



UNITED NATIONS DECADE ON
ECOSYSTEM
RESTORATION
2021-2030



UNITED NATIONS
OCEAN CONFERENCE
NICE, FRANCE 2025



OUR
OCEAN

OUR OCEAN OUR FUTURE

9-13 JUNE

UNITED & URGENT ACTION

UNITED NATIONS
OCEAN CONFERENCE

WHAT IMMEDIATE ACTION
can we take to **RESTORE**

& **PROTECT**

OUR OCEAN

IS THE
OCEAN
HEALTHY?

HUMAN
ACTIVITIES

CLIMATE
CRISIS

INDIVIDUAL
actions!

BLUE
ECONOMY

HIGH LEVEL POLICY
DIALOGUE

on

**MULTI-SECTORAL
PARTNERSHIPS**

for the conservation & Restoration
of Marine and Coastal Ecosystems

REGIONAL
cooperation

BLUE
ECONOMY

Will it thrive
for generations
to come?

SOLUTIONS

KNOWLEDGE
& science

GLOBAL
FRAMEWORKS

PARIS
AGREEMENT

SEA LEVEL RISE

SOLUTIONS

KNOWLEDGE
& science

BLUE ECONOMY

What else is needed?



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Executive Summary

The Third **United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC 2025)**, convened in Nice, France, from June 9–13, 2025, brought together global leaders, scientists, policymakers, civil society, and private sector actors under the theme **“Our Ocean, Our Future: United for Urgent Action.”** Co-hosted by the Governments of France and Costa Rica, the conference aimed to accelerate progress on Sustainable Development Goal 14 (Life Below Water) and culminated in the adoption of the Nice Ocean Action Plan.

The conference underscored the existential urgency of restoring ocean health in the face of climate change, biodiversity loss, overfishing, pollution, and fragmented governance. It reaffirmed multilateral commitments through robust discussions on marine finance, deep-sea mining moratoriums, marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ), the 30 x30 biodiversity target, and legal frameworks anchored in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

India’s active participation showcased its leadership in blue economy initiatives, deep-ocean science, marine policy innovation, and climate-smart fisheries. Highlights included the Deep Ocean Mission's Samudrayaan, banning single-use plastics, enhancing Marine Protected Areas, and digital innovations like the SAHAV marine data portal.

As part of its contribution, the India Water Foundation (IWF) hosted a high-level official side event titled **“Multi-sectoral Partnerships for the Conservation and Restoration of Marine and Coastal Ecosystems.”** The event brought together global experts and stakeholders to advocate for science-based, inclusive, and rights-oriented marine ecosystem restoration.

Key themes included the integration of ocean-climate-biodiversity linkages, expansion of blue financing, marine spatial planning, and the need for community-driven and equitable marine governance. Innovations and best practices from UNEP, FAO, ADB, WorldFish, INCOIS, and others enriched the dialogue with regional and local success models—from coral restoration and women-led seaweed farming to digital ocean services and regenerative aquaculture.

The conference and side event concluded with a unified call for stronger multi-level governance, blue finance innovation, data-driven decision-making, regional cooperation, and social equity. Stakeholders were urged to move from dialogue to action, translating global commitments into tangible outcomes for ocean health, livelihoods, and planetary sustainability.

Introduction



The Ocean is more than a vast expanse of water—it is a vital source of life, sustenance, climate regulation, and economic prosperity. In an era marked by intensifying climate impacts, biodiversity loss, unsustainable development, and rising pollution levels, the protection and sustainable governance of our marine and coastal ecosystems has become an imperative for global survival. Against this backdrop, the **Third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC 2025) convened from June 9–13 in Nice, France**, co-hosted by the Governments of Costa Rica and France, brought together world leaders, scientists, policymakers, civil society, and private sector actors in an urgent call to action to safeguard **“Our Ocean, Our Future.”**

Under the overarching theme of **"United for Urgent Action"**, UNOC 2025 aimed to accelerate progress on Sustainable Development Goal 14 (Life Below Water) and reinforce multilateral cooperation through the Nice Ocean Action Plan, adopted as the Conference's outcome document. Ten high-level Ocean Action Panels, plenary sessions, and official side events addressed key issues such as ocean finance, marine pollution, deep-sea mining, sustainable fisheries, regional governance, ocean-climate-biodiversity linkages, and food systems from the sea.

