

Summary of the UNGA High-level Event on the Ocean: 1 June 2021

The ocean agenda enshrined in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 (life below water) has experienced delays in progress due to the postponement of physical meetings, including the Second UN Ocean Conference, because of COVID-19. The inability to hold this conference has hampered, among other things, the evaluation of progress on SDG 14, following the fact that four targets were supposed to have been achieved in 2020, namely those related to: protecting and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems (14.2); ending unreported fishing and overfishing, and destructive fishing practices (14.4); conservation of coastal and marine areas (14.5); and eliminating harmful fisheries subsidies (14.6).

For this reason, the President of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), Volkan Bozkır, convened this one-day High-level Event on the Ocean, four years after the 2017 UN Ocean Conference, to drum up momentum by enabling a review of progress and actions required in the lead up to the Second UN Ocean Conference to convene in Lisbon, Portugal, in 2022.

The meeting featured four panel sessions addressing the following topics:

- Bringing Together UN Processes on the Ocean;
- Towards a Healthy, Protected and Climate-Resilient Ocean;
- Fisheries and Aquaculture; and
- A Sustainable Ocean Economy.

Delegates highlighted the need to upscale action including through advocating for concluding discussions on legally binding instruments to support protection of the ocean and restoration of livelihoods of coastal communities. Among these, delegates advocated for conclusion of negotiations at the World Trade Organization’s (WTO) upcoming session addressing prohibiting harmful fishing subsidies that threaten sustainable fishing and encourage illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. Delegates also called for the UN to facilitate a legally binding global and robust treaty to tackle marine plastics.

The UNGA High-level Event on the Ocean took place on 1 June 2021 in a hybrid format, with some delegates attending in person at UN Headquarters in New York combined with virtual attendance from around the world.

A Brief History of the Ocean Conference

Heads of State and Government in September 2015 adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda), “Transforming Our World,” which includes the 17 SDGs and their 169 targets. SDG 14 on life below water contains ten targets, that address: marine pollution; managing and protecting marine

and coastal ecosystems; ocean acidification; overfishing and IUU fishing and destructive fishing practices; conservation of coastal and marine areas; prohibiting harmful fisheries subsidies; increasing economic benefits to small island developing states (SIDS) and least developed countries; increasing scientific knowledge, developing research capacity, and transferring marine technology; providing access for small-scale artisanal fishers to resources and markets; and implementing international law to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean and its resources.

In December 2015, the UNGA decided to convene a high-level UN conference to support implementation of SDG 14 in Fiji (resolution 70/226). The venue was reconsidered due to the impact of Tropical Cyclone Winston, which struck Fiji in February 2016. In September 2016, the UNGA decided to hold the conference at UN Headquarters in New York, with Fiji and Sweden as co-hosts (resolution 70/303). By the same resolution, the UNGA: agreed on the structure and outcomes of the conference; requested the President to convene a two-day preparatory meeting in February 2017; and requested the UN Secretary-General to prepare a background note ahead of the preparatory meeting, including a proposal of themes for partnership dialogues to convene during the conference.

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Key Turning Point

UN Ocean Conference: The high-level UN Conference to Support the Implementation of SDG 14 was held from 5–9 June 2017. It sought to identify ways and means to support SDG 14 implementation. The conference outcomes included an intergovernmentally agreed Call for Action, which reconfirms the commitment of UN Member States to the implementation of SDG 14 and to mobilize financial resources. In addition to producing key messages from partnership dialogues, the conference also registered 1,328 voluntary commitments by governments and other stakeholders on topics, such as the creation of marine protected areas (MPAs), action on plastic and other marine debris, and funding for scientific research and capacity-building activities.

UNGA High-level Event on the Ocean Report**Opening Segment**

In his opening remarks, UNGA President Volkan Bozkir underscored the importance of the Ocean, saying “There is no scenario where we live aplenty without an ocean.” He highlighted an increased appetite for change, with people seeking sustainability and peace of mind from the transformation of behavior, and an increased awareness that a healthy ocean is key to a healthy economy.

