



03 August 2021

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## Oceans and Law of the Sea

### Contribution from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

#### 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 76/72 of 9 December 2021 for the report entitled “Oceans and the law of the sea” on developments and issues relating to ocean affairs and the law of the sea. The contribution consists of a summary of developments from September 2021 to Aug 2022.
2. Parties to the UNFCCC have recognized the importance of protecting the ocean and its ecosystems in the Convention and Paris Agreement:
  - (a) 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);
  - (b) In the [Paris Agreement](#), Parties noted the importance of ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems, including oceans, and the protection of biodiversity, recognized by some cultures as Mother Earth.
3. At COP 25, the [Chile Madrid Time for Action](#) 2019, governments recognized the need to strengthen the understanding of, and action on, ocean and climate change under the UNFCCC. COP25 mandated the first [Ocean and climate change dialogue](#), drawing upon the knowledge and scientific findings from the IPCC [Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a changing climate](#).

#### II. Adoption of mandate on ocean-based climate action

4. At COP 26, in the [Glasgow Climate Pact](#) 2021, building on the outcomes of the first ocean and climate change dialogue in 2020, **governments permanently anchored the inclusion of strengthened ocean-based action under the UNFCCC multilateral process**. Parties:
  - (a) Noted the importance of ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems, including forests, the ocean and the cryosphere, and the protection of biodiversity (preamble);
  - (b) Emphasized the importance of protecting, conserving and restoring nature and ecosystems, including forests and other terrestrial and marine ecosystems, to achieve the long-term global goal of the Convention by acting as sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases and protecting biodiversity, while ensuring social and environmental safeguards (para 2);

(c) Recognized the importance of protecting, conserving and restoring ecosystems to deliver crucial services, including acting as sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases, reducing vulnerability to climate change impacts and supporting sustainable livelihoods, including for indigenous peoples and local communities (para 50);

(d) 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, as appropriate (para 60);

(e) Invited the SBSTA Chair to hold an annual Ocean and climate change dialogue, and prepare an informal summary report that is made available to the COP at each subsequent session (para 61)

### III. Updates on activities under UNFCCC

5. The [research and systematic observation agenda](#) under the UNFCCC continues to identify and discuss updates and needs in regards to systematic observation and research on and of the ocean. Annual mandated dialogues provide the space for these discussions to take place between science and policy makers, most recently: the [Earth information Day 2021](#) and the fourteenth meeting of the [research dialogue 2022](#) as input into negotiations.

6. The Earth information day 2021 emphasized the need for sustainable, long term investment for ocean observations which is critical to enhance understanding of, among other things, the global energy budget, changes in global sea level, ocean circulation, transport of carbon in ocean systems and regional implications for coastal ecosystems of ocean acidification and changes in the carbon cycle. The ocean remains critically under-observed. The models of ocean, climate, and the data being collected in the ocean are now starting to diverge and make the application of models difficult. Ocean observation systems therefore require urgent international support.

7. At SBSTA 52–55, the SBSTA encouraged Parties and relevant organizations to strengthen ocean and cryosphere observations, as well as strengthen observation and research, and address gaps and needs, including with regards to understanding the opportunities for, and challenges of implementing nature-based solutions in ocean ecosystems for adaptation and mitigation action. The SBSTA also noted the need for further understanding of gaps in knowledge on both tipping points and incremental transformations in the climate system, including in the cryosphere and ocean.<sup>1</sup>

8. The fourteenth meeting of the research dialogue discussed research and research capacity building needs, including on short-term climate predictions and regional modelling; ocean and cryosphere; carbon dioxide removal and integrated solutions for adaptation and resilience.

9. At SBSTA 56, the SBSTA encouraged Parties and relevant organizations to strengthen research and research capacity and to address related research needs, as indicated at the fourteenth meeting of the research dialogue, particularly in countries with limited research capacity such as certain developing countries, especially the least developed countries and small island developing States, and to share scientific information globally, including in relation to understanding climate change impacts on and risks for the ocean and cryosphere, and related ecosystems.<sup>2</sup>

10. The [Nairobi work programme on adaptation](#) (NWP) supports implementation of adaptation through knowledge sharing. A key focus area is on [the oceans, coastal areas and ecosystems](#). In this context, the [NWP expert group on oceans](#) has been working since 2019 to address the specific knowledge needs of countries in oceans, coastal areas and ecosystems.

11. The expert group curated knowledge in a report on how countries and coastal communities can build resilience and address challenges in adapting to the adverse impacts of climate change: UNFCCC. 2021. [Enhancing resilience of oceans, coastal areas and](#)

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<sup>1</sup> See FCCC/SBSTA/2021/3, paragraphs 62–76.