India, with its long coastline, vast Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), and a growing blue economy, participated in the conference to reaffirm its commitment to sustainable ocean governance and marine biodiversity conservation. India's engagements at UNOC 2025 reflected its evolving leadership in areas such as marine pollution reduction, deep-sea exploration, ocean literacy, and inclusive blue economy initiatives.

In alignment with this vision, the **India Water Foundation**, a UN-accredited think tank, organized an official **virtual side event titled “Multi-sectoral Partnerships for the Conservation and Restoration of Marine and Coastal Ecosystems” on June 11, 2025**. This session brought together experts from government, international organizations, academia, and civil society to explore collaborative strategies for restoring marine ecosystems and building coastal resilience.

This report provides a comprehensive overview of the deliberations and outcomes of the UN Ocean Conference 2025, India's contributions and engagements, the insights and recommendations from the India Water Foundation's official side event, and the way forward toward a more inclusive and sustainable Ocean future.

Official Side Event Report: Multi-sectoral Partnerships for the Conservation and Restoration of Marine and Coastal Ecosystems

As part of its enduring commitment to sustainable ocean governance and SDG 14, the **India Water Foundation (IWF)** hosted a high-level official side event during the UN Ocean Conference 2025 on “**Multi-sectoral Partnerships for the Conservation and Restoration of Marine and Coastal Ecosystems.**” On 11th June 2025 (Virtual) from 6:00-8:00 PM. This session brought together eminent global voices from government, international organizations, scientific bodies, and financial institutions to explore the intersection of marine science, inclusive development, and policy action.



Objective and Context

The event was conceptualized as a policy dialogue platform aimed at catalyzing cross-sectoral collaboration, enhancing ocean-climate-biodiversity linkages, and promoting integrated governance models for marine and coastal ecosystem resilience. It aligned with the conference’s overarching theme—“Accelerating Action and Mobilizing All Actors”—and contributed to the global discourse on forging partnerships that are inclusive, science-based, and action-oriented.

Key Themes and Speaker Highlights

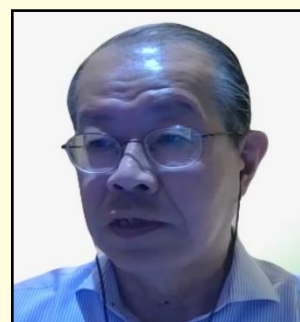
Dr. Arvind Kumar, President of India Water Foundation, opened the session with a powerful framing of the ocean crisis, highlighting that oceans absorb 90% of excess heat and 23% of global CO₂ emissions, yet are increasingly pushed toward a tipping point due to rising temperatures, acidification, deoxygenation, and plastic pollution. He underscored the impacts of global coral bleaching—affecting over 84% of reefs—and called for urgent implementation of the BBNJ Agreement and the 30x30 biodiversity target. His remarks set the tone for the session, emphasizing nature-based solutions, local innovation, and transdisciplinary governance as key to ensuring marine ecosystem restoration.



Shri Bharat Lal, Secretary General, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of India, chaired the session. He emphasized the urgency of ocean conservation in the context of global human rights and socio-economic equity. He called for collective action to preserve the ocean's contribution to climate regulation, oxygen production, and food systems, noting that the ocean economy would rank as the 7th largest in the world if measured as a single nation. He advocated for a four-fold approach: collaboration, data-driven policy, rights-based frameworks, and outcome-oriented action.

Highlighting India's initiatives like SAGAR, mangrove restoration, and seaweed farming by women-led SHGs, he proposed establishing a South Asia–Middle East Blue Carbon Protocol to standardize marine carbon accounting and facilitate climate finance.

Dr. Yutaka Michida, UN Ocean Decade Envoy, University of Tokyo. He emphasized the role of marine spatial planning (MSP) for equitable and sustainable ocean use. He acknowledged India's leadership in establishing IOC India and supported the development of layered, multi-level MSP frameworks to manage competing demands like offshore wind, fishing, and conservation. He called for regional coordination through IOC sub-commissions, inclusion of Indigenous priorities, and natural capital valuation as economic instruments—"pricing the priceless"—to drive better investment in ecosystem services.





Ms. Sinikinesh Beyene Jimma, Acting Head, Marine and Freshwater Branch, UNEP. She emphasized the urgency of scaling up ecosystem-based approaches for marine and coastal resilience, particularly in climate-vulnerable regions. She outlined UNEP's strategic priorities—strengthening area-based management tools like Marine Protected Areas, restoring natural buffers such as mangroves and seagrasses, and enhancing early warning systems. Stressing the need for integrated governance, she called for the inclusion of indigenous knowledge systems, cross-sectoral cooperation, and the mainstreaming of nature-based solutions into national climate strategies and NDCs.