Ricardo Serrão Santos, Minister of the Sea, PORTUGAL, said the pandemic, though devastating to the ocean economy, has also increased urgency for the achievement of SDG 14. He added that making the Ocean inclusive and connected is the ambition for the Second UN Ocean Conference, which his country will be hosting.

Presenting via videoconference, Raychelle Omamo, Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs, KENYA, said humanity has become aware first-hand of the impacts of an unhealthy planet to our wellbeing. She urged innovative financial solutions, information sharing and technological capacity building to enable developing countries to upscale their actions on SDG 14.

Joining through a video link, Peter Thomson, UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for the Ocean, said six years after the SDGs were inaugurated, progress on ocean action is more tangible compared to the “indifferent waters we sailed before SDG14.” He said the UN Decade of Ocean Science will play a leading role in tackling ocean acidification, IUU, and marine pollution, which remain unabated.

Maggie Q, SDG 14 Advocate and Founder of QEEP UP, said “fighting for our ocean health is fighting for the majority of the planet.” She noted that if a place on earth existed where 25% of the human population was needed for survival, we would do everything in our power to protect it. By the same token, she posited, everything possible needs to be done to save coral reefs, which only cover 1% of the ocean floor yet are responsible for food, shelter, and breeding grounds for 25% of all marine species.

Bringing Together UN Processes on the Ocean

This panel addressed synergies between key UN Ocean processes and the 2030 Agenda, as well as global and regional policy frameworks. On the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, speakers drew on lessons learned for a sustainable future.

Moderator Dona Bertarelli, Special Advisor for the Blue Economy, UN CONVENTION ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (UNCTAD), and Co-Chair of the Bertarelli Foundation, opened the panel, saying “There is no blue economy without a happy ocean,” and emphasized education to “unlearn a lack of care” for the ocean.

On mechanisms to align and create synergies between UN ocean processes, Liu Zhenmin, UN Under Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, called for enhanced collaboration, especially on addressing and preventing inequalities on access to and use of ocean resources.

On the ten-year initiatives – the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, and UN Decade of Action for the SDGs – Vladimir Ryabinin, Executive Secretary, INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION OF THE UN EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (IOC-UNESCO), said this current unprecedented decade will provide clear guidance, data, and the knowledge needed to achieve a managed ocean.

Regarding linkages between the “30 x 30” global initiative (ensuring that 30% of the ocean is covered by MPAs or other effective conservation-based measures by 2030) and the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) process under the the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Rena Lee, BBNJ Intergovernmental Conference President, said a major BBNJ workstream is area-based management, including MPAs. Lee identified overlapping mandates of global, sectoral, and regional UN processes as a key challenge and emphasized capacity building for national coordination as a way to help Member States synthesize ocean-related information.

Agnes Kalibata, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the 2021 Food Systems Summit, outlined enabling conditions for UN processes to ensure inclusivity, equitability, and accessibility. She highlighted the importance of establishing a space to empower diverse voices. She explained, “We have the mechanism to pull local challenges into a global dialogue,” noting the complexities of recognizing all voices and the need to build trust among stakeholders. She called for a human rights-based approach to achieve the SDGs, and a holistic perspective for a functional food system.

During follow-up questions to the panelists, Ryabinin reflected on how commitments can help move from processes to actions, citing historical examples, such as increased ocean mapping from 5% in 1903 to 20.5% today.

Zhenmin framed key entry points to link commitments with other UN processes by reflecting on lessons from the first UN Ocean Conference, including the “game-changing” development of a consultative mechanism for inclusive stakeholder engagement, and the voluntary commitments registry, which continues to grow.

During an interactive discussion, SPAIN supported involvement of all actors for a successful Decade of Ocean Science as critical for coordinating processes and actions. ARGENTINA, a Champion of the International Seabed Authority Marine Scientific Research Action Plan, stressed that the UN Decade on Ocean Science offers an opportunity for international coordination, and called for adequate ocean research funding.

Rabinin said an “ocean literate” society is needed to overcome the out-of-sight, out-of-mind challenges associated with ocean issues and highlighted the IOC’s upcoming Generation Ocean outreach campaign.

