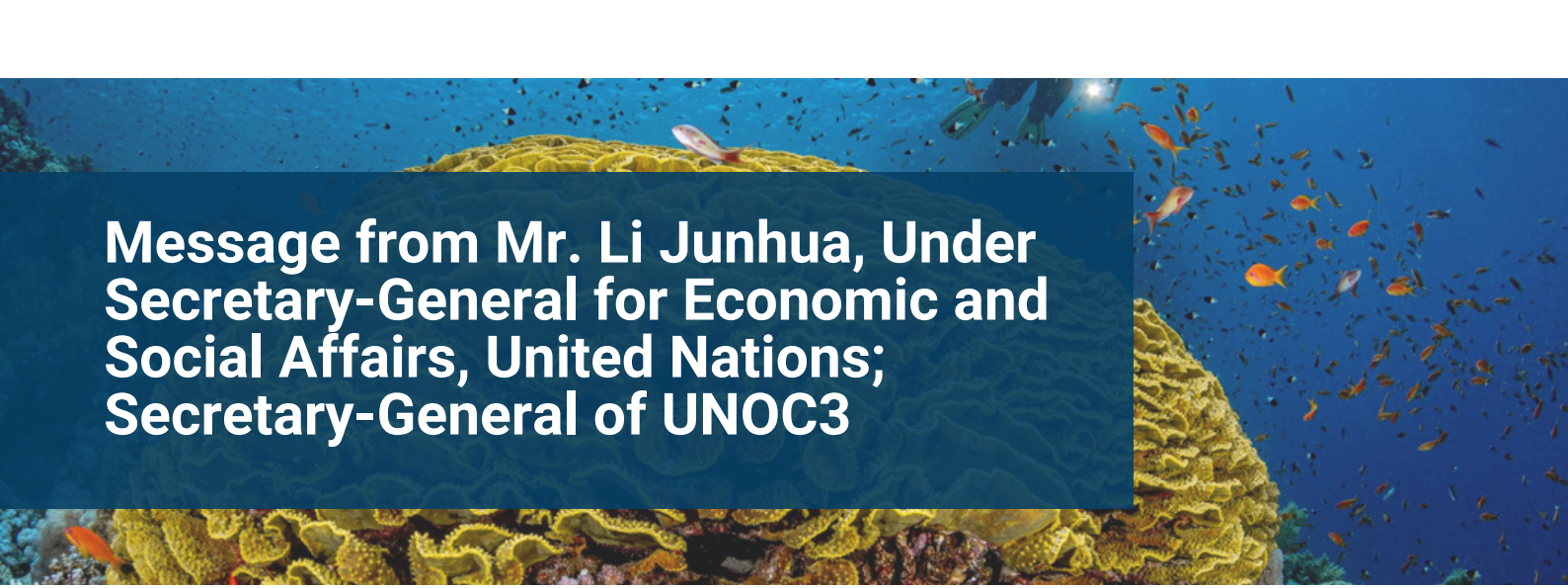
Through the Blue Economy and Finance Forum, Heads of State, heads of international organisations, financial institutions and businesses call for a sustainable and regenerative blue economy. The BEFF mobilized close to \$9 billion in financial commitments until 2030 from public and private stakeholders, including \$2.8 billion for the restoration of marine ecosystems alone.

The “One Ocean Science” Congress in Nice brought together over 2 000 marine and ocean scientists and provided clear policy recommendations to Heads of States and Government in UNOC3. France and the European Union are going to design the Neptune Mission, oceanic research and exploration initiative, a new joint public private consortium for exploring the ocean.

Finally, the political declaration was adopted by consensus in Nice. This massive support was confirmed in NY a few weeks later, when all countries but one voted for its formal adoption by the UNGA.

More than a success, UNOC3 demonstrated the strength of the multilateralism to protect and secure our relations with Ocean.





Message from Mr. Li Junhua, Under Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations; Secretary-General of UNOC3

Five months after the third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3) in Nice, I continue to reflect with deep gratitude on the remarkable participation and engagement that made it such a defining moment for global ocean action. The unprecedented gathering of leaders, experts, and stakeholders from every sector transformed the Conference into a powerful demonstration of the strength of multilateralism in advancing solutions for the ocean, even in today's challenging geopolitical context.

The outcomes of UNOC3 proved what ambition matched with collaboration and commitment can achieve. Leaders in Nice set out a clear direction through the Political Declaration, calling for the full implementation of landmark agreements such as the BBNJ and WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreements, the expansion of marine protected areas, and greater global cooperation in ocean science and data sharing.

