

3rd EDITION
UNITED NATIONS - PORTUGAL

OCEAN

FELLOWSHIP

CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAM ON SUSTAINABLE
OCEAN GOVERNANCE AND BLUE ECONOMY



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



REPÚBLICA
PORTUGUESA
NEGÓCIOS ESTRANGEIROS



CAMÕES
INSTITUTO
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PORTUGAL
MINISTÉRIO DOS NEGÓCIOS ESTRANGEIROS



OCEANO AZUL
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	2
2. CONCEPT	4
2.1 LOCATION.....	5
2.2 SCHEDULE AND COURSE STRUCTURE	5
2.3 PROGRAM.....	6
2.4 TEACHING METHOD	9
2.5 TARGET PARTICIPANTS.....	10
2.6 DATES AND TIMELINE FOR OPERATIONALIZATION.....	10
2.7 LEARNING OBJECTIVES	11
2.8 EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP	12



1. INTRODUCTION



In today's world, the health of our ocean is more critical than ever before. As we face challenges such as climate change, overfishing, pollution, ocean acidification, biodiversity loss and habitat destruction, it is imperative to prioritize sustainable ocean governance and focus on building a sustainable blue economy.

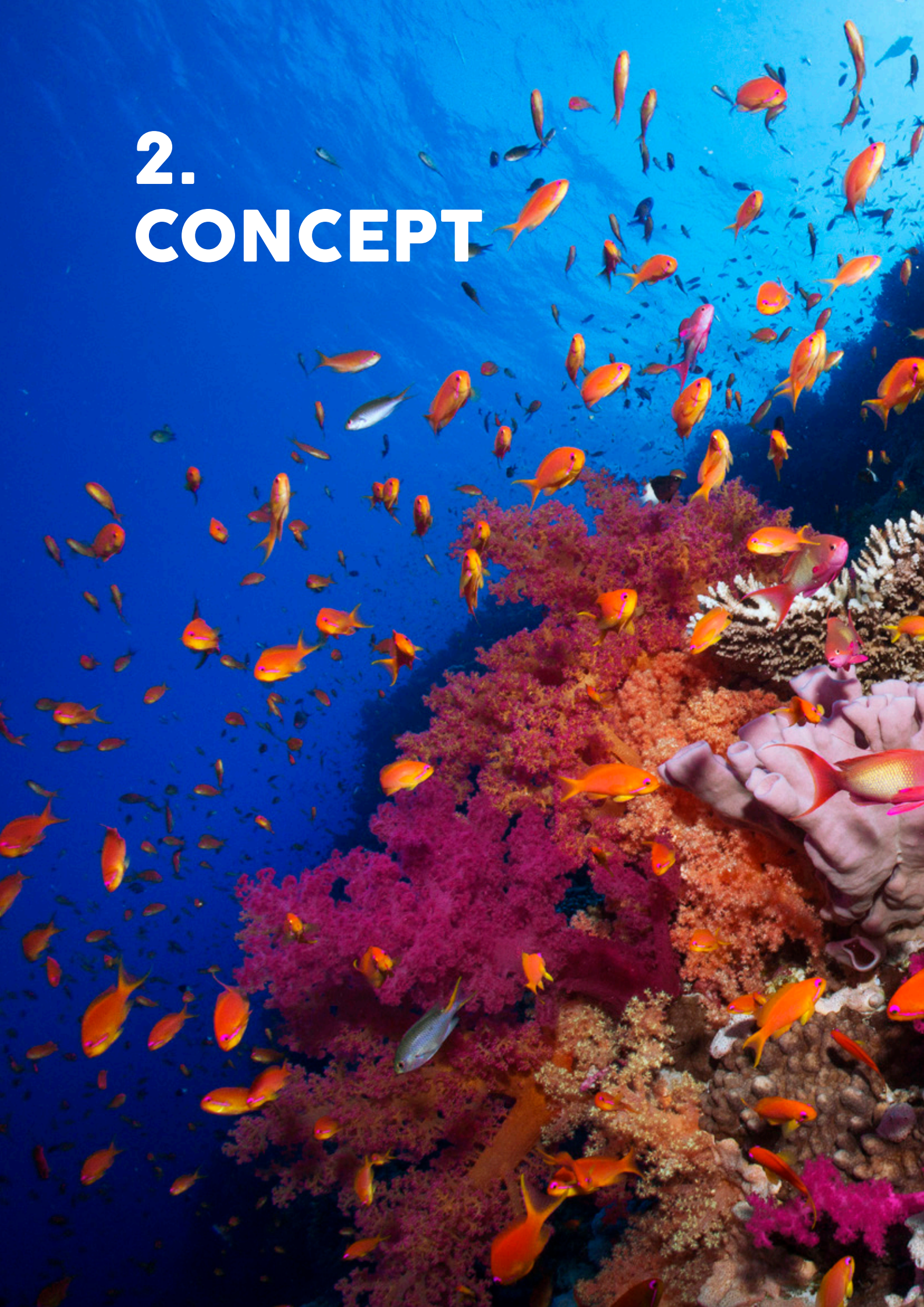
The ocean plays a crucial role in regulating climate, providing food security, supporting biodiversity, and sustaining livelihoods for millions of people worldwide, underpinning almost all Sustainable Development Goals. The importance of sustainable ocean governance for global environmental stability and resilience cannot be overstated. Effective ocean governance is instrumental to ensure a healthy planet and the achievement of sustainable development. Furthermore, the ocean provides vast opportunities for economic growth, in particular for developing countries, which can unlock their full potential for economic development while safeguarding the health of marine and coastal ecosystems. A thriving sustainable blue economy can create jobs, enhance food security and gender equality, alleviate poverty, and stimulate innovation in coastal communities, driving inclusive development pathways and ensuring long-term prosperity for both present and future generations.

