

Summary of the Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue 2026: 10-11 June 2026

The Ocean is the planet's greatest shock absorber for human-caused climate change. It traps [about 30% of carbon emissions](#) since the Industrial Revolution and [absorbs roughly 90% of the heat](#) generated by our greenhouse gas emissions. But its ability to insulate Earth from the impacts of climate change has limits. As excessive heat warms the Ocean and the changing atmosphere alters seawater chemistry, impacts such as sea-level rise, marine heatwaves, and Ocean acidification are increasingly harming marine biodiversity and the wellbeing of people who live near the Ocean or depend on it for survival.

In recognition of the Ocean's role in climate action, the COP 27 Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan mandates that annual Ocean and climate dialogues take place led by two co-facilitators who are biennially selected by the Parties, and for a summary report to be presented at COP.

At the June 2026 session of the Bonn Climate Change Conference, the Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue convened during two afternoon sessions to consider three topics:

- **Ocean-based priorities in the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)**, including restoring and protecting marine ecosystems, sustainable food production, Ocean-based renewables and transitioning away from fossil fuels, sustainable tourism, coastal resilience, tackling emissions from marine transport;
- **Means of implementation**, including identifying practical pathways to unlock and scale predictable, accessible, and adequate Ocean-related climate finance, recognizing that a significant proportion of Parties (particularly developing countries and SIDS) have framed their Ocean-related actions as conditional on external support in their NDCs; and
- **Ocean-climate-biodiversity synergies and international cooperation**, including examining practical approaches for improving policy coherence across the UNFCCC and Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) processes and identifying concrete areas for alignment across NDCs, National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs).

The Dialogue started with a COP 31 Presidency segment on the Ocean, followed by panel sessions with Parties and experts shared their national experiences and relevant initiatives during the discussion of the three Dialogue topics. On the second day, panelists focused on defining outcomes from the Dialogue for COP 31, with World Café-style breakout groups to capture national and

regional best practices. Following the breakout talks, the Dialogue reconvened in a plenary session to finalize and link key messages.

Throughout the two days, participants underscored that means of implementation are crucial to enhancing action and called for improving access, international cooperation, capacity building, and establishment of appropriate governance. Many participants also underscored the need to address mismatches between needs on the ground and existing financial mechanisms. Participants welcomed growing recognition of the role of the Ocean in climate ambition, and several expressed optimism that momentum arising from the Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue may show the way to tangible action and commitments at COP 31.

A Brief History of the Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue

COP 25 mandated the first Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue, when the Chilean Presidency sought to achieve greater recognition of the ocean within the UNFCCC. The COP decided to launch a dialogue on the ocean and climate change, to be convened under the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technical Advice (SBSTA), which supports implementation of the Paris Agreement. At COP 26, Parties decided to hold the Dialogue on annual basis, with the aim of integrating the ocean across the climate agenda.

At COP 27, the Sharm-el Sheikh Implementation Plan established the facilitated Dialogue, further cementing its role in advancing ocean-based climate action across mitigation, adaptation, means of implementation, and science.

In 2023, the outcome of the first Global Stocktake welcomed the Dialogues and encouraged further strengthening ocean-based action.

In 2025, countries participating in the UN Ocean Conference adopted a declaration welcoming the convening of the Dialogue and emphasizing the importance of implementing the Framework Convention and Paris Agreement to ensure the health, productivity, sustainable use, and resilience of the ocean. At COP 30, held in the same year, participants in a special event on the 2025 Dialogue outcomes called for making the Ocean a central pillar of climate ambition, operationalizing the Dialogues key messages across agenda items, and integrating them into the UNFCCC work programs and constituted bodies.

Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue 2026 Report

UNFCCC delegates and stakeholders participated in three scene setting panels during the first day of the two-day Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue 2026. Under the guidance of co-facilitators Sivendra Michael (Fiji) and Ulrik Lenaerts (Belgium), the 2026

Dialogue took place as part of the 2026 June Climate Conference in Bonn, Germany, and convened under the auspices of the UNFCCC's Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA).

