

2022 UN OCEAN CONFERENCE

Outcomes of the High-Level Meeting on Ocean and Climate

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OCEAN & CLIMATE
PLATFORM



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INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

From Lisbon to Sharm el-Sheikh: Accelerating Ocean-Based Climate Solutions

“The ocean provides food, energy, water, jobs and economic benefits for people in every country, even those that are landlocked. It is a crucial buffer against climate change and a massive resource for sustainable development. The health of our oceans and seas is inextricably linked with the health of our planet and all life on Earth” Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres.

INTRODUCTION

On 27 June 2022 in Lisbon, Portugal, the United Nations Global Compact, the High-Level Climate Champions, the Ocean and Climate Platform, UNFCCC and the Governments of Portugal, the United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom, convened chief executives from businesses, financial institutions, NGOs, UN organizations and government representatives for a high-level meeting on the ocean and climate.

This meeting focused on the implementation of solutions at the ocean-climate nexus. The following document provides background on the ocean-climate nexus, highlights recent developments in ocean-based climate action and outlines the main takeaways from the meeting. This document also lays the foundation for a set of short and mid-term targets, referred to here as *Blue Breakthroughs*, being developed with the ambition to be presented at COP 27 in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt.

The Ocean-Climate Nexus

We depend on a healthy, productive and resilient ocean for food security, climate mitigation, economic livelihoods and much more. In the words of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, “the health of our oceans and seas is inextricably linked with the health of our planet and all life on Earth.” The ocean is key to addressing many of the interconnected challenges facing our world today – including the climate crisis. In fact, on the pathway to limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, ocean-based solutions have the potential to reduce the emissions gap by up to 21 per cent by 2050.

Despite the impact multipliers of investing in the ocean, SDG 14 – Life Below Water – has received the lowest level of financial investment of any Sustainable Development Goal. However, the ocean-climate nexus has gained considerable recognition in

recent years, first in the Paris Agreement, and most recently in Glasgow at COP 26. In Glasgow, nature-based solutions were at the heart of climate negotiations as ocean health became an important pillar of the Glasgow Climate Pact.

At COP 26, more than 120 civil society organizations – NGOs, scientists, companies and international organizations – endorsed the [Ocean for Climate Declaration](#), thereby committing to “bold public and private actions to achieve a healthy and productive ocean for a resilient, biodiverse and net-zero future” in line with the vision and priorities described in the [Ocean and Coastal Zones](#) of the UNFCCC Climate Action Pathways. The Glasgow Climate Pact also established an annual [Ocean & Climate Change Dialogue](#) under the aegis of the UNFCCC’s Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA).

The ocean-climate nexus has rapidly become a centerpiece of climate negotiations and climate action in the global community. This momentum, which reached new heights in Glasgow, serves as a reminder of this nexus and presents new opportunities for accelerating the implementation of ocean-based solutions on the path towards net zero and beyond.

2022 - The Ocean Super Year

In 2022, many encouraging steps have been taken towards accelerating the implementation of ocean-based climate solutions. In February, nearly 40 governments raised the collective level of ambition for ocean action at the One Ocean Summit. In March, the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-5) announced its ambition to complete a draft, by 2024, of a global legally binding agreement that addresses plastic pollution. In June, the World Trade Organization (WTO) reached a multilateral deal on fisheries subsidies. Also in June, the global community gathered at the UN Ocean Conference to discuss the implementation of SDG 14. These discussions led to the commitments made in the [Lisbon Declaration](#).

The ocean is high on the global climate agenda. Meanwhile, investor appetite for blue investment is on the rise whilst businesses are recognizing the need to align their operations with the transition to a net-zero, resilient future in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. The following takeaways from the high-level meeting in Lisbon seek to build on this momentum on the road to COP 27 in Sharm El Sheikh.



TAKEAWAYS

The High-Level Meeting - Executive Summary

In efforts to turn words into action, the high-level meeting in Lisbon focused on implementation by establishing a framework of key actions. This framework was developed for governments, cities, ocean-based industries and the financial sector. The key actions outlined below are aimed at accelerating implementation and at unlocking the tremendous potential of ocean-based solutions in climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Where We Are

- **We know that the ocean holds vital solutions to stay within healthy planetary boundaries and to meet the goals of the Glasgow Climate Act, supporting both climate change adaptation and mitigation goals.**
- **Now is the time to capitalize on building momentum by scaling the financing and implementation of these solutions.**

Financing Solutions

- Scaling blue finance is essential to accelerating the implementation of ocean-based solutions.

Action Item: The finance sector, along with policymakers, must determine how best to de-risk blue finance in order to increase investor confidence and mobilize private capital. Mechanisms could include, but are not limited to, government backstops, second-party opinions, loan guarantees, tax incentives, favourable lending rates and clear strong global standards and guidelines.

Action Item: Governments must implement fiscal policies to demystify blue finance mechanisms and finance ministers should engage with these mechanisms.

- Scaling ocean investment requires clarity and transparency in the global financial markets, particularly with new and emerging asset classes.