The Conference also heightened the urgency and need for greater investment in SDG14 to close the multi-billion-dollar funding gap, strengthening the science-policy interface as well as leveraging the interlinkages between the ocean, climate change and biodiversity.

The Political Declaration is backed by a concrete action plan—over 800 Voluntary Commitments were announced in the lead-up to UNOC3. In Nice, new pledges were announced by Member States and stakeholders in areas such as the expansion of

marine protected areas, deep-sea ecosystem literacy, blue economy innovation, and food systems transformation. A growing wave of momentum, driven by new commitments to ratify key international

treaties, marks a milestone in global ocean governance and collective action for a sustainable blue future.

Our task ahead is clear: to turn commitments into concrete, measurable results. With the 2030 deadline fast approaching, effective implementation of these commitments is more critical than ever. The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs stands ready to work with all partners to carry this momentum forward, turning the consensus and pledges from Nice into lasting progress for people, planet, and prosperity.

Looking ahead, preparations for the fourth United Nations Ocean Conference in 2028 are already underway. I look forward to our continued collaboration as we chart the next chapter for a sustainable and prosperous future for the ocean.



MESSAGE FROM H.E. AMB. PETER THOMSON, THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL'S SPECIAL ENVOY FOR THE OCEAN



Yes indeed, some four months past, at UNOC3 in Nice, the “sails of sustainability” were hoisted high for SDG14. There were many hands on those ropes, multiple thousands of us hauling away at them;

I was not disappointed. Take as an example French Polynesia announcing the largest marine protected area in the world, following hard on the heels of the announcement by the Azores that it had established the largest marine protected area in the North Atlantic. By such determined steps do we reach our goal of protecting 30% of the ocean by 2030. Calm seas never a skilled sailor made, so we must face stormy headwinds with stoic resolve. We must accept that the failure of INC5.2 to agree on a Plastics Treaty comes at a critical juncture for ocean health. The best of ocean science informs us that climate change is warming and acidifying the seas, that one-third of fish stocks are overexploited, that marine biodiversity is in alarming decline, and that plastic pollution is suffocating marine life and reappearing on our plates in the food we eat. We have long been labouring to correct these ills: through the High Seas Treaty (BBNJ), WTO’s Harmful Fisheries Subsidies Agreement, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and SDG14’s drive to conserve and only sustainably use the ocean’s resources. But without a Plastics Treaty, one of the most pervasive threats to marine ecosystem and to human health, remains unaddressed.

over 60 Heads of State and Government, over 110 Ministers, delegates from 140 countries, and many thousands of representatives of governments, international organisations, NGOs, the private sector and civil society. While our SDG14 course remains essentially the same, holding true to the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean’s resources, as we sailed out from Nice, we were all mightily fortified by the best of ocean science, by new avenues of ocean finance, and steady following winds of political commitment in favour of SDG14’s implementation.

In the last DESA Ocean Action Newsletter, on the approach to UNOC3, I wrote that I was looking forward to learning about sustainable solutions, innovations and practical pathways to productivity, protection, resilience and hope.

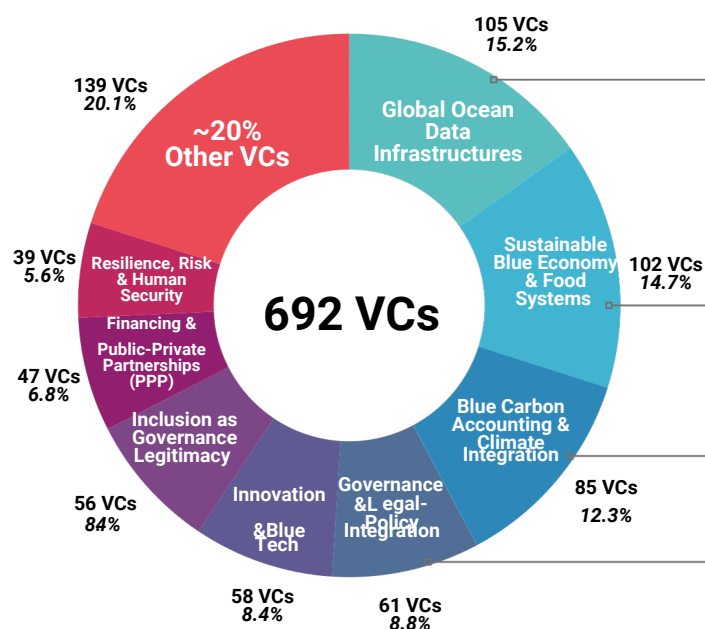
As we voyage on, we can take hope from the ocean's amazing powers of recovery and resilience. For if we are prepared to implement the science-based actions necessary to unleash those regenerative powers, we will in tandem replenish our own reserves of hope. And all along the journey, while game-changing innovations and technological breakthroughs can be thrilling moments, we need to remember that for the most part tangible progress is painstaking, is at times prosaic, and where international consensus is required, can be very protracted. But journey on we must, hope and intergenerational justice demand that of us. They demand that we push on with fidelity to our allotted course, delivering humankind in the end to a place where we can live in harmony with the ocean and be at peace with Mother Nature.