SBSTA Vice-Chair Carol Franco noted that a preparatory meeting in March identified three discussion topics for the Dialogue: Ocean-based priorities in the NDCs; Means of Implementation; and Ocean-climate-biodiversity synergies and international cooperation.

Ali Mohammed, Special Climate Envoy, Kenya, highlighted the 2026 Our Oceans Conference, taking place in Mombasa 14-18 June, will focus on: marine protected areas; sustainable blue economies; climate change; maritime security; and sustainable fisheries.

Robert Karoro, Facilitator, Working Group of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform, stressed the importance of the Ocean for Indigenous People all around the globe and the need for holistic climate action. Jessie Turner, Global Climate Action Agenda Activation Group 7 and the Ocean Community of Action, said the Blue NDC initiative has challenged governments to include the Ocean across NDCs and NAPs.

Cecilia Kinuthia-Njenga, UNFCCC Secretariat, highlighted that 2026 is an important year for the Ocean with events including this Dialogue and Türkiye's decision to place Ocean and Seas in the Action Agenda.

COP 31 Presidency Opening Statements

In a video, Inia Seruiratu, Pacific Ocean Envoy, stressed the need to integrate the Ocean across the UNFCCC agenda, including in mitigation, adaptation, and the upcoming Global Stocktake (GST). He highlighted the global responsibility to protect fisheries, stressed the need to decarbonize maritime transport, and said the Pacific countries are leading with traditional and science-based initiatives.

Sally Box, COP 31 Chief Negotiator, Australia, stressed that the Ocean is a global ally, noting it provides climate regulation services and stressing that its health is essential for adaptation. She noted that Australia is working with Fiji to host the pre-COP in Fiji and leaders' event in Tuvalu and aims to build on previous COPs' work on the Ocean. She encouraged the Dialogue to focus on how to make Ocean action more practical and investable.

Tuğba Dinçbaş, Director of COP 31 Action Agenda, Directorate of Climate Change, Türkiye, noted the need to understand the pressures of warming waters, biodiversity loss, and tourism pressures, among other challenges. She said early warning is an area where COP 31 can generate attention and stressed that the Ocean and Seas Action Agenda can highlight the need to advance credible and practical Ocean actions.

Panel on Ocean-based Priorities in the NDCs

Anna Paula Prates, Brazilian Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, noted the increasing recognition of the importance of Ocean national action during the past decade and noted that 92% of island and coastal countries have included at least one reference to the Ocean and Seas in their NDC.

Kassim Gwasu-Toure, African Group of Negotiators (AGN), underlined the challenge of translating paper commitments into implementation. He underscored the need for: strong operational synergies with the 2026 Standing Committee on Finance (SCF); ensuring that any new technology guidance or framework respects the concept of no new burdens; and structuring a multiyear roadmap aligned with the UNFCCC calendar.

Jiro Hiratsuka, Ministry of Environment, Japan, highlighted knowledge and experience gained from 45 local initiatives, which included projects to cultivate seaweed bed creation, provide environmental education, and restore fishing grounds. He reported

that enablers to promote blue carbon activities and support local action include inter-ministry cooperation and development of legal frameworks.

Jonathan Baines, World Resources Institute (WRI), called attention to the Blue NDC Challenge, which was launched by Brazil and France to place Ocean-based climate solutions at the heart of NDCs, noting that many countries have incorporated the Ocean into their NDCs. He said Ocean-climate action has been driven by fisheries and marine conservation ministries and suggested that a whole-of-government approach is needed. He also highlighted that governance is the type of support most frequently requested and is seen as a prerequisite for attracting investment.

Karen Evans, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC-UNESCO), called attention to IOC's Blue Carbon Finance Toolbox, which provides an overview of financial mechanisms and strategies to support the conservation, restoration, and sustainable management of blue carbon ecosystems. She encouraged parties to improve their cooperation, build technical capacity to generate Ocean data, and build early warning systems, among other actions.

