



UN Global Compact COP28 Input Paper

Seaweed

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.



Seaweeds and Climate Change

Industry state of play

In this context, 'seaweed' denotes macroalgae, marine organisms that photosynthesize and reproduce without flowers. Unlike microalgae, which are not visible to the naked eye, macroalgae are easily visible and typically grow anchored to the seabed or reef substrates.

Seaweeds have the potential to help address some of the world's most pressing challenges. They play a crucial role in healthy food systems—that is, healthy people, a healthy planet, and a healthy economy. Seaweeds can be used as a sustainable, nutritious food source for humans and animals, help enrich soils and complement terrestrial fertilizers by boosting plant nutrition, and be a source of innovative materials ranging from plastic substitutes to sustainable building bricks. By providing natural habitat and food for marine life, seaweeds can help restore ocean biodiversity. They can help de-acidify surrounding waters and reduce ocean pollution by removing excess nutrients, often the result of terrestrial runoff. Various seaweeds have multiple applications in medicine, packaging, and textiles. Seaweed cultivation and transformation can be a source of alternative livelihoods for fishers, especially women in some areas of the world, building the resilience of coastal communities by providing new sources of employment and revenue. Important research is underway on the potential of some seaweeds to contribute towards the mitigation of climate change through the reduction of ruminant methane emissions and atmospheric carbon dioxide removal.

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 Marine Conservation Breakthrough](#): “By 2030, investments of at least \$72 billion secure the integrity of ocean ecosystems by protecting, restoring, and conserving at least 30% of the ocean for the benefit of people, climate, and nature.”

While seaweeds do not have a specific sustainable growth target or Breakthrough, the [Seaweed Manifesto](#) outlines how to drive the development of a scaled-up, responsible seaweed industry that balances food and biomass production.

UN Global Compact is hosting the [Global Seaweed Coalition](#) with 1200+ members, whose mission is to support the safe and sustainable scale-up of the seaweed industry worldwide.



Policy Recommendations

- ❖ **Strengthen Regulatory Frameworks:** Governments should prioritize investments to enhance the regulatory landscape for seaweed production. This includes developing reliable seaweed standards and working alongside international entities like IMO, FAO, and ILO.
- ❖ **Enhance Data Collection and Analysis:** A centralized effort should be established to gather comprehensive data on seaweeds, including their economic value, environmental benefits, and comparative advantages over synthetic alternatives.
- ❖ **Support Small Seaweed Farmers:** Efforts should be directed towards providing farmers with knowledge on sustainable practices, financial support, and practical guidances. Inclusivity is vital, with seaweed farmers and Indigenous Communities playing a significant role in Marine Spatial Planning and setting NDCs.

Business recommendations

- ❖ **Establish a Global Seaweed Research Consortium:** The formation of a dedicated network focusing on seaweed research will guide businesses, consumers, and government agencies towards low-carbon alternatives.
- ❖ **Promote Seaweed as an Alternative in Various Industries:** Beyond its environmental benefits, seaweeds hold considerable promise to provide benefits in areas like livestock feed to reduce methane emissions, carbon capture alternatives, and as potential substitutes for plastic feedstocks.

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 Seaweed

[Seaweed Manifesto](#)

[Seaweed as a Nature-Based Climate Solution Vision Statement](#)

[Global Seaweed Coalition Annual Report](#)