United Nations

Framework Convention on Climate Change

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Oceans and Law of the Sea

Contribution from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change secretariat

I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) secretariat ("the secretariat") seeks to contribute to the United Nations General Assembly resolution entitled "Oceans and the law of the sea" (78/69), of 5 December 2023 entitled "Oceans and the law of the sea". More specifically, in accordance with paragraph 361 of the said resolution, this report will cover the main recent developments in the UNFCCC process on the theme "Marine ecosystem restoration" that would be the focus of the twenty-sixth meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law, to be held from 22 to 26 June 2026.

2. Parties have recognized the importance of protecting the ocean and its ecosystems in the Convention and the Paris Agreement:

3. In the Convention, Parties agreed to protect the climate system (Article 2), defined as the totality of the atmosphere, hydrosphere, biosphere and geosphere and their interactions (Article 1.3, Article 4.1 (d)).

4. In the Paris Agreement, Parties noted in its preamble the importance of ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems, including oceans, and the protection of biodiversity, recognized by some cultures as Mother Earth.

II. Adoption of and update on the mandate on ocean-based climate action

5. At the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 25) in 2019, in the Chile Madrid Time for Action (Decision 1/CP.25, para. 30), Parties highlighted the importance of the ocean, including as an integral part of the Earth's climate system, and of ensuring the integrity of ocean and coastal ecosystems in the context of climate change. COP 25 mandated the first Ocean and climate change dialogue to be convened in 2020, drawing upon the knowledge and scientific findings from the IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a changing climate.

6. At COP 26 in 2021, in the Glasgow Climate Pact (Decision 1/CP.26 Paras. 60-61), building on the outcomes of the first ocean and climate change dialogue in 2020, Parties invited the relevant work programmes and constituted bodies under the UNFCCC to consider how to integrate and strengthen ocean-based action in their existing mandates and workplans and to report on these activities within the existing reporting processes. Parties also invited the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) Chair to hold an annual ocean and climate change dialogue to strengthen ocean-based action.

7. At COP 27 in 2022, in the COP Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan (Decision 1/CP.27 para. 50) and the CMA Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan (Decision 1/CMA.4 para. 79) Parties were encouraged to consider, as appropriate, ocean-based action in their national climate goals and in the implementation of these goals, including but not limited to nationally determined contributions (NDCs), long-term strategies and adaptation communications.

8. At COP28, in 2023, the outcome of the first global stocktake (Decision 1/CMA.5, para. 180), welcomed the outcomes of and the informal summary report on the 2023 ocean dialogue and encouraged further strengthening of ocean-based action, as appropriate. It invited Parties to preserve and restore oceans and coastal ecosystems and scale up, as appropriate, ocean-based mitigation action (paragraph 35). It encouraged the implementation of integrated, multi-sectoral solutions, such as nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based approaches, and protecting, conserving and restoring nature and ecosystems, including marine and coastal ecosystems, which may offer economic, social and environmental benefits such as improved resilience and well-being (paragraph 55). Further, Parties noted that ecosystem-based approaches, including ocean-based adaptation and resilience measures, can reduce a range of climate change risks and provide multiple co-benefits (paragraph 56).

9. At the same COP, in Decision 2/CMA.5, para.6, Parties adopted the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience (Decision 3/CMA.4),which includes a range of thematic and process targets for climate adaptation and resilience. A key target is to reduce climate impacts on ecosystems and biodiversity by accelerating ecosystem-based adaptation and nature-based solutions, including the management, restoration, and conservation of terrestrial, inland water, mountain, marine, and coastal ecosystems.

10. At COP30 in 2025, Parties adopted the Global Mutirao: Uniting humanity in a global mobilization against climate change, that emphasizes the importance of conserving, protecting and restoring marine ecosystems to achieve the Paris Agreement temperature goal, while underscoring the urgent need to address, in a synergistic manner, the interlinked crisis of climate and ocean degradation.

11. At the same COP, Parties also adopted the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) decision, which contains in its annex, 59 indicators with suggestions for disaggregation including by coastal and marine ecosystems. Further, Parties in addressing the matter Cooperation with other international organizations inter-alia noted the importance of cooperation amongst the Rio Conventions, as appropriate. The High-Level Champions for Climate Action launched the Global Climate Action Agenda 2026-30, including on "hundreds of million hectares of forest, land and ocean protected or restored."

III. Marine ecosystem restoration in the ocean and climate change dialogue 2025

12. In accordance with decision 1/CP.27, the Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan, developed country Parties selected Ulrik Lenaerts from Belgium as their co-facilitator. Developing country Parties selected two co-facilitators who will be co-facilitating the ocean dialogue on a rotational basis, starting with Carlos Márcio Bicalho Cozendey from Brazil in 2025, and Sivendra Michael from Fiji in 2026.[1]

13. The 2025 Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue ("Dialogue") was held in hybrid mode over two days on 17–18 June 2025 in conjunction with the sixtieth session of the subsidiary bodies, Bonn, Germany. The dialogue focused on three topics: Ocean-based measures in the NDCs, second, the ocean under the GGA, and third, Ocean-climate-biodiversity synergies. The cross-cutting issues included means of implementation (MOI), particularly finance, as well as science.