Against this backdrop, the United Nations – Portugal Ocean Fellowship was launched as one of the key follow-ups to the 2022 UN Ocean Conference (UNOC2) held in Lisbon, cohosted by Portugal and Kenya. The establishment and continuation of an ocean fellowship program is meant to cultivate a new generation of leaders equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to address these pressing issues facing the ocean. By fostering collaboration and the sharing of information and experiences among participants, as well as by tapping into the expertise of Portuguese and international scientists, policymakers, economists, and stakeholders, this program seeks to build capacity in developing countries, in particular SIDS, enabling them to drive innovative solutions to protect and preserve our marine ecosystems while promoting economic growth and equity. In doing so, this fellowship program aims to strengthen the collective effort towards the successful achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14: Life Below Water.

This concept note offers an overview for such a capacity building program, which had its first edition in 2024 and its second edition in 2025, and is designed to continue in subsequent years, in line with both the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the priorities of the 2030 Portuguese Development Cooperation Strategy. This overview outlines the program's structure, organization and training outcomes, as well as substantive contents and lecturing/learning methodology.

Further information, including on the guidelines for selection, can be found online through this [link](#).

2. CONCEPT



2.1 LOCATION & DATE

The annual training session will take place in Lisbon, Portugal, at the premises of Oceano Azul Foundation, in Parque das Nações. The third edition of the Fellowship will take place from **17 to 22 May 2026**.

2.2 SCHEDULE AND COURSE STRUCTURE

The capacity building program will be scheduled over five working days and will consist of 30 effective teaching hours in total (including field trips), excluding lunches and coffee breaks, unless otherwise agreed. A welcome reception will take place on the eve of the program's kick-off, while teaching will be scheduled Monday-Friday from 9.00 AM to 6.00 PM.

Lunches, as well as coffee breaks, will be served.

The recommended daily structure is outlined below but may be adapted.

