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Oceans and the law of the sea

Oceans and the law of the sea

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, which covers the period from 1 September 2025 to 31 August 2026, is submitted pursuant to paragraph 358 of General Assembly resolution [80/110](#), in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report on developments and issues relating to ocean affairs and the law of the sea, including the implementation of the resolution, for consideration at its eighty-first session. The report, which is also submitted to States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, pursuant to article 319 of the Convention, highlights developments reported by the United Nations and its specialized agencies, funds and programmes, as well as by the bodies established under the Convention.

* [A/81/150](#).

I. Introduction

1. The present report highlights key developments relating to ocean affairs and the law of the sea, including activities undertaken by the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations. It should be read together with other reports relevant to oceans and the law of the sea issued by the United Nations during the period under review,¹ as well as the detailed contributions provided by the specialized agencies, funds, programmes and bodies of the United Nations system, and other intergovernmental organizations.²

¹ These include: (a) report of the Secretary-General on oceans and the law of the sea ([A/81/68](#)), which addressed the topic of focus of the twenty-sixth meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea; (b) report of the nineteenth round of informal consultations of States Parties to the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (ICSP19/UNFSA/INF.3); (c) report on the work of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea at its twenty-sixth meeting ([A/81/182](#)); (d) report of the thirty-sixth meeting of the Meetings of States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea ([SPLOS/36/13](#)); (e) report of the Preparatory Commission of the Preparatory Commission for the Entry into Force 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 and the Convening of the First Meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Agreement ([A/AC.296/2026/9](#)); (f) report of the Secretary-General on actions taken by States and regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements in response to relevant paragraphs of General Assembly resolutions 64/72, 66/68, and 77/118 on sustainable fisheries, addressing the impacts of bottom fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks ([A/81/88](#)); (g) report of the Secretary-General on challenges related to sea level rise and ways and approaches to address them ([A/81/74](#)); and (h) other relevant documents, such as the statements by the Chairperson of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf on the progress of work in the Commission ([CLCS/65/1](#), [CLCS/66/2](#) and [CLCS/67/2](#)).

² Inputs have been received from the Bonn Agreement, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), Council of Europe (COE), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Human Rights Council Special Rapporteur on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment (HRCSR Environment), Human Rights Council Special Rapporteur on climate change (HRCSR Climate Change), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), International Court of Justice (ICJ), International Hydrographic Organization (IHO), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), International Maritime Organization (IMO), Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), International Oil Pollution Compensation Funds (IOPC Funds), International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Seabed Authority (ISA), International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), International Whaling Commission (IWC), North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC), Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), North Pacific Marine Science Organization (PICES), Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO), Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), OSPAR Commission, Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions (BRS), Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SCBD), South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP), South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (UNDPPA), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Human

II. Legal and policy framework

2. The General Assembly reaffirmed that the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea³ sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out.⁴ The importance of the Convention for the maintenance of international peace and security and the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and their resources was also recognized.⁵

3. The number of parties to the Convention increased to 172 following the accession of Kyrgyzstan and the ratification of Cambodia.⁶ These States thereby also became parties to the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982,⁷ which now has 155 parties.⁸ The number of parties to the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (Fish Stocks Agreement) increased to 96, with the accessions of Sierra Leone and Albania.⁹

4. 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 (Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction) entered into force on 17 January 2026.¹⁰ As at 31 August 2026, the Agreement had 145 signatories and 93 parties.¹¹ The Preparatory Commission for the Entry into Force of the Agreement and the Convening of the First Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Agreement held its third session from 23 March to 2 April 2026 and recommended a number of documents to the Conference of the

Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA), World Meteorological Organization (WMO), World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism), World Trade Organization (WTO). All contributions are available at: un.org/Depts/los/general_assembly/contributions81.htm.

³ See *Multilateral Treaties Deposited with the Secretary-General*, chap. XXI. Available at <https://treaties.un.org>.

⁴ General Assembly resolution 80/110, Preamble; General Assembly resolution 80/109, para. 2.

⁵ General Assembly resolution 80/110, Preamble.

⁶ C.N.450.2025.TREATIES-XXI.6 (Depositary Notification) of 22 September 2025 and C.N.85.2026.TREATIES-XXI.6 (Depositary Notification) of 16 February 2026, respectively.

⁷ See *Multilateral Treaties Deposited with the Secretary-General*, chap. XXI. Available at <https://treaties.un.org>.

⁸ C.N.451.2025.TREATIES-XXI.6.a (Depositary Notification) of 22 September 2025 and C.N.86.2026.TREATIES-XXI.6.a (Depositary Notification) of 16 February 2026, respectively.

⁹ C.N.69.2026.TREATIES-XXI.7 (Depositary Notification) of 4 February 2026 and C.N.257.2026.TREATIES-XXI.7 (Depositary Notification) of 24 June 2026, respectively.

¹⁰ C.N.447.2025.TREATIES-XXI.10 (Depositary Notification) of 19 September 2025. In accordance with its article 68, paragraph 1, the Agreement entered into force 120 days after the date of deposit of the sixtieth instrument of ratification, approval, acceptance or accession.

¹¹ See *Multilateral Treaties Deposited with the Secretary-General*, chap. XXI. Available at <https://treaties.un.org>.

Parties.¹² The first meeting of the Conference of the Parties will be held at United Nations Headquarters from 11 to 22 January 2027.¹³

5. In relation to the seabed and the ocean floor and subsoil thereof beyond the limits of national jurisdiction (the Area), the Council of the International Seabed Authority continued developing draft regulations on the exploitation of mineral resources in the Area. The Further Revised Consolidated Text of the draft regulations was considered at the thirty-first session of the Council, which also adopted a decision on the approach to the continuation of the elaboration of the draft regulations.¹⁴

III. Maritime spaces and law of the sea proceedings

6. During the reporting period, the Secretary-General received seven deposits of charts and/or lists of geographical coordinates of points under UNCLOS.¹⁵ The Secretariat continued drawing attention to the importance of technical standards for the collection, storage and dissemination of ocean-related geospatial information, including in the context of the implementation of the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction.¹⁶

7. The Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf began its consideration of three sets of recommendations transmitted to it by the respective subcommissions and approved two of these. The Commission also established three new subcommissions.¹⁷

8. The International Seabed Authority reported that 31 contracts for exploration were in force as at 31 March 2026.¹⁸

9. The Special Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea delivered its judgment in the *M/T “Heroic Idun” (No. 2) Case (Marshall Islands/Equatorial Guinea)* on 27 May 2026.¹⁹ The “Zheng He” Case (*Luxembourg v. Mexico*) was discontinued by agreement between the parties.²⁰ Nauru Ocean Resources Inc. and Tonga Offshore Mining Ltd. each instituted proceedings against the International Seabed Authority and the Seabed Disputes Chamber of the Tribunal prescribed provisional measures.²¹

¹² Report of the Preparatory Commission for the Entry into Force 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 and the Convening of the First Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Agreement, [A/AC.296/2026/9](#), para. 71 and annexes I to X.

¹³ Pursuant to General Assembly resolution [80/107](#), para. 6 and Report of the Preparatory Commission, [A/AC.296/2026/9](#), para. 51.

¹⁴ ISA contribution; see also [ISBA/30/C/18](#), [ISBA/31/C/CRP.1/Rev.2](#) and [ISBA/31/C/38](#).

¹⁵ See www.un.org/depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/depositpublicity.htm.

¹⁶ General Assembly resolution [80/110](#), para. 6 and <https://iho.int/en/standards-and-specifications>.

¹⁷ Statements by the Chair on the progress of work in the Commission at its sixty-fifth, sixty-sixth and sixty-seventh sessions, respectively: [CLCS/65/1](#), [CLCS/66/2](#) and [CLCS/67/2](#); Letter dated 31 March 2026 from the Chair of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf addressed to the President of the thirty-sixth Meeting of States Parties, [SPLOS/36/10](#), paras. 8-12.

¹⁸ ISA contribution.

¹⁹ ITLOS contribution. See www.itlos.org/en/main/cases/list-of-cases/the-m/t-heroic-idun-no-2-case-marshall-islands-equatorial-guinea.

²⁰ ITLOS contribution. See www.itlos.org/en/main/cases/list-of-cases/the-zheng-he-case-luxembourg-v-mexico.

