



COMMUNITIES OF OCEAN ACTION

IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 14

Meeting of the Communities of Ocean Action “From Commitments to Action: Implementing SDG14”

**Grand Hyatt Incheon, Incheon, Republic of Korea
30-31 May 2019**

Meeting Report

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations (UN) Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) organized a Meeting of the Communities of Ocean Action (COAs) “From Commitments to Action: Implementing SDG14” at Grand Hyatt Incheon, in Incheon, Republic of Korea, on 30-31 May 2019. Around 80 participants representing the Co-focal points, Sherpas and members of the nine COAs, as well as other stakeholders, attended the Meeting.

The meeting was aimed to share best practices and experiences amongst the members of different COAs and any interested stakeholders, to provide partnership opportunities and to catalyze further pledges for ocean action. In particular, the meeting included 4 sessions aimed to hear experiences in the implementation of voluntary commitments (VCs) from the members of different COAs, a dedicated session on building partnerships and a session where the new UN ocean action website was launched, which continues to be an online platform for the members of the COAs to exchange information on good practices and lessons learned and register and update on their VCs. At the meeting, a VC Café was organized for providing additional networking opportunities.

Through expert presentations and interactive discussions, the meeting made important contributions towards the preparatory process in the lead-up to the 2020 United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development (Ocean Conference) and to the deliberations of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development to be held under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in July 2019. In particular, several sessions of the meeting, explicitly or implicitly, touched upon

the key aspects of the 2020 Ocean Conference, including: expectations for the 2020 Ocean Conference, scaling up ocean action based on science and innovation, a communications strategy and the collaboration of ocean-related processes.

The remainder of this report summarizes the presentations made at the meeting and key messages arising from each of the sessions. The analysis presented by speakers in various sessions on the COAs was based on the voluntary commitments registered in the online platform maintained by DESA (<https://oceanconference.un.org/commitments/>), which was established in the context of the 2017 Ocean Conference. The introduction of COAs by Co-focal points and Sherpas at these sessions is based on, inter alia, interim assessments undertaken by them, all of which are publicly available (<https://oceanconference.un.org/coa#activities>). The final programme of the meeting, session background notes and presentations are available on the meeting website at: <https://oceanconference.un.org/incheonCOAs2019>.

OPENING SESSION

Following the introduction by Mr. Alexander Trepelkov, Officer-in-Charge, Division for Sustainable Development Goals, DESA, Mr. Yangsoo Kim, Vice Minister, Ministry of Oceans & Fisheries of the Republic of Korea delivered a welcome address, highlighting that we are now facing with the oceans in distress and this issue requires the global collective action. He noted that the subjects addressed by the nine COAs generally corresponded to the mandates of his Ministry, and outlined its relevant work, inter alia, relating to marine pollution prevention, marine protected areas, sustainable fisheries and capacity-building of developing countries. Finally, he drew attention to the National Oceans Day of Korea to be celebrated on 31 May. He informed that the slogan for the ceremony this year was “Our Dream & future – Come with the Sea”, and that a new national campaign named “Marine Plastic Zero” will be announced there.

Mr. Jong-sik Heo, Vice Mayor, Incheon Metropolitan City delivered welcome remarks, noting that the risk of conflicts and tensions in the sea around Incheon have been eased, and the possibility of cooperation for peace is ever-growing as a result of concerted efforts, in particular by the citizens of Incheon. He hoped that this meeting would deepen the embracing and understanding among all ocean stakeholders, expanding the potential for cooperation. He stressed that the City of Incheon would also play an active role to facilitate mutual understanding and cooperation among the COAs and would join the international community’s efforts in pursuing a sustainable marine environment through active environment protection and conservation of the oceans and wetlands and creating a marine-friendly urban environment. Finally, he promised that Incheon would more actively support various activities and upcoming programmes of the United Nations Office for Sustainable Development.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs delivered a keynote address. He outlined key events and meetings for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 in the lead-up to the 2020 Ocean Conference, including the SDG Summit, and stressed that these events, along with a Special Edition of the

Secretary General’s report on SDG Progress and the Global Sustainable Development Report, provided an opportunity for the international community to build on the inherent synergies of our common objectives to accelerate implementation through collaboration and partnerships. Pointing to the importance of the ocean and its resources to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs as a whole, he recalled the outcomes of the 2017 Ocean Conference and underscored the importance of their follow-up, including by learning from the members of the COAs and engaging better with them to enhance implementation together. Last but not least, Mr. Liu expressed his readiness to fully support the 2020 Ocean Conference in his capacity as the Secretary-General of the Conference in cooperation with the Special Adviser to the Presidents of the Conference on oceans and legal matters.