Ms. Jimma also highlighted the chronic underfunding of ocean conservation, urging a threefold increase in investment to close the ocean finance gap and ensure that marine action keeps pace with climate ambition.

Dr. Rishi Sharma, Senior Fishery Officer, FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. Dr. Sharma linked fisheries management to nutrition, livelihoods, and environmental sustainability, pointing to the sector's low carbon footprint and high nutrient efficiency. He presented FAO's cross-border project involving seven countries in South and Southeast Asia focused on marine pollution control, habitat restoration, and ecosystem-based fisheries governance. He highlighted the need for public-private partnerships, community-led monitoring, and evidence-based policymaking, stressing governance, finance, and innovation as the three core enablers of long-term resilience.



Dr. Essam Yassin Mohammed, Director General of WorldFish and Senior Director at CGIAR, emphasized the critical role of community-led, inclusive partnerships in restoring marine ecosystems while ensuring food security and climate resilience. Drawing from field-based experience, he highlighted successful models such as EcoFish Bangladesh, which promotes co-managed fisheries, and multi-trophic aquaculture systems that mimic natural ecosystems to enhance sustainability. He also referenced community-driven Marine Protected Areas in Timor-Leste and climate-resilient

livelihoods in the Solomon Islands and Malaysia, enabled through the Knowledge-Nature-Action (KNA) approach. In India, he noted WorldFish's collaboration in promoting women-led fishery collectives and climate-smart aquaculture. Dr. Essam called for greater investment in rights-based aquatic food systems that empower local actors, ensure equity, and recognize the ocean not as a commodity to exploit but as a shared, living system requiring stewardship and justice.

Dr. Sanath Ranawana, Director, Agriculture, Food, Nature and Rural Development Sector Group, Asian Development Bank (ADB). Dr. Ranawana presented ADB's regional strategy on coastal resilience and blue food systems, backed by a \$40 billion investment by 2030. He detailed how climate threats to Asia-Pacific's coastal economies—home to over 100 million people—require hybrid adaptation models, blending green (mangroves) and grey infrastructure (seawalls). He emphasized blue finance tools, fisheries value chains, and nature-based aquaculture, while also presenting model projects from the Philippines and Kerala, India. He argued that investing in coastal resilience yields benefits 10x the cost, making it a strategic economic imperative.



Dr. Steffen Knodt, Chairman, National Ocean Decade Committee, Germany. Dr. Knodt provided insights on Germany's national experience with the UN Ocean Decade, highlighting blue economy R&D, offshore wind-energy planning, and ecosystem restoration in the Baltic Sea. He described how former fishers are being re-trained as "sea rangers" for conservation. He stressed that investor-community collaboration is essential for scaling up ocean innovation, and emphasized the need for digital ocean twins, blue bonds, and biodiversity credits to unlock financial flows to coastal restoration projects globally.

Dr. Sanjiba Kumar Baliarsingh, Scientist at the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), highlighted India's leadership in delivering science-based ocean services that directly support sustainable livelihoods and coastal resilience. He showcased INCOIS's flagship initiatives such as Potential Fishing Zone advisories, which help fishers reduce fuel consumption by up to 70%, and coral bleaching alert systems across the Andaman, Nicobar, and Lakshadweep islands. He also detailed India's operational support for oil spill detection, storm surge forecasting, and the development of a Marine Energy Atlas to map the potential of tidal, wave, and ocean thermal energy. Dr. Baliarsingh emphasized the growing role of citizen science, real-time data dissemination, and capacity building through UNESCO-certified training centers. His intervention underlined how ocean data and digital platforms are already enabling low-emission livelihoods and enhancing India's preparedness for climate-related marine events, while contributing to broader regional cooperation in the Indian Ocean.

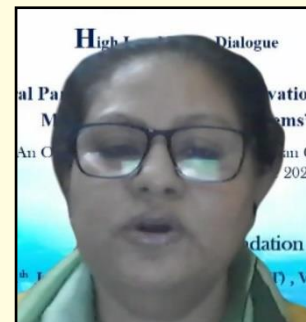




Ms. Ine Moulaert, Valorisation Manager, Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ), Belgium. She shared practical insights from Belgium’s densely used coastal zone, highlighting the importance of local engagement and science-community partnerships in marine ecosystem restoration. She described initiatives such as biogenic reef restoration under the Coast busters project, where industry, government, and research institutions collaborate to revive coastal biodiversity. Ms. Moulaert also emphasized the role of marine spatial planning, data integration platforms, and nature-based coastal adaptation in Europe’s blue economy. Her message underscored that even in small geographies, stakeholder-driven models can create meaningful impact—demonstrating that resilience is as much about community ownership as it is about technology and policy.