²¹ See <https://www.itlos.org/en/main/cases/list-of-cases/case-concerning-an-inquiry-by-the-international-seabed-authority-nauru-ocean-resources-inc-v-international-seabed-authority/> and

10. The International Court of Justice held hearings on the merits in *Arbitral Award of 3 October 1899 (Guyana v. Venezuela)* in May 2026.²²

11. The Permanent Court of Arbitration continued administering two arbitrations brought under Annex VII to UNCLOS. An arbitral award was issued in the *Dispute Concerning Coastal State Rights in the Black Sea, Sea of Azov, and Kerch Strait (Ukraine v. the Russian Federation)* on 22 April 2026.²³ Procedural matters were considered in the *Dispute Concerning the Detention of Ukrainian Naval Vessels and Servicemen (Ukraine v. the Russian Federation)*.²⁴

12. On 2 June 2026, Cambodia instituted compulsory conciliation proceedings regarding its maritime boundary dispute with Thailand, pursuant to article 287 and Annex V to UNCLOS.

IV. Importance of the human dimension

13. A healthy, productive and resilient ocean is essential for sustainable ocean-based economies, nutrition and food security, and underpins deep cultural and social connections of people around the planet.²⁵ However, the growing pressures on the ocean, as well as sea level rise, continued to threaten livelihoods and coastal communities, as well as the enjoyment of human rights.²⁶

14. Irregular migration by sea remained a major challenge, with shifting routes and uneven implementation of search and rescue obligations leading to longer, more hazardous sea journeys.²⁷ Recent increases in piracy and armed robbery at sea threatened the safety of seafarers (see sect. V).²⁸ In addition, attacks and threats on merchant vessels, in particular around the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea, resulted in fatalities and injuries of seafarers and left many stranded at sea, in addition to adversely impacting food security and the global economy.²⁹

15. Despite steady growth continued in global fish production, trade and consumption, fishing remained among the most dangerous occupations in the world, particularly for small-scale fishers.³⁰ There was also a need to increase gender equality in ocean-related sectors.³¹

<https://www.itlos.org/en/main/cases/list-of-cases/case-concerning-an-inquiry-by-the-international-seabed-authority-tonga-offshore-mining-ltd-v-international-seabed-authority/>.

²² See ICJ contribution; see also www.icj-cij.org/case/171.

²³ PCA contribution; see also <https://pca-cpa.org/en/cases/149> and PCA press release of 22 April 2026.

²⁴ PCA contribution; see also <https://pca-cpa.org/en/cases/229> and PCA press release of 5 January 2026.

²⁵ General Assembly resolution 79/314, Annex, “Our ocean, our future: united for urgent action”, para. 3.

²⁶ OHCHR, HRCSR Climate Change and HRCSR Environment contributions; see also Human Rights Council resolution 60/20, para. 1; General Assembly resolutions 76/300 and 80/263; Report of the Secretary-General on challenges related to sea level rise and ways and approaches to address them, A/81/74.

²⁷ IOM and UNHCR contributions; see also IOM World Migration Report 2026, p. 99. Available at <https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2026>.

²⁸ IMO contribution.

²⁹ IMO contribution; see also Security Council Resolution 2817 (2026); IMO Council Decision C/ES.36/D of 19 March 2026; Security Council resolution 2768 (2025).

³⁰ FAO contribution.

³¹ ILO, IMO and UNIDO contributions; see also UNCTAD, 2025 Review of maritime transport (UNCTAD/RMT/2025), p. 62.

A. Labour at sea

16. Working conditions of seafarers continued to be difficult and often characterized by overwork, fatigue and restricted shore leave, as well as risks of detention, abandonment, and violence and harassment on board, which has led to labour shortages in the industry.³² The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) reported 166 new cases of abandonment of seafarers by mid-June 2026.³³

17. In the fisheries and aquaculture sector, trafficking in persons, forced and child labour, discrimination, high injury and fatality rates as well as poor working conditions remained a matter of concern.³⁴ The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) promoted labour rights, social protection and increased safety standards in fisheries and aquaculture, including through trainings and initiatives to facilitate insurance and improve fishing vessel safety standards.³⁵ FAO and ILO launched policy guidance on the elimination of child labour in fisheries and aquaculture.³⁶ IMO has been working with its member States on the introduction of harmonized qualification standards and a minimum level of competence for personnel working on fishing vessels covered by the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel.³⁷

18. The ILO adopted guidelines for fair labour market services for migrant fishers, which aim to promote fairness, transparency and accountability in the recruitment and employment of migrant fishers worldwide.³⁸ A code of practice on occupational safety and health in aquaculture was adopted by a meeting of experts in May 2026, to be considered by the Governing Body of the ILO in November 2026.³⁹

19. ILO also provided technical assistance at the national and regional level to support the ratification and implementation of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, and the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007.⁴⁰ In addition, ILO, FAO and IMO delivered a variety of capacity-building activities, including a workshop on the occasion of the launch of ILO's global partnership for decent work in fisheries; training courses covering the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel, and the promotion of decent working conditions in fisheries; and trainings of trainers for port managers.⁴¹

B. Migration by sea

20. Thousands of people faced peril when taking dangerous journeys by sea, including risks of trafficking in persons, kidnapping, inhuman and degrading treatment and loss of life.⁴² These risks were compounded by uneven implementation

³² ILO contribution; UNCTAD, [2025 Review of maritime transport](#), p. 144-148.

³³ ILO and IMO contributions.

³⁴ ILO contribution.

³⁵ FAO contribution.

³⁶ FAO and ILO contributions; ILO and FAO, Policy guidance on eliminating child labour in fisheries and aquaculture (2025). Available at <https://doi.org/10.54394/WLLR4354>.

³⁷ IMO contribution.

³⁸ ILO contribution; ILO document GB.356/Decisions, p. 18.

³⁹ ILO contribution; ILO, [Code of practice on occupational safety and health in aquaculture](#) (MEOSHA/2026/6).

⁴⁰ ILO contribution.

⁴¹ FAO, ILO and IMO contributions.

⁴² IOM and UNHCR contributions. For detailed information regarding protection concerns in relation to specific maritime routes, see OIM and UNHCR contributions, and IOM, World

of search and rescue and safe disembarkation obligations,⁴³ including due to limited rescue capacity and reported pushbacks at sea.⁴⁴ Figures of fatalities were likely underreported as a result of “invisible shipwrecks”, where vessels vanish without trace.⁴⁵ Many of these issues, as well as the need for stronger international cooperation on missing migrants and humanitarian assistance, were highlighted during the second International Migration Review Forum, held in May 2026.⁴⁶

21. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) continued to advocate for a precautionary and humanitarian approach to distress at sea, and for all persons in distress to be rescued and disembarked to a place of safety, consistent with international law, including through intensified engagement with States and other stakeholders.⁴⁷ The International Organization for Migration (IOM) continued supporting States and partners to operationalize Objective 8 of the Global Compact for Migration and advocated for evidence-based and rights-based approaches to reduce loss of life at sea.⁴⁸ The Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants warned that the growing practice of outsourcing asylum and migration processes, including for people intercepted at sea, entailed serious risks of human rights violations.⁴⁹

22. In November 2025, the International Criminal Police Organization coordinated “Operation Liberterra III” across 119 countries to combat trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling, which included interceptions of high-risk sea departures of overcrowded vessels with minimal safety equipment.⁵⁰

23. Efforts continued to build capacity for the protection of life at sea. IOM, UNHCR, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Criminal Police Organization held trainings to raise awareness regarding the legal frameworks applicable to migration by sea and strengthen search and rescue coordination.⁵¹ The United Nations Transitional Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNTMIS) delivered search and rescue workshops⁵² and provided technical assistance on the development of a national search and rescue framework in Somalia.⁵³

Migration Report 2026 (Geneva, 2026). Available at <https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2026>.

⁴³ IOM and UNHCR contributions.

⁴⁴ UNHCR contribution.

⁴⁵ IOM contribution.

⁴⁶ See Second International Migration Review Forum Summary Report, available at <https://migrationnetwork.un.org/system/files/docs/second-international-migration-review-forum-summary-report.pdf>; Report of the Secretary-General on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, A/79/590, Annex.

⁴⁷ UNHCR contribution.

⁴⁸ IOM contribution.

