

## UN Ocean Conference Highlights: Thursday, 30 June 2022

On the penultimate day of the second UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon, Portugal, delegates met in plenary to hear general statements and participated in two interactive dialogues which also convened during the day.

### General Debate

Several delegations indicated their support for concluding negotiations towards a new agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ), as well as their support for a new treaty to address plastic pollution. Many also shared their progress fulfilling their 2017 voluntary commitments.

President Emmanuel Macron, France, reviewed progress on commitments and encouraged tangible results through systematic action frameworks, highlighting EU decisions on climate goals for 2030 and 2050 and reporting intent to co-host the UN Ocean Conference in 2025 with Costa Rica.

BULGARIA highlighted their investment in marine biodiversity conservation. CAMEROON called for an inclusive blue economy fund. FINLAND announced 11 voluntary commitments worth EUR 100 million and the COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT announced the Blue Charter Report Project Incubator with the target to incubate 30 country-led ocean solutions.

COSTA RICA highlighted their work in the GloLitter Partnership Project, and on the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People. CÔTE D'IVOIRE highlighted, *inter alia*, the country's focus on sustainable fisheries, including annual no-take periods and VIET NAM emphasized the need for partnerships, new technologies and tools.

HAITI called for urgent action to address, among others, ocean acidification, overfishing, and ocean dead zones. DOMINICAN REPUBLIC underlined cost-effective, ecosystem approaches, prioritizing nature-based solutions for coordinated ocean action. NIGERIA stressed the importance of meeting the 30X30 commitment to restore the health and resilience of the ocean.

YEMEN sounded the alarm about a potential oil spill from the FSO Safer in the Red Sea, which contains over 1 million barrels of oil. NAURU shared the challenges of small island development States (SIDS) and called on developed countries to take responsibility for historical climate change. PACIFIC ISLAND FORUM reflected leadership in providing blue Pacific solutions, underscoring the need to address nuclear safety measures and waste management.

CAMBODIA highlighted their designation of a marine protected area (MPA) covering 405 square kilometers. COOK ISLANDS reported on the 2017 designation of the Moare Moana marine park, entirely covering their 1.9 million square kilometer exclusive economic zone (EEZ). SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS reported on the country's marine management area. FRENCH POLYNESIA asserted islands are a source of opportunity and solutions, outlining alternative development that values traditional

knowledge and solidarity between generations, highlighting the commitment to 1 million sq km of ocean.

ARMENIA noted the country's partnership with UNESCO on a communication campaign for a new generation of effective change makers, including for the oceans. BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION highlighted, *inter alia*: Blueing the Black Sea GEF Regional project to address pollution and blue economy investments; and Virtual Blue Career Center to promote synergies in the region.

BANGLADESH emphasized capacity development as paramount to generate, integrate and render accessible ocean data, information and knowledge. UNITED ARAB EMIRATES committed to, *inter alia*, focus on ecosystem restoration by planting 100 million mangroves by 2030, and establishing a marine innovation park as a center of excellence for science and research.

UN EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC, AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (UNESCO) welcomed the Framework of Ocean Decade Alliance and reported 160 actions for transformative science in every ocean basin in the world. NIPPON FOUNDATION reviewed efforts to strengthen training opportunities of SIDS, particularly of young researchers.

BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS called for a paradigm shift, reclassifying SIDS to large ocean countries. The NORTH-EAST ATLANTIC FISHERIES COMMISSION called for coordinated partnerships and INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE COUNCIL called for new ways for self-organizing, bottom-up learning and impact networks to share ocean openly.

INTERNATIONAL SEABED AUTHORITY recalled the General Assembly decision to maintain the deep seabed beyond national jurisdiction as the common heritage of humankind.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) explained that oceans, rivers and lakes can feed the world only if they are "valued responsibly, sustainably and equitably," pointing to the Blue Transformation Roadmap 2022-2030. OCEANO AZUL FOUNDATION called on government leaders to put in place legal binding protocols.

Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of Marine Environment Including Socioeconomic Aspects highlighted bridging the science policy interface through briefs and assessments relevant to decision makers, as well as building capacity in ocean governance.

COMUNIDAD Y BIODIVERSIDAD called for democratizing science and incorporating a human rights-based approach, sharing their plan for a sustainable fisheries app, reaching 300,000 people in Latin America by 2030.