Moderator’s Closing Reflections

Ms. Shweta Tyagi, Chief Functionary, India Water Foundation, in her concluding remarks as moderator, provided a comprehensive synthesis of the dialogue and outlined a forward-looking vision rooted in transdisciplinary collaboration, equity, and systems thinking. Emphasizing that the challenges facing our oceans are interconnected with issues of climate justice, food security, and livelihoods, she called for a shift from siloed interventions to integrated, multi-sectoral strategies. Ms. Tyagi advocated for the adoption of blue infrastructure models that combine ecological



integrity with economic value—such as mangroves, reefs, and seagrass meadows—particularly for nature-based coastal protection. She underscored the importance of embedding traditional knowledge systems and Indigenous wisdom into formal governance structures and highlighted the need for inclusive stakeholder engagement, especially of women, youth, and marginalized communities in marine decision-making. Recognizing the acute financing gap, she urged the establishment of National Blue Resilience Funds supported by a mix of CSR, ESG-aligned capital, and public investments, and stressed that ocean finance must be locally accessible, just, and transparent. Ms. Tyagi reaffirmed the India Water Foundation’s commitment to serving as a bridge between science, policy, and community voices, and called on all stakeholders to translate ideas into action, ensuring that the momentum generated at UNOC 2025 leads to real, measurable outcomes on the ground and in the water.

Key Takeaways and Recommendations:

1. Strengthen Integrated Ocean Governance

- Establish multi-level and multi-sectoral governance frameworks to bridge institutional silos between ministries (e.g., environment, fisheries, finance, and coastal development).
- Promote the adoption of Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) as a tool for balancing ecological conservation with economic activities, including offshore infrastructure, fisheries, and tourism.

- Integrate Indigenous knowledge systems, community priorities, and traditional management practices into national and regional ocean policy frameworks.

2. Scale Up Sustainable and Inclusive Blue Financing

- Create dedicated National Blue Resilience Funds to mobilize public, private, and philanthropic capital for ecosystem restoration, community resilience, and innovation.
- Mainstream blended finance models, combining climate finance, CSR contributions, and ESG-aligned investment instruments such as blue bonds, debt-for-nature swaps, and biodiversity credits.
- Support coastal communities and small-scale actors in accessing finance through simplified procedures, local intermediaries, and community-driven projects.

3. Promote Science, Innovation, and Data-Driven Decision-Making

- Enhance regional cooperation in ocean observation systems, including satellite monitoring and in-situ data collection, through platforms such as IOC sub-commissions and institutions like INCOIS.
- Expand citizen science initiatives and open-access digital platforms to support environmental monitoring, early warning systems, and climate adaptation planning.
- Encourage the use of natural capital accounting to incorporate ecosystem values into national economic planning and infrastructure development.

4. Prioritize Equity and Social Inclusion in Ocean Action

- Ensure that ocean and coastal policies explicitly address the needs and rights of coastal communities, women, youth, and Indigenous Peoples, recognizing them as active stakeholders, not passive beneficiaries.
- Strengthen climate-resilient livelihoods through training, technology transfer, and inclusive value chains, especially in fisheries and aquaculture sectors.
- Institutionalize adaptive social protection systems for populations vulnerable to climate-induced marine risks, including sea-level rise, erosion, and resource shifts.

5. Advance Transboundary and Regional Cooperation

- Foster South-South and regional partnerships to share knowledge, build institutional capacity, and coordinate efforts on marine biodiversity conservation, blue carbon management, and pollution control.
- Support the establishment of regional platforms or protocols—such as a South Asia–Middle East Blue Carbon Framework—to facilitate joint research, finance mobilization, and policy harmonization.
- Leverage global initiatives (UNOC, CBD COP, UNFCCC) to institutionalize cross-regional learning and shared accountability mechanisms for ocean action.