SESSION I: From 2017 to 2020: Experiences from the UN Ocean Conference 2017 and Looking Ahead to the UN Ocean Conference 2020

Ambassador Peter Thomson, Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for the Ocean, made introductory remarks setting the stage. He highlighted the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in its special report on Global Warming of 1.5 °C and noted that the health of the ocean was intricately linked with climate change. Providing an overview of ocean-related problems, such as ocean acidification, deoxygenation, ocean warming, marine pollution and unsustainable fishing practices, Ambassador Thomson stressed the importance of SDG 14 and the accomplishments of the 2017 Ocean Conference as a game-changer. Ambassador Thomson highlighted the numerous efforts and initiatives such as the Global Sustainable Blue Economy Conference in Nairobi, the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy. In addition, he stressed the important contributions that the Communities of Ocean Action could make toward the implementation of SDG 14, including in relation to the eight interactive dialogues at the 2020 Ocean Conference, and the development of the sustainable blue economy.

The following panellists who represented the co-hosts of the 2017 and 2020 Ocean Conferences and the secretariat made presentations on the experiences of the 2017 Ocean Conference and expectations for the 2020 Ocean Conference:

- H.E. Mr. Lazarus Ombai Amayo, Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations
- Mr. Taholo Kami, Special Representative – Oceans, Ministry of Economy, Fiji
- Ms. Helen Ågren, Ambassador for the Ocean, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sweden (remote participation)
- Mr. Sérgio Carvalho, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Portugal to the United Nations
- Mr. Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs

The following key messages emerged from the presentations and ensuing discussion at this session:

- There must be an emphasis on “connecting the dots” and “filling in the gaps” as we move towards the stocktaking of the 2020 Ocean Conference, including an identified need to

better synergize between SDG14 and other SDGs, as well as the Paris Agreement and the Aichi Targets; greater integration between the Ocean Conference and other ocean fora and meetings, such as building on experiences such as the Sustainable Blue Economy Conference in Nairobi and consolidating the Our Ocean Conference and UN Ocean Conference VC processes. We can move beyond working in silos through the UN Ocean Conference.

- There is a need for global solutions from both State and non-State actors. An emphasis on private and financial sectors will be critical in Lisbon; we need this sector on board both ethically, as well as showing the business perspectives of investments in a global and sustainable blue economy.
- Our oceans are inextricably linked with other global ecosystems and cannot be fixed in a vacuum. There must be a greater emphasis on the connectivity of oceans to upland ecosystems with a source-to-sea approach, including consideration of inland waters and upstream inputs for both marine plastics and other pollutants.
- The 2020 Ocean Conference needs to focus on scaling up success stories and building on successful partnerships. We also need to increase focused regional cooperation as well as regional/international linkages.
- Even with science and innovation taking a prominent role in the 2020 Ocean Conference, including through the launch of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, we must not lose sight of the emphasis of the VCs on accelerating on-ground implementation, and make funds for both State and non-State actors more accessible.

SESSION II: Experiences in Implementation

A. Lessons from the COAs on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Management, Mangroves and Coral Reefs

Introductory remarks on the following three COAs were delivered: COA on Marine and coastal ecosystems management by Mr. Joseph Appiott, Coordinator for Marine, Coastal and Island Biodiversity, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity; COA on Mangroves by Dr. Aban Marker Kabraji, Regional Director, Asia, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN); and COA on Coral reefs by Mr. Gabriel Grimsditch, Programme Management Officer, Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Branch, Ecosystems Division, United Nations Environment Programme.