⁴⁹ Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, Gehad Madi, on externalization of migration governance and its effect on the human rights of migrants, A/80/302; and Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, Gehad Madi, on externalization of migration governance: new trends and specific aspects, A/HRC/62/35. See also OHCHR Manual on Human Rights Monitoring (Revised edition) (2022), Chapter 26: Monitoring and protecting human rights in the context of migration. Available at www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/2022-11-14/Chapter26-Monitoring-Protecting-HR-Migration.pdf.

⁵⁰ INTERPOL contribution. See www.interpol.int/News-and-Events/News/2026/Global-operation-safeguards-4-400-potential-trafficking-victims-detects-13-000-irregular-migrants.

⁵¹ INTERPOL, IOM, UNHCR and UNODC contributions.

⁵² Jointly with the European Union Capacity Building Mission in Somalia.

⁵³ DPPA contribution.

24. An inter-agency group on the protection of refugees and migrants moving by sea continued sharing information and opportunities to advance the protection of life at sea, consistent with international law.⁵⁴ UNODC launched a legislative guide and model legislative provisions on the smuggling of migrants, to assist States in aligning legislation with international obligations and enhance cooperation.⁵⁵ UNHCR, IMO and the International Chamber of Shipping issued updated guidance on distress identification, rescue coordination, survivor care and cooperation procedures.⁵⁶ UNHCR published a paper on the criminalization and constraint of search and rescue operations.⁵⁷

C. Gender-related aspects

25. There has been growing awareness and commitment to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women in ocean-related sectors towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5.⁵⁸ The number of women employed in those sectors has slightly increased in recent years.⁵⁹ However, women continued to face a range of structural challenges that limited their advancement and leadership opportunities, which United Nations entities and other stakeholders have been working to address.⁶⁰

26. A range of capacity-building initiatives promoted gender equality in ocean-related sectors. Under the auspices of the IMO, eight regional Women in Maritime Associations were established, and fellowships and tailored training expanded access to maritime education and leadership opportunities for women in developing countries.⁶¹ FAO supported women's organizations in small-scale fisheries by providing training and equipment to improve market access and strengthen their leadership capacity.⁶² The International Seabed Authority continued its See Her Exceed (S.H.E.) Global Mentorship Programme and published guidelines for advancing gender equity in deep-sea research activities, which were developed under that programme.⁶³ It also launched the S.H.E. Gender Compact to promote the safe participation of women in activities at sea.⁶⁴ UNTMIS supported Somalia in advancing gender-responsive approaches in maritime law enforcement and, with UNODC, co-organized workshops on women's participation in the maritime sector in Somalia and Kenya.⁶⁵

⁵⁴ IOM and UNHCR contributions.

⁵⁵ UNODC contribution. See also www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/2026/Publications/2516934E-MLProvisionsSoM-eBook.pdf.

⁵⁶ UNHCR contribution. See also IMO, UNHCR and International Chamber of Shipping, [Rescue at Sea: A guide to principles and practice in the context of refugees and migrants movements](#) (2026).

⁵⁷ UNHCR, No. 48: Criminalisation and constraint of humanitarian action at sea, [PPLA/2026/03](#).

⁵⁸ FAO, ILO, IMO and UNIDO contributions.

⁵⁹ IMO and Women's International Shipping and Trading Association (WISTA), [Women in Maritime Survey 2024](#), p. 11

⁶⁰ FAO, ILO, IMO and UNIDO contributions; see also IMO and WISTA, [Women in Maritime Survey 2024](#), p. 126; UNCTAD, [2025 Review of maritime transport](#), p. 62.

⁶¹ IMO contribution.

⁶² FAO contribution.

⁶³ ISA contribution; see also ISA, [Advancing gender equity in deep-sea research activities: addressing the barriers to women's participation in at-sea missions](#) (2025).

⁶⁴ ISA, S.H.E. Gender Compact – A Voluntary Framework for the Safe, Inclusive and Equitable Participation of Women in At-Sea Activities (2026). Available at <https://isa.org.jm/publications/she-gender-compact/>.

⁶⁵ DPPA contribution.

27. The empowerment of women in ocean-related industries was promoted by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization through integrating gender-responsive approaches across its programmes.⁶⁶ A strategic framework on gender equality was developed under the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.⁶⁷ UNODC convened a dialogue on women's leadership in maritime domain awareness and law enforcement.⁶⁸ The International Hydrographic Organization continued its initiative to empower women in hydrography⁶⁹ and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission supported the greater inclusion of women in ocean science.⁷⁰

V. Maritime safety and security

28. Maritime safety and security continue to underpin international navigation and shipping, which sustain the global economy and sustainable development. During the reporting period, armed conflict in different regions remained a concern for the safety and security of shipping and the lives and livelihoods of seafarers, with broader implications for the international community. In particular, the situation in the Strait of Hormuz garnered significant attention, including by the Security Council and at the IMO.⁷¹

29. With respect to maritime safety, the Cape Town Agreement of 2012 on the Implementation of the Provisions of the Torremolinos Protocol of 1993 relating to the Torremolinos International Convention for the Safety of Fishing Vessels, 1977, adopted in 2012 under the auspices of the IMO, will enter into force in February 2027.⁷² The Agreement sets out mandatory safety standards for fishing vessels of 24 meters in length and over, including minimum requirements on the design, construction, equipment, and inspection of such vessels, as well as vessel stability and seaworthiness, machinery and electrical installations, life-saving appliances, fire protection and communications equipment.⁷³

30. The IMO Maritime Safety Committee adopted a new International Code of Safety for Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships to enable the autonomous or remote operation of ships in global shipping, by setting out a comprehensive, goal-based

⁶⁶ UNIDO contribution.

⁶⁷ IOC-UNESCO contribution; see also IOC-UNESCO, Ocean Decade Gender Action Plan (2026). Available at: <https://oceandecade.org/publications/ocean-decade-gender-action-plan/>.

⁶⁸ UNODC contribution.

⁶⁹ IHO contribution.

⁷⁰ IOC-UNESCO contribution.

⁷¹ See IMO and UNCTAD contributions. See also Security Council resolution 2817 (2026) and IMO Council document C/ES.36/D. The IMO Facilitation Committee (FAL 50, March 2026), the Legal Committee (LEG 113, April 2026), the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 84, April 2026) and the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC 111, May 2026) considered the situation in the Strait of Hormuz, from their respective remits, and MEPC 84 and MSC 111 adopted resolutions on, respectively, "Actions to ensure the protection of the marine environment in the Arabian Sea, Sea of Oman and the Gulf region, particularly in and around the Strait of Hormuz, resulting from the unlawful activities of the Islamic Republic of Iran" (MEPC.406(84)) and "Actions to ensure the safety and security of navigation and of the seafarers in the Arabian Sea, the Sea of Oman and the Gulf region, particularly in and around the Strait of Hormuz, resulting from the unlawful activities of the Islamic Republic of Iran" (MSC.582(111)). MSC 111 also approved "Guidance on training and certifications of seafarers affected by the situation in the Arabian sea, the sea of Oman and the Gulf region, particularly in and around the Strait of Hormuz" (MSC.1/Circ.1698).

⁷² FAO and IMO contributions; see also <https://www.imo.org/en/mediacentre/hottopics/pages/capetownagreementforfishing.aspx>.

⁷³ IMO contribution.

framework to ensure that remotely controlled or autonomous ships are designed and operated to a level of safety, security and environmental protection that is expected of a conventional ship.⁷⁴ IMO also adopted various amendments to regulations under the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea concerning the requirement for dissemination of maritime safety information and signed a joint statement with the International Telecommunication Union and the International Civil Aviation Organization, identifying key actions required from member States to address harmful interference with global navigation satellite systems.⁷⁵

31. With regard to maritime security, the Security Council held an Arria-formula meeting on “Maritime Safety and Security: Protection of Seafarers” in November 2025 and a high-level open debate on “The safety and protection of waterways in the maritime domain” in April 2026.