Day 1: Setting the Tone for Global Ocean Action



The third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC 2025) commenced on June 9 in Nice, France, with an impassioned call for urgent and united action to restore and safeguard the world's oceans. The opening plenary, co-chaired by **President Rodrigo Chaves Robles** of Costa Rica and **President Emmanuel Macron of France**, emphasized the existential urgency of ocean-related challenges and the need to revitalize multilateralism in global marine governance. President Macron set the tone by declaring that “the Ocean is not for sale,” underscoring the imperative of bold, collective action to protect marine ecosystems for future generations.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres

echoed these sentiments, urging nations to move decisively “from plunder to protection, from exclusion to equity, and from short-term exploitation to long-term stewardship.” One of the key priorities highlighted on the opening day was the ratification and implementation of the Agreement under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement). Several countries, including Dominica, Greece, Norway, and Romania, announced recent ratifications, signalling growing momentum towards the agreement's entry into force.



A significant theme that emerged was the widespread opposition to deep-sea mining, with additional countries—Cyprus, Latvia, Luxembourg, and Slovenia—joining the call for a precautionary pause. This brought the total number of nations advocating for a moratorium to 36, reflecting mounting concerns about the irreversible damage deep-sea mining could inflict on fragile marine ecosystems.

The importance of achieving the 30 by 30 target under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework—to protect at least 30% of the world's oceans by 2030—was reiterated, alongside strong calls for accelerating negotiations on the UN Global Plastics Treaty. Throughout the day, more than 20 heads of state participated in the general debate, showcasing their national efforts and recommitting to collaborative ocean stewardship.

Two high-level Ocean Action Panels also took place, focusing respectively on marine ecosystem restoration and strengthening the science-policy interface for ocean health. These panels emphasized interconnectivity, technology transfer, capacity building, and inclusive financing as crucial enablers for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 14 (Life Below Water).

The opening day laid a strong foundation for the week’s deliberations, with a clear message: the world must act urgently, inclusively, and decisively to ensure a healthy, productive, and resilient Ocean for all.

Day 2: Bridging the Finance Gap and Confronting Marine Pollution



The second day of the United Nations Ocean Conference 2025, held on June 10, focused on two of the most pressing challenges to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 14: the urgent need to mobilize adequate and accessible finance for ocean action, and the global imperative to reduce marine pollution, particularly from plastics and land-based sources.

The day opened with a powerful reminder from speakers that the Ocean is not merely a resource—it is living capital, and investing in its health is intrinsically tied to the survival and prosperity of humanity. Discussions during the morning Ocean Action Panel centered on closing the ocean finance gap, a longstanding barrier to effective marine conservation, especially for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Co-chaired by **Kamina Johnson Smith**, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica, and **Jóhann Páll Jóhannsson**, Minister of the Environment, Energy and Climate of Iceland, the session stressed the need for innovative financial tools, simplified access mechanisms, and the redirection of harmful subsidies towards sustainability-focused investments.

Speakers called for the consolidation of fragmented funding architectures and proposed the establishment of a dedicated global ocean financing mechanism. Promising solutions such as blue bonds, debt-for-nature swaps, parametric insurance, and blue carbon credits were highlighted, along with the urgency to operationalize facilities like the One Ocean Finance Facility to support implementation on the ground.

The afternoon session turned the spotlight on marine pollution, one of the most visible and transboundary threats to ocean health. Co-chaired by **Messouda Mint Baham Ould Mohamed Laghdhaf**, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development, Mauritania, and **Carsten Schneider**, Federal Minister for the Environment of Germany, the panel reiterated that preventing marine pollution—especially plastic waste—is not only an environmental priority but a global health and justice issue. A strong call was made for a robust, ambitious, and binding UN Plastics Treaty, one that addresses the full life cycle of plastics and ensures equitable outcomes for vulnerable communities. UNEP Executive Director **Inger Andersen** emphasized that while negotiations



remain complex, global consensus is within reach and will represent a major win for multilateralism and environmental justice.

Panelists stressed the importance of technology transfer, shared monitoring systems, circular economy frameworks, and capacity building to support pollution control measures, especially in developing nations. The need for transboundary cooperation, sound chemicals management, and the recovery of legacy marine waste was also highlighted.

In both panels, the message was resounding: financial innovation and pollution prevention are central pillars of ocean recovery. Without these, the pathway to a sustainable and resilient marine future remains compromised. The day concluded with a renewed sense of urgency and cooperation, as countries recognized their shared responsibility in both funding and fixing the ocean crisis.

India's Engagements and Contributions at UNOC 2025

At the Third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3) held from June 9–13, 2025, in Nice, France, India demonstrated strong leadership and commitment to ocean sustainability. Represented by **Dr. Jitendra Singh, Union Minister of Earth Sciences (Independent Charge)**, India underscored its evolving role as a key actor in global marine governance, advancing a science- and innovation-driven agenda for a sustainable and inclusive Blue Economy.

