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**2025 United Nations Conference to Support the
Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14:
Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and
marine resources for sustainable development**

Nice, France, 9–13 June 2025

Item 9 of the provisional agenda*

Ocean Action panels

**Ocean Action panel 1: Conserving, sustainably managing
and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems, including
deep-sea ecosystems**

Concept paper prepared by the Secretariat

Summary

The present concept paper was prepared pursuant to paragraph 24 of General Assembly resolution [78/128](#), in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General of the 2025 United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development to prepare concept papers on each of the themes of the Ocean Action panels, taking into account the relevant ocean-related processes of the Assembly and other possible contributions. The present paper relates to Ocean Action panel 1, on the theme “Conserving, sustainably managing and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems including deep-sea ecosystems”. In the paper, the status, trends, challenges and opportunities for achievement of the relevant targets of Sustainable Development Goal 14 are set out under the overarching theme of the Conference: “Accelerating action and mobilizing all actors to conserve and sustainably use the ocean”.

* [A/CONF.230/2025/1](#).



I. Introduction

Importance of marine and coastal ecosystems

1. Healthy marine and coastal ecosystems, including those in the deep sea, are essential for planetary stability and human well-being. They support an enormous range of life forms, with more than double the diversity found on land, as well as human well-being. Healthy oceans provide many essential benefits and services for people and the planet, including climate regulation, maintenance of the physical and chemical cycles of the planet, nutrition, food security, human well-being and a wide range of cultural and spiritual values.

2. The annual economic value provided by the ocean to the global economy is projected to reach \$3 trillion by 2030, making it comparable to one of the top 10 economies worldwide. The production of aquatic foods in the ocean sustains millions of people, with food provision on average growing at about twice the growth rate of the human population since 1960. Globally, 492 million people, nearly half of them women, depend at least partly on small-scale fisheries.¹ Oceans also provide non-monetary benefits, including nutrition and social and cultural values.

Challenges facing marine and coastal ecosystems

3. The health, functioning and resilience of marine and coastal ecosystems are increasingly facing pressure from the intensifying use of marine resources and from destructive practices, combined with other human-induced pressures, leading to a triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity and nature loss, and pollution, which undermines the long-term sustainability of those important ecosystems and the services that they provide.

4. Moreover, the investment needed to scale up conservation efforts in line with growing human pressures is lacking. If unaddressed, those pressures will lead to further ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss, impacting global food security and livelihoods, and undermining planetary functions and stability. A stronger and closely coordinated global response is therefore required to conserve, sustainably manage, and restore marine and coastal ecosystems.

Developments at the international level towards sustainable ocean ecosystems

5. Since the 2022 United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, the health and resilience of ocean ecosystems have been further recognized globally. At the 2024 high-level political forum on sustainable development, participants emphasized the role of the ocean in advancing Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 13 and 17, highlighting the need for coordinated and accelerated global efforts to protect marine biodiversity and ensure the sustainable use of ocean resources.

6. In recognition of the need for scaled-up action, several international processes, frameworks and agreements have been developed with a focus on increasing political ambition and catalysing actions in support of sustainable ocean ecosystems and biodiversity, such as 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, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the intergovernmental negotiating committee on plastic pollution and the ocean and climate change dialogue under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, among others.

¹ See www.nature.com/articles/nature09689.

7. Despite significant efforts and advances, the global community is falling short of achieving most of the targets under Goal 14, including those relating to conserving, sustainably managing and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems.