DAY	TIME	
1	5.00 PM – 8.00 PM	Welcome reception
	8.30 AM – 09.00 AM	Arrival and registration
2	9.00 AM – 10.00 AM	Opening and welcome
	10.00 AM – 11.00 AM	Introduction
	11.00 AM – 11.30 AM	Coffee break
	11.30 AM – 1.00 PM	Lectures & Teamwork
	1.00 PM – 2.30 PM	Lunch
	2.30 PM – 3.45 PM	Lectures & Teamwork
	3.45 PM – 4.00 PM	Coffee break
	4.00 PM – 5.15 PM	Lectures & Teamwork
	5.15 PM – 6.00 PM	Group discussion and Stocktaking
	3	9.00 AM – 11.00 AM
11.00 AM – 11.30 AM		Coffee break
11.30 AM – 1.00 PM		Lectures & Teamwork
1.00 PM – 2.30 PM		Lunch
2.30 PM – 3.45 PM		Lectures & Teamwork
3.45 PM – 4.00 PM		Coffee break
4.00 PM – 5.15 PM		Lectures & Teamwork
5.15 PM – 6.00 PM		Group discussion and Stocktaking
...		
6	9.00 AM – 11.00 AM	Lectures & Teamwork
	11.00 AM – 11.30 AM	Coffee break
	11.30 AM – 12.30 PM	Lectures & Teamwork
	12.30 PM – 1.00 PM	Course wrap-up and Program Closing
	1.00 PM – 1.30 PM	Group photo
	1.30 PM – 3.00 PM	Lunch

2.3 PROGRAM

The program will address the main substantive priorities aligned with the concept and purpose of the fellowship, as well as the areas where the organizers feel that more value can be added, taking into account the lessons drawn from the first two editions of the program.

When identifying lecturers and experts for the program, the organizers will take into account national and international partners with academic and practical expertise on the covered subjects, as well as demonstrated experience and excellence in such areas.

These partners will include relevant departments of the United Nations, relevant departments of the Portuguese Public Administration, the Portuguese Task Force for the Extension of the Continental Shelf, the Oceano Azul Foundation, the NOVA University, the Portuguese Institute for the Law of the Sea, among others.

The main substantive components of the program will be as follows:

Setting the stage: The state of our ocean | total: 1.5 hour

Introduction to the ocean crisis and the need for urgent collective action

- Towards UNOC4 and 2030: priorities for transformative ocean action
- Opportunities for change: building a new generation of ocean leaders



1. Global Ocean Governance Frameworks | total: 10 hours

Understanding the legal and institutional foundations

1.1. The legal regime established under UNCLOS and the institutional system of bodies created under the Convention

1.1.1. The legal regime established under UNCLOS

1.1.2. The BBNJ Agreement

1.1.3. Tools for effective implementation of the BBNJ Treaty

1.1.4. The Preparatory Commission – towards the first Conference of the Parties

1.2. The ocean under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

1.2.1. SDG14 implementation: progress, gaps and the UNOC process

1.2.2. The challenge of integrated action: the Ocean–Climate–Biodiversity nexus and the Source-to-Sea approach

1.3. Sea-Level Rise

1.3.1. The legal implications of sea-level rise

1.3.2. Strategies for building resilience against sea-level rise and tools for disaster-risk reduction

1.4. Looking ahead: emerging challenges for ocean governance

1.4.1. Plastic pollution and the negotiations of a treaty

1.4.2. Deep sea mining

1.4.3. The post-2030 Global Ocean Agenda

2. Sustainable Blue Economy | total: 10 hours

2.1. The framework for a Sustainable Blue Economy

2.1.1. What is a Sustainable Blue Economy: definition and its legal, policy and financial frameworks

2.1.2. The Sustainable Blue Economy in developing countries: challenges and opportunities

2.2. The Sustainable Blue Economy and innovative finance

2.2.1. The concept of Blue Natural Capital and its application

2.2.2. Innovative financial mechanisms and strategies for their mobilization

2.3. The ocean economy and conservation virtuous feedback loop

- 2.3.1. Marine spatial planning (MSP) and the different uses of the sea
- 2.3.2. Marine Protected Areas (MPAs): legislative, policy and financial enablers
- 2.3.3. The Portuguese case-study: ocean conservation and economic benefits at the local, regional, national and international level