Panel on Ocean-Climate-Biodiversity Synergies and International Cooperation

Ivan Vejar, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Chile, on behalf of AILAC (Independent Alliance of Latin America and the Caribbean), underscored the need to address climate change and biodiversity in a synergistic way, noting that preserving healthy ecosystems is necessary to enhance resilience for climate change. He said AILAC strongly encourages alignment between NDC and NBSAPs as well as the operationalization of the Agreement 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 (BBNJ Agreement). He highlighted that Chile has bid to host the BBNJ Secretariat in Valparaiso.

Alessandra Lamotte, European Commission, DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, presented the newly launched OceanEye initiative, which aims to strengthen Ocean observation and responds to the 2025 Ocean Dialogue's call for further support to the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS).

Valentina Germani, Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS), discussed the status of the BBNJ Agreement and emphasized the importance of complementing, and not undermining existing legal instruments, frameworks, and global or sectoral bodies such the UNFCCC.

Leel Randeni, Ministry of Environment, Sri Lanka, noted national efforts to establish marine protected areas and an integrated coastal management plan, among other activities. He said coordination problems can hamper collaboration and NDCs have helped bring together stakeholders and institutions to make progress.

Tristan Tyrrell, CBD Secretariat, called attention to the Global Review of Collective Progress, which will take place during CBD COP 17 and will include an assessment of progress on Target 8 (Ocean) among other targets relevant to this Dialogue.

Panel on Means of Implementation

Charles Hamilton, Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), underlined the importance of capacity building for SIDS and added that monitoring, evaluation, and learning, vulnerability and impact assessment, and access to climate finance should be driven by SIDS and closely related to their NDCs.

Wenxin Li, Global Environment Facility (GEF), reported that, of the 17,000+ projects that the GEF is currently supporting, over

one-third support SIDS and LDCs. On the Ocean, she said the GEF is the largest public funder. She underscored the GEF's work to combine multiple focal areas to support the development of NDCs and NAPs.

Isobel Bartholomew, co-facilitator of the Standing Committee on Finance, highlighted that the upcoming SCF forum will be dedicated to finance action for water systems and Ocean and will take place on 21-22 September. She said the COP and meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA) will consider the report of the SCF.

Jens Sedemund, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), reported on research on the Ocean economy and highlighted, inter alia, that 2024 data show a decline in public finance for the Ocean.

Discussion

During a discussion session following the panels, SAUDI ARABIA stressed that any outcome from the Dialogue should be balanced, factual, and technical. She added that this platform is not a vehicle for promoting energy pathways or development models and suggested focusing on the MOI required to meet ambitions for climate action.

NEW ZEALAND appreciated the spotlight on the Pacific region in advancing the Ocean-climate nexus and said the GST could help to mainstream the Ocean across the agenda. NORWAY supported a focus on practical and integrated Ocean action. INDONESIA supported coordination across NDCs, NAPs and NBSAPs and cooperation with the BBNJ Agreement. SAUDI ARABIA highlighted that the Ocean Dialogue is under the Paris Agreement, not the BBNJ Agreement.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) highlighted that fisheries and agriculture are increasingly recognized in NDCs, but noted that related indicators need to be standardized. FIJI said Ocean-based targets in NDCs are not a niche issue and stressed that the context for the Dialogue is that while the Ocean has absorbed 90% of excess heat, this service is degrading, and we risk overshooting the 1.5°C goal. CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL noted that the SCF Forum and Ocean Dialogue can help to unlock new opportunities.

Defining the Outcome

On the second day of the Dialogue, Peter Thomson, UNSG's Special Envoy for the Ocean, greeted participants via video message. Describing the Ocean as the connective lifeblood between the climate and biodiversity agendas, Thomson underscored that success under the Paris Agreement, Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and BBNJ Agreement depends on the coherent implementation of all three. He further emphasized that means of implementation are central to delivering Ocean-based climate action and called for moving beyond fragmented funding to sustainable finance that supports long-term Ocean stewardship and resilience.