II. Status and trends

Marine biodiversity and drivers of biodiversity loss

8. The ocean is one of the world's major reservoirs of biodiversity. The ocean hosts 32 of the 34 known phyla on earth, and it is estimated that the ocean contains between 500,000 and 10 million marine species, many of which have yet to be identified, and over 2,000 new species are recognized each year. Beyond microorganisms (bacteria and viruses) and marine invertebrates, which comprise the majority of marine life, approximately 18,000 bony and cartilaginous fish are described. Furthermore, the large degree of uncertainty in the number of marine species illustrates the high level of uncertainty in the global knowledge of marine biodiversity. Marine animal species are insufficiently protected at the international level, partly due to their migratory nature and presence in areas beyond national jurisdiction and also because of persistent gaps in scientific knowledge and understanding of their ecological roles and conservations needs, even though they play an irreplaceable role in the functioning of the ecosystems on which life on Earth depends. The International Union for Conservation of Nature considers that 46,300 species are threatened with extinction worldwide, totalling 28 per cent of species assessed, including 37 per cent of sharks and rays.

9. Given the enormous diversity of marine life and the complexity of marine ecosystems and the ways in which human activities affect marine ecosystems, it is challenging to provide a simple overall description of the state of marine biodiversity. While progress is being made with regard to certain places and species, and habitat protection and recovery is being demonstrated in certain areas, there is an overall continuing trend of rapid biodiversity and habitat loss. Approximately half of the live coral cover on coral reefs has been lost since the 1870s, and 44 per cent of reef-building coral species globally are at risk of extinction. According to the Red List of Mangrove Ecosystems of the International Union for Conservation of Nature, half of the world's mangrove provinces are considered threatened. Almost 30 per cent of global seagrass area has been lost since the late nineteenth century, and at least 22 of the world's 72 seagrass species are in decline. As many as 97 per cent of migratory fish listed in the Convention on Migratory Species are at risk of extinction, and 6 out of the 13 great whale species are now classified as endangered or vulnerable.

10. In terms of fisheries, most of the 18,000 backboneed marine fish species (and their numerous stocks) are not impacted by direct exploitation – over 85 per cent of marine backboneed fish species are not targeted by fisheries. However, the fraction of exploited fish stocks impacted by overfishing continues to increase, with 62.3 per cent being fished within biologically sustainable levels in 2021, which is 2.3 per cent lower than in 2019. Currently, the global catch remains stable with 76.9 per cent of landings coming from biologically sustainable stocks in 2021. Those global figures include regional variations and localized fishing impacts that are explored in reporting from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Although the fraction of overfished fish stocks continues to increase, reported global catches are stagnating, despite the increasing fishing effort.² In addition, according to reports under the Convention on Migratory Species, many marine migratory species listed in the Convention's appendices, including marine mammals and some species

² See www.science.org/doi/abs/10.1126/science.adr5487.

of sharks and rays, are acutely sensitive to exploitation pressure (for example, as by-catch) on account of their inherently low reproductive capacity.

11. Major threats to ocean biodiversity arise from anthropogenic climate change, with rising ocean temperatures, acidification, and sea level rise having recorded impacts on species and habitats alike. Other significant threats include unsustainable fishing practices, land/sea-use change, and land-based and marine pollution, including wastewater and agricultural runoff. Scientific assessments vary in their estimation of individual and synergistic pressures, suggesting that 59–97 per cent of the ocean is experiencing increasing cumulative impacts from those human pressures.³ Significant efforts have been made to better understand the various direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss. This has resulted in a good understanding of why marine ecosystems are being degraded across the world (with regional and local variations for certain species and habitats). Likewise, a wide range of tools have been developed and implemented to minimize pressures and reduce or eliminate their impacts on marine ecosystems.

12. Unfortunately, many of those drivers and pressures have either increased in recent years or have not yet been minimized to a level that is no longer harmful to ecosystem structure and function and to long-term sustainability in some areas. Climate change, and its associated impacts, continues to worsen, with the period from 2015 to 2024 being the 10 warmest years on record, and ocean warming and global mean sea level reaching their highest levels on record in 2024. These impacts act synergistically with other pressures facing the ocean, with increasing overall cumulative impacts on many marine systems. According to the Planetary Boundary Framework updated in September 2023, 6 out of the 9 critical processes that together maintain a stable and resilient Earth have been transgressed.⁴