Thematic Priorities Emerging from Post-UNOC2 Ocean Voluntary Commitments

692 Voluntary Commitments Announced Since UN Ocean Conference 2022

~80% of the Voluntary Commitments (553) align with 8 principal thematic clusters



Top4 Clusters of Ocean Commitments

Global Ocean Data Infrastructures (105 VCs) Ocean science, monitoring, and digital innovation **Trend:** Shift from isolated research to interoperable systems (e.g., EU Digital Twin Ocean, NOAA acidification monitoring). Data is emerging as a governance asset, enabling treaty implementation (BBNJ, IMO, WTO Fisheries). **Examples:** Digital Twin Ocean #58573; EuroGOOS #57656; NOAA #58018.

Sustainable Blue Economy & Food Systems (102 VCs)

Aquaculture, livelihoods, and circular value chains **Trend:** Pollution and production reforms recast as circular-economy growth, linking SDG 14 and SDG 8. **Examples:** Sustainable Fashion (Grenada #57286); Waste-to-Wealth (Africa #58643); Aquaculture (Mozambique #58561; Colombia #57877).

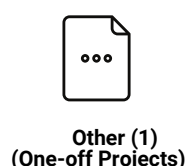
Blue Carbon Accounting & Climate Integration (85 VCs)

Blue-carbon ecosystems within climate finance and carbon markets **Trend:** Beyond restoration → inventories, MRV systems, and Paris Agreement alignment. **Examples:** Blue Carbon Inventory (Mauritius #58697); Strategy (Costa Rica #58954); Convex Seascape Survey #57641.

Governance & Legal Policy Integration (56 VCs)

Youth, gender, and Indigenous participation **Trend:** From symbolic engagement to structural inclusion as a measure of governance credibility. **Examples:** Antarctic Youth Pact #58683; EuroGOOS Literacy #57656; Women 4 Our Ocean #57870; Guardians #57888.

~20% of Voluntary Commitments (139) address cross-cutting priorities



Footnotes:

(1) Contains commitments that are localized, highly specific, or do not scale or cluster with others thematically. These are often small community projects, individual MPAs, or country-specific actions with limited cross-linkages.



Updates from the Community of Ocean Action (COA): Sustainable Blue Economy

The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) convened the 2025 Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on SDG 14 on 12 and 13 May 2025. Insights from 80 experts were collected from eight parallel working group sessions each focusing on a specific SDG 14 target or cluster of related targets, co-chaired by the relevant lead UN custodian agencies. The EGM acted as steppingstone towards the 2025 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). The HLPF session on SDG 14 and interlinkages with other SDGs took place on 17 July 2025. The session brought together experts, policymakers, and stakeholders to accelerate ocean action. Discussions cast light on critical issues for advancing sustainable blue economy, including the role of innovative financing and equitable investment in the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean. The session underscored the opportunities offered by new technologies and the importance of empowering Indigenous peoples, local communities, women, youth, and local partnership including with small-scale fishers. To inform the HLPF on the status of SDG14, DESA also prepared a Secretariat Background Note and a factsheet. Further comprehensive information is available in the newly released 2025 SDG Report.

The 2025 HLPF Ministerial Declaration recognizes that SDG 14 remains one of the least funded SDGs and that accelerating ocean action globally requires significant and accessible finance, and also “recognizes the opportunities offered by sustainable ocean-based economies for States, especially developing countries, in particular small island developing States and least developed countries, to eradicate poverty and hunger and achieve sustainable and inclusive growth while safeguarding the health, resilience and productivity of marine and coastal ecosystems for present and future generations”. The HLPF declaration further recognizes “the potential of sustainable ocean-based economy initiatives and small-scale and artisanal fisheries for achieving sustainable development and livelihoods, food security, nutrition and employment”.