14. Based on the Dialogue proceedings, the co-facilitators prepared the informal summary report with key messages, including considerations for COP30. More specifically, the relevant messages for marine ecosystem restoration included:

[1] See letter of the Chair of the SBSTA, Adonia Ayebare, dated 24 January 2025.

(a) By including the ocean in NDCs, Parties can collectively strengthen climate ambition, while maximizing climate and biodiversity co-benefits. A wide range of ocean-based mitigation and adaption measures, targets and policies are available for inclusion in NDCs, that are aligned with the 1.5°C target of the Paris Agreement. These include integrated coastal zone management, nature-based solutions (NbS), the conservation, restoration, and management of coastal blue carbon ecosystems, climate-smart and resilient fisheries and aquaculture solutions, marine renewable energy technologies, decarbonization of marine transport, marine spatial planning, marine protected areas, and ecosystem-based adaptation;

(b) Innovative mechanisms such as de-risking strategies and blended finance models (Blue Bonds, insurance schemes, guarantee funds) show potential to unlock ocean-related investments. While high costs and uncertain returns challenge emerging areas like blue carbon ecosystem restoration and offshore renewables, long-term investments can reduce costs, scale solutions, and align biodiversity and climate goals;

(c) Recognizing co-benefits of ocean initiatives—such as mangrove conservation and restoration and fisheries management for both carbon and, respectively, disaster risk reduction and food security—can elevate their value in climate finance while ensuring whole of ecosystem approaches.

15. Additionally, during the Dialogue discussions, it was noted that many adaptation priorities such as marine protected areas (MPAs), coastal protection, fisheries, and blue carbon ecosystems, are directly linked to biodiversity conservation objectives. Integrated national ocean policies, marine spatial planning, and ecosystem-based adaptation offer practical pathways to operationalize this alignment. Some Parties mentioned building capacity and increasing integration of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) with the new NDCs, recognizing that ecosystem restoration brings mitigation co-benefits and food security for communities.

16. Additionally, Parties are encouraged to consider the key messages contained in the informal summary reports of the 2023 and 2024 Dialogues on marine ecosystem restoration.

IV. Ecosystem marine restoration in the national adaptation plans

17. In the 2025 report by the UNFCCC secretariat on Progress in the process to formulate and implement NAPs, it was reported that the conservation and restoration of ecosystems involves protecting natural habitats, preventing degradation and rehabilitating damaged ecosystems to maintain biodiversity and ecosystem services that are crucial for climate regulation, food and water security, and planetary well-being. Healthy ecosystems such as forests, wetlands, coral reefs and mangroves serve as natural defences against floods, droughts, sea level rise and heatwaves, thereby supporting climate adaptation goals under the Paris Agreement.

18. The progress report also showcased good practices and case studies on ecosystem marine restoration. Saint Lucia's NAP and GCF-supported FISH-ADAPT project address ecosystem health and fish stock sustainability through nature-based solutions and sustainable fishing practices, improving the resilience of boat ramps, jetties, storage buildings and processing sites against storm and sea level rise, as well as enhancement of the resilience of coastal and inland aquaculture. The GCF-financed project Resilient Puna: Ecosystem based Adaptation for sustainable High Andean communities and ecosystems in Peru aims to strengthen the knowledge and participation in climate planning of the High Andean communities, establish sustainable financing for ecosystem-based adaptation measures and improve access to public and private financing for climate-resilient initiatives to restore, conserve and manage Puna ecosystems using ecosystem-based adaptation and climate-resilient livelihoods.

V. Marine ecosystem restoration in the nationally determined contributions

19. In the 2025 NDCs synthesis report by the secretariat, Parties reported a significant increase in ocean-based climate action in their new NDCs compared with in their previous NDCs, with an additional 39 per cent including an ocean-based reference in their new NDCs. As of 30 November 2025, of the 98 Parties that have submitted a new NDC, 75 per cent included at least one explicit reference to the ocean, with a total of 346 adaptation measures and 95 mitigation measures, along with 30 cross-cutting measures on the ocean being reported.

20. Most ocean-based adaptation and mitigation actions were noted in the form of policies, programmes and initiatives, with 53 quantified targets identified (41 for adaptation and 12 for mitigation). The adaptation targets include measurable outcomes like hectares of restored mangroves. Of the 52 per cent of Parties that reported on ocean-based mitigation measures, 15 per cent explicitly referenced Decision 1/CMA.5 paragraph 35 on preserving and restoring the ocean and coastal ecosystems and scaling up ocean-based mitigation action.