Key National Statements and Announcements



In his address to the high-level plenary, **Dr. Singh**, called for urgent global action on ocean health, advocating for a Global Ocean Pact and endorsing the swift ratification of the BBNJ Agreement. India also firmly supported the development of a legally binding Global Plastics Treaty, aligning with multilateral efforts to combat marine pollution.

The Minister showcased India's growing blue economy capabilities, highlighting:

- Over \$80 billion in Blue Economy projects under initiatives such as Sagarmala and Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY).
- A 10% increase in fish production and the formation of over 1,000 Fish Farmer Producer Organizations (FFPOs) since UNOC 2022.
- Over \$2.5 billion invested in modernizing India's fisheries sector.

India's technological and scientific advancements were also brought to the fore, including:

- The Deep Ocean Mission's 'Samudrayaan' project, India's first manned submersible, expected to reach depths of 6,000 meters by 2026.
- The nationwide ban on single-use plastics, and the successful 'Swachh Sagar, Surakshit Sagar' campaign, which has cleaned more than 1,000 km of coastline and removed over 50,000 tonnes of plastic waste.

- The launch of ‘SAHAV’, a digital ocean data portal promoting transparency and real-time marine data access.

Further aligning with global conservation goals, Dr. Singh announced that India’s Marine Protected Areas now cover 6.6% of its Exclusive Economic Zone, contributing to the 30x30 target under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Bilateral and Multilateral Engagements

A notable highlight of India’s diplomacy at UNOC3 was the bilateral meeting between Dr. Jitendra Singh and **Mr. Vidar Helgesen**, Executive Secretary of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO. The dialogue focused on enhancing global ocean observation systems, with India reaffirming its commitment to contribute through both satellite-based platforms and in-situ observation infrastructure.



Dr. Singh emphasized India’s leadership in advancing scientific understanding of the Indian Ocean, particularly for monsoon forecasting and climate resilience. He stressed that robust ocean observation systems are key not only for improved forecasting but also for unlocking the economic potential of the Blue Economy.

Mr. Helgesen encouraged India to take on a more active role in global coordination mechanisms, particularly in data sharing, regional cooperation, and capacity building under the IOC framework. The bilateral reaffirmed the shared objective of strengthening multilateralism in ocean science to tackle challenges such as rising sea levels, biodiversity loss, and marine pollution.

India’s Thematic Priorities at UNOC 2025

Throughout the conference, India consistently emphasized:

- Equitable access to ocean science and technology, especially for developing countries.
- Regional and South-South cooperation, particularly in the Indo-Pacific.
- Inclusive governance, with a focus on supporting women, youth, and Indigenous communities in the ocean sector.
- Integrating nature-based solutions, such as the restoration of 10,000 hectares of mangroves, into national shoreline management.

India also participated in high-level events such as the India-Norway side session on Marine Spatial Planning, and took a co-leadership role in ‘Blue Talks’ alongside France and Costa Rica, further cementing its global presence.

Day 3: Advancing Sustainable Fisheries and Inclusive Ocean Economies

On June 11, the third day of the UN Ocean Conference 2025 placed a sharp focus on the social, economic, and ecological dimensions of fisheries, alongside the broader transition toward sustainable ocean-based economies. Central to the day's discussions was the recognition that the health of the ocean is deeply intertwined with the well-being of millions of people who depend on it—particularly small-scale fishers, coastal communities, and developing nations.

The morning Ocean Action Panel, co-chaired by **Bùi Thanh Son**, Deputy Prime Minister and



Minister of Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam, and **Marija Vučković**, Minister for Environmental Protection and Green Transition of Croatia, spotlighted the urgent need for sustainable and equitable fisheries management. With moderation by **Alfredo Giron**, Head of Ocean Action at the World Economic Forum, the panel emphasized that fisheries are not only crucial to food security and nutrition, but are also key to

poverty reduction and economic development in many coastal regions.

Panelists and delegates strongly advocated for flexible, adaptive management systems, the modernization of aquaculture, and effective enforcement against illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. The importance of community-led approaches, particularly those that empower small-scale and Indigenous fishers, was repeatedly underscored. Leaders from SIDS and developing coastal states, including **President Taneti Maamau** of Kiribati and Prime Minister **Jeremiah Manele** of the Solomon Islands, called for international financing not as charity, but as a strategic investment in global ocean health and food security.