Updates from the Community of Ocean Action (COA): Coral Reefs

The Community of Ocean Action for coral reefs is co-chaired by the United Nations Environment Programme and the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), a global partnership between Nations and organisations which aims to drive urgent and collaborative global action for the conservation, protection and restoration of coral reefs, ensuring their resilience, and sustainable management through inclusive policies and action-oriented solutions for people and economies.

Urgent Call to Action #ForCoral issued at the One Ocean Science Congress

Preceding the 2025 UN Ocean Conference, the One Ocean Science Congress took place, June 4-6, Nice, France. The Congress served as a scientific forum to provide insights on the ocean's health, dynamics, and future, with the goal of supporting evidence-based policy and decision-making for the UNOC. Recognising the unprecedented severity of mass mortality of corals in 2023 and 2024, where global ocean temperature exceeded previous records by a large margin, and the severe risk of catastrophic loss of coral reefs, the International Scientific Committee of the One Ocean Science Congress called on the nations gathering at UNOC to take urgent actions #ForCoral. Read the call [here](#).



Coral Reef Highlights from the 2025 UN Ocean Conference

#ForCoral Pavilion

From 2–13 June, the #ForCoral Pavilion at UNOC3 became a vibrant hub for collaboration and action, uniting leaders, scientists, youth, artists, investors, community voices, and policymakers around one urgent mission: to protect and restore the world's coral reefs. Throughout the two weeks, the Pavilion hosted over 40 sessions and panels, screened more than 10 films, and welcomed over 100 distinguished speakers, including several ministers and thousands of visitors. Brazil also launched its National Strategy for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Coral Reefs (ProCoral), a milestone in the country's efforts to protect these ecosystems. From immersive experiences and high-level dialogues to a special visit from HRH Princess Eugenie of York, every moment underscored one clear message: Coral reefs matter and we must act now. We extend our gratitude to the General Organization for the Conservation of Coral Reefs and Sea Turtles in the Red Sea (SHAMS), the Chair of ICRI, Bloomberg Ocean Initiative, the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), and the Global Fund for Coral Reefs (GFCR), whose generous support made the Pavilion possible. As we carry this momentum beyond UNOC3, we remain committed to advancing reef conservation through innovation, partnerships, and local action #ForCoral.

GCRMN Latest Regional Assessment

The Status and Trends of Coral Reefs of the Pacific: 1980–2023, a landmark report by [the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network \(GCRMN\)](#), an operational network of ICRI, provides the most comprehensive assessment of Pacific coral reefs to date. Drawing on 50 datasets, representing over 15,000 surveys from 8,000 sites, it reveals that while average coral cover has remained stable for decades, underlying ecological shifts and rising pressures from climate change, cyclones, and human activity threaten these vital ecosystems. Developed through the collaborative expertise of over 110 co-authors, the report offers clear, science-based recommendations to guide urgent, bold action. The report was officially presented at two high-level events:

- [Coral Reef and People: Honouring Culture and Advancing Conservation Action for the Pacific Islands](#), 11 June 2025
- [The Status and Trends of Coral Reefs in the Pacific: 2024 – A Call to Action for Pacific Islands and People](#), 12 June 2025

These events welcomed high-level dignitaries from the Independent State of Samoa, Niue, the Republic of Kiribati, and French Polynesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Republic of Palau, alongside key partners including Ambassador Peter Thomson, UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for the Ocean, Dr Khaled Asfahani, ICRI co-chair, and SHAMS CEO, [The Pacific Community \(SPC\)](#), and [the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme \(SPREP\)](#). The report is now being actively disseminated to broaden its reach and impact, serving as a critical tool to catalyse coordinated regional action for coral reef protection and sustainable management.

Eleven Countries Launch First Commitment to Protect Climate-Resilient Coral Reefs

On June 10 2025, a growing coalition of countries and partners launched and signed a high-level global commitment to protect climate-resilient coral reefs, setting a new bar for ocean action in a warming world. Championed by WCS alongside the Government of Papua New Guinea, WWF, and TNC, this voluntary commitment prioritises coral reefs with the greatest potential to survive climate change – and to serve as the foundation for future reef recovery, biodiversity conservation, and human wellbeing. At UNOC3, signatories include the Bahamas, Belize, France, Indonesia, Madagascar, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tanzania, and Vanuatu. Read more [here](#).

