



# Ocean-Climate Bulletin



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**A Summary Report of the Workshop:  
Is the Paris Agreement Good News for the Ocean?**  
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## **SUMMARY OF THE WORKSHOP: IS THE PARIS AGREEMENT GOOD NEWS FOR THE OCEAN?: 14 SEPTEMBER 2016**

The Division of Environment and Oceanic Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile and the National Geographic Society organized a workshop that gathered approximately 80 representatives from government and civil society to consider the theme, “Is the Paris Agreement Good News for the Ocean?” The workshop took place at National Geographic headquarters in Washington, DC, US, on 14 September, immediately prior to the Third Our Ocean Conference, which is also convening in Washington, DC, from 15-16 September.

Participants focused on how to build on the momentum generated with the “Because the Ocean” initiative that was announced during the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 21) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which concluded with the adoption of the Paris Agreement on climate change. The workshop brought together the ocean and climate communities, including representatives from governments, climate change negotiators, scientists and civil society, to identify challenges related to including the ocean in the UNFCCC agenda and to develop an action plan for addressing ocean-related issues through the climate action to take place under the Paris Agreement.

Roundtable discussions considered whether climate change impacts on the ocean should raise the level of climate action ambition, how the ocean could be included in countries’ Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and the way forward. Participants noted the value of further scientific research and discussions with policy makers regarding the implications of climate-related impacts on the ocean. Opportunities to spur action to address these linkages through the Paris Agreement, such as its provisions for NDCs and for a global stocktake and facilitative dialogue to take place in 2018, were also discussed. In closing the workshop, Heraldo Muñoz, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chile, said the workshop provided a contribution to achieving the third and final goal of the “Because the Ocean” Declaration, which was to establish a work plan on the ocean under the UNFCCC. He also said the workshop discussions could provide the basis for a second declaration.

## **BRIEF HISTORY OF OCEAN AND CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY**

Ocean and climate change policy are linked due to the fact that the carbon dioxide that is causing climate change is also absorbed by the ocean and is changing the chemistry of the seawater, exacerbating climate change and impacting sea life. This process is called ocean acidification and efforts to address it have been discussed at many recent intergovernmental meetings. Climate change is also changing the ocean’s temperature and causing the melting of polar ice-sheets, which in turn affects coastal and island ecosystems and communities. In addition, climate change is reducing the ocean’s capacity to generate oxygen for the planet.

In June 2014, the US Department of State hosted the first “Our Ocean” Conference in Washington, DC. Participants from almost 90 countries considered three themes: sustainable fisheries, marine pollution, and ocean acidification. Among the outcomes were the “Our Ocean Action Plan,” which identifies actions related to the meeting themes that the US would undertake, and the “Our Ocean Initiatives,” which identifies initiatives and commitments that participants announced during the conference.

In May 2015, the fifth and final meeting of the Global Ocean Commission focused on linkages between the climate and ocean in the context of the Commission’s report, titled “From Decline to Recovery: A Rescue Package for the Global Ocean,” and the Commission’s objective of making politically and technically feasible recommendations regarding key threats, challenges, and changes to the ocean.

In September 2015, UN Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 associated targets that are to be achieved during the 15-year period from 2015-2030. SDG 14 calls for the international community to take action to “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources.” Target 14.3 calls for action to “Minimize and address the impacts of ocean acidification, including through enhanced scientific cooperation at all levels.”

In October 2015, the Second Our Ocean Conference took place in Valparaiso, Chile, and brought together over 500 participants from 56 countries. Panel discussions discussed marine protected areas, ocean acidification, marine pollution, ocean champions, sustainable fisheries, local communities, and law of the sea governance.

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In November 2015, at the opening of the Paris Climate Change Conference, Heads of State and Government and Ministers from 22 countries endorsed the “Because the Ocean” Declaration. The Declaration, *inter alia*, called for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to produce a special report on the ocean, the UN to convene a High-Level Ocean Conference on SDG 14 implementation, and the UNFCCC to develop an ocean action work programme.

In December 2015, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted resolution 70/226, calling for convening an SDG 14 conference. Following further negotiations, on 9 September 2016, the UNGA agreed on modalities for the Conference, including to: consider the theme, “Our oceans, our future: partnering for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14;” seek to identify ways and means to support the implementation of SDG 14; and contribute to the follow-up and review process of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by providing an input to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) on the implementation of SDG 14.