Action Item: As capital flows into blue finance, establishing and maintaining investor confidence is crucial. Until now, relatively new asset classes such as blue bonds have suffered from a lack of global standardization. In response, the [UN Global Compact has announced that five global stakeholders are developing a universal guidance for blue bonds](#)—a commitment to provide the global market

with clear consistency and transparency in financing the sustainable ocean economy. The aim of this guidance is to provide market participants with clear criteria, practices and examples for issuances.

- The deployment of ocean investment must be strategic and tactical.

Action Item: Ocean investment must be “finance intentional”. For example, small amounts of finance can fund “turnkey” projects that make it easy and low cost for investors to invest in the sustainable ocean economy. Another example is the use of grant finance to affect policy that creates or accelerates market trends. Scaling the sustainable ocean economy also requires greater investment in SMEs. Investors must recognize the particular needs of SMEs by supporting specific, feasible solutions rather than theoretical solutions developed on the global scale.

- New waves of ocean investment should focus on small island developing states who are often left out of major financing despite their heightened vulnerability to climate change and the high potential of ocean based solutions to build long term resilience.

Action Item: Banks and lending institutions must invest more money in green facilities that are accessible to small island developing states.

Action Item: Finance mechanisms should reflect local, social and economic conditions. However, the finance sector must also recognize that a multiplicity of finance mechanisms and institutions can lead to fragmentation and inefficiency. Finance systems must avoid creating complex lending environments that require significant resources to navigate, particularly for small island developing states.





Accelerating Sustainable Ocean-Based Industry

- Although recent developments in renewable energy, shipping, aquaculture and other ocean-based industries are encouraging, there remain significant challenges for these industries to transition to net-zero and to adopt nature-positive activities. Some of these challenges are addressed in the following section: Turning to Policy.
- The increased competition for space in the marine environment and the lack of sustainable ocean management plans stand as barriers to the sustainable growth of industries in the ocean economy.

Action Item: Working with governments, companies must approach marine spatial planning with a focus on coexistence rather than competition. With a collaborative focus on coexistence, companies can find mutually beneficial uses for limited marine space and resources.

Action Item: Companies must innovate with a focus on synergies with nature. Current examples of innovative marine space usage include wind farms that restore biodiversity, that grow corals, or that contribute to coastal restoration projects.

Action Item: Ocean-based industries, policymakers, and other stakeholders can scale and strengthen the sustainable ocean economy by identifying opportunities for jobs that exist in the ocean economy beyond the net zero transition.

Turning to Policy

- The financing and implementation of ocean-based solutions is often limited by a lack of relevant government policy.

Action Item: Governments must develop policies and legislation that incentivize the research, development and implementation of ocean-based solutions. Incentives could include, but are not limited to, subsidies, environmental taxes and mandates.

Action Item: Governments must develop processes that accelerate the leasing of marine space. These processes should also reward companies focused on coexistence and synergies in marine spatial planning.

- Coastal cities are facing a high number of threats from climate change.

Action Item: National and local governments must develop policy and legislation that support climate adaptation and mitigation projects and that attract capital for coastal cities, especially in emerging markets.

MOVING FORWARD WITH THE BLUE BREAKTHROUGHS

At COP 26, parties endorsed sectoral breakthroughs on climate change mitigation, known as the *Glasgow Breakthroughs*, as effective mechanisms to accelerate action. Under the framework of the *Glasgow Breakthroughs*, national governments and non-state actors collaborate towards specific milestones and targets, activating an “ambition loop” of climate action.

The high-level meeting in Lisbon, and the UN Ocean Conference as a whole, highlighted the need to set similar pathways in the ocean context. To deliver on the action items outlined above, businesses, financial institutions and governments need to share a common plan with measurable, regionalized and short and mid-term goals. Using the mechanisms established in Glasgow, and building on the United Nations Global Compact's [5 Tipping Points for a Healthy and Productive Ocean](#), **a set of Blue Breakthroughs are being developed with the ambition to be presented at COP 27 in Sharm El Sheikh.**

These *Blue Breakthroughs* will help articulate what key actors must do, and by when, to deliver much needed systems change. Such pathways will provide direction for investors and policymakers to enable the acceleration of ocean investment and ocean-based solutions implementation across the globe, particularly in the Global South. Setting specific milestones and targets is fundamental to activating the ambition loop of ocean action and to delivering on the actions necessary for scalability and implementation.

Below are already defined breakthroughs that can serve as reference points for the *Blue Breakthroughs*.

Ocean-based conservation

- **HLCC 2030 Breakthrough Ambition:** 20 per cent of the largest companies in each ocean economy sector are publicly reporting on actions taken to reverse Blue Carbon Ecosystems loss by 2030.
- **What:** Measures aimed at the protection, restoration and conservation of coastal and marine ecosystems that sequester and store carbon and/or offer coastal resilience and protection from climate impacts. Examples of these ecosystems include mangroves, coastal wetlands, salt marshes and seaweed communities.