In the afternoon, attention shifted to the broader vision of a sustainable ocean economy, with a session co-chaired by **Surangel S. Whipps Jr.**, President of Palau, and **Annette Gibbons**, Deputy Minister of Fisheries and Oceans of Canada. Moderated by **Minna Epps**, Director of the Ocean Team at IUCN, the session brought to light the need to align economic development with environmental stewardship, creating opportunities that are both climate-resilient and socially inclusive.



President Whipps emphasized that true transformation in the ocean economy must be rooted in equity, ensuring that island and coastal communities—not just global industries—reap the benefits of ocean resources. Gibbons echoed this, warning against the prioritization of short-term profits over long-term sustainability and calling for new global coalitions like the 100% Alliance for Sustainable Ocean Management and the High Ambition Coalition for a Quiet Ocean.

Discussions highlighted critical areas for action: decarbonizing maritime transport, promoting green infrastructure, enabling blue job creation for women and youth, and investing in coastal community resilience. The need for regenerative finance, policy coherence, and integrated value chains was widely recognized, along with the central role of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) in ocean governance.

Day 3 reinforced the idea that a just and inclusive blue economy cannot exist without the meaningful engagement of those whose lives are most directly tied to the ocean. From fisheries to transport, and from livelihoods to equity, the discussions reflected a shared commitment to ensuring that the ocean's future is not only sustainable—but fair, inclusive, and resilient.

Day 4: Uniting Climate, Biodiversity, and Regional Cooperation for Ocean Governance

The fourth day of UNOC 2025, held on June 12, illuminated the critical intersections between climate change, biodiversity, and ocean health, while addressing a persistent barrier to progress—fragmented governance. As planetary crises grow more complex and interconnected, the day's discussions underscored that siloed responses are no longer sufficient. What is needed now is coherence across policy frameworks and cooperation across borders.



In the morning Ocean Action Panel, co-chaired by **Jean-Luc Crucke**, Minister of Climate and Ecological Transition, Belgium, and **Arif Havas Oegroseno**, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, Indonesia, delegates explored the interlinkages between the ocean, climate, and biodiversity. Moderated by **Susan Gardner**, Director of the Ecosystems Division at UNEP, the panel called for ambitious actions that embrace co-benefits

across multiple global agendas. Speakers stressed that goals under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the Paris Agreement, and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change are inherently interdependent, and must be pursued with unified ambition.

Highlighting the Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue 2025, and Indonesia's upcoming Ocean Impact Summit, the session showcased innovative approaches such as the Coral Bond Initiative and reimagining shipping to address both emissions and underwater noise. **Astrid Schomaker**, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), cautioned that meeting global targets demands greater ambition at the national level, bolstered by science, finance, and local knowledge systems.



In the afternoon session, moderated by **Cynthia Barzuna** of the World Resources Institute, discussions turned to the need for enhanced regional and subregional cooperation. Co-chaired

by **Leila Benali**, Minister of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development, Morocco, and **Claudio Barbaro**, Undersecretary of State, Ministry of the Environment, Italy, this panel tackled the consequences of disjointed governance structures, which hinder effective responses to ocean degradation.

Benali emphasized that solutions must transcend institutional and political boundaries, advocating for knowledge democratization, scalable partnerships, and regional solidarity. Barbaro pointed to the Barcelona Convention as a successful model, facilitating implementation of global goals at the local level. President **Wesley Simina** of Micronesia underscored the challenges of climate-induced shifts in tuna populations, demonstrating how outdated quotas and static boundaries no longer reflect ecological realities.

Throughout both sessions, delegates called for stronger data-sharing mechanisms, harmonized legal frameworks, and inclusive governance models that recognize Indigenous knowledge, traditional practices, and the rights of local communities. The importance of regional seas conventions and fisheries management organizations was reaffirmed as essential drivers for implementing global commitments where they matter most—on the ground and in the water.

Day 4 reinforced the message that only integrated, cooperative, and adaptive governance can address the Ocean’s multifaceted challenges. As the Ocean transcends borders, so too must our solutions—guided by science, equity, and a shared responsibility for the planet’s most life-giving system.

Day 5: Strengthening Food Systems and Legal Frameworks for a United Ocean Future

The final day of the UN Ocean Conference 2025, held on June 13, brought into focus two crucial dimensions of ocean governance: the transformational role of the Ocean in sustainable food systems and the importance of legal frameworks, particularly the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), in safeguarding marine resources. As the week-long conference drew to a close, delegates emphasized the urgency of turning commitments into coordinated, legally grounded, and inclusive action through the adoption of the Nice Ocean Action Plan.