2.4. Deep dive: a look into Blue Economy sectors

- 2.4.1. Sustainable fisheries: The importance of small-scale fisheries
- 2.4.2. Blue Biotechnology
- 2.4.3. Sustainable coastal and marine tourism

3. Managing and harnessing the potential of the continental shelf | total: 4 hours + field visit

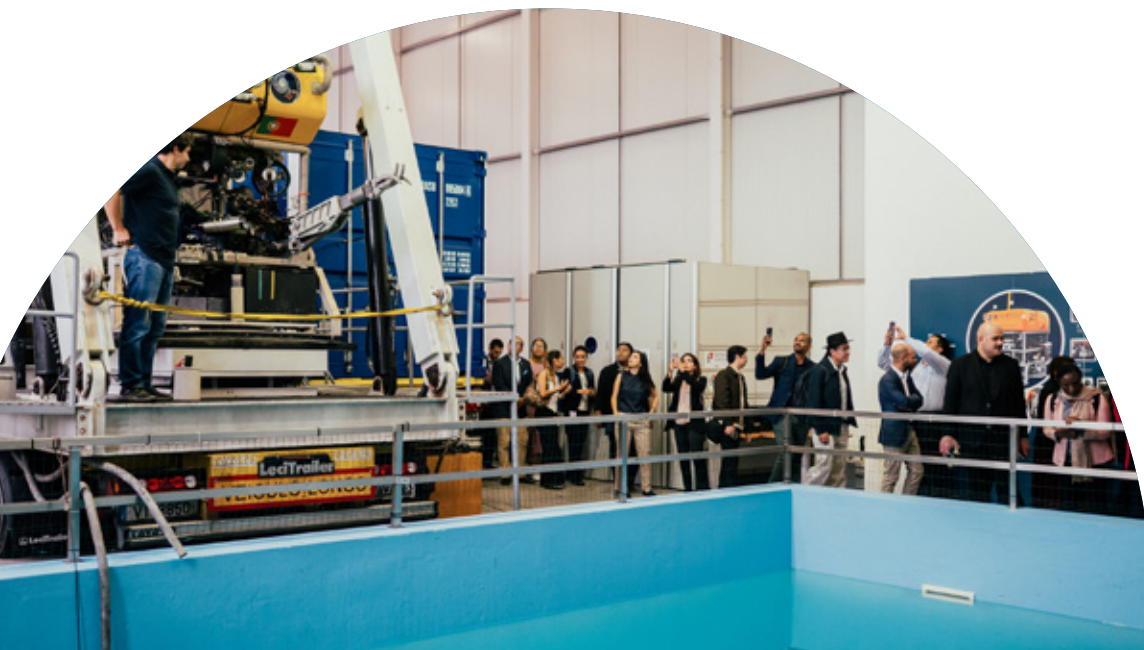
3.1. What is the continental shelf?

- 3.1.1. Geologic and legal definitions
- 3.1.2. The marine environment of the seabed
- 3.1.3. Governance of the seabed

3.2. The extension of the continental shelf

- 3.2.1. The legal framework
- 3.2.2. Preparing the submission: scientific and legal requirements
- 3.2.3. The Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf: the process for evaluation and engagement with the Commission

3.3. Field visit to the Portuguese Task Group for the Extension of the Continental Shelf (EMEPC)





2.4 TEACHING METHOD

A mixed method approach will be applied to link both theory and practice. Field visits are also envisioned, when pertinent. Ample time for questions, discussions and peer-to-peer exchange on both specific and broad questions is incorporated. Group assignments will be included.