Ocean-based Transport

- **HLCC 2030 Breakthrough Ambition:** 5 per cent of fuels used for international shipping and 15 per cent of fuels used for domestic shipping to be zero emission fuels by 2030.
- **What:** Measures aimed at decarbonizing domestic ocean-based transport and international shipping.

Offshore Renewable Energy

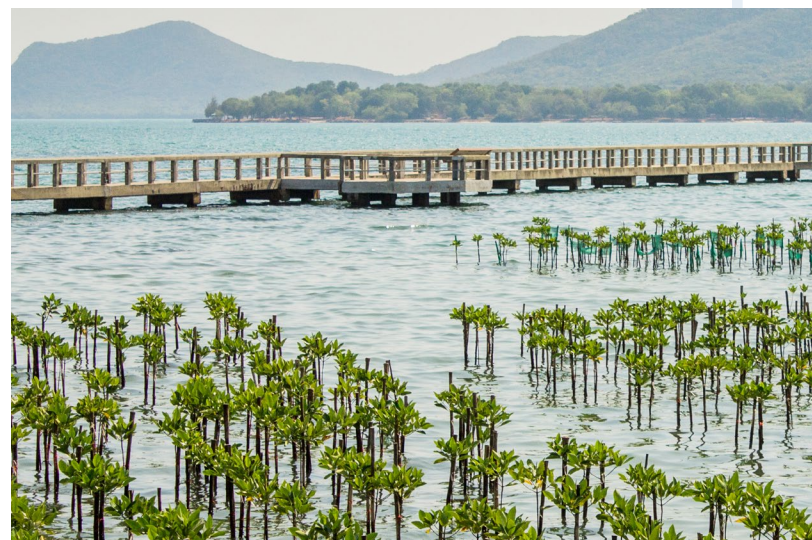
- **HLCC 2030 Breakthrough Ambition:** Solar and wind power to make up at least 40 per cent and all renewables to make up at least 60 per cent of global electricity generation by 2030, including 380GW of installed offshore wind capacity by 2030.
- **What:** Measures aimed at scaling up offshore renewable energy.

Ocean-based Food

- **HLCC 2030 Breakthrough Ambition:** 20 per cent of major fishing and aquaculture companies, as categorized by revenue tiers, to join the Science based target initiative.
- **What:** Measures aimed at decarbonizing fisheries and aquaculture operations and production.

What Remains

- **Blue Finance Breakthrough Ambition:** Determine short and mid-term goals for the scaling of investment in the sustainable ocean economy, with emphasis on small island developing states and SMEs.
- **Marine Spatial Planning Breakthrough Ambition:** Determine short and mid-term goals for the sustainable use of marine space with a focus on co-existence and synergies. These targets can be informed by the existing work of the [High-Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy](#) and of the United Nations Global Compact's marine spatial planning and offshore renewables working group and its [climate-smart MSP roadmap](#).
- **Ocean Economy Employment Breakthrough Ambition:** Determine short and mid-term goals for the creation of jobs in the sustainable ocean-economy, both within and outside the net-zero transition.



CONCLUSION

Covering 71 per cent of our planet's surface, the ocean is the lifeblood of human and natural life on earth. Unfortunately, unsustainable and inequitable development have pushed many ocean ecosystems to the brink of collapse. A healthy ocean is essential to addressing climate change and to creating economic prosperity in sustainable and resilient societies. As the ocean-climate nexus continues to gain recognition on the global scale, now is the time for implementation. The key actions outlined in this document serve as a pathway to accelerating the implementation of ocean-based climate solutions. Guided by a common action plan of *Blue Breakthroughs*, governments, cities, ocean-based industries and the financial sector can deliver the systems change that our ocean, and our future, so desperately need. The High-Level Climate Champions and the United Nations Global Compact welcome the engagement of additional partners to collectively define these *Blue Breakthroughs*.



THE TEN PRINCIPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL COMPACT



HUMAN RIGHTS

- 1 Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights; and
- 2 make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses.



LABOUR

- 3 Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;
- 4 the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour;
- 5 the effective abolition of child labour; and
- 6 the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.



ENVIRONMENT

- 7 Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges;
- 8 undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility; and
- 9 encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.



ANTI-CORRUPTION

- 10 Business should work against corruptions on in all its forms, including extortion and bribery.

The Ten Principles of the United Nations Global Compact are derived from: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Labour Organization's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, and the United Nations Convention Against Corruption.

ABOUT THE UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL COMPACT

As a special initiative of the UN Secretary-General, the United Nations Global Compact is a call to companies everywhere to align their operations and strategies with ten universal principles in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption. Launched in 2000, the mandate of the UN Global Compact is to guide and support the global business community in advancing UN goals and values through responsible corporate practices. With more than 15,000 companies and 3,000 non-business signatories based in over 160 countries, and more than 70 Local Networks, it is the largest corporate sustainability initiative in the world.

For more information, follow @globalcompact on social media and visit our website at unglobalcompact.org.



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