In April 2016, the 43rd session of the IPCC adopted four decisions, including an agreement to undertake a special report on climate change and oceans and the cryosphere.

## REPORT OF THE WORKSHOP

Waldemar Coutts, Ambassador, Director of Environment and Ocean Affairs, Chile, opened the workshop and invited participants to consider the theme, “Is the Paris Agreement good news for the ocean?” He underscored the importance of initiatives addressing the ocean and climate change, including the Our Ocean Conference and the “Because the Ocean” Declaration.

Gary Knell, President and CEO, National Geographic Society, welcomed participants to National Geographic’s headquarters, and said National Geographic is doubling its commitment to explore the ocean and protect ocean habitats. While noting new and extended marine protected areas (MPAs) have increased protected ocean areas from 1% to 3% in recent years, he stressed that more needs to be done. He also noted only 10% of the ocean has been explored, which is crucial to understanding what is happening in the ocean.

Catherine Novelli, Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy and the Environment, US, emphasized increasing capacity building to improve monitoring of ocean acidification. She expressed hope that the Third Our Ocean Conference would hear about how the ocean fits into nationally determined contributions (NDCs) as well as national commitments to build ocean resilience, protect coastal habitats and promote blue carbon sinks. She urged all stakeholders to work together to ensure that the ocean has a prominent place in Paris Agreement implementation.

Hakima El Haite, Minister of Environment, Morocco (COP 22 Presidency), and High-Level Climate Champion, stressed that including ocean actions in the NDCs could send a clear signal, especially given the possibilities for NDCs to be translated into robust policies. She noted the need for a stronger commitment by



**Hakima El Haite**, Minister of Environment, Morocco (COP 22 Presidency), and High-Level Climate Champion (photo courtesy of the National Geographic Society)

the maritime transport sector, and supported the recommendation for creating a multidisciplinary group to explore ways to address climate-ocean issues at the UNFCCC. She highlighted that the ocean is at the “heart” of the action agenda at COP 22, with 12 November being “Ocean Day.”

## KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Laurence Tubiana, Climate Change Ambassador, France, and High-Level Champion for pre-2020 climate action, delivered the keynote address. She stressed the need to address the knowledge gap on adaptation as it relates to the ocean and to identify practical steps forward. She suggested considering how the NDCs could be improved before 2020, and how they could transform climate policy plans and investment plans in light of the consequences of climate change on the ocean, agriculture, industry and other sectors. She suggested thinking about how the global stocktake and facilitative dialogue to take place in 2018 could be used to inform the next round of NDCs. She called for encouraging countries to put forward their long-term decarbonization strategies, and noted that COP 22 would launch a platform for countries and cities to do so. She emphasized the need to work across the climate regime, and bring in actors such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and financial institutions on the investment side.



**Laurence Tubiana**, Climate Change Ambassador, France, and High-Level Champion for pre-2020 climate action (photo courtesy of the National Geographic Society)

### ***ROUNDTABLE 1: SHOULD CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS ON THE OCEAN RAISE THE LEVEL OF CLIMATE ACTION AMBITION?***

Teresa Ribera, Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI), moderated this roundtable.

Hans-Otto Pörtner, IPCC Working Group 2 Co-Chair, discussed some of the projected impacts of ocean warming, acidification and deoxygenation under different climate change scenarios, such as reduced habitat ranges for marine fishes and invertebrates. He said while mentioning the ocean in the Paris Agreement was a start, more needs to be done, namely formally integrating the ocean into the UNFCCC process, and enhancing the science basis of ocean-related solution options, such as MPAs, conservation/restoration, and “blue economy.”

Ove Hoegh-Guldberg, University of Queensland, Australia, explained that the Paris Agreement goals, if achieved, will be better for coral reefs but will not go far enough, since future temperature trends will exceed known tolerance of corals. He urged managing non-climate stresses on reef systems and protecting the regions that will play a role in the rebirth of coral and other vital ecosystems.

Rashid Sumaila, University of British Columbia, Canada, discussed climate change impacts on ocean fisheries economics. Noting the important economic and social roles of fisheries, he used studies involving British Columbia and Mexico to explain how climate change will impact the systems that sustain fisheries, decreasing their productivity and raising their costs. He concluded that given the economic and social impacts climate change will bring to fisheries, a higher level of ambition is needed.