Presentations on the implementation of the following VCs belonging to these COAs were made by the members of the COAs:

- “Removal of marine debris from reef areas in Gulf of Mannar, Tamil Nadu, India - to reduce the stress to the bleached corals and to support recovery process” (#OceanAction 27510) by Mr. J.K. Patterson Edward, Director, Suganthi Devadason Marine Research Institute (SDMRI)
- “Planting 1 Million 'SeaTrees' (mangroves) on behalf of the global Surfing community” (#OceanAction 25401) by Mr. C. Michael Stewart, Founder, Director of Partnerships, Sustainable Surf

- “Stopping Fish Bombing” (#OceanAction 16709) by Mr. George Woodman, Director, Stop Fish Bombing!
- “Improving the effectiveness of coastal and marine resource management in the Philippines” (#OceanAction 27475) by Mr. Jonathan Baines, Conservation Manager, Marine Conservation Philippines
- “Support to the Government on Marine and Coastal Resource Management and Sustainable Livelihoods in Northern Sri Lanka” (#OceanAction 19874) by Mr. Ananda Mallawatantri, Country Representative, IUCN - Sri Lanka

Overall the session reiterated the vital importance of protecting, managing and restoring coastal ecosystems, including coral reefs, mangroves and seagrass, for improving livelihoods around the world. The session outlined the following lessons and reflections from the COAs:

- There is overlap in the VCs submitted to the three COAs;
- Geographical gaps exist in VCs, especially in Africa, the Indian Ocean and the Middle East across the three COAs;
- The region with the most VCs across the three COAs is Southeast Asia, which is also the region with the largest area of coral reefs and mangroves;
- There is an underrepresentation of VCs from the private sector and academia across the three COAs, and COAs should reach out to these sectors to build and diversify the COAs;
- Most VCs are from Government and NGOS, who are the traditional partners for the UN;
- Newsletters and webinars have been useful platforms and tools for communicating between VCs and sharing lessons learned;
- Increased communication and networking between the VCs and across the COAs would be useful to build the communities and make them more useful, especially for lessons learned and knowledge transfer;
- There is a low reporting rate (about 20%) on the VCs across all COAs;
- VCs identified some common themes for increased impact, including:
 - The need for technological solutions to environmental problems in different contexts;
 - The need for better data and baseline information for making decisions about environmental protection and management;
 - The need for sustainable financing for environmental protection and management;
 - The need to reach out to diverse stakeholders and engage them in environmental protection and management, especially stakeholders that the ‘environmental community’ does not typically work with.
 - The need to find a way to connect the dots on how we can work with the private sector and others

SESSION III: Experiences in Implementation (Contd.)

B. Lessons from the COAs on Sustainable Blue Economy and Scientific Knowledge, Research Capacity Development and Transfer of Marine Technology

Introductory remarks on the following two COAs were delivered: COA on Scientific knowledge, research capacity development and transfer of marine technology by Mr. Julian Barbière, Head, Marine Policy and Regional Implementation Section, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO; and COA on Sustainable blue economy by Ms. Madhushree Chatterjee, Chief, Natural Resources and Interlinkages Branch, Division for Sustainable Development Goals, DESA.

Presentations on the implementation of the following VCs belonging to these COAs were made by the members of the COAs:

- “Investing in Seychelles' Blue Future” (#OceanAction 16110) by Ms. Angelique Pouponneau, Chief Executive Officer, Seychelles Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust (SeyCCAT)
- “APRU network of experts, future leaders and policy makers addressing the health of the Pacific Ocean and its marine and coastal resources” (#OceanAction 18938) by Ms. Christina Schönleber, Director (Policy&Programs), APRU
- “Capacity Building on Coastal Protection in South Indian and Atlantic Oceans” (#OceanAction 16238) by Dr. Cush Ngonzo Luwesi, Deputy Director General (Academic), University of Kwango; Health College of Kenge (ISTM-Kenge)

Mr. Thomas Goreau, Advisor for Ocean Work Programme, SIDS DOCK, also made a presentation on coral reefs.