13. Furthermore, the indirect drivers (also referred to as “underlying causes”) of biodiversity loss, such as demographic change, social and cultural dynamics, poverty and market trends, are especially difficult to address as part of efforts to achieve healthier ecosystems, especially as they operate almost always in concert and across multiple scales and varying levels of proximity from the location in question.⁵

Global commitments and frameworks related to ocean biodiversity

14. The integration of biodiversity considerations into the multilateral policy framework for the ocean is progressing, with cooperation under international instruments increasing (e.g. between regional fishery bodies and regional seas conventions and action plans). Ecosystem-based management approaches are being promoted.

15. The Convention on Biological Biodiversity is one of the main international frameworks regarding the protection of biodiversity worldwide. Its first marine and coastal biodiversity programme of work was adopted in 1998. In 2006, at the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Parties adopted scientific criteria for identifying ecologically or biologically significant marine areas. Those marine areas are special areas in the ocean that, in one way or another, serve important purposes and support the healthy functioning of oceans and the many services that the oceans provide. One of the main outcomes of

³ Benjamin S. Halpern and others, “Recent pace of change in human impact on the world’s ocean”, *Scientific Reports*, vol. 9, No. 11609 (2019), available at <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-019-47201-9>; David O. Obura and others, “Integrate biodiversity targets from local to global levels”, *Science*, vol. 373, No. 6556 (2021), available at <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.abh2234>.

⁴ See www.stockholmresilience.org/research/planetary-boundaries.html.

⁵ Ibid.

the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of Parties was the agreement on a new process to identify those ecologically or biologically significant marine areas.

16. Adopted in 2022, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework sets ambitious global goals and targets for nature, including the protection of 30 per cent of marine and coastal areas by 2030. Essentially, the Framework requires a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to deliver the many interlinked targets in an integrated way – from ecosystem conservation and restoration to sustainable consumption and production practices.

17. The Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction, adopted on 19 June 2023, is intended to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. It addresses:

- Marine genetic resources, including the fair and equitable sharing of benefits
- Measures such as area-based management tools, including marine protected areas
- Environmental impact assessment
- Capacity-building and the transfer of marine technology

18. The Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction will enter into force 120 days after the date of deposit of the sixtieth instrument of ratification, approval, acceptance or accession. With over a third of the ratifications required received at the time of preparation of the present concept paper, the 2025 United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 represents a unique opportunity to galvanize commitments for additional ratifications.

19. Adopted by the General Assembly in September 2024, the Pact for the Future includes a commitment to accelerating efforts to restore, protect, conserve, and sustainably use the environment. It offers ambitious actions to improve the health, productivity, sustainable use, and resilience of the ocean and its ecosystems, reflecting the spirit of Sustainable Development Goal 14.

20. As for marine species, several conventions include provisions to ensure their preservation. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora is designed to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten the survival of the species. The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals is designed to conserve migratory species throughout their ranges. The International Whaling Commission regulates commercial whaling through a moratorium prohibiting commercial whaling enacted in 1986. Several other conventions complete the multilateral framework for the protection of marine species, including the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and neighbouring Atlantic Area and the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas.

21. The above instruments complement the wide range of existing global and regional multilateral instruments and bodies that deal with certain aspects of marine and coastal ecosystems, including: the United Nations Convention on the Law of the

Sea and its implementing agreements; regional seas conventions and action plans;⁶ regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements; conventions dealing with pollution from ships such as the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as modified by the 1978 and 1997 Protocols, the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments and the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter and the Protocol thereto; conventions dealing with certain pollutants, such as the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants; and work under the International Seabed Authority, in addition to many others.

22. Furthermore, various processes and initiatives have emerged that are essential to the implementation of international commitments related to the ocean. For example, the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects, through which the world ocean assessments are produced, is the only global integrated assessment mechanism for the state of the marine environment. United Nations "decade" initiatives are also crucial in that regard. The United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (Ocean Decade) provides a platform to co-create and co-deliver the knowledge needed for decision-making and contributes to strengthening the science-policy-society interface. In addition, the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration provides a major opportunity to elevate attention and actions on restoration of marine and coastal ecosystems.