During the discussion, participants noted that the Paris Agreement had brought the role of the ocean into the discussion on how to address and respond to climate change, but much work remains, including for scientific research and the identification of how NDCs can be used as tools to address the linkages. Several participants stressed the need for a narrative that will convey the message that we can progressively restore what we have destroyed if we focus our efforts. Many speakers stressed the value of honest discussions between scientists and policy makers, such as this workshop. Other actions suggested included: researching human motivation to address long-term changes; using the tools within the Paris Agreement, including the NDCs and its inclusion of ocean action, to push for ambitious action; and exploring the costs of resilience strategies.

### ***ROUNDTABLE 2: HOW COULD THE OCEAN BE INCLUDED IN COUNTRIES' NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTIONS?***

Kalee Kreider, National Geographic Society, moderated this roundtable.

Julien Rochette, IDDRI, discussed areas of convergence and reciprocal benefit between climate and the ocean, stressing Paris Agreement implementation challenges, possible win-win options, and the need to promote adaptation and resilience. He suggested: mitigating local causes of ocean acidification; building bridges between the ocean and climate communities at the national level; using existing regional ocean governance mechanisms better;

integrating national biodiversity strategies with climate mitigation strategies; and participating in discussions on a “global adaptation goal.”

Manuel Barange, FAO, discussed fisheries and aquaculture as a climate adaptation component. He discussed examples from FAO of three types of adaptation experiences that can work: institutional frameworks; livelihood strategies; and improving resilience and reducing risks. Going forward, he called for: more ambition/innovation in sectoral and multi-sectoral NDCs; scalability of proposals, from local to regional and global; new funding mechanisms; Blue Growth frameworks; and mechanisms for best practice sharing.

Alex Rogers, University of Oxford, and International Panel on the State of the Ocean, discussed the role of the ocean in climate mitigation. He noted that the ocean can sequester about two billion tons of carbon per year, but that its ability to do so depends on keeping its ecosystems healthy. He explained that coastal ecosystems (mangroves, saltmarsh and seagrass) can also sequester carbon. He also discussed the risks of possible geoengineering initiatives, such as iron fertilization.

María Amparo Martínez Arroyo, Director General, National Institute of Ecology and Climate Change (INECC), Mexico, discussed Mexican climate change policy and the ocean, including its NDC commitments, its emphasis on ecosystem-based adaptation in coastal zones, and the work of the Interagency Commission for the Sustainable Management of Seas and Coasts. She said Mexico, host of COP 13 for the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), will propose increased synergies between the CBD, UNFCCC and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). She also suggested promoting, at COP 22, some form of regional contributions.

Participants stressed the need for a better scientific understanding of how ocean and marine systems are working in terms of carbon sequestration, and the impacts of sequestration, among other issues. Some stressed the need for prevention, such as preserving mangroves rather than trying to restore them, while others noted that mangrove destruction will not be addressed until alternative livelihoods are available. One participant asked if it would be possible, under Article 4 of the Paris Agreement (bilateral agreements), to develop a mechanism through which States could bilaterally develop benefit sharing arrangements that could enhance the protection of mangroves. A participant called for being careful in promoting complex international systems if it is not clear how they will deliver the desired protection for the ocean. Participants noted that financing sources are often siloed by sector, pointing out the Green Climate Fund as an example, and asked how a more holistic approach to finances could be pursued. Others noted that governments and non-governmental organizations also have their own silos. Speakers also called attention to the ongoing negotiations within the Preparatory Committee on the elements of a draft text of an international legally binding instrument under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ), and asked how climate issues could be on the table in those talks.

### ROUNDTABLE 3: THE WAY FORWARD

Rémi Parmentier, The Varda Group, moderated this roundtable.

Waldemar Coutts, Ambassador, Director of Environment and Oceanic Affairs, Chile, said the “Because the Ocean” Declaration established the need to include the ocean in climate change action, and he summarized related discussions in the *Ad Hoc* Working Group on the Paris Agreement (APA) in May 2016. He stressed the need to show gaps in Paris Agreement implementation involving the ocean, and to reach a COP 22 decision for an action plan for collective action on the ocean and climate change.

Jan Olsson, Ambassador for the Environment and Oceans, Sweden, discussed preparations for the UN High-Level Conference on SDG 14 to be held in June 2017 in New York. He said: the science on climate change and the ocean is understood well enough to act now; action on climate change is necessary to save the ocean; and the High-Level conference “is an opportunity not to be missed to create a thorough overview of the totality of actions being taken and actions needed to meet our obligations under SDG 14.”