Participants thereafter viewed a video highlighting cooperation and partnerships, including creative financing, and the need for science, policy, and action to work together.

Towards a Pollution-free, Protected and Climate-resilient Ocean

Ligia Noronha, Assistant-Secretary-General, UN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (UNEP), moderated the panel, noting that the long-term ability of the ocean to provide services to human well-being relies on a cross-sectoral approach, requiring concrete actions and innovative solutions.

Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, Executive Secretary, CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (CBD), stated that the inability to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets was due to the assumption that achievement was solely the responsibility of governments. She added that “everyone” must take action. Mrema encouraged a new approach for the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework that empowers and encourages a wide range of stakeholders to take up the cause of ocean stewardship.

Haydée Rodríguez-Romero, Vice Minister, Water and Oceans, COSTA RICA, described the adoption of a series of programmes and policies to reduce plastic consumption and production in her country. She emphasized the importance of working with the private sector and communities to minimize the negative impacts of plastics pollution in the ocean.

Martin Stuchtey, SYSTEMIQ Ltd., stated that now is time to write a new narrative for the ocean—one that will not take us to despair, but to an upward cycle where many solutions exist. Calling for a more holistic strategy, Stuchtey defined an ocean approach that seeks to “prosper, produce and protect.”

Discussing nature-based solutions requiring fast track actions, Rodríguez-Romero expressed the need to promote highly connected and well-managed MPAs. Stuchtey referred to “Breaking the Plastic Wave: A Comprehensive Assessment of Pathways Towards Stopping Ocean Plastic Pollution,” underscoring that a combination of existing solutions and technologies are available to cut annual flows of plastics into the ocean by 80%.

During ensuing discussions, the EU highlighted the importance of ocean-based economies for sustainable post-pandemic recovery. TUVALU called for coordinated and integrated approaches, mentioning the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, which represents the commitment of the region to work together to address critical challenges of the region including on the ocean.

ANTIGUA and BARBUDA read out an Ocean’s Day Plastic Pollution Declaration, encouraging States to end plastic pollution in the ocean and calling on the UN to facilitate a legally binding agreement on plastic pollution.

Participants then viewed a video compiling voices of youth from Canada and the Millennials Movement, calling for States to make progress on SDG 14 targets on marine plastic pollution.

Fisheries and Aquaculture

This panel, moderated by Melanie Siggs, GLOBAL SEAFOOD ALLIANCE, addressed obstacles and opportunities in this sector, and underscored the need to recognize the role of seafood in the UN Food Systems Summit to be held in Rome in October 2021.

Maxímo Torero, FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UN (FAO), drew attention to the need for more robust fisheries management through improved monitoring, better institutional capacity, and greater political will. He encouraged a human rights-based approach to strengthen small-scale fisheries.

The differences between the global north and south in access to seafood, Shakuntala Thilsted, WORLD FISH CENTER, highlighted, have caused nutritional inequalities leading to increased vulnerability among poor populations. She added that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this issue and beseeched governments to introduce programmes, which encourage nutritious guidelines and feeding programmes for mothers and children.

Yuvan Beejadhur, WTO, stated that the blue economy would be the seventh largest country in the world (in terms of GDP) if we were to quantify its size and potential impact. He called on countries to increase transparency in the use of loss-generating fisheries subsidies and encouraged an end to this practice. Beejadhur also cautioned against the losses of food production and trade capacity of SIDS due to climate change. He added that the blue economy could add USD 1.5 trillion in international trade if its benefits were better harnessed.

In ensuing discussions, BRAZIL, supported by NEW ZEALAND and several others, called for concluding the WTO negotiations on fishing subsidies that threaten sustainable fishing and encourage IUU. INDONESIA said the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture in 2022 will be a steppingstone to supporting farmers and workers in this area.

FRANCE highlighted the Coalition for an Exemplary Mediterranean by 2030, a collaboration with SPAIN and MONACO that protects the Mediterranean Ocean. He also called for strong commitments under BBNJ process. The US advocated for elevating the role of fisheries and aquaculture at the UN Food Summit. NAURU said we need to ensure the perpetrators and not just the vessels take responsibility for IUU fishing. The final video featured global initiatives for bold action, such as Rise Up for the Ocean, and sectoral commitments in the tourism and shipping industries.