UNITED CITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS appealed to make explicit in the UN Ocean Conference declaration the knowledge and experiences of local and regional governments for sustainable management models.

The AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION discussed the African Blue Economy Strategy to promote the development of marine resources. THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY highlighted the recent launch of the Nuclear

TECHNOLOGY for Controlling Plastic Pollution (NUTEC Plastics), to monitor and track plastic in the ocean and improve recycling rates. ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN, CARIBBEAN, AND PACIFIC STATES drew attention to their Strategic Plan for Fisheries and Aquaculture. UN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (UN-ESCAP) noted their provision of technical assistance and climate finance in support of ocean action.

INSTITUTE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY, with the CHILDREN AND YOUTH MAJOR GROUP, WORLD OCEAN NETWORK and the CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF SAINT JOSEPH OF PEACE, CARITAS OCEANIA and others, joined calls for a moratorium on seabed mining. GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD INITIATIVE called for the ratification of the Agreement on Port State Measures to address IUU fishing.

MISSIONARY SOCIETY OF SAINT COLUMBAN lamented the absence at this Conference of many Pacific Island people, especially women, and urged they be invited as guests at future ocean conferences. HEIRS TO OUR OCEANS underscored the need for intergenerational equity, calling for lowering the conference registration age to 15. EARTH ECO INTERNATIONAL underlined the need for youth leadership in conservation decision making.

CONSEIL DES INNU DE EKUANITSHIT called for better protection of MPAs and migratory species and GREENX TELEMECHANICS LIMITED said it is “time for the world to wake up.”

BRAZILIAN HUMPBACK WHALE INSTITUTE called for the voice of civil society to be heard first, not last and BLUE VENTURES emphasized, *inter alia*, listening to fishers, securing their preferential access rights, and prioritizing local food and job security.

STIFTELSEN STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL WATER INSTITUTE encouraged, *inter alia*, local to global actions to increase investment in science and education, include all stakeholders and innovate transformative, replicable, scalable solutions.

GLOBAL GHOST GEAR INITIATIVE applauded the IMO decision on mandatory marking of fishing gear. SAILORS FOR THE SEA JAPAN pointed to their Blue Seafood Guide. UNA PUNTA CINCO highlighted the commitment to ocean action of the Regional Climate Conference of Youth in Latin America.

OCEANCARE called to recognize ocean noise as marine pollution and ban ocean-floor drilling operations. POLISH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES supported global ocean literacy programmes. GLOBAL OCEAN BIODIVERSITY INITIATIVE called attention to their work in marine science including the description of ecologically or biologically significant marine areas.

The NETWORK OF MPA MANAGERS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN called for a new global alliance to boost MPA financing. The SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY ON OCEAN RESEARCH highlighted work to promote networking across all ocean science disciplines. OCEAN CONSERVANCY stressed that ocean action commitments need to be accompanied by sustainable finance and comprehensive implementation plans.

MARINE STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL flagged need for sustainable fishing for a blue food revolution, pledge that the proportion of catch from oceans will expand to be a third of global catch by 2030. UPWELL TURTLES pledged USD 750,000 over two years to monitor critically endangered Pacific leatherback turtle populations.

ØRSTED affirmed the potential of an energy transition using offshore wind. BLUEBIO ALLIANCE spoke on scaling ocean action through innovative technologies. LIVE OCEAN drew attention to the Voices of a Healthy Ocean Declaration, and pledged to support science partnerships and solutions.

EDP GROUP announced plans to expand renewable energy provision in Europe by 2025. BLUE FOREST called for improved satellite imagery to monitor mangroves and strengthening of private sector financing for to expand mangrove forests.

RARE noted mayoral actions to establish no-take zones in the coral triangle and in meso-America to encourage sustainable fisheries. NATIONAL OCEANOGRAPHY CENTRE, UK called for the promotion of the ocean-biodiversity nexus, and for the enhancement of marine scientific research, noting the importance of an underwater ocean sensing network.

MUN IMPACT emphasized the need for courage to “walk the unconventional path” to confront the threats to the ocean, including by promoting ocean education for youth, women, Indigenous Peoples and vulnerable groups. INTERNATIONAL UNION OF SOCIALIST YOUTH called for a ban on bottom trawling, and a ban on deep seabed mining.

CANADIAN PARKS AND WILDERNESS SOCIETY highlighted a new MPA grounded in traditional knowledge and laws and supported by a robust management plan on indigenous lands.