<sup>2</sup> See FCCC/SBSTA/2022/L.14, paragraph 8.

[ecosystems through collaborative partnerships](#). The report highlights solutions and good practices for enhancing the resilience of oceans, coastal areas and ecosystems through collaborative partnerships and provides an overview of knowledge gaps and opportunities for coordinated action to address them. The members of the expert group represent United Nations organizations such as FAO, the IPCC, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, the UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and the United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea.

12. The expert group also provided a supplement to the National Adaptation Plan technical guidelines, in coordination with the Green Climate Fund and the Least Developed Country expert groups on [Coastal adaptation and nature-based solutions for the implementation of NAPs: Considerations for GCF proposal development](#). The report identifies entry points and financial instruments for enhancing access to the Green Climate Fund for implementing coastal and marine nature-based solutions.

13. The secretariat supported the [Technology Executive Committee](#) (TEC) in organizing two regional expert meetings on green hydrogen and ocean energy technologies during [Asia-Pacific Climate Week 2021](#). Further, the TEC collaborated with Friends of Ecosystem-based Adaptation, IUCN and the NWP on [Technology Day](#), consisting of three thematic sessions on innovative approaches to strengthening coastal and ocean adaptation, which took place during the IUCN World Conservation Congress and at COP 26 with the active participation of representatives of the GCF, the IPCC and UNESCO. The secretariat also supported the TEC and youth NGOs in organizing an expert meeting on youth-led innovative approaches to climate technology and adaptation at the [Global Sustainable Technology and Innovation Community conference](#) in Dubai.

14. The TEC and the [Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage](#) collaborated on the joint policy brief on [Technologies for Averting, Minimizing and Addressing Loss and Damage in Coastal Zones](#). The policy brief provides information on an array of technologies – hardware, software, and orgware – currently available to assess risks, reduce risks, recover and rehabilitate from the impacts of climate change in coastal zones. It also highlights challenges and opportunities of these technologies where improvements can be made to help countries prepare better to deal with adverse impacts of climate change in coastal zones.

15. The most recent [Standing Committee on Finance \(SCF\) forum](#) focused on ‘Finance for Nature-based Solutions’. The first part of the two-part Forum was held in hybrid format in October 2021. A [synthesis report](#) was produced that provides an overview of key nature-based solution concepts, economic considerations, financing options and enabling environments for NbS. The report points to the mitigation and adaptation potential of various coastal and ocean-based activities, socio-economic benefits of NbS in oceans and marine ecosystem, examples of projects supported by bilateral and multilateral institutions, and the need to scale-up financial and technical support to developing countries to formulate and implement climate projects in ocean and marine ecosystem. The report will inform Part II of the Forum focused on NbS implementation and scaling solutions. The Forum is due to take place in-person in 2022, with options for virtual attendance. The dates and venue will be confirmed soon. The SCF will submit a summary report on the Forum to COP27.

16. The [Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue 2022](#), mandated at COP 26 (see paragraph 4 above) took place on 15 June, during the Bonn Climate Change Conference. The dialogue explored options and opportunities for strengthening and integrating national ocean climate action under the Paris Agreement and enabling ocean climate solutions, finance and other support, and optimising institutional connections. Ways forward highlighted the importance of including ocean-related action in countries nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and addressing the finance gap for ocean and climate action (see figure below).



# Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue Ways Forward

15<sup>TH</sup> JUNE  
2022

*the ocean requires our urgent action*

**2050**  
**2030**

**DECARBONISE SHIPPING SECTOR**  
IMO

**CLIMATE SMART FISHERIES & AQUACULTURE**  
FOOD SECURITY

**PROTECT & RESTORE MARINE & COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS**  
MARINE SPATIAL PLANS  
MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

**SCALE UP MARINE RENEWABLE ENERGY**  
LONG HORIZON policy frameworks  
repurpose!

**close the FINANCE GAP**  
private  
blended

**OCEAN SCIENCE**  
OCEAN at the HEART of national policies

**Cross SECTORAL PARTNER SHIPS**

**STEREOTYPED POLICY PROCESSES**

**INTEGRATE UNFCCC BODIES & PROGRAMMES**

**BLUE NDCs & NAPS**

**COP27**  
Nov 2022

**UN OCEAN CONFERENCE**  
June 2022

**OCEAN-BASED CLIMATE SOLUTIONS**

Graphic recording by [StephanieHeckman.com](http://StephanieHeckman.com)  
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#climatevisualstories