A Sustainable Ocean Economy

This panel highlighted the global interest and effort to “build back better” from the COVID-19 pandemic, including how a sustainable ocean economy can help realize that achievement.

Moderator Sandra Ojiambo, CEO and Executive Director, UN GLOBAL COMPACT, framed the discussions, calling for collective action and reiterating that achieving the SDGs cannot be accelerated without protecting the ocean.

Achim Steiner, Administrator, UN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP), identified a need to regulate and shape opportunities to manage “mixed blessings,” such as aquaculture’s promise of new income coupled with its threat to mangrove forests. He drew attention to the “invisibility of ecosystem services” and the need for industry to invest in regeneration.

Carlos Manuel Rodríguez, CEO, GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY, highlighted the failure of global markets to internalize negative externalities. Recognizing the current economic system aims for growth without respect for planetary boundaries, he called for an institutional transformation to deliver new tools to incentivize multi-sectoral, integrated strategies.

Jens Frølich Holte, State Secretary, NORWAY, described the importance of valuing ocean ecosystem services in accounting, engaging all stakeholders, and increasing political commitment and action for sustainable growth for the ocean economy. He reported

that the 14 world leaders who have come together for the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy aim to promote their recommendations globally.

Atsushi Sunami, President and Executive Director, OCEAN POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE, SASAKAWA PEACE FOUNDATION, JAPAN, noted the gap in SDG target 14.6 on eliminating harmful subsidies, and underscored the importance of economic and trade policies that shape positive incentive structures and transparency to achieve sustainable fisheries.

On the role of technology in a sustainable ocean economy, Steiner shared UNDP's Ocean Innovation Challenge, which provides USD 250,000 grants to support scientific, entrepreneurial and technological innovations to help prime a new economy of innovation. Rodríguez added that while many countries have data, technology can be used to apply that data to improve marine spatial planning and decision making. Holte noted that technology and innovation are necessary to create jobs for the blue economy in a post-COVID-19 world. Sunami shared that Japan has recently formed a national committee to address and apply the science that will emerge from the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

During the interactive session, CANADA underscored the need to create sustainable targets and sustainable budgets and called for moving beyond single indicators such as GDP. IRELAND emphasized national marine spatial planning and collaboration among the public and private sectors. The MALDIVES shared its commitment to reduce marine plastic pollution and harmonize policies with international standards and best practices. MEXICO stressed accountability, ocean monitoring, and the importance of access to ocean financing for all countries.

On sustainable budgets, Rodríguez drew attention to gaps in understanding both current needs and investments required to ensure policy coherence. He suggested changing the name of SIDS to "LOSIDS" or "large ocean" SIDS, noting they are stewards of large marine ecosystems. Holte noted that silos still present a challenge and projected that the upcoming Second UN Ocean Conference would strengthen collaboration and collective action. Sunami emphasized the value of working with insurance companies and for appropriate financing mechanisms to drive sustainable development for coastal communities through blue finance.

Closing Segment

The UN High-level Thematic Debate on the Ocean closed with a Call-to-Action video narrated by UNDP Ocean Advocate Cody Simpson, who highlighted that the ocean agenda is too important to fail. Participants thereafter viewed a video performance of Handel's Water Music, Suite No.1, IV by UN Chamber Music.

The meeting closed at 5:47pm EDT.

A Brief Analysis of the UNGA High-Level Event on the Ocean

The COVID-19 pandemic has given humanity a first-hand experience of what an unhealthy planet has in store for its residents. Moreover, the ocean has not been spared from the impacts of the triple planetary crises – climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution — and has received, in the past decade, increased attention due to drastic ecological changes caused by

ocean acidification, illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing (IUU), and marine pollution. The consequences of the destruction of marine ecosystems have led to losses of ecosystem services that support livelihoods and coastal economies around the world, causing severe nutritional, economic, and social losses. Besides its impacts on public health and livelihoods, the pandemic has had a ripple effect on global environmental policies and processes, as ocean-related meetings scheduled for 2020 had to be canceled or held virtually. This has meant the interruption of progress on the international ocean agenda.