The following key messages emerged from the presentations and ensuing discussion at this session:

- More private sector and scientific community stakeholders are needed to support implementation of SDG 14.
- It is also important to share challenges and successes in VC implementation.
- There is a need for more scientific research and capacity building. In particular, gaps with regard to science exist in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean region.
- One example of the importance of science, as well as citizen science and traditional/local knowledge is the Seychelles, where fisheries management measures are based on both scientific data and local, qualitative data collected by fishers. Fishers are involved in developing management measures and collecting data.
- Seychelles Blue Bond provides many lessons for other countries. Investment from the Blue Bond has gone into capacity building and community work, including with artisanal fishers and other beneficiaries. Active outreach and developing materials/applications in native language have been important to attract participants.
- Communities and private sector want to be part of the transition into a sustainable blue economy. It is important to provide them opportunities to participate. Active outreach may be necessary.
- In science, it is important to establish connections between experts and undertake interdisciplinary research. Capacity can be raised through collaborative partnerships.

Partnerships also ensure that existing efforts are built on, and that duplication is minimized. Currently there is a need to network beyond the established clusters.

- In order to be effective, capacity building needs to be implemented in collaboration with local people.

SESSION IV: Building Partnerships

Presentations were made by the following panellists:

- Mr. Taholo Kami, Special Representative – Oceans, Ministry of Economy, Fiji
- Mr. Mathias Wikström, Founding Partner, RBK Communication
- Ms. Claire Rumsey, International Year of the Reef Coordinator, International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI)
- Mr. Masanori Kobayashi, Senior Research Fellow at Ocean Policy Research Institute, Sasakawa Peace Foundation

Mr. Alexander Trepelkov, Officer-in-Charge, Division for Sustainable Development Goals, DESA, who served as the moderator of the session, also delivered remarks, inter alia, on the Small Island Developing States partnerships and the UN ECOSOC Partnership Forum.

The following key messages emerged from the presentations and ensuing discussion at this session:

- There is a need to create an enabling environment and momentum for partnerships, including through capitalizing on issues of common interest, such as plastics and oceans+climate, around which engagement, attention and capacity have been built.
- Networks can be a valuable avenue for partnerships, but must remain adaptable to changing circumstances.
- It is necessary to create incentives for stakeholder engagement in partnerships, including by maintaining consistent communication, providing opportunities for visibility and information-sharing, and making engagement as simple and practical as possible
- Should utilize and further develop guidance from experience on what makes partnerships effective

SESSION V: Scaling Up Ocean Action based on Science and Innovation at the Time of Climate Change

Presentations were made by the following panellists:

- H.E. Mr. Peter Lescouhier, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Belgium to the Republic of Korea
- Mr. Julian Barbière, Head, Marine Policy and Regional Implementation Section, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO
- Ms. Marjo Vierros, Director, Coastal Policy and Humanities Research; Research Associate, Nereus Program, University of British Columbia

The following key messages emerged from the presentations and ensuing discussion at this session:

- Climate change poses enormous challenges for science and innovation to scale up
- Partnerships will be essential - Sharing and promoting solutions, experience, lessons learned
- COAs can be drivers of policy change
- The UN Decade of Ocean Science will be an opportunity to create science for the needs of the future

In addition, the following views relating to the key questions of this session have been expressed:

- What would be the science-based and innovative areas of action that should be highlighted to support the implementation of SDG14?
 - Ocean literacy among wider population
 - UN Decade of ocean science for sustainable development
 - Blue economy, focusing on sustainable ocean-based industries e.g. Marine biotech, renewable energy and aquaculture
 - Local innovative action including traditional knowledge, e.g. locally managed marine areas, empower communities to take charge
 - Understanding and building climate resilience – understanding multiple impacts, involving and increasing young scientists
- How to stimulate science-based and innovative ocean action to advance the implementation of SDG14?
 - Civil society to promote ocean literacy and drive policy change – help bridge gaps between stakeholders
 - Need more mainstream funding with clear value chain
 - Address capacity building
 - Sharing of experiences among countries
 - 2 level approach – proactive design and expanding uptake
 - Global, inclusive process contributing to SDGs, connected by enabling architecture
 - Align funding priorities and develop innovative financing
 - Partnerships
 - Provide more incentives for scientist to get engaged in policy
 - Develop big collaborations, these are most successful
 - Capacity building in developing countries – institutional capacity that stays in the region,
 - Partnerships that involve the private sector to implement SDG14
- What are the respective roles of the Communities of Ocean Action (COAs) and voluntary commitment (VC) holders in scaling up ocean action based on science and innovation?
 - Provide a dialogue for co-designed approach to the ocean decade
 - Sharing and promoting solutions, experience, lessons learned