Participants devoted most of the second session of the dialogue to discussion in breakout groups on the three themes addressed in panel discussions on the first day: Ocean-based priorities in NDCs; Means of Implementation; and Ocean-climate-biodiversity synergies, and international cooperation.

In the final hour of the session, Co-Facilitator Michael invited countries and observers to take the floor while the breakout group moderators took time to synthesize the afternoon's discussions.

COMOROS welcomed recognition of the Ocean as a pillar of climate action, underscored that healthy marine and coastal

ecosystems are essential for addressing climate change, and emphasized the importance of gender responsive climate action and meaningful participation by local communities.

A representative of the WOMEN AND GENDER CONSTITUENCY emphasized that while the blue economy is often framed as sustainable, Oceans are increasingly being transformed into sites of exploration, extraction, exploitation, and geopolitical contestation. She questioned who benefits from the blue economy, and at what cost? A representative of the Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations (ENGOS) also asked who truly benefits from the blue economy and at what cost to women, small-scale fisheries, Indigenous Peoples, and coastal communities, and said international financial institutions must be held accountable for worsening the climate crisis.

ICELAND: underscored that blue foods are essential food and nutrition security, as well as climate resilience, but are underrepresented in major food and climate dialogues; called for moving to implementation; supported strong integration of the Ocean throughout UNFCCC work; and supported calls for gender action.

Emphasizing that the Ocean is key to achieving Paris Agreement objectives, MONACO welcomed initiatives to scale up private finance for the blue economy and highlighted the importance of relying on the best available science to support Ocean action.

CHILE underscored the need to address the Ocean-climate-biodiversity crisis in an integrated manner and supported enhanced coordination among the UNFCCC, CBD, and other relevant organizations.

BRAZIL called on parties and stakeholders to join the Blue NDC Challenge and said the task ahead is not to create new tracks, but to ensure the Ocean is systematically embedded in processes and decisions.

The EU: said future dialogues should be aligned with the ambitions and implementation cycle of the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement; encouraged scaling up Ocean-based sustainable development action; and strongly supported synergies between the UNFCCC and other international processes to advance the 1.5°C degree goal.

SAUDI ARABIA emphasized that implementation pathways must be nationally determined and Ocean-climate action should not be framed around any single technology or energy source.

Noting that its Exclusive Economic Zone is a carbon sink and provider of food security, PALAU said SIDS can only reduce climate emissions by closing persistent gaps in capacity, and their special circumstances must be fully recognized in the design and delivery of support.

FRANCE welcomed a focus on the Ocean in NDCs and emphasized the need to lower the costs of alternative fuels that may contribute to decarbonization.

TUVALU, speaking on behalf of Least Developed Countries (LDCs), expressed concern about the impacts of Ocean acidification on marine life, said the Ocean plays a major role in fighting greenhouse gases, and noted that some LDCs have already built Ocean action into their NDCs, including through mangrove restoration and the establishment of additional marine protected areas.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ORGANIZATIONS emphasized that the Ocean is not a commodity; rather, it is life, identity, culture, mobility, and a responsibility across generations. They said the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion on Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change and the BBNJ Agreement

show Ocean governance is already moving toward a rights-based architecture, and the UNFCCC should not lag behind.

NIUE highlighted its Ocean Conservation Commitments, an innovative non-market mechanism to finance Ocean protection, and underscored that for SIDS, Oceans are not a separate agenda.

The Research and Independent NGOs (RINGO): supported alignment and synergistic activities across conventions; said Ocean observing systems remain essential; called for more transdisciplinary approaches; and underscored the importance of the precautionary principle, especially concerning marine carbon dioxide removal.

Feedback from Breakout Groups

Co-Facilitator Michael invited the moderators of the World Café-style breakout groups to share the key messages emerging from the discussions.