In light of this, the President of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), Volkan Bozkır, decided to convene this one-day High-level Event on the Ocean to ensure continued momentum on the ocean agenda, particularly in lead up to the Second UN Ocean Conference, which was postponed due to COVID-19. This postponement hampered, among other things, the evaluation of progress on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 (life below water) and its targets. UN Member States have yet to discuss the achievements of four of the SDG 14 targets, which were supposed to have been met in 2020. These targets relate to: protecting and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems (14.2); ending unreported fishing and overfishing, and destructive fishing practices (14.4); conserving coastal and marine areas (14.5); and eliminating harmful fisheries subsidies (14.6). The targets formed the basis of the high-level event's panel sessions. Since these efforts had been stymied by the pandemic, the event aimed to inject new life into these issues and the ocean agenda more broadly.

This analysis focuses on the drumbeat of momentum building towards the Second UN Ocean Conference to be held in Lisbon, Portugal, in 2022, and the role of the ocean in post-pandemic recovery efforts enshrined in the push to "build back better."

Ailing Ocean

A healthy planet depends on a healthy ocean. In his intervention, Peter Thomson, UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean, highlighted our current predicament, saying, "We are not heading to the destination of below 2°C scenario but rather to a temperature increase of 3 to 5°C by the end of the twenty-first century." The impacts of rising temperatures on the ocean include including acidification, sea level rise, and lower oxygen levels with cascading impacts on ocean ecosystems, and consequences for ocean-based livelihoods.

Fisheries are a major source of protein for billions of people. However, with fish stocks threatened, access to fish and seafood has further divided the "haves and have-nots"—leading to increases in hunger, poverty, and malnutrition in vulnerable populations. In addition to the impacts of climate change, the "scourge of plastic pollution" is further suffocating and depleting marine organisms.

Discussions around the event's themes further highlighted existing regional inequalities and differences regarding resilience levels and the ability to cope with and recover from the impacts of ocean degradation. Thus, post-pandemic recovery strategies, some delegates argued, should apply a human rights-based approaches. For this reason, the meeting reiterated the need for inclusivity in recovery strategies, as enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and its transformative promise to "Leave No One Behind."

Building Back Better—Together

While the pandemic turned many people's worlds upside down, recovery efforts do have a silver lining in that they provide the opportunity to focus on recovery that in line with the 2030 Agenda. Accepting the challenge to develop more inclusive solutions, the High-level Ocean Event from the outset conveyed optimism that a green-blue recovery from the pandemic is possible. However, such a recovery requires all-hands-on deck with collaboration among governments, UN bodies, intergovernmental organizations, civil society, the private sector, and others. Such efforts are also needed to advance implementation of SDG 14. Some pointed to events already on the calendar to maintain momentum and continued recognition of the role of the ocean in the push to build-back-better.

For example, the concept of a blue recovery has gained resonance in the momentum created by the current UN Decade for Ocean Science for Sustainable Development: not only in continuing to develop data, but also, as delegates noted, for increasing funds for technological transfer and capacity building required to usher in a blue recovery for a sustainable ocean economy.

The build-up to the Second Ocean Conference has significant momentum from other thematic celebrations and events as well. The alignment of the High-level Ocean Event with World Reef Awareness Day, which is celebrated annually on 1 June, did not go unnoticed, as delegates brought attention to the plight of coral reefs. As one speaker explained even though coral reefs occupy 1% of the ocean floor, they provide food, shelter and breeding grounds for 25% of all marine species.

A week after the High-level Ocean Event, UN World Oceans Day, on 8 June, will address a wide range of ocean issues, such as implementation of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, international shipping and maritime security, biodiversity conservation, sustainable development, and climate change. This year, as in 2020, the event will be held virtually, under the theme, "The Ocean: Life and Livelihoods," to highlight the life-sustaining capabilities of the world's ocean for humanity and all other beings.