32. In response to ongoing concerns relating to the fraudulent registration of vessels, IMO approved new guidelines on the registration of ships to improve transparency and due diligence in ship registration, as well as to prevent fraudulent registrations and misuse of flags.⁷⁶ IMO also adopted revised guidelines on maritime cyber risk management and was working on revised guidelines for the prevention and suppression of the smuggling of drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals on ships engaged in international maritime traffic, aimed at addressing threats from organized crime.⁷⁷

33. With regard to piracy, IMO indicated that 171 incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships were reported in 2025, constituting an increase of approximately 17 per cent compared to 2024. The areas most affected during 2025 were the Straits of Malacca and Singapore (122), West Africa (21) and the Indian Ocean (10). The number of incidents in the Gulf of Guinea (West Africa) increased in 2025 by 4 compared to 2024, constituting an increase of approximately 24 per cent. A plenary meeting of the Contact Group of Illicit Maritime Activities was held in July 2026 to consider maritime security developments in the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean region, where since the start of 2026 an increase in piracy and armed robbery at sea had been reported.⁷⁸

34. In addition, efforts to address a broad range of other crimes at sea that challenge maritime security were ongoing through different multilateral frameworks. UNODC reported on efforts to combat illegal waste trafficking, crimes in the fisheries sector across the fisheries value chain, crimes in the ship recycling industry, drug trafficking by sea, radiological and nuclear trafficking risks, smuggling of migrants and other transnational organized criminal activities at sea. These efforts included trainings, technical assistance activities, publications and assessment activities, including to strengthen law enforcement activities at sea.⁷⁹ INTERPOL also implemented various activities, including capacity building for law enforcement authorities and deployment of Operational Support Teams at the request of INTERPOL member countries to strengthen their investigative capabilities and fight illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and associated crimes, as well as the illegal trade of marine wildlife species.⁸⁰ Other initiatives included efforts by the Basel Convention

⁷⁴ IMO contribution.

⁷⁵ IMO contribution.

⁷⁶ IMO contribution.

⁷⁷ IMO contribution.

⁷⁸ IMO contribution. See also DPPA and ECCAS contributions regarding measures to combat piracy and armed robbery against ships.

⁷⁹ UNODC contribution.

⁸⁰ INTERPOL contribution.

secretariat to address illegal traffic in hazardous wastes and other wastes⁸¹ and efforts under CITES to combat wildlife crime related to marine species.⁸²

35. At the regional level, the establishment of the United Nations Support Task Force to the Gulf of Guinea Commission in support of implementation of the 2025 Yaoundé Declaration and its evolution from a coordination mechanism into a practical platform supporting regional policy coherence, implementation, and investment facilitation is noteworthy.

36. The International Advisory Body for Submarine Cable Resilience established three working groups in order to focus on key areas critical to global submarine cable resilience and issued a declaration reaffirming commitment to cooperation in that regard.⁸³

VI. Climate change and the ocean and sea level rise

37. Scientific evidence indicates that climate-induced changes continue to affect the physical state of the ocean and reduce the resilience of marine and coastal ecosystems.⁸⁴ The rate of ocean warming during 2005–2025 was more than double that observed during 1960–2005, while the global mean sea level remained at record-high levels in 2025.⁸⁵ Ocean heat content reached another record high in 2025.⁸⁶ These global trends, reaffirmed by regional climate assessments, underscore the growing importance of sustained ocean observations, ocean-climate services and early warning systems.⁸⁷ Ocean warming, acidification, marine pollution and increasingly widespread marine heatwaves are heightening risks to coral reefs, fisheries, coastal ecosystems and the communities and economies that depend on them.

38. Organizations were advancing science-based technical responses, including through a climate impact assessment on the long-term effectiveness of marine protected and conserved areas,⁸⁸ consideration of new scientific research on the impacts of climate change on vulnerable marine ecosystems⁸⁹ and integration of climate information into ecosystem assessments.⁹⁰

39. The thirtieth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change adopted the “Global Mutirão: Uniting humanity in a global mobilization against climate change”, which emphasized the vital importance of conserving, protecting, restoring and sustainably using and managing marine ecosystems to achieve the Paris Agreement temperature goal, while underlining the urgent need to address, in a comprehensive and synergetic manner, the interlinked global crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and land and ocean degradation.⁹¹ The Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue 2026 focused on ocean-

⁸¹ BRS contribution.

⁸² CITES contribution.

⁸³ ITU and UNODC contributions.

⁸⁴ See the third World Ocean Assessment, whose digital platform is available at <http://woa.un.org/>.

⁸⁵ WMO contribution; see also WMO, State of the Global Climate 2025 (WMO No. 1391). Available at <https://library.wmo.int/records/item/69807-state-of-the-global-climate-2025>.

⁸⁶ WMO contribution.

⁸⁷ WMO contribution.

⁸⁸ CMS contribution.

⁸⁹ NAFO contribution.

⁹⁰ ICES and OSPAR contributions; see also the third World Ocean Assessment, available at <http://woa.un.org/>.

⁹¹ UNFCCC contribution; see also Decision 1/CMA.7, [FCCC/PA/CMA/2025/19/Add.1](https://unfccc.int/decisions/decision-1/cma.7).

based priorities in the nationally determined contributions; means of implementation; and ocean-climate-biodiversity synergies and international cooperation.⁹² Ten years after the entry into force of the Paris Agreement, 78 per cent of Parties included explicit reference to the ocean in their new nationally determined contributions, an increase of 39 per cent.⁹³ Ocean-based adaptation efforts remained prominent, and reported ocean-based mitigation measures, while fewer in number, showed increasing innovation and sectoral diversity, spanning renewable energy deployment, blue carbon sequestration, fisheries and aquaculture, and decarbonization of maritime transport.⁹⁴

40. In its resolution 80/164, the General Assembly took note of the adoption by the International Law Commission of the final report of the Study Group on the topic “Sea-level rise in relation to international law”, recognized the valuable contribution of this work to enhancing the understanding and clarification of related issues of international law and invited States to reflect on it in 2026.⁹⁵ In response to General Assembly decision 78/558, the Secretary-General issued a report on challenges related to sea level rise and ways and approaches to address them.⁹⁶

41. In the context of these developments, as well as recent advisory opinions from the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea⁹⁷, the International Court of Justice⁹⁸ and Inter-American Court of Human Rights⁹⁹ the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted, by consensus, resolution 60/20 on sea-level rise and its effects on the full and effective enjoyment of human rights, which emphasized, inter alia, the responsibility of States to adopt urgent, equitable and human rights-based measures to mitigate and adapt to its impacts, and that the continuity of statehood in respect of sea-level rise is consistent with the duty to protect, respect, promote, and fulfil human rights.¹⁰⁰ The Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States acknowledged in its “Malabo Declaration” the climate crisis as the most serious threat facing several of their member States, particularly small island developing States, and was working to translate the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice into policies, litigation strategies and advocacy.¹⁰¹ A high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly to further consider sea level rise will be held on 24 September 2026. A political declaration is being negotiated.¹⁰²

42. Worldwide efforts to address climate change impacts have continued on many other fronts, including through adaptation initiatives targeting coastal erosion and sea level rise through mangrove restoration and coastal protection projects in Africa,¹⁰³

⁹² UNFCCC contribution; see also <https://unfccc.int/event/2026-ocean-and-climate-change-dialogue-part-i-mandated-event>.

⁹³ See UNFCCC contribution; see also Synthesis report by the secretariat on nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement, [FCCC/PA/CMA/2025/8](https://unfccc.int/publications/2025/08/fccc-pa-cma-2025-8).

⁹⁴ See UNFCCC contribution; see also Synthesis report by the secretariat on nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement, [FCCC/PA/CMA/2025/8](https://unfccc.int/publications/2025/08/fccc-pa-cma-2025-8).

⁹⁵ General Assembly resolution 80/164.

⁹⁶ [A/81/74](#).

⁹⁷ See <https://www.itlos.org/en/main/cases/list-of-cases/request-for-an-advisory-opinion-submitted-by-the-commission-of-small-island-states-on-climate-change-and-international-law-request-for-advisory-opinion-submitted-to-the-tribunal/>.

⁹⁸ See General Assembly resolution 80/263 and <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/187/advisory-opinions>.

⁹⁹ See https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea_32_en.pdf.

¹⁰⁰ OHCHR contribution; see also Human Rights Council resolution 60/20.

¹⁰¹ OACPS contribution.

¹⁰² General Assembly decision 78/558 of 1 August 2024. See also the report of the Secretary-General on challenges related to sea level rise and ways and approaches to address them ([A/81/74](#)).