SWEN BLUE OCEAN called attention to the Blue Ocean Impact Fund to support entrepreneurial ventures supporting ocean actions.

### *Interactive Dialogues*

**Increasing scientific knowledge and developing research capacity and transfer of marine technology:** Co-Chair Amélie de Montchalin, Minister, Ecological Transition and Territorial Cohesion, France, opened the dialogue, underscoring the need to share ocean science. Co-Chair Franz Tattenbach, Minister, Environment and Energy, Costa Rica, said ocean science allows us to understand human impacts and take tangible action, including meeting national voluntary commitments.

Moderator Margaret Leinen, Director, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, called for greater ambition, including for a 21st century ocean observation system.

Vladimir Ryabinin, Executive Secretary, IOC-UNESCO, noted that ocean science receives only 1.7% of research funding even though the ocean covers 70% of the planet. Jane Lubchenco, US, said the world needs science to save itself from fantasy and called for a new narrative that moves from “the ocean is too big to fix” to “the ocean is too big to ignore.”

Peter de Menocal, President, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, emphasized understanding the oceans’ ability to absorb carbon and prioritizing collective benefits for mankind. Hide Sakaguchi, President, Ocean Policy Research Institute of Sasakawa Peace Foundation, highlighted technology that minimizes human impact, explaining that smart fishing systems yield the required volume of fish at the required time.

Cameron Diver, The Pacific Community, New Caledonia, said investment in marine technology, including research vessels, is critical to Pacific states’ scientific sovereignty. Ratih Pangestuti, National Research and Innovation Agency, Indonesia, emphasized including indigenous communities in scientific cruises, and increasing ocean literacy and citizen science.

In the discussion, Antigua and Barbuda, for the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), said they “remember the commitments and wait patiently for them to materialize only to be disappointed,” and invited countries to join the “Declaration for the enhancement of marine scientific knowledge, research capacity and transfer of marine technology to SIDS.”

PORTUGAL called for an integrated approach that addresses pollution from land and sea sources, and a shift to a blue mind to work with, not against the ocean.

GUATEMALA, with AOSIS, Tuvalu, for the PSIDS, TANZANIA, ARGENTINA, BANGLADESH, US, and Pakistan, for the G-77/CHINA, called for technology and knowledge transfer to tackle disparities in achieving SDG targets.

UN-ESCAP shared their commitment to convening governments to enhance regional cooperation on ocean work. CHILE underscored the importance of science, monitoring and clear reporting to meet ocean commitments. SWEDEN highlighted the importance of marine spatial planning. OCEAN NETWORKS CANADA highlighted Indigenous Peoples’ participation in the blue economy.

EU shared their objective to become the first carbon-neutral continent in the world. DOMINICAN REPUBLIC stressed the value of South-South cooperation.

GLOBAL FISHING WATCH shared its efforts to make publicly available knowledge about ocean-related human activities.

SPAIN supported collaboration, capacity building, partnerships, and training and research in strategic countries. CANADA outlined their use of marine technologies. CHINA and EUROGOOS talked about the importance of engaging with many countries to promote knowledge sharing. ALGERIA called for information on the knowledge gaps of African countries.

**Enhancing the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law, as reflected in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS):**

Co-Chair Gudlaugur Thór Thórdarson, Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate, Iceland, called UNCLOS one of the world's greatest achievements, giving us stability and predictability and contributing to peace and security, even though threats such as acidification were not known to its drafters. Co-Chair Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Singapore, said UNCLOS strikes the right balance—enabling economic growth and protecting the marine environment.

Calling UNCLOS a robust and enduring framework, Alexander Tudhope, University of Edinburgh, UK, also noted that the state of the ocean has declined over the forty years since its passage and asked how we implement international law for the benefit of future generations.

Michael Lodge, Secretary-General, International Seabed Authority, said UNCLOS stands as a test for multilateralism and cautioned that mandates be respected, not undermined.

Vladimir Jares, Director of Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, reflected on the benefits of implementing international law on promoting science and innovation, and, on the other hand, the essential role of science in global policy making. He called for enhanced capacity of states to participate in international ocean governance, as well as in implementing international agreements.

Jia Yu, Deputy Director-General, Institute for Marine Affairs, Ministry of Natural Resources, China, shared several examples on how China complies with international instruments for the benefit of ecosystems and international cooperation.