The drumbeat of the ocean will also be heard during the Glasgow Climate Change Conference (COP 26) in November 2021, where several ocean-related activities are being planned by, among others, the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action's Ocean and Coastal Zones thematic area to mobilize civil society to help "green the big blue" through nature-based solutions. The meeting will also feature a Virtual Ocean Pavilion.

The two UN Decades—addressing Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and Ecosystem Restoration—are major opportunities to promote focus on SDG 14. The Decade of Ocean Science, which has been in full swing since January 2021, will support efforts to reverse the cycle of declining ocean health. The Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, to be launched during World Environment Day on 5 June, is further expected to include ocean-related topics.

In addition, the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture 2022 will keep the spotlight on the ocean, and on the millions of small-scale fishers, fish farmers and fish workers who provide healthy and nutritious food to billions of people and, thus, contribute to achieving food security.

Green Meets Blue

"There is no scenario where humans can prosper without the Ocean." Following this remark by UNGA President Volkan Bozkir, delegates explored holistic approaches dubbed the "triple Ps" for ocean restoration: protect, produce, and prosper. Participants maintained that the blue economy must become the cornerstone of a post-COVID recovery and consist of nature-based solutions to address the triple planetary crises. One delegate suggested that "to achieve green, we must apply the right amount of blue," which is only possible with a healthy ocean.

The concept of a blue economy has continued its rise in prominence on the international agenda, bringing focus to the fact that the transition to a low-carbon and resource efficient green economy requires addressing transformations in the ocean and seas. Many noted the need to accelerate negotiations underway on legally binding instruments to protect the ocean. The session on fisheries and aquaculture highlighted the need to finalize negotiations at the World Trade Organization on fishing subsidies that threaten sustainable fishing and encourage IUU at the World Trade Organization. During the session on pollution, delegates equally made calls on the UN to facilitate a legally binding global and robust treaty to tackle marine plastics.

The need to rekindle ocean action in the buildup to the Second UN Ocean Conference following a lull due to the pandemic was echoed during the event, as was the hope that experiences learned from the pandemic would motivate countries to take action. Blue and green are no longer vague concepts in the halls of the UN and in intergovernmental processes; rather they are ones that citizens of planet Earth are now not only aware of, but are actively seeking to participate in. This movement is particularly driven by youth, who are protesting the actions of previous generations that have imperiled their future enjoyment of a sustainable and secure planet and its ocean.

Generation Restoration

The global pandemic has been a wakeup call to society on the delicate balance between nature and our survival on earth. With widespread closures of natural recreational areas including beach facilities, public outcry turned towards the unsustainable behavior of businesses and government that have led humanity down this path.

It has, in turn, amplified formerly muted voices of environmental activism, many of which, in past decades, struggled to be heard. Today, thousands of citizens and organizations around the world are raising their voices to join with groups, such as Generation Restoration, which uses the popular hashtag #GenerationRestoration. This is a generation that is putting the planet's health first, seeking transformative change in every facet of our lives for more sustainable, blue, green, and circular economies. Their ultimate goal is the reconciliation of peace with nature.

This transformative movement and its calls for change were woven into the agenda of the UN High-level Event on the Ocean. Videos presented during each panel session featured voices of youth, business, and civil society, calling for diverse action from regulating IUU fishing and combating marine plastic pollution to reducing carbon emissions from the maritime industry.

The onus is now on everyone, governments, the UN and other intergovernmental organizations, businesses and civil society alike, to take responsibility for ocean action and to play their part in bending the curve on the triple planetary crises to achieve a sustainable blue-green world and restore harmony between humans and nature.