- What factors should be taken into account in ensuring that science-based and innovative actions aimed at meeting SDG14 and addressing adverse effects of climate change maximize co-benefits and minimize negative trade-offs?
 - Linkages with all SDG important
 - Relatively under-represented SDG 14 VC: Inequality, education, gender, health
 - Avoiding negative trade-offs – blue economy is key
 - Marine spatial planning as an integrating solution?

SESSION VI: Experiences in Implementation (Contd.)

C. Lessons from COAs on Sustainable Fisheries and Implementation of International Law as Reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

Introductory remarks on the following two COAs were delivered: COA on Sustainable fisheries by Mr. Joseph Zelasney, Fishery Officer, Policy Economics and Institutions Branch, Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); and COA on Implementation of international law as reflected in United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea by Ms. Stephanie Ierino, Legal Officer, Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, Office of Legal Affairs.

Presentations on the implementation of the following VCs belonging to these COAs were made by the members of the COAs:

- “Review existing policies, legal and institutional framework for sustainable use and development of marine fisheries resources” (#OceanAction 17122) by Mr. V.K. Daby, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Ocean Affairs, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping, Mauritius
- “Integrated National Oceans Policy and Marine Spatial Plan for Solomon Islands” (#OceanAction 19754) by Ms. Gladys Luahiti, Chief Desk Officer, Oceans and Climate Change Desk, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, Solomon Islands
- “Implementation of the 2016 London Protocol/Convention Strategic Plan to support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (#OceanAction15907) by Mr. Fredrik Haag, Head, Office for London Convention/Protocol & Ocean Affairs, Marine Environment Division, International Maritime Organization (IMO)
- “The Pew Ending Illegal Fishing Project” (#OceanAction 14947) by Mr. Peter Horn, Director, Ending Illegal Fishing Program, The Pew Charitable Trusts
- “Fisheries and Shrimp Aquaculture Improvement in Asia” (18499) by Mr. Harry Yuli, Vice Chair, Asian Seafood Improvement Collaborative
- “Small-Scale Fisheries Academy in Senegal” (#OceanAction 28293) by Dr. Cornelia E Nauen, President, Mundus maris asbl

The following key messages emerged from the presentations and ensuing discussion at this session:

- Solving the complex problems associated with sustainable development of the oceans and their resources requires cross-sectoral collaboration, cooperation and information sharing at all levels, in addition to political will.
- Opportunities exist to strengthen cooperation, coordination and information sharing, and to leverage and build upon existing mechanisms, initiatives and partnerships in this respect.
- Building inclusive, multi-stakeholder platforms and partnerships is essential to advance the 2030 Agenda.
- There is a need to be flexible and to pay due regard to the different needs of different stakeholders.
- Promoting local leadership of ocean action has the potential to empower and build capacity in local communities regarding efforts to support implementation of SDG14.
- The Communities of Ocean Action are inclusive of all stakeholders. Voluntary commitments made by all stakeholders are mutually reinforcing.
- Implementation of the legal framework for the ocean which has at its core the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea is essential to achieving SDG14. That framework provides, inter alia, opportunities for sharing science, innovation, and scaling-up action.
- Developing national regulatory frameworks can be a complex exercise. Challenges associated with the development of such frameworks can include capacity, sustainable funding and political will.

SESSION VII: Experiences in Implementation (Contd.)