Enric Sala, National Geographic Society, discussed communication strategies regarding climate change and the ocean, emphasizing the need to identify the audience, what to tell them, and the timing of the communication. He also stressed simplifying the message in a way that enables decisions and allows for a call to short-term actions that demonstrate progress while working toward the long-term goal.

During the discussion, one participant suggested that a focus on resilience could bring the ocean and climate agendas together. Participants also discussed the importance of building accountability into the commitments that countries are making, and noted that the 2030 Agenda incorporates an indicator framework that seeks to hold countries accountable.

### CLOSING

In a ceremony presided by Ricardo Lagos Weber, President, Senate of Chile, Peru became the 23rd signatory of the “Because the Ocean” Declaration with the signature of Antonio Garcia Revilla, Director General, Multilateral and Global Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Peru.

In closing remarks on the way forward, Heraldo Muñoz, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chile, suggested: reaching a common understanding on the ocean’s role as a carbon sink in the UNFCCC negotiations on guidelines for NDCs; defining appropriate adaptation actions; and building political awareness on the ocean-climate nexus at the UNFCC and the High-Level Conference. He declared that the workshop had contributed to achieving the final goal of the “Because the Ocean” Declaration, and provided the basis for a second declaration.

The workshop closed at 5:09 pm.



L-R: Antonio Garcia Revilla, Ambassador, Director General of Multilateral and Global Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Peru; Ricardo Lagos Weber, President of the Senate, Chile; and Waldemar Coutts, Ambassador, Director of Environment and Oceanic Affairs, Chile

### UPCOMING MEETINGS

**Third Our Ocean Conference:** This event will focus on ocean issues including marine protected areas, sustainable fisheries, marine pollution, and climate-related impacts on the ocean. **dates:** 15-16 September 2016 **location:** Washington, DC, US **contact:** US Department of State Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs **email:** OurOcean2016@state.gov **www:** <http://ourocean2016.org/>

**Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI) Regional Capacity Development Workshop for the South Pacific:** This workshop will provide an opportunity for dialogue and experience-sharing across different sectors, and aims to, *inter alia*, identify and consolidate common priorities among different sectors and stakeholders for conservation, management and sustainable economic growth in marine and coastal areas. **dates:** 31 October - 4 November 2016 **location:** Apia, Samoa **contact:** CBD Secretariat **phone:** +1-514-288-2220 **fax:** +1-514-288-6588 **email:** [secretariat@cbd.int](mailto:secretariat@cbd.int) **www:** <https://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=SOIWS-2016-03>

**International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) General Assembly:** The General Assembly will address the degradation of coral reefs and related ecosystems around the world, including: the status of coral reefs; the impacts of climate change on coral reefs; coral bleaching; and initiatives in the Indian Ocean region. **dates:** 2-4 November 2016 **location:** Paris, France **contact:** Francis Staub, ICRI Coordinator **email:** [fstaub@icriforum.org](mailto:fstaub@icriforum.org) **www:** <http://www.icriforum.org/ICRIGM31>

**UNFCCC COP 22:** During the 22nd session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 22) to the UNFCCC, parties will, *inter alia*, begin preparations for entry into force of the Paris Agreement. **dates:** 7-18 November 2016 **location:** Marrakech, Morocco **contact:** UNFCCC Secretariat **phone:** +49-228 815-1000 **fax:** +49-228-815-1999 **e-mail:** [secretariat@unfccc.int](mailto:secretariat@unfccc.int) **www:** <http://unfccc.int/>

**Scoping Meeting for the IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Oceans and the Cryosphere:** This meeting will develop a draft Scoping Paper describing the objectives and an annotated outline of the IPCC Special Report. The draft Paper will be considered by the IPCC at its 45th session in March 2017. **dates:** 6-9 December 2016 **location:** Monaco **contact:** IPCC Secretariat **email:** [IPCC-Sec@wmo.int](mailto:IPCC-Sec@wmo.int) **phone:** +4122 730 8208 **fax:** +41 22 730 8025 **www:** <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/srocc/>

**UN Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14:** This High-Level conference will seek to: identify ways and means to support the implementation of SDG 14; build on existing partnerships and stimulate new partnerships to advance SDG 14 implementation; involve all relevant stakeholders to assess challenges and opportunities relating to, as well as actions taken towards, SDG 14 implementation; exchange the experiences gained in SDG 14 implementation; and provide an input to the HLPF. **dates:** 5-9 June 2017 **location:** New York, NY, US **www:** <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/oceans/SDG14Conference>