¹⁰³ ECCAS contribution.

as well as work by FAO on resilience of fisheries and aquaculture-dependent communities to climate change impacts.¹⁰⁴ While the IMO net-zero framework did not achieve consensus in 2025, progress was made on the development of its implementing provisions.¹⁰⁵ Parties to the London Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter and its Protocol reaffirmed a precautionary approach toward marine geoengineering as a means to counteract the effects of climate change and warned against rising marine geoengineering activities by commercial entities.¹⁰⁶ The “Geneva Consensus”, adopted at the sixteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), highlighted the vital role of the ocean in the climate system and emphasized the need for increased climate finance. A number of regional organizations and arrangements reported their continued consideration of the impact of climate change on their work.¹⁰⁷

VII. Ocean sustainability

43. While real gains have been made toward achieving Sustainable Development Goal 14, progress has remained uneven and insufficient amid serious headwinds from the collapse in development assistance, to growing debt burdens in developing countries, rising conflicts, slowing global economic growth, climate chaos and other shocks.¹⁰⁸ The 2026 progress assessment by the Secretary-General indicated that Goal 14 was one of the goals that was most offtrack.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, historic advances in ocean governance, such as the entry into force of the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction¹¹⁰ and the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies,¹¹¹ are strengthening the foundation for long-term ocean recovery.¹¹² Ensuring the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean and its resources would require investing in sustainable ocean economies, scaling-up effective area-based conservation and integrated coastal zone management, strengthening the resilience of coastal communities, and enhanced investments in science and innovation.¹¹³

44. The global ocean economy has doubled in real terms over the last 25 years according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.¹¹⁴ UNCTAD reported that global ocean-related trade reached approximately \$2.5 trillion

¹⁰⁴ FAO contribution.

¹⁰⁵ IMO contribution.

¹⁰⁶ IMO contribution; see also <https://www.imo.org/en/mediacentre/meetingsummaries/pages/lc-47-lp-20.aspx>.

¹⁰⁷ NAFO, NEAFC, OSPAR and SPRFMO contributions.

¹⁰⁸ United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals Report 2026 (New York, 2026). Available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2026/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2026.pdf>.

¹⁰⁹ United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals Report 2026 (New York, 2026). Available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2026/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2026.pdf>.

See also Sachs, J.D., Lafortune, G., Fuller, G. and Iablonovski, G. (2026). Implementing Sustainable Development: 2030 and Beyond. Sustainable Development Report 2026. Paris: SDSN; Dublin: Dublin University Press. Available at:

<https://sdgtransformationcenter.org/reports/sustainable-development-report-2026>.

¹¹⁰ See <https://www.un.org/bbnjagreement/en>.

¹¹¹ See https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/rulesneg_e/fish_e/fish_e.htm.

¹¹² United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals Report 2026 (New York, 2026). Available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2026/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2026.pdf>.

¹¹³ Report of the Secretary-General on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, A/81/93-E/2026/73. Available at: https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/2026-06/SG%20Progress%20Report%202026_1.pdf.

¹¹⁴ OECD, The Ocean Economy to 2050 (Paris, 2025). Available at <https://doi.org/10.1787/a9096fb1-en>.

in 2025, with services accounting for 58 per cent of the total.¹¹⁵ Building on this momentum, efforts continued to promote sustainable, inclusive and resilient ocean-based economies through the development and implementation of policies, regulations, measures and initiatives,¹¹⁶ and the provision of capacity-building and technical assistance.¹¹⁷ Particular attention was given to integrated approaches and tools, such as marine spatial planning,¹¹⁸ integrated coastal zone management,¹¹⁹ integrated land-sea planning,¹²⁰ and area-based management tools,¹²¹ as well as to circular economy approaches.¹²² Efforts also continued to promote sustainable trade in ocean-related goods and services.¹²³ Attention was also given to promoting the participation of women, youth and other groups in ocean-based economies,¹²⁴ and to strengthening resilience through timely marine forecasts and early warning services.¹²⁵

45. Efforts to advance ocean finance included mobilizing public and private resources, facilitating more equitable access to concessional finance, and using dedicated funds and blended-finance mechanisms. The WTO Fisheries Funding Mechanism became fully operational and approved 26 project grants totaling USD 2.9 million to support developing and least developed country WTO members in implementing the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies.¹²⁶ The Global Climate Action Agenda at the 2025 United Nations Climate Change Conference featured a voluntary initiative to develop the “One Ocean Partnership”, aimed at catalyzing at least USD 20 billion in investment in the regenerative blue economy by 2030.¹²⁷ Increased use of blended-finance mechanisms, such as debt-for-nature swaps, concessional loans and loan guarantees, was also reported, including to support coral reef resilience.¹²⁸ The Secretary-General also undertook steps to further operationalize the multidimensional vulnerability index, including through the appointment of an independent expert advisory panel.¹²⁹ Work also continued on the co-design of a “One Ocean Finance” facility aimed at establishing a coherent global financial architecture linking ocean use to long-term reinvestment in ocean health.¹³⁰

¹¹⁵ UNCTAD, “Ocean services lead trade, opening new opportunities for developing economies”, 8 June 2026. Available at <https://unctad.org/news/ocean-services-lead-trade-opening-new-opportunities-developing-economies>.

¹¹⁶ BRS, SCBD, CITES, CMS, DPPA, ECCAS, ECLAC, FAO, IHO, ILO, ISA, IWC, OACPS, UNCTAD, UNEP, UN-Habitat, UNIDO, UNODC, UNWTO and WTO contributions.

¹¹⁷ BRS, SCBD, DPPA, ECLAC, FAO, UNCTAD, UNIDO and UNODC contributions; see also un.org/oceancapacity.

¹¹⁸ SCBD, CMS, FAO, IHO, IOC-UNESCO and UNEP contributions.

¹¹⁹ IHO contribution.

¹²⁰ UN-Habitat contribution.

¹²¹ SCBD, CMS, Council of Europe, FAO, NEAFC, OSPAR and UNEP contributions.

¹²² BRS, CMS, SACEP, UNCTAD, UNEP, UN-Habitat, UNIDO, UNODC, and UNWTO contributions.

¹²³ CITES, FAO, IWC, UNCTAD, UNIDO, UNWTO and WTO contributions.

¹²⁴ DPPA, FAO, IMO, UNEP, UN-Habitat and UNIDO contributions.

¹²⁵ IOC-UNESCO and WMO contributions.

¹²⁶ WTO contribution.

¹²⁷ UNFCCC, “Global Climate Action Agenda at COP30: Outcome Report” (advance unedited version). Available at: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/COP30%20Action%20Agenda_Final%20Report.docx.pdf.

¹²⁸ UNEP contribution.

¹²⁹ General Assembly resolution 80/146c. See also <https://www.un.org/en/desa/expert-panel-mvi>.

¹³⁰ UNEP, “Launching the co-design phase of the One Ocean Finance Facility”, 16 March 2026. Available at <https://www.unep.org/technical-highlight/launching-co-design-phase-one-ocean-finance-facility>.

A. Promoting marine science and technology

46. Implementation of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development continued at an accelerated pace.¹³¹ Building on recommendations from a mid-term evaluation, efforts to increase its impact included the establishment of a new Decade Advisory Board, strengthened engagement across the United Nations system, including through UN-Oceans, enhanced monitoring of policy impacts and the development of strategic frameworks on capacity development, gender equality and Indigenous and local knowledge.¹³² By the end of the reporting period, more than 700 endorsed programmes and projects were contributing to the Decade Challenges, supported by 43 national Decade committees and an expanding network of regional and thematic coordination hubs.¹³³ Preparations were underway towards the 2027 Ocean Decade Conference, which will provide an important opportunity to assess progress and identify priorities for the remainder of the Decade.