D. Lessons from COAs on Marine Pollution and Ocean Acidification

Introductory remarks on the COA on Ocean acidification were delivered by Mr. Bronte Tilbrook, Co-chair, Global Ocean Acidification Observing Network (GOAON).

Presentations on the implementation of the following VCs belonging to these COAs were made by the members of the COAs:

- “OA Alliance Commitment to Combating Ocean Acidification” (#OceanAction 15195) by Ms. Jessie Turner, Project Coordinator, International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification (OA Alliance)
- “Building International Capacity to Monitor, Understand, and Act on Ocean Acidification” (#OceanAction 15877) by Ms. Meghan Jeans, Program Director, The Ocean Foundation
- “Gullah/Geechee Nation SDG Implementation” (#OceanAction 14540) by Queen Quet Marquette L. Goodwine, Gullah/Geechee Nation
- “Strengthening data partnerships for Oceans in Asia and the Pacific” (#OceanAction 16118) by Ms. Nobuko Kajiura, Sustainable Development Officer, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP)

- “Establishment of the International Marine Training Centre for Innovative Science and Technology for Sea Dumped Weapons, and Shipborne Disposal Solutions to Support the Eradication of all Underwater Munitions” (#OceanAction 21356) by Mr. Terrance Long, Chair, International Dialogue on Underwater Munitions (IDUM)

The following key messages emerged from the presentations and ensuing discussion at this session:

- Although the VCs belonging to these COAs feature diverse lead entity types, topics addressed, size and regions, there are good practices and lessons learned in the implementation of these VCs that are common and can benefit the implementation of other VCs.
- Facilitating the implementation of VCs belonging to COAs on marine pollution and ocean acidification requires the consideration of a number of issues, including: the importance of broad, multi-stakeholder partnerships; a need for capacity-building and trainings; importance of traditional knowledge and cultural knowledge; and effective communication and outreach.
- In spite of enhanced scientific findings, unknown elements remain and can be an obstacle to addressing a bigger problem. For example, monitoring of ocean acidification has progressed, but consequences of ocean acidification are yet to be further understood; increased understanding would lead to better addressing measures for adaptation.
- As data is spread in various locations, there is a need for its integration, or “connecting dots”. ESCAP’s Ocean Account project could help address this challenge.
- The scale of the problem might necessitate innovative solutions (e.g., geoengineering). However, such solutions would require careful consideration of their potential impacts in advance.

VC Café: Informal Interactive Session for Participants

To kick off the interactive VC Café, Ms. Ariel Alexovich, Associate Public Information Officer, UN DESA Division for Sustainable Development Goals, outlined the course of the session and invited all meeting participants to visit a series of exhibits set up by other participants who registered for exhibition space in advance. All participants could stop for coffee, walk around the exhibits and network with each other. The informal setting allowed for more in-depth conversations between participants as well as more information-gathering about the good work being done by the COAs.

A special highlight came from the International Coral Reef Initiative, which brought two virtual reality headsets providing participants with an immersive experience plunging them into a healthy coral reef they could explore.

These organizations exhibited material about their work toward achieving SDG 14 during the VC Café:

- Association internationale pour les pauvres les indignes et assistance
- National Marine Biodiversity Institute of Korea
- The Ocean Foundation
- International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification
- Gullah / Geechee Nation Sea Island Coalition
- International Coral Reef Initiative
- Ghent University Global Campus
- Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies
- Ocean Policy Research Institute, Sasakawa Peace Foundation
- Mundus maris
- UN-Oceans
 - UN Office of Legal Affairs, Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea
 - Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, UNESCO
 - International Maritime Organization
 - Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

SESSION VIII: Developing a Communications and Outreach Strategy for the UN Ocean Conference 2020

The session on Communications and Outreach began with the launch of the renewed oceanconference.un.org website, by Mr. Alexander Trepelkov, Officer-in-Charge of the UN DESA Division for Sustainable Development Goals. More explanation was provided by Mr. Ernesto Araiza, UN DESA Information Systems Officer and website lead, who demonstrated the new features of the site, including the emphasis on registering voluntary commitments, and a redesign of the sub-page for the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean.