21. Overall, 84 ocean-based adaptation measures support the conservation and restoration of blue carbon ecosystems through NbS. These include mangrove reforestation, coral reef rehabilitation, seagrass restoration and MPAs. NbS measures focus on conserving, restoring, and sustainably managing ecosystems to enhance resilience to climate change. Actions include planting and protecting mangroves[2], wetlands[3], seagrass[4], and coral habitats[5] to strengthen natural defenses against flooding, erosion, and biodiversity loss. They also involve ecosystem restoration[6], such as restoration and conservation of coastal biomes[7], as well as the protection of coastal ecosystems in order to maintain or enhance other ecosystem-related services.[8]

22. A total of 25 MPAs and other area-based management measures were included in the NDCs.[9] These measures focus on conserving and sustainably managing marine and coastal ecosystems through the designation and effective management of protected zones. They mostly include the establishment or expanding MPA coverage[10], ensuring ecological representativeness and connectivity, and integrating participatory management approaches. Measures also involve monitoring, control, and surveillance systems to enforce protection[11], as well as rehabilitation and restoration of degraded marine and coastal areas.[12]

23. A total of 14 marine biodiversity conservation measures were included in the NDCs.[13] These measures focus on protecting, restoring, and sustainably managing marine species and ecosystems. They include monitoring and addressing emerging threats such as invasive species and ocean acidification[14], implementing species-specific action plans[15], and restoring

[2] Bangladesh, Cambodia, Cuba, Cote D'Ivoire, Djibouti, Fiji, Guinea, Liberia, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mexico, Pakistan, Qatar, Sao Tome, Saint Lucia, Solomon Islands, Tonga, United Arab Emirates, Vanuatu, Venezuela

[3] Bangladesh, Canada, Cuba, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mexico

[4] Bangladesh, Cambodia, Jamaica, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia

[5] Bangladesh, Belize, Cambodia, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia, Niue, Qatar, Saint Lucia, Sao Tome, United Arab Emirates

[6] Australia, Azerbaijan, Cabo Verde, Colombia, Indonesia, Mauritius, Mexico, Peru, Suriname, United Kingdom, Uruguay, Vanuatu

[7] Bahamas, Belize, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Ecuador, European Union, Guinea, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Morocco, Saint Lucia, Singapore, Sri Lanka

[8] Belize, Cambodia, Mexico, Niue, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tuvalu

[9] Angola, Cabo Verde, Fiji, Lebanon, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia, Morocco, Nigeria, Niue, Qatar, Tonga, Tuvalu, United Kingdom, Vanuatu, Suriname

[10] Angola, Cabo Verde, Fiji, Lebanon, Madagascar, Mauritania, Mauritius, Maldives, Micronesia, Morocco, Niue, Nigeria, Qatar, Suriname, Tonga

[11] Cabo Verde, Madagascar, Mauritania, Mexico, Tonga, Tuvalu

[12] Cabo Verde, United Kingdom, Vanuatu

[13] Cabo Verde, Canada, Lebanon, Maldives, Mexico, Micronesia, Niue, Qatar, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sao Tome, Venezuela

[14] Maldives, Micronesia, Niue, Qatar

[15] Lebanon, Maldives, Sao Tome

key habitats like coral reefs and mangroves[16]. Strengthening institutional capacity, legal frameworks, and monitoring systems supports effective conservation and aligns with the targets of the Convention on Biological Diversity.[17]

24. A total of 42 carbon sequestration were included in the NDCs.[18] These measures focus on restoring and managing coastal ecosystems to enhance carbon sequestration. Actions include restoring mangroves, seagrasses, salt marshes, and other coastal habitats to improve ecosystem functionality and capture atmospheric CO_2.[19] Policies often formalize no-net-loss approaches for coastal wetlands,[20] and involve multi-stakeholder partnerships with local communities, private landowners, and policymakers.[21] In addition, scientific research, monitoring, and mapping of blue carbon stocks support evidence-based management, inform policy, and identify opportunities for ecosystem-based mitigation and sustainable livelihoods.[22]

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[16] Lebanon

[17] Cabo Verde, Mexico, Venezuela

[18] Bangladesh, Belize, Canada, Chile, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Mauritius, Micronesia, Monaco, Niue, Russian Federation, Tuvalu, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States of America

[19] Bahamas, Bangladesh, Canada, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Cote d'Ivoire, Indonesia, Jamaica, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia, Tuvalu, United Arab Emirates, United States of America, Russian Federation

[20] European Union, Jamaica, Niue

[21] Belize, United Kingdom

[22] Belize, Indonesia, Kenya, Mauritius, Monaco, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, Venezuela