



UN Global Compact COP28 Input Paper

Aquatic Food

Dubai, UAE, 30 November–12 December 2023

What is COP and what's the role of non-state actors

The Conference of the Parties for Climate Change is convened under the multilateral process on climate change adopted in 1992, known as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). In 2015, the historic adoption of the Paris Agreement set the ambition to limit global warming by 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels, review countries' commitments every five years and provide financing to developing countries to mitigate climate change, strengthen resilience and enhance abilities to adapt to climate impacts. While the UNFCCC COPs are designed for governments to take stock of the climate crisis and decide the best actions to tackle it, they have also become a critical space where non-state actors can showcase their decarbonization pathways, their commitments to net-zero operations, and call for government policies. This is a direct reflection of the widely accepted fact that not one sector or single group alone can tackle the climate crisis - but rather that all stakeholders must take action and seek multilateral, public-private sector cooperation.

This year's climate COP, the 28th, will be hosted by the government of the United Arab Emirates, marking the halfway point between the historic Paris Agreement and the 2030 mark. The UAE COP28 Presidency will focus on the following: Mitigation, Food Systems, Adaptation, Climate Finance and Loss and Damage. Marking the conclusion of the [first Global Stocktake](#), COP28 will be a pivotal moment for governments to negotiate their country's response to the stocktake findings, and agree on new pathways to meet the 1.5 degrees goal.

United Nations Global Compact's role as a special initiative of the United Nations

The United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) is the world's largest corporate sustainability and corporate social responsibility initiative. While voluntary action is critical, global standards, policies and regulations are required to get to the scale of action necessary to make meaningful progress towards net zero. UNGC's role at COP is to support and facilitate dialogue between governments and non-state actors, in partnership with UNFCCC.

UNGC Ocean work

The Ocean Stewardship Coalition convenes ocean-related industries, academic institutions, financial actors, governments and UN agencies, to deliver on the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development - establishing guidances, courses, and standards, informing regulatory institutions and developing finance frameworks.

This paper is part of a series of Input Papers on key ocean topics, and can be shared with all interested stakeholders. For further information about the UN Global Compact Ocean's work, please reach out to ocean@unglobalcompact.org.



Aquatic Foods and Climate Change

Industry state of play

The exponential rise in the global population, allied with economic development and the acceleration of urbanization, is rapidly elevating the demand for high-quality foods and in particular proteins. Aquatic foods –derived from marine animals, plants, and algae– represent an incredible opportunity to help meet this increasing demand, but the industry faces multiple crossroads, balancing global demand with ecological sustainability and climate action. Presently, over 90% of aquatic food systems are facing substantial risks posed by environmental changes, particularly in high-stakes regions like Asia, Latin America, and Africa, where most of the growth opportunities for the sector will need to be realized to meet global protein and nutrients demand in the future.

Overfishing remains a critical issue; it jeopardizes marine ecosystems and the livelihoods dependent on them; 30 to 35% of seafood is either lost or discarded post harvest. Aquaculture is a growing alternative, but comes with its own set of environmental, health and economic challenges; antibiotic use, feed sourcing, and waste management. While climate change poses a significant threat to aquatic ecosystems, these very systems also offer promising solutions to the climate crisis.

Breakthroughs and Targets

The UN Climate Change High-Level Champions (UN HLCC) are connecting the work of governments with various voluntary initiatives. By strengthening the engagement of non-state actors in the COP processes, the aim is to mobilize stronger, faster and more ambitious climate action. For this, the UN HLCC 2030 Breakthroughs are being created as goals that clearly outline, for some of the major sectors of the economy, opportunities for financing, solutions and technology in the transition to a climate-neutral and nature-positive economy. Launched at the 2023 IUCN World Leaders' Forum by H.E. Razan Al Mubarak, the Ocean Breakthroughs provide transformative pathways covering five key ocean sectors, including marine conservation, where accelerated action and investments could deliver up to 35 percent GHG emissions reduction and contribute to a resilient, nature-positive and net zero future by 2050.

[UN HLCC Aquatic Food Breakthrough](#): "By 2030, provide at least USD 4bn per year to support resilient aquatic food systems that will contribute to healthy, regenerative ecosystems, and sustain the food and nutrition security for three billion people".

To meet a global demand for healthy proteins, sustainable aquaculture must scale up.

UN Global Compact has a set of [Practical Guidances](#) that map current regulations, business standards and best and emerging practices for both aquaculture and seaweed sectors. UNGC has developed a [guide](#) to support seafood sector companies to set a science-based emission reduction target with the SBTi.



Key Policy and Business Recommendations

Policy Recommendations

- ❖ **Systemic Shift:** Recognize the role of seafood as a low carbon alternative in food systems, by promoting sustainable production, capacity building and good governance.
- ❖ **Implement Full Traceability:** By 2030, enact legislation and effectively implement agreements (FAO Port State Measure Agreement, WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement), mandating that all internationally-traded seafood comes with standardized, consumer-trustworthy transparent and traceable sources, and facilitate technology and innovation development to support data for transparency and traceability in seafood supply chains.
- ❖ **Promote Ocean-Based Nutrition:** Incentivize shifts in consumption and production away from land-based proteins towards more sustainable ocean-derived calories. Seaweed can play a crucial role as a source of food, feed, and fertilizer, aligned with both dietary and environmental needs.

Business recommendations

- ❖ **Foster Regenerative Aquaculture:** Support the development and scaling of integrated multi-trophic aquaculture systems that mimic natural ocean ecosystems, supporting a nature-positive approach as the basis for the scale up of the aquaculture industry.
- ❖ **Financial Incentives for Sustainability:** Utilize blue bonds and other financial mechanisms aligned with ESG criteria to fund sustainable practices.
- ❖ **Seafood loss and Waste:** Eliminate bycatch, and minimize discard and waste of seafood in harvest and post harvest phases, by finding alternative uses for seafood and creating supply chain collaboration and partnerships.

Key Documents for Reference:

General Ocean-Climate Leadership Resources

[Global Stocktake / UNFCCC](#)

[UN HLCC Ocean Breakthroughs](#)

[UN Climate Change High-Level Champions](#)

[COP 28 UAE Website](#)

[IPCC report](#)

[UNGC Sustainable Ocean Principles](#)

[Ocean-Climate Tracker Report - WRI / HLCs](#)

Sector-Specific Resources for Aquatic Foods

[Setting Science-Based Targets in the Seafood Sector: Best Practices to Date](#)

[WTO Harmful Fisheries Subsidies Agreement Protocol acceptance](#)

[SeaBOS](#)