On **Ocean-based priorities in the NDCs**, Marine Lecerf, Ocean & Climate Platform, said participants shared best practices and identified implementation challenges including, for example, difficulty accessing support for using tools and translations and data gaps for local contexts. She said some of these barriers could also be opportunities and noted efforts to strengthen consistency among adaptation and mitigation measures. She also highlighted the use of NDCs as tools to engage new stakeholders and coordinate across sectors, taking a multilevel approach. On next steps for the Dialogue, Lecerf said participants welcomed the direction of the Dialogue, supported providing more operational outputs, and stressed the need for a multi-year plan. She concluded by noting that participants highlighted the need for integration of Ocean focal points in constituted bodies and work programs and the importance of taking the Global Stocktake into consideration.

On **Means of Implementation**, Karen Evans, IOC-UNESCO, said the groups recognized many challenges with current financing mechanisms, including lack of accessibility and mismatches between mechanisms and implementation, particularly concerning timescales and inclusive processes. Participants emphasized the need to recognize that “no one size fits all” and different financing mechanisms are appropriate for different groups. Participants also highlighted that the Dialogue can raise awareness of challenges and ensure better integration and information exchange across UNFCCC processes.

On **Ocean-climate-biodiversity synergies, and international cooperation**, Chelsea Johnson, Center for Climate and Energy Solutions, said participants discussed the need to strengthen science, data, and governance for Ocean and climate issues, as well as to support evidence-based decision making, reporting, and implementation. Johnson said participants also highlighted the need to improve coordination among focal points, include Indigenous Peoples, and strengthen and standardized procedures and reporting mechanisms at the national level, while also noting capacity constraints. She noted that some participants hoped the outcomes of this would be considered at COP 31.

Closing

Co-Facilitator Lenaerts summarized the discussions during the two days, highlighting the importance of the Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue as a platform to advance and deepen integration. He said NDCs are central to the challenge, and there is still room to enhance and broaden Ocean-based action to increase climate ambition. He said means of implementation are crucial to enhancing action, and highlighted the need for access, international cooperation, capacity building, and establishment of

appropriate governance. He also highlighted opportunities including Nature-based Solutions and the BBNJ Agreement as cooperation mechanisms, and cited the need to become a strong part of the Global Stocktake. He concluded by noting strong engagement from the COP 31 Presidency and expressed optimism that the Ocean and Climate Dialogue can help in shaping the way forward.

Co-Facilitator Michael reiterated the concerns many participants expressed regarding mismatches between needs on the ground and existing financial mechanisms. Emphasizing that building momentum is critical to translate the ideas of the Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue into tangible actions and commitments, he asked all participants to join this “Ocean-climate current.”

Upcoming Meetings

UNCCD COP 17: Set to take place during the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists, the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP 17) will bring Parties together to build on efforts to promote the sustainable management, restoration, and conservation of rangelands while accelerating action against desertification, land degradation, and drought. **dates:** 17-28 August 2026 **location:** Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia **www:** unccdcop17.org and unccd.int

CBD COP 17: CBD COP 17 will be held in conjunction with the 12th meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CP-MOP-12) and the sixth meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing (NP-MOP-6). COP 17 will mark the first global review of collective progress towards the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. **dates:** 9-30 October 2026 **location:** Yerevan, Armenia **www:** cbd.int

UNFCCC COP 31: The 2026 UN Climate Change Conference will consist of UNFCCC COP 31, the 21st meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 21), and the eighth meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA 8), as well as the 65th sessions of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA 65) and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI 65). **dates:** 9-20 November 2026 **location:** Antalya, Türkiye **www:** unfccc.int

For additional upcoming events, see: sdg.iisd.org

Glossary

BBNJ	Biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
GST	Global Stocktake
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
NAPs	National Adaptation Plans
NBSAPs	National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
SBSTA	Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice
SCF	Standing Committee on Finance
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change