CORDAP and The Earthshot Prize launch global search for coral Innovators

On June 10 2025, G20 CORDAP (Coral Research & Development Accelerator Platform) and The Earthshot Prize launched the Coral Innovation Search - a global effort to fast-track solutions for coral reef protection and restoration. Unveiled aboard the OceanXplorer during a high-level side event, the initiative brought together voices from investment, philanthropy, and advocacy, including James Blunt and Philippe Cousteau Jr. The launch marks a bold step to mobilise innovation and resources for safeguarding the future of coral reefs.

GFCR Partners Pledge Over US\$25 Million for Coral Reefs

As the most widespread coral bleaching event on record pushes the world's reefs toward an ecological tipping point, a coalition of government and philanthropic partners has announced over US\$25 million in new contributions to [the Global Fund for Coral Reefs \(GFCR\)](#) at UNOC3. While the funding announced represents meaningful progress, the gap to meet the GFCR's 2030 targets remains significant. Substantially more capital will be required to scale locally led investments and unlock private finance for long-term reef resilience. Read more [here](#).





Thirty Six #ForCoral

Thirty Six for Coral is a global art exhibition uniting 36 leading artists to raise awareness and funds for coral reef conservation. Launched on the sidelines of UNOC3 and on view at the Grand-Hôtel du Cap-Ferrat (June 12–20), the show turns creativity into action for one of Earth's most endangered ecosystems: coral reefs.

In a powerful demonstration of how culture and creativity can advance environmental action, artists like Shezad Dawood, Dustin Yellin, Petroc Sesti, Henrietta Armstrong, and Akwetey Orraca-Tetteh, among others, have created works that underscore the urgent need for art, ocean advocacy, and coral reef conservation to come together.

Special thanks to the 36 artists, [Project Zero](#) and [The Coral Collective](#) for highlighting the importance of art #ForCoral.

Conclusion

As we look ahead, it is vital that we carry forward the momentum generated through recent global efforts and partnerships. From scientific breakthroughs and policy commitments to financial pledges and creative campaigns, we have the tools, knowledge, and collective will to act #ForCoral. By sustaining this energy and turning ambition into implementation, we can secure a future where vibrant, healthy coral reefs continue to support biodiversity, coastal communities, and the global ocean system.



Updates from the Community of Ocean Action (COA): Sustainable Fisheries

WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies Enters into Force

On 15 September 2025, WTO members celebrated the entry into force of the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies (AFS), after ratification by two-thirds of its 166 Members. This historic achievement delivers on the mandate of SDG Target 14.6 and commits members to curbing billions of dollars in annual spending on the most harmful subsidies that contribute to the depletion of marine fish stocks.

The AFS is the WTO's first multilateral agreement with environmental sustainability at its core. Its disciplines prohibit subsidies for illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, for fishing overfished stocks, and for fishing on the unregulated high seas.

Hailing the Agreement, WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala thanked WTO members for their commitment to protecting the livelihoods of fishing communities around the world and said that “this Agreement demonstrates how you can put trade in the service of both people and planet”.





Voluntary Commitments in Spotlight



Turning the Tide on Plastics

96 GOVERNMENTS UNITED BEHIND A BINDING PLASTICS AGREEMENT


Ninety-six countries endorsed the **“Nice Wake Up Call” declaration** for an ambitious global plastics treaty. The declaration underlines unprecedented multilateral momentum to end marine plastic pollution and accelerates negotiations toward a legally binding treaty.

LARGEST COORDINATED EU FINANCIAL PACKAGE FOR THE OCEAN

At UNOC3, the European Commission introduced the first-ever **“European Pact for the Ocean”**, committing **€1 billion** to ocean governance, sustainable economy, research, and diplomacy. This landmark initiative signals Europe’s intent to anchor ocean priorities into long-term governance frameworks.



Landmark Funding Commitment



Indigenous Leadership in Action

LARGEST INDIGENOUS-LED RESERVE EVER DECLARED

Pacific leaders from Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, and New Caledonia announced the **world’s largest Indigenous-led marine reserve**, covering an extraordinary **6 million km²**. Built on traditional knowledge and community stewardship, this initiative reframes global marine conservation by placing Indigenous leadership at the center.

FRONTLINE WOMEN DRIVING INCLUSIVE OCEAN CONSERVATION EFFORTS

Frontline women leaders — from Indigenous communities, Afro-descendant groups, fisherwomen, park rangers, and MPA managers—have come together under the **Women Ocean Guardians** initiative, which aims to institutionalize women's leadership in marine governance while creating dedicated funding streams, training, and accountability frameworks.