The format of the program is envisioned to focus on two main methods: **Sessions and Group discussion and Stocktaking**.

- | **Sessions** will focus on theoretical lectures from top experts in each of the substantive components and its subsections.
- | The **daily group discussion and stocktaking**, taking place at the end of each working day, is structured as a critical time for peer-to-peer learning and strategic stocktaking, designed to maximize the practical utility of the program's content.

While speakers/experts will attend and support the exchanges with their valuable input as needed, the sessions primarily provide an opportunity for Fellows to discuss, reflect upon, and take stock of the high-level discussions held throughout the day's panels.

In this context, Fellows will be encouraged to (i) consider how the different topics impact their respective countries and identify associated challenges and opportunities, and (ii) exchange best practices, successful methods, and strategies they have successfully employed in their countries, creating a rich repository of country/community-specific knowledge for mutual benefit.

2.5 TARGET PARTICIPANTS

Envisaged participants are high level officials from different developing countries, namely heads/deputy heads of national agencies overseeing and responsible for Ocean Policy and/or Ambassadors or their equivalents holding decision-making responsibility in the areas of ocean policy, governance and economy. Given their special relationship with the ocean, as well as the myriad of challenges stemming from their geographical specificities, priority will be given to Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the first iterations of this program.

Seminar cohorts will be dimensioned for **30 in-person participants**.

2.6 DATES AND TIMELINE FOR OPERATIONALIZATION

The first fellowship cohort will occur in the first semester of 2026, from 17 to 22 May.

The operationalization of the program will be subject to the following timeline:

- 5 February** Launch of the third edition of the Fellowship and indication of deadline for applications
- 27 February** Deadline for submission of applications
- 13 March** Announcement of selected participants
- April** Conclusion of logistics and preparatory meeting with selected participants
- 17 – 22 May** Third edition of the Fellowship program



2.7 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This capacity-building program seeks to address, among others, the following questions, taking into account developing countries' specific challenges:

- | **How can ocean governance tools be effectively mobilized to support the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean and its natural capital?**

Which are the existing policy, legal and financial instruments to address challenges such as sea-level rise? What are the ratification procedures, the tools for effective implementation of the BBNJ Treaty, the work undertaken by its Preparatory Commission, as well as the ways to harness BBNJ for sustainable development? What are the new and emerging challenges for ocean governance and what responses can best advance ocean health and the sustainable development of developing countries, including SIDS?

- | **Which are the existing policy, legal and financial instruments to promote a sustainable blue economy?**

How can the economic potential of old and new ocean industries be harnessed? To what extent, and through which means, can developing countries benefit from such potential? How can conservation measures support the livelihoods, culture and economic development of coastal communities? What is Blue Natural Capital? What role do blue carbon ecosystems play in climate mitigation and coastal resilience, and what is their economic and financial value? What sectors, innovations and approaches can act as engine of a sustainable blue economy revolution?

- | **What measures - scientific, legal and policy - can be developed to ensure the sustainable management of the continental shelf?**

What are the main tenets of a successful submission for the extension of the continental shelf?

These questions will be addressed through **three intensive courses** (each focusing on the main themes described above) which will touch on multiple theoretical and practical aspects of each topic.

The methodology envisaged adopts an **active learning approach**, with discussion, examples, lessons learned, and practice as key constituents. Peer-to-peer and problem-based learning will be encouraged during the courses. The organizing team and experts will pay particular attention to proposing activities meant to stimulate debate.

2.9 EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP

An evaluation of impact of the Fellowship will be carried out regularly, with a view to assessing its implementation, drawing lessons and improving its added value.

A follow up will also be provided, including a participation certificate, a summary report and integration into the United Nations – Portugal Ocean Fellowship Alumni Network: a repository for knowledge-sharing and expertise to support future needs or initiatives, where fellows will find all resources presented and shared throughout the programme.











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