The morning Ocean Action Panel, co-chaired by **Philip Isdor Mpango**, Vice President of Tanzania, and **Kim Sungbum**, Deputy Minister for Marine Policy, Republic of Korea, spotlighted the ocean’s central role in addressing food insecurity, malnutrition, and poverty, particularly in coastal and developing nations. Moderated by **Jim Leape** of Stanford University, the panel emphasized the untapped potential of blue food systems to deliver sustainable nutrition and livelihoods while supporting ecological resilience.

Speakers highlighted the need for stronger international cooperation, science-policy integration, and financial flows to enhance marine resource access, reduce harvest losses, and support modern, climate-resilient aquaculture. There was a strong call to empower small-scale fishers, improve value chain transparency, and scale social protection systems that make ocean food systems equitable and future-ready. The discussion recognized aquatic foods not just as a

dietary option, but as a strategic component of global food systems transformation, closely linked with SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), and SDG 14 (Life Below Water).

In the afternoon session, attention turned to the legal foundations of sustainable ocean governance. Co-chaired by **Heraldo Muñoz**, Special Envoy for the Ocean, Chile, and **Penelope Ridings**, Member of the International Law Commission, New Zealand, and moderated by **François Alabrune**, Ambassador of France to the Netherlands, the panel focused on advancing the implementation of UNCLOS and reinforcing legal instruments for ocean protection. Panelists reiterated that UNCLOS remains the “constitution for the Ocean”, and must be fully leveraged to promote equity, inclusivity, and sustainability.



Delegates emphasized the urgent need for ratification of the BBNJ Agreement, rapid conclusion of a UN Plastics Treaty, and strengthened governance in areas beyond national jurisdiction. **Leticia Carvalho**, Secretary General of the International Seabed Authority (ISA), warned against the deep seabed becoming a “Wild West” and called for collective stewardship guided by equity and science.

The day concluded with the adoption of the official outcome document, the Nice Ocean Action Plan, formally titled “Our Ocean, Our Future: United for Urgent Action.” This declaration serves as a political roadmap for advancing marine protection, finance, science, and cooperation. Closing remarks by leaders such as **Olivier Poivre d’Arvor**, Special Envoy of the French President, and **Arnoldo André Tinoco**, Foreign Minister of Costa Rica, reaffirmed the importance of translating declarations into concrete steps—across nations, sectors, and communities.

The final day not only synthesized the week's urgent themes—from marine finance to deep-sea protection—but also signaled a shift from fragmented dialogue to unified action. With new momentum, refined strategies, and strengthened legal instruments, the global community left Nice with renewed resolve to protect the Ocean—our shared life force, food source, and future.

Key Thematic Outcomes of UNOC 2025

A. Ocean Finance and Governance

- Call for the creation of a dedicated global ocean financing mechanism.
- Promotion of blue bonds, debt-for-nature swaps, and biodiversity credits.
- Emphasis on marine spatial planning and natural capital accounting to align economic and ecological goals.

B. Marine Pollution and Plastic Waste

- Resounding support for a binding Global Plastics Treaty.
- Scaling up of circular economy models, waste monitoring systems, and transboundary cooperation on marine litter.
- Highlighting the global health implications of marine plastic pollution.

C. Sustainable Fisheries and Blue Economies

- Advocacy for community-led, rights-based fisheries governance.
- Investments in blue jobs, climate-resilient aquaculture, and inclusive value chains.
- Calls for international funding not as aid, but as strategic investment in global food and ocean security.

D. Climate-Biodiversity-Ocean Nexus

- Emphasis on aligning Paris Agreement, Kunming-Montreal Biodiversity Framework, and SDG14.
- Innovative solutions such as Coral Bond Initiatives and nature-based shipping alternatives.
- Demand for harmonized policies and greater regional cooperation.

E. Legal Architecture and Cooperation

- Reaffirmation of UNCLOS as the foundational legal instrument for ocean governance.
- Push for the ratification of the BBNJ Agreement and regulation of deep-sea mining.
- Strengthening regional seas conventions and marine biodiversity governance beyond national jurisdiction.

Conclusion:

UNOC 2025 marked a decisive step toward restoring ocean health, with global leaders adopting the Nice Ocean Action Plan and committing to urgent, inclusive, and science-based action. India's active role and the India Water Foundation's side event underscored the power of multi-sectoral partnerships and regional cooperation. The path ahead demands turning commitments into measurable impact to secure a resilient, equitable, and sustainable ocean future.