47. International cooperation on ocean observation, monitoring and data exchange expanded,¹³⁴ with continued efforts to strengthen observing systems¹³⁵ and data platforms;¹³⁶ improve data interoperability, quality assurance and open access;¹³⁷ and facilitate the combined use of oceanographic, biodiversity and bathymetric data, among other data.¹³⁸ Participation in the Global Ocean Observing System, the Ocean Data and Information System and the Ocean Biodiversity Information System increased.¹³⁹ More than 2,000 research and commercial vessels contributed real-time observations, while 44 States reported ocean acidification observations from 765 stations.¹⁴⁰ Global seabed mapping also advanced.¹⁴¹ The Executive Council of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission approved the Global Sea-Level Observing System Implementation Plan (2026) and the revised terms of reference of its group of experts.¹⁴²

48. Scientific and technological capabilities for observation, analysis, forecasting and decision support also continued to advance.¹⁴³ Space-based observations and remote sensing,¹⁴⁴ artificial intelligence,¹⁴⁵ electronic monitoring and reporting,¹⁴⁶ smart submarine cables,¹⁴⁷ digital platforms,¹⁴⁸ as well as nuclear and isotopic techniques¹⁴⁹ supported data collection, analysis and operational decision-making. Capacity-building and technology-transfer activities strengthened the ability of

¹³¹ ECLAC, ICES, IHO, IOC-UNESCO, ISA and UNFCCC contributions.

¹³² IOC-UNESCO contribution.

¹³³ IOC-UNESCO contribution.

¹³⁴ ECCAS, IAEA, IHO, IOC-UNESCO, ISA, ITU, UNEP, UNOOSA and WMO contributions.

¹³⁵ IAEA, IOC-UNESCO, ITU and WMO contributions. See also, IOC-UNESCO, Global Ocean Observing System Status Report 2025. Available at <https://www.ocean-ops.org/goosreport/#home>.

¹³⁶ IAEA, IOC-UNESCO, ISA and UNEP contributions.

¹³⁷ FAO, ICES, IAEA, IHO, IOC-UNESCO, ISA, NEAFC, UNEP and UNOOSA contributions.

¹³⁸ IHO, IOC-UNESCO and ISA contributions.

¹³⁹ IOC-UNESCO contribution.

¹⁴⁰ IOC-UNESCO contribution.

¹⁴¹ IHO and IOC-UNESCO contribution.

¹⁴² IOC-UNESCO contribution; see also IOC-UNESCO, Decision EC-59/3.4.

¹⁴³ IAEA, IHO, IOC-UNESCO, ITU, UNEP, UN-Habitat, UNIDO, UNODC, UNOOSA and WMO contributions.

¹⁴⁴ IHO, SACEP, UNEP, UN-Habitat and UNOOSA contributions.

¹⁴⁵ UNCTAD and UNODC contributions.

¹⁴⁶ NEAFC, SPRFMO and UNEP contributions.

¹⁴⁷ ITU contribution.

¹⁴⁸ IAEA, IMO, ISA, SACEP, UNCTAD, UNEP, UN-Habitat, UNODC and WMO contributions.

¹⁴⁹ IAEA contribution.

developing States to conduct research and use ocean data.¹⁵⁰ Notwithstanding these advances, the third edition of the Global Ocean Science Report highlighted low average investment in ocean science, marked geographical disparities in investment and reporting capacity, and continuing vulnerabilities in ocean science.¹⁵¹

49. Notable progress was made in strengthening the ocean science–policy interface through comprehensive, integrated assessments of the marine environment, including socioeconomic aspects, in particular in the context of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects.¹⁵² Developed by interdisciplinary writing teams comprising more than 650 experts, the third World Ocean Assessment was made accessible through a dedicated digital platform and introduced innovative elements, including forward-looking sustainability pathways and cross-cutting themes addressing gender, equity, and Indigenous, traditional owner, and local community knowledge.¹⁵³ Thematic summaries on biodiversity and on climate change, prepared by the Group of Experts, are scheduled for release in 2026.¹⁵⁴ The fourth cycle of the Regular Process, covering the period from 2026 to 2030, also commenced, with its programme of work being structured around four main outcomes: assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socioeconomic aspects; outreach and engagement, including through the digital platform; support for and interaction with other ocean-related intergovernmental processes; and a capacity-building programme to develop the capacities of States in strengthening the ocean science-policy interface at national, regional and global levels.¹⁵⁵

B. Conservation and sustainable use of living marine resources

50. According to the 2026 State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture, the share of the world's marine fishery stocks fished within biologically sustainable levels declined to 62.4 per cent in 2023, down by 2.1 percentage points from 2021. These trends underscore the urgency of coordinated and effective fisheries data collection, assessment and management systems, as well as the application of science-based management and precautionary approaches, to sustain fishery resources and support their long-term sustainability.¹⁵⁶

51. The nineteenth round of Informal Consultations of States Parties to the Fish Stocks Agreement focused its discussions on the implications of the Agreement on Marine Biodiversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction for sustainable fisheries and the role of regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements in that respect.¹⁵⁷ In addition, a multi-stakeholder workshop was held as part of the General

¹⁵⁰ FAO, IAEA, IOC-UNESCO, ISA, ITU, OACPS, UNCTAD, UNEP, UNIDO, UNODC, UNOOSA and WMO contributions.

¹⁵¹ IOC-UNESCO, Global Ocean Science Report: Investing in Sustainable Ocean Solutions, 2026. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000398511>. See also IOC-UNESCO, Decision EC-59/3.1.

¹⁵² See <https://www.un.org/regularprocess/>.

¹⁵³ See <https://woa.un.org> and <https://www.un.org/regularprocess/woa3>. See also <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2026/06/press-release-as-ocean-pressures-mount-united-nations-report-calls-for-urgent-global-collaboration-to-protect-marine-ecosystems>.

¹⁵⁴ See

https://www.un.org/regularprocess/sites/www.un.org/regularprocess/files/2_clean_ver_edited_annotated_outline_of_third_assessment_final_clean.pdf.

¹⁵⁵ See <https://www.un.org/regularprocess/cycle4>.

¹⁵⁶ FAO, The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2026 – Blue Transformation: turning vision into impact (Rome, 2026). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd8357en>.

¹⁵⁷ See <https://www.un.org/oceancapacity/content/unfsa-informal-consultations-states-parties>.

Assembly's review of measures taken by States and regional fisheries management organizations to address the impact of bottom fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks.¹⁵⁸

52. FAO reported on its extensive activities to promote sustainable fisheries, including through technical assistance, capacity-building, promoting inter-agency coordination and support to regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements.¹⁵⁹ 2026 also marked the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing.¹⁶⁰

53. At the WTO, the Committee of Fisheries Subsidies was established following the entry into force of the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies.¹⁶¹ The International Whaling Commission provided real-time emergency response advice to countries through its Strandings Initiative.¹⁶²

54. By promoting multi-jurisdictional cooperation and translating international commitments into actionable regional measures, regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements, as well as other regional fishery bodies, were increasingly instrumental in the implementation of international instruments addressing climate change, overfishing, fisheries subsidies, pollution, and conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.¹⁶³

C. Protection and preservation of the marine environment and conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity

55. Marine ecosystems have been increasingly affected by pollution, habitat loss, climate change and other anthropogenic pressures. While there have been some positive changes, biodiversity across many marine ecosystems was predominantly negatively affected and overall trends remain of concern.¹⁶⁴

56. At its twentieth meeting, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora adopted amendments to that Convention's appendices and new decisions on introduction from the sea concerning the transportation of species listed under the Convention caught in areas beyond national jurisdiction.¹⁶⁵ At its fifteenth meeting, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals also adopted amendments to that Convention's appendices, including to add all three species of thresher sharks to Appendix I. It further adopted amendments to its resolution on bycatch, to advance efforts to address overexploitation as a major driver of marine biodiversity loss.¹⁶⁶ Under the Convention on Biological Diversity, the secretariat prepared a report on collective progress in the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.¹⁶⁷

57. The entry into force of the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction marked a significant milestone, shifting attention

¹⁵⁸ See https://www.un.org/Depts/los/bottom_fishing_workshop.htm.

¹⁵⁹ See FAO contribution.

¹⁶⁰ See <https://www.fao.org/port-state-measures/news-events/detail/en/c/1759791/>.

¹⁶¹ WTO contribution.

¹⁶² IWC contribution.

¹⁶³ See also NAFO, NEAFC, OACPS, PICES, and SPRFMO contributions.

¹⁶⁴ See World Ocean Assessment III, Section 4, Chapter 4.

¹⁶⁵ CITES contribution.

¹⁶⁶ CMS contribution.