Translating commitments into action

23. There has been an expansion of spatial conservation of around 1.77 million km² since 2020, bringing the global coverage of protected and conserved areas to 8.4 per cent of marine and coastal areas. However, a further 78.3 million km² (21.6 per cent) of marine and coastal areas needs to be secured in networks of protected and conserved areas by 2030 to reach the target of protecting at least 30 per cent of marine areas,⁷ and practical tools and adequate resourcing to ensure management effectiveness and enforcement must be considered. There have been noteworthy efforts to identify and create other new effective area-based conservation measures as a key contribution to the 2030 target. One related example is the ongoing expansion of marine spatial planning initiatives. By the end of 2023, 126 countries or territories were engaged in such initiatives, with 45 having finalized plans.⁸ However, only a small number of countries have formally reported measures in their marine and coastal areas to the World Database on Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures, despite the fact that the use of related and possibly criteria-compliant spatial management measures (for example, in Locally Managed Marine Areas) could provide an example of successful measures.

⁶ Regulatory frameworks for the protection of biodiversity that promote the use of integrated approaches have been introduced under 18 regional seas conventions and action plans. Several of them have adopted legally binding protocols to conserve marine and coastal biodiversity and integrated coastal zone management by providing concrete measures for the conservation and sustainable management of marine and coastal resources, including commitments with regard to the target of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework to protect at least 30 per cent of marine areas by 2030.

⁷ United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre and International Union for Conservation of Nature, *Protected Planet Report 2024* (Cambridge, United Kingdom, and Gland, Switzerland, 2024).

⁸ See <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000390054>.

24. With concerted conservation action, the world is witnessing the recovery of vulnerable species and populations (including many marine mammals and sea turtles), and tools and approaches to reverse negative trends are available. For example, it has been shown that nature is generally declining less rapidly in areas managed by Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and their role as ocean stewards should be recognized and supported.

25. Unfortunately, despite the diversity of nature's values, most policymaking approaches have prioritized a narrow set of values at the expense of both nature and society, as well as of future generations, and have often ignored values associated with Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' world views.⁹

III. Challenges and opportunities

A. Challenges

Rising pressures on ecosystems and biodiversity loss

26. Despite significant efforts to understand and mitigate the drivers of biodiversity loss, many pressures on marine and coastal ecosystems have increased or remain inadequately addressed, including pollution, coastal development and resource overexploitation. Climate change continues to worsen. Ocean warming and rising sea levels exacerbate those pressures, leading to strong and intensifying cumulative impacts on marine and coastal ecosystems. Indirect drivers, such as demographic change, social dynamics, poverty and market trends, further complicate efforts to achieve healthier ecosystems.

Capacity limitations and discrepancies

27. Many countries and communities lack the expertise, infrastructure and financial resources needed to implement sustainable management frameworks for marine ecosystems. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework set a target of closing a \$700 billion annual biodiversity finance gap. While biodiversity-related official development finance has increased, a substantial financial gap remains. Addressing that gap is crucial to meeting commitments under the Framework. Furthermore, capacity needs are not merely limited to financial resources, but they also include informational, technical, scientific, legal and institutional capacities.

Governance challenges

28. Relevant laws, regulations and policies exist in nearly all countries, but the capacity for effective implementation is sometimes lacking. Fragmentation within government sectors hinders coherent implementation and policy development, even on interconnected issues such as biodiversity and climate change. Inclusive and participatory governance systems are needed to empower Indigenous Peoples and local communities, as well as women and youth, in ocean governance and decision-making. Small-scale fisheries, which employ more people than all other ocean sectors combined, should be engaged in governance and management.

⁹ Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, *The Methodological Assessment