

IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERNATIONAL LAW AS REFLECTED IN UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE LAW OF THE SEA

INTERIM ASSESSMENT

1. What is the overall progress made with the implementation of the Voluntary Commitments in your Community of Ocean Action since the conclusion of the Ocean Conference?

As at 31 December 2018, the Community of Ocean Action on the implementation of international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (COA) comprised 295 Voluntary Commitments and 273 members. 23 of these Commitments were registered in the period following the conclusion of the Ocean Conference on 9 June 2017.

39 progress reports have been submitted through the [Registry of Voluntary Commitments](#). These reports indicate that:

- 31 Voluntary Commitments are **on track**,
- Four Voluntary Commitments have been **completed**,
- Two Voluntary Commitments reported **financial issues**, and
- One Voluntary Commitment was **cancelled**.

In addition, twelve replies were received by email from members in response to a request by COA Focal Points for input to inform the conduct of this interim assessment, including with respect to the progress made with respect to their individual Voluntary Commitments. Those responses also generally indicate that relevant Voluntary Commitments are on track.

Collectively, the progress reports received to date account for approximately 16.5% of Voluntary Commitments within the COA.

The majority of these reports have not indicated major implementation challenges. That said, the key common implementation challenges identified by COA members were capacity issues, stakeholder engagement (including difficulties encountered in effective coordination of stakeholders and the costs of conducting stakeholder consultations), and the availability of funding and/or resources more generally. Identified additional challenges related to ensuring that new partnerships complemented existing international ocean policy instruments, processes and forums, and addressing an identified lack of baseline information on ocean governance at the regional level.



2. What are the current gaps and challenges in your Community of Ocean Action that need to be addressed, including through new Voluntary Commitments and/or by engaging additional actors?

Three topics of focus were identified by Focal Points for the COA during 2018. These were:

- 1) addressing gaps in participation and challenges in implementation of international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS),
- 2) addressing challenges and urgent needs of developing countries, including:
 - a) increasing participation in decision-making processes and operational activities,
 - b) improving marine scientific research and sharing of results, and
 - c) developing infrastructure and enforcement capabilities, and
- 3) strengthening ocean governance:
 - a) promoting better cooperation and coordination at all levels, including cross-sectoral cooperation and coordination, and
 - b) promoting partnerships aimed at enhancing the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in UNCLOS.

Three thematic webinars were hosted for COA members during 2018: 22 August, 18 October and 10 December 2018. Each of these webinars focused on one of the topics identified above.

These webinars enabled COA Focal Points to lead focused substantive discussions on these topics, including as to how, through the COA and the implementation of its Voluntary Commitments, members could contribute to addressing relevant gaps and/or challenges in the implementation of international law as reflected in UNCLOS.

Presentations were made during each webinar by COA members regarding their Voluntary Commitments. These presentations aimed to showcase how relevant Commitments contributed to addressing the thematic challenges highlighted above.

COA Focal Points will maintain their focus on addressing these topics, and on supporting the implementation of existing Voluntary Commitments within the COA, during 2019.

3. Please provide any illustrative examples of inspiring and impactful Voluntary Commitments in your Community of Ocean Action

The overarching objective of the COA is to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in UNCLOS.

Effective implementation of the legal framework for the oceans, with UNCLOS at its core, will have a critical impact on progress in all the target areas of Sustainable Development Goal 14 and other ocean-related targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. While many steps have been taken to strengthen the implementation of international law, as reflected in UNCLOS, full and effective implementation is necessary to achieve the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources.

The Voluntary Commitments in the COA encompass a broad range of activities that are critical to achieving this end, including: activities to raise awareness of the legal and policy framework for the oceans and promote their effective implementation; activities to develop the capacity of States towards broader participation in and effective implementation of UNCLOS, its implementing Agreements and other ocean-related instruments; and activities to strengthen ocean governance, among others.

Four of these Voluntary Commitments have already been reported as completed:

- [#OceanAction14264](#), “Ocean Protection Educational Initiatives and Advocacy”, registered by MY World Mexico;
- [#OceanAction16830](#), “The Peace Boat Ocean and Climate Youth Ambassador Programme”, registered by Peace Boat,
- [#OceanAction18998](#), “Restore the Mesoamerican Coral Reef”, registered by Restore Coral, and
- [#OceanAction21416](#), “Swedish strategy for global action on the environment, climate, oceans and natural resources 2018-2022”, registered by the Government of Sweden.

For example, in completing [#OceanAction21416](#), the Government of Sweden has reported the adoption of a strategy for global development cooperation in the areas of environmental sustainability, sustainable climate and oceans, and sustainable use of natural resources 2018-2022. That strategy, adopted on 1 March 2018, will enable the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency to support global action for sustainable oceans, including support to normative processes and institutional capacity building, during the period 2018 to 2022.

Beyond the achievements, beneficiaries, and specific actions taken to positively impact beneficiaries, which are identified in progress reports submitted by COA members, it is difficult for the Focal Points to substantively assess the potential impacts of individual Voluntary Commitments.



4. Please provide any other comments, including lessons learned within your Community of Ocean Action

Looking forward to 2019, COA Focal Points will consider other possible methods of outreach and engagement with members of the COA to maintain progress and support members in implementation of their Commitments. In particular, the possibility of hosting webinars at different times of the day to account for time differences and to facilitate broader engagement with COA members from different regional groups will be explored.

Recognizing that the problems of ocean space are closely interrelated and need to be considered as a whole through an integrated, interdisciplinary and intersectoral approach, moving forward, it will be important to promote exchange of information, cooperation and coordination between the nine Communities of Ocean Action, to capitalize on linkages and to avoid possible duplication of efforts.

Noting the diversity of Voluntary Commitments within the COA, in developing a common/harmonized methodology for final reporting in 2020, it may be desirable to consider incorporating an indicator(s) that will enable assessment of progress beyond a quantitative or empirical assessment of those Commitments that have been “completed”.



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