¹⁶⁷ SCBD contribution.

towards its implementation. The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora adopted amendments to resolutions on cooperation with other biodiversity-related conventions and on its Strategic Vision: 2021-2030, recognizing the relevance of the Agreement to global efforts for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity.¹⁶⁸ The secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity convened an expert workshop on scientific and technical work conducted under that Convention relevant to marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction¹⁶⁹ and FAO published a guide on “Fisheries and the BBNJ Agreement”,¹⁷⁰ while the Regional Seas Programme and the secretariats of various regional seas conventions and action plans supported regional awareness and coordination on the implementation of the Agreement.¹⁷¹

58. At the regional level, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols, at its twenty-fourth meeting, adopted amendments to annexes of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean.¹⁷² In the Western Indian Ocean region, the text of a new protocol on marine and coastal biological diversity and protected areas to the Nairobi Convention was finalized, and a Conference of Plenipotentiaries is expected to be convened in 2026 for its adoption.¹⁷³

59. With regard to hazardous chemicals and waste, the Open-ended working Group of the Basel Convention advanced work, inter alia, on technical guidelines on the environmentally sound management of waste, plastic waste and options to address used textiles and textile wastes.¹⁷⁴ Furthermore, the Harmonized System Committee of the World Custom Organization adopted amendments to the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System, covering plastic waste, waste mineral oils containing persistent organic pollutants and waste pneumatic tyres.¹⁷⁵ In addition, the International Atomic Energy Agency developed methodologies for assessing radiological impacts from historical dumping of radioactive waste into the ocean and evaluating the cumulative impacts of chemical and radioactive pollutants in the marine environment.¹⁷⁶

60. Regarding pollution from vessels, the conditions for entry into force of the 2010 Protocol to the 1996 International Convention on Liability and Compensation for Damage in Connection with the Carriage of Hazardous and Noxious Substances by Sea were met in April 2026, paving the way for its entry into force on 29 November 2027.¹⁷⁷ Additionally, the IMO Marine Environment Protection Committee approved measures relating to energy efficiency of ships, including draft amendments to the NOx Technical Code 2008, as well as amendments to Annex VI of the Convention for

¹⁶⁸ CITES contribution.

¹⁶⁹ SCBD contribution.

¹⁷⁰ FAO contribution; see also FAO, Fisheries and the BBNJ Agreement – A guide (Rome, 2026). Available at <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd7986en>.

¹⁷¹ UNEP contribution.

¹⁷² UNEP contribution.

¹⁷³ UNEP contribution.

¹⁷⁴ BRS contribution; see also

[https://www.basel.int/TheConvention/OpenendedWorkingGroup\(OEWG\)/Meetings/OEWG15/Overview/tabid/10424/Default.aspx](https://www.basel.int/TheConvention/OpenendedWorkingGroup(OEWG)/Meetings/OEWG15/Overview/tabid/10424/Default.aspx).

¹⁷⁵ BRS contribution.

¹⁷⁶ IAEA contribution.

¹⁷⁷ IMO and IOPC Funds contribution.

the Prevention of Pollution from Ships.¹⁷⁸ It also adopted the 2026 Strategy and the Action Plan to Address Marine Plastic Litter from Ships.¹⁷⁹

61. Within several organizations, work continued on area-based management tools, including marine protected areas, and other measures. The secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity received 29 new submissions from four parties relating to new or amended ecologically or biologically significant marine areas and prepared draft voluntary guidelines on peer-review processes for the description of such areas.¹⁸⁰ The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals adopted resolutions on Important Marine Turtle Areas and on priorities for the area-based conservation of marine migratory species.¹⁸¹ In the Cairo Ministerial Declaration, parties to the Barcelona Convention committed to, inter alia, strengthening and expanding marine and coastal protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures.

VIII. Strengthening international cooperation and coordination

62. UN-Oceans continued to strengthen its efforts as the inter-agency mechanism that seeks to enhance the coordination, coherence and effectiveness of United Nations system entities and the International Seabed Authority in ocean and coastal matters, in accordance with its terms of reference and annual work programmes.¹⁸² The International Telecommunication Union and the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs joined UN-Oceans, bringing its membership to 33. Regular meetings of UN-Oceans included a strengthened focus on the BBNJ Agreement and a new priority on aligning the work of UN-Oceans members with the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

63. UN-Oceans members continued to support ocean-related processes and highlight the role of UN-Oceans as a platform to pool expertise, harmonize efforts and provide support to Member States with a view to delivering as one United Nations, including at a side event on the margins of the thirtieth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on “Ocean-climate-biodiversity nexus: leveraging synergies across frameworks”.¹⁸³ Additionally, an online meeting of Principals in January 2026 explored how UN-Oceans members could work together to deliver capacity-building more effectively, including by enhancing coordination and collaboration.

64. Efforts to strengthen international cooperation and coordination on ocean issues continued at both the global and regional levels, including in relation to marine biodiversity,¹⁸⁴ marine pollution and waste management,¹⁸⁵ fisheries management;¹⁸⁶

¹⁷⁸ IMO contribution; see also [MEPC.407\(84\)](#), [MEPC.408\(84\)](#).

¹⁷⁹ IMO contribution; see also [MEPC.417\(84\)](#).

¹⁸⁰ SCBD contribution.

¹⁸¹ CMS contribution.

¹⁸² General Assembly resolution [68/70](#), Annex; 2025 and 2026 UN-Oceans Work Programmes and Statement of commitments in relation to the Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction, available at www.un.org/depts/los/coop_coor/docs_en.htm.

¹⁸³ See www.un.org/depts/los/coop_coor/actvs_en.htm.

¹⁸⁴ CITES, ICCAT, IOC-UNESCO, IWC, SCBD and UNEP contributions.

¹⁸⁵ Bonn Agreement, BRS, FAO, IAEA, IMO, SACEP, UN-Habitat, UNIDO, UNODC and WTO contributions.

¹⁸⁶ FAO, ICCAT, ILO, ISA, NAFO, NEAFC, PICES, SCBD and UNIDO contributions.

ocean-related aspects of climate change;¹⁸⁷ marine science,¹⁸⁸ including ocean observations and data sharing;¹⁸⁹ peace and security;¹⁹⁰ maritime safety and security;¹⁹¹ transnational and wildlife crime;¹⁹² protection of undersea cables;¹⁹³ and charting and navigational safety.¹⁹⁴

65. Conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity continued to be an area of focus,¹⁹⁵ including in the context of the recent entry into force of the BBNJ Agreement. In this regard, the Preparatory Commission for the Entry into Force of the BBNJ Agreement and the Convening of the First Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Agreement recommended to the Conference of the Parties to the Agreement for its consideration a draft decision on arrangements to enhance cooperation with relevant legal instruments and frameworks and relevant global, regional, subregional and sectoral bodies.¹⁹⁶ The Sustainable Ocean Initiative Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organizations and Regional Fisheries Bodies held its fifth meeting, with a focus on assessing progress in implementing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and on cooperation in support of the implementation of the BBNJ Agreement.¹⁹⁷

66. Regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements and regional seas conventions continued to cooperate on the conservation and sustainable management of fisheries and sustainable use of biodiversity.¹⁹⁸ The Regional Seas Programme continued to enhance cooperative efforts, including by aligning regional monitoring with other biodiversity instruments.¹⁹⁹ The meeting of the Collective Arrangement between competent international organisations on cooperation and coordination regarding selected areas in areas beyond national jurisdiction in the North-East Atlantic considered potential collaborative management plans for high seas marine protected areas in the OSPAR Convention Area, as well as interactions with the BBNJ Agreement.²⁰⁰

67. Cooperation and coordination across the fisheries sector more generally also continued.²⁰¹ FAO, in collaboration with regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements, among others, continued to implement the Common Oceans Deep-sea Fisheries Project, including through the mapping of deep-sea fisheries in areas beyond national jurisdiction.²⁰²

68. Efforts to enhance marine scientific collaboration continued,²⁰³ including by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission in various respects, in particular the accelerated implementation of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development,²⁰⁴ as well as by the International Council for the

¹⁸⁷ Council of Europe, IOC-UNESCO, UNCTAD, UNFCCC, UNEP, UNTWO and WTO contributions.

¹⁸⁸ ICES, IOC-UNESCO, ISA, ITU and PICES contributions.

¹⁸⁹ IOC-UNESCO contribution.

¹⁹⁰ DPPA contribution.

¹⁹¹ FAO, UNHCR and UNODC contributions.

¹⁹² CITES, FAO and UNODC contributions.

¹⁹³ ITU contribution.