Next, Ms. Ariel Alexovich, Associate Public Information Officer, UN DESA Division for Sustainable Development Goals, presented on the website and social media statistics from the 2017 Ocean Conference, with a view to identifying which best practices and lessons learned could be applied to the 2020 Ocean Conference. Mr. Sergio Carvalho, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Portugal to the UN, provided an overview of Portuguese expectations for communications around the 2020 Conference.

Then, the floor was opened to the rest of the participants for their comments on three issues:

- Remarks and suggestions about the revised website
- How to mobilise more stakeholders in communications
- How to encourage a new generation of voluntary commitments

The following key messages emerged from the presentations and ensuing discussion at this session:

- Multilingualism of the website and outreach materials is essential, as is ensuring that the website is accessible in many versions (mobile, low-internet speeds, etc.).

- A wider array of perspectives should be included in the outreach for the Ocean Conference, for instance, a meaningful indigenous presence and engagement with stakeholder groups like surfers that do not typically participate in UN events.
- The UN should provide specific, tangible opportunities for the private sector to be involved in outreach opportunities.
- A communications task team for stakeholders for the Ocean Conference should be set up well in advance of the Conference.

SESSION IX: Promoting Collaboration, Cooperation and Coordination among Relevant Ocean-related Initiatives and Processes

Presentations were made by the following panellists:

- H.E. Mr. Lazarus Ombai Amayo, Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations
- Dr. Joëlle Hivonnet, Minister – Deputy, Head of the Political, Press and Information Section, Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Korea
- Mr. Joseph Appiott, Coordinator for Marine, Coastal and Island Biodiversity, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity
- Ms. Marjo Vierros, Director, Coastal Policy and Humanities Research; Research Associate, Nereus Program, University of British Columbia

The following key messages emerged from the presentations and ensuing discussion at this session:

- There has been an acceleration in the number of ocean-related initiatives and processes at the global, regional and national levels. Such initiatives and processes mentioned by panellists included: those related to the Paris Agreement, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the SAMOA Pathway, the Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction and Our Ocean Conference series.
- It is important to acknowledge the positive impacts arising from these initiatives and processes, while there is a need for coherence, cooperation, communication and coordination among these efforts and the remaining gaps also need to be assessed and addressed. In this regard, the General Assembly in its resolution 73/292 decided that the 2020 Ocean Conference shall share ongoing efforts, successes and challenges between relevant ocean-related initiatives and processes with a view to promoting collaboration, cooperation and coordination, as well as preventing the unnecessary duplication of efforts, to ensure further efficiency and effectiveness in support of Goal 14.
- It is important that cooperation takes place at the multilateral level, including the regional level, and cross-sectoral cooperation both at the international and national levels occur. However, coordination is often a challenge, even at the national level. In addition, multi-stakeholder partnerships, including civil society organizations and the private sector, are critical.

- One good example for ensuring coherence between related processes concerns the development of platforms for Ocean Conference voluntary commitments and SAMOA Pathway partnerships. As many of the latter initiatives are aimed to further the implementation of SDG 14 and there are clear interlinkages between these two processes, the harmonious development of these platforms turned out to be particularly useful, especially for follow-up and analysis of implementation. This type of coordination efforts should also be sought for other related processes. Related to the above, activities for capacity-building and transfer of marine technology should also be attempted with a view to their convergence.

SESSION X: CLOSING

Ambassador Peter Thomson, Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean, delivered closing remarks, in which he stressed the importance of: innovation for solving the problems facing the ocean and climate; the youth and ocean literacy as important priorities for the future; and science-based action for reaching SDG 14 and its targets. Highlighting the numerous ongoing ocean-related initiatives ranging from national actions on plastic pollution to negotiations for the CBD post-2020 biodiversity framework, he underscored the importance of convergence and coherence among these initiatives. He emphasised that COAs have an important role to play in the approach to the 2020 UN Ocean Conference, since they contain widespread knowledge and expertise in their fields of competence. He urged them to scale up their efforts in concert with DESA.