Rena Lee, President, BBNJ Intergovernmental Conference (IGC), hailed UNCLOS as the anchor and foundation of the work of the IGC and hoped that the outcome instrument will include processes that establish how different actors will interact with one another.

Mārtiņš Pāparinskis, University College London, noted challenges associated with sea level rise and maritime boundaries, and highlighted the potential for UNCLOS as a platform for harmonization of states' rights and obligations, also noting the importance of advisory opinions by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

Jakob Granit, Director General, Agency for Marine and Water Management, Sweden, and Chair, Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, emphasized sustained investment in ocean management, regional collaboration, and marine spatial planning.

Vanuatu, on behalf of PSIDS, called for targeted cooperation and coordination on implementation of UNCLOS and called for support of the Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the Face of Climate Change-Related Sea-Level Rise. VANUATU underscored the obligations of states to protect the rights of present and future generations against adverse effects of climate change.

VIET NAM called for full implementation of UNCLOS. ECUADOR reminded delegates that UNCLOS was not intended to be static law, but a living framework that could be developed and amplified through agreements. TIMOR-LESTE stressed the importance of sovereignty of seas for SIDS, noting that UNCLOS has provided tools to finalize maritime boundaries.

The PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM said UNCLOS is the blueprint for the rights and entitlements of their people and identified nuclear contamination as a danger to the sustainable use of oceans and conservation of marine ecosystems.

FINLAND called for the establishment of MPAs and the protection of the high seas. ARGENTINA said UNCLOS is in good shape because its “organs are in good condition,” and highlighted the needs of developing countries for achieving the SDGs. ISRAEL asked for “zero tolerance” against marine environmental offenders.

The INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE COUNCIL called out countries that exploit marine resources in developing country territories, offering as an example, fisheries in Cabo Verde, where the country must invest in conservation but receives little of the profits from the fisheries.

BANGLADESH recalled that implementing ocean science will be challenging for developing countries who lack capacity and technology.

UK spoke about establishing partnerships and commitments to fund diverse projects in support of the ocean. FRENCH POLYNESIA cited their longstanding efforts to protect the ocean and called for a high-seas protected area. The PHILIPPINES shared that actions by a neighboring country had damaged their marine environment and that UNCLOS provided a mechanism for recourse. WOMEN4OCEANS noted that biodiversity and climate change were not concerns when UNCLOS was adopted and, with WWF and YOUTH FOR EUROPE, called for a moratorium on deep seabed mining.

CHILE favored swift action to conclude the BBNJ process and, for ISA, said a 15-year moratorium would be rational to allow for development of scientific norms in light of knowledge gaps. On plastic pollution, INDONESIA supported establishment of a global agreement and said reduction targets must be credible, inclusive and science based.

FAO outlined its role in fisheries fora and agreements, and tracking progress under SDG 14. IUCN urged completing the BBNJ negotiations in 2022. YOUTH FOR EUROPE said decisions made today directly affect our future and called for active inclusion in ocean governance decisions.

In his final remarks, Co-Chair Balakrishnan recalled that the oceans were here before us and will be here after us, explaining that the reasons for ocean law are really about human wellbeing.

### *In the Corridors*

With a day left to go at the second UN Ocean Conference, delegates managed to complete the general debate, with non-state actors taking the spotlight in a near-empty plenary hall. Their clear voices filled the void, with strong calls for a moratorium on deep seabed mining. “We cannot afford the risk,” shared one youth delegate, “we are in the midst of a climate crisis that could be worsened by drilling into the seabed.”

Others fixated on the “injustice” of being cut off mid-sentence during the general debate. “There is nobody here to hear us anyway,” said one exasperated participant, “why not just allow us to really share our views?” Another queried why those “actually doing the work” were allocated less speaking time than “those only outlining plans to do the work.” “I would give the UN a one-star rating for their commitment to stakeholder participation,” said one delegate.

In the dialogues, one voice pierced through the dense sessions, directly warning that decisions made (on seabed mining) will affect their future for decades to come. A poignant reminder was given by one co-chair in closing who said the ocean was here before we existed and will be here after we are gone. Our laws to protect the ocean are really about protecting the wellbeing of humankind.

The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis of the UN Ocean Conference will be available on Monday, 4 July 2022 at [enb.iisd.org/2022-un-ocean-conference](http://enb.iisd.org/2022-un-ocean-conference)

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