¹⁹⁴ IHO contribution.

¹⁹⁵ FAO, IOC-UNESCO and IWC contributions.

¹⁹⁶ See [A/AC.296/2026/9](#), Annex VII.

¹⁹⁷ SCBD contribution.

¹⁹⁸ ICCAT contribution.

¹⁹⁹ UNEP contribution.

²⁰⁰ NEAFC and OSPAR contributions.

²⁰¹ ILO, NAFO, NEAFC and UNIDO contributions.

²⁰² FAO contribution.

²⁰³ PICES contribution.

²⁰⁴ IOC-UNESCO contribution.

Exploration of the Sea, which signed new and updated memoranda of understanding with several partners.²⁰⁵

IX. Capacity-building and technical assistance

69. As persistent capacity gaps continue to hamper the ability of States to implement law of the sea frameworks and maximize the benefits from the ocean and seas, the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs continued to respond to a growing need for capacity-building and technical assistance.²⁰⁶

70. The Division continued to assist developing countries in implementing the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and its implementing agreements, with funding from a number of Member States and other donors. Activities were undertaken in cooperation with a wide range of partners, including specialized agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations, regional organizations and other stakeholders.

71. The Division also continued to implement a programme of activities to promote a better understanding of the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction, including by conducting two regional workshops.²⁰⁷

72. In January 2026, the Division concluded implementation of a four-year global capacity-building project to strengthen awareness and implementation of the Fish Stocks Agreement, under which awareness-raising materials and an implementation guide to the Agreement were developed, training at the regional level and technical assistance to six developing States Parties to the Agreement were delivered, and a global training and experience-sharing workshop was organized.²⁰⁸

73. As part of the Programmes of Assistance to meet the strategic capacity needs of developing States in the field of ocean governance and the law of the sea, the Division delivered a workshop on the law of the sea and ocean governance for the wider Indian Ocean region, in Male, and undertook national capacity-building and technical assistance activities in five developing States.²⁰⁹

74. The Division's collaboration with the World Bank and other partners to implement the ProBlue Ocean Governance Capacity-Building Training Programme was extended for another cycle to address continued and rising demand. The Division also provided a customized national capacity-building programme in ocean affairs and the law of the sea and continued its cooperation with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research to deliver briefings on ocean affairs and the law of the sea and sustainable fisheries to New York-based delegates.

75. The Division continued to administer nine voluntary trust funds to assist developing States with the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and its implementing agreements, including by facilitating participation in ocean-related meetings, intergovernmental processes, and the settlement of disputes through the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.²¹⁰

²⁰⁵ ICES and NEAFC contributions.

²⁰⁶ See www.un.org/oceancapacity and www.un.org/Depts/los/general_assembly/DOALOSListActivities1Sep2025-31Aug2026.pdf.

²⁰⁷ See www.un.org/bbnjagreement.

²⁰⁸ See www.un.org/oceancapacity/UNFSAProject.

²⁰⁹ See <https://www.un.org/oceancapacity/norway>.

²¹⁰ See www.un.org/oceancapacity/tf and www.un.org/Depts/los/general_assembly/SGReportTrustFunds1August202531July2026.pdf.

Fellowships

76. The Division continued implementing the United Nations-Nippon Foundation (UNNF) Capacity-Building Programmes.²¹¹ Together, the Fellowship on Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, the Strategic Needs Fellowship, and the Ocean Governance Fellowship for small island developing States benefited 34 ocean professionals from 29 developing States, including from small island developing States, least developed countries and landlocked developing countries.²¹² Training activities were delivered with the support of experts, including from partner universities, the Division and other United Nations System organizations.

77. Under the UNNF Alumni Programme, two alumni meetings were held, bringing together 10 alumni in New York and 55 in Tokyo.²¹³ The Tokyo meeting coincided with the Island States Ocean Summit, where several alumni served as speakers, moderators and rapporteurs.²¹⁴

78. The Division continued to administer and implement the Hamilton Shirley Amerasinghe Memorial Fellowship on the Law of the Sea, with the thirty-seventh fellowship awarded to a national of Ghana.²¹⁵

X. Conclusions

79. The legal framework for the ocean has been further strengthened with the entry into force of the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction and the increase in participation in the Convention and its implementing agreements. However, concerted efforts remain necessary to ensure the full implementation of these and other ocean-related instruments, in order to address the severe and cumulative pressures on the ocean and achieve Goal 14 of the 2030 Agenda.

80. Addressing labour shortages, safety hazards, and decent work challenges in the maritime, fisheries and aquaculture sectors require sustained, coordinated global interventions, including through the effective implementation of regulatory frameworks. The effective implementation and enforcement of harmonized standards and enhanced inspection regimes are essential to guarantee safe, fair, and dignified working conditions.

81. While progress has been made through the making of commitments to save lives and provide humanitarian assistance to people moving irregularly by sea, further efforts are needed for their full and effective implementation.

82. While efforts have continued to promote gender equality and strengthen women's participation and leadership across ocean-related sectors, further sustained

²¹¹ See <https://www.un.org/oceancapacity/UNNF>.

²¹² The Bahamas; Bangladesh (2 Fellows); Benin; Plurinational State of Bolivia; Cameroon; Chile; Colombia; Ecuador; Fiji (3 Fellows); Haiti (2 Fellows); Indonesia; Kenya; Madagascar; Maldives; Morocco; Mozambique; Nauru; Pakistan; Papua New Guinea (2 Fellows); Samoa; Sao Tome and Principe; Senegal; Seychelles; Sierra Leone; Solomon Islands; Sri Lanka; Timor-Leste; Tonga; and Trinidad and Tobago.

²¹³ See <https://www.un.org/oceancapacity/content/alumni>.

²¹⁴ Organized by The Nippon Foundation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO. See <https://islandoceansummit.org/#:~:text=The%20%27Island%20States%20Ocean%20Summit%3A%20Sustainable%20Ocean%20Action,bolster%20evidence-based%2C%20climate-resilient%20sustainable%20ocean%20planning%20and%20management>.

²¹⁵ See <https://www.un.org/oceancapacity/HSA>.

action is needed to address persistent structural barriers and ensure gender equality at all levels.

83. Recent challenges to the safety and security of maritime navigation have underpinned the importance of international law and global rules, regulations and standards to global commerce, sustainable development and the health and well-being of seafarers. Steps are being taken to strengthen the frameworks for both maritime safety and security through competent intergovernmental organizations, yet reinvigorated efforts and strengthened implementation remain necessary.

84. Scientific evidence continued to highlight the increasing impacts of climate change on the ocean, including record heat content, sea level rise, and increasing pressures on ecosystems and coastal communities. This underscored the need for international bodies to advance scientific, policy and legal responses, with ocean-related considerations featuring more prominently in global climate change deliberations.

85. Despite historical advances in ocean governance, progress towards achieving Goal 14 remains uneven and insufficient. Accelerated action is needed to promote sustainable, inclusive and resilient ocean-based economies, scale up integrated approaches and tools, strengthen coastal resilience and advance science and innovation. Scaling up accessible and predictable ocean and climate finance, particularly for small island developing States and other vulnerable coastal countries, also remains critical.

86. Implementation of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development continued at an accelerated pace, alongside advances in observation, data exchange, technology and capacity-building. The Regular Process continued to strengthen the ocean science-policy interface, through the launch of its third World Ocean Assessment digital platform and the commencement of its fourth cycle (2026–2030). However, persistent underinvestment and geographical disparities in ocean science remain.

87. The continued global decline in the percentage of fish stocks exploited at biologically sustainable levels necessitates robust international cooperation, science-based management, and enhanced implementation of global and regional frameworks to mitigate overfishing and habitat degradation. Lessons can be drawn from areas where strong fisheries management has been effective in preventing overexploitation and restoring stocks.

88. The state of the marine environment and marine biodiversity remains alarming due to increasing cumulative pressures on the ocean and its ecosystems. Despite positive developments, enhanced action is needed to reverse these trends and ensure a healthier and more resilient ocean for present and future generations.

89. International cooperation and coordination on ocean issues remains a priority within and across sectors, such as the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity, fisheries, sea level rise and ocean science. UN-Oceans can be further leveraged to pool expertise, exchange knowledge, enhance collaboration and support Member States, including with respect to capacity-building activities, which remain critical for developing States.