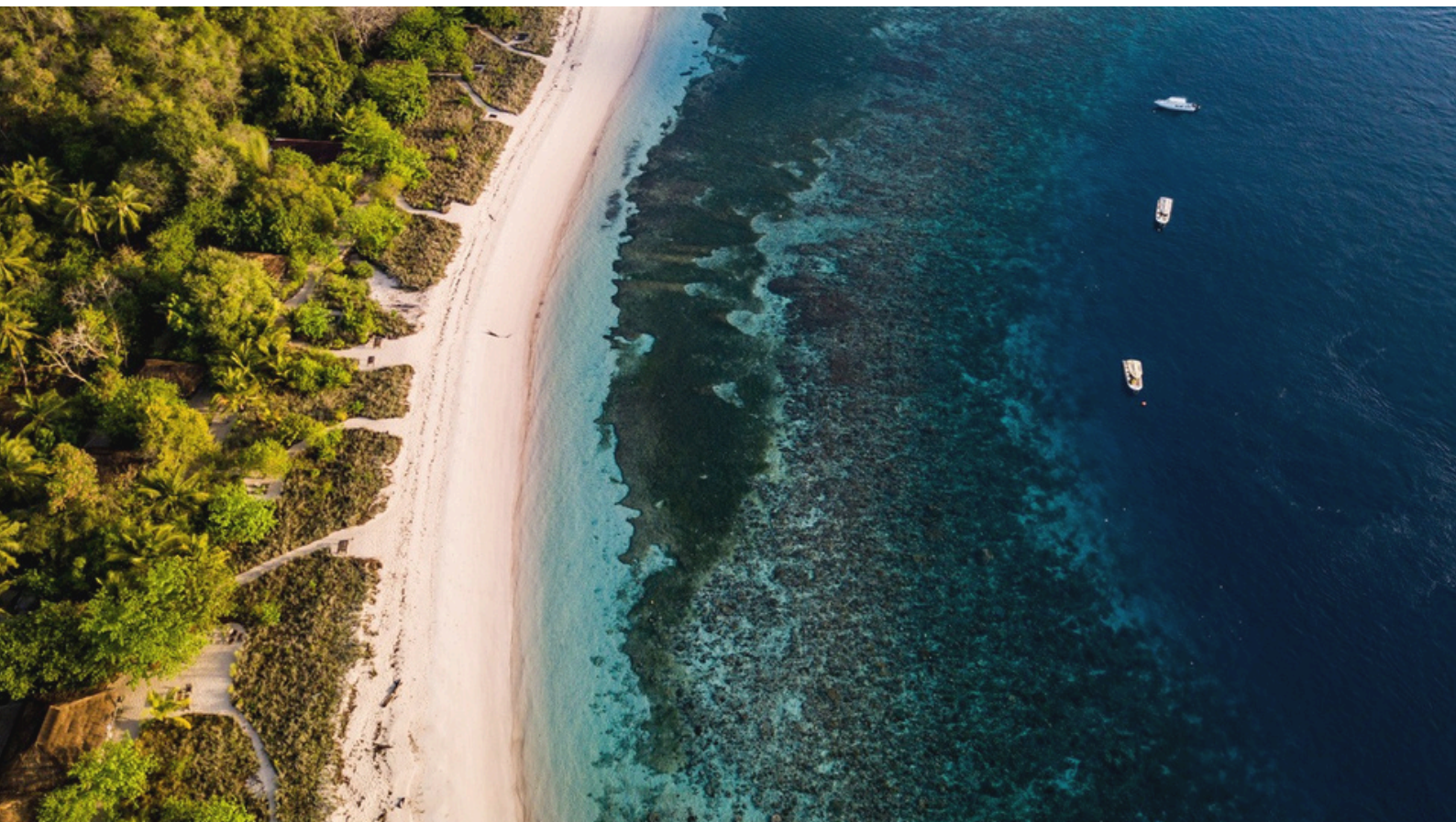
*Centering Women in
Ocean Governance*



*Finance Meets
Conservation*

1ST OUTCOME BOND LINKING RETURNS TO CORAL REEF HEALTH

Indonesia's Coral Reef Fund is the world's **first outcome-based bond for Marine Protected Areas**, mobilizing **\$150 million** to protect **1.9 million hectares** of coral reefs. Investor returns are tied directly to improvements in reef fish biomass, making this a groundbreaking model for channeling private capital into verifiable conservation results.





Editorial Notes

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