Upcoming Meetings

52nd Session of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Subsidiary Bodies: Postponed since June 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 52nd session of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies is tentatively scheduled to prepare for COP 26.

dates: 31 May–17 June 2021 (TBC) **location:** online **www:** <https://unfccc.int/calendar> <https://unfccc.int/event/1st-sessional-period-2021>

2nd UN World Oceans Day: The 2nd UN World Oceans Day, highlighting the theme of “The Ocean: Life and Livelihoods,” will hear from thought-leaders, celebrities, institutional partners, community voices, entrepreneurs, and cross-industry experts about the biodiversity and economic opportunity that the ocean sustains. **date:** 8 June 2021 **location:** virtual **www:** <https://unworldoceansday.org>

Rising to the Global Challenge of Ocean Plastic Pollution: This webinar will bring together policymakers, experts, and local problem solvers to discuss ways to ensure that the growing international efforts to combat the ocean plastic pollution crisis are effective and beneficial. **date:** 8 June 2021 **location:** virtual **www:** <https://www.climatelinks.org/events/rising-global-challenge-ocean-plastic-pollution>

21st Meeting of the UN Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (ICP-21): ICP-21 will focus its discussions on the topic “Sea-level rise and its impacts.”

dates: 14-18 June 2021 **location:** online **www:** https://www.un.org/depts/los/consultative_process/consultative_process.htm

High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) 2021: The ninth session of the HLPF will take place over eight days in July 2021 under the following theme: “Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, that promotes the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: Building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.” **dates:** 6-15 July 2021 **location:** online **www:** <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2021>

54th Session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (IPCC-54) and WG I AR6 Approval Plenary: This session is expected to finalize the contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report. Arrangements for the meeting are still pending. **dates:** 26 July - 9 August 2021 (TBC) **location:** online (TBC) **www:** <https://www.ipcc.ch/calendar/>

Food Systems Summit: As part of the UN Decade of Action to achieve the SDGs by 2030, the Food Systems Summit aims to provide a platform for ambitious new actions, innovative solutions, and plans to transform food systems and leverage these shifts to deliver progress across all of the SDGs. **dates:** September or October 2021 (tentative) **location:** (TBC) **www:** <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit>

2021 UN Biodiversity Conference (CBD COP 15): CBD COP 15, the 10th meeting of the COP serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, and the 4th meeting of the COP serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing are scheduled to take place to review the achievement and delivery of the CBD’s Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. It is also expected to take a final decision on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, as well as decisions on related topics, including capacity building and resource mobilization.

dates: 11- 24 October 2021 **location:** Kunming, China **www:** <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/>

Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 26): UNFCCC COP 26, the 16th meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 16), and the third meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA 3) are expected to convene one year after the originally scheduled after it was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. **dates:** 1-12 November 2021 **location:** Glasgow, UK **www:** <https://unfccc.int>

UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-5) Resumed Session: Convening under the theme, “Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the SDGs,” UNEA-5 will provide a platform for discussing and implementing nature-based solutions that contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, by holistically addressing its social, economic, and environmental dimensions. Building on the February 2021 online session, the meeting will discuss ways to ensure that policies for economic recovery following COVID-19 lead to a resilient and inclusive post-pandemic world. A special UNEA session to commemorate the 50th anniversary of UNEP’s establishment will be held for two days (5-6 March 2022) in conjunction with the resumed session of UNEA-5. **dates:** 28 February – 4 March 2022 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **www:** <https://www.unep.org/environmentassembly/>

Second UN Ocean Conference: The Second Ocean Conference will take place in Lisbon, Portugal. The overarching theme of the Conference is “Scaling up ocean action based on science and innovation for the implementation of Goal 14: stocktaking, partnerships and solutions.” **dates:** Summer 2022 **location:** Lisbon, Portugal **www:** <https://oceanconference.un.org/>

Seventh International Marine Debris Conference: The meeting will be held at the Busan Exhibition and Convention Center, bringing together close to 50 countries and regions to discuss a range of topics including prevention of microplastics, collaboration in the private sector, effective implementation of laws-regulations-policies. This is the first time that the conference, held under the auspices of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA), US, takes place in a country other than the US. **dates:** September 2022 **location:** Busan, Republic of Korea

Glossary

2030 Agenda	2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
BBNJ	Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
COP	Conference of the Parties
IOC-UNESCO	Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
IUU	Illegal, unreported and unregulated
MPAs	Marine Protected Areas
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
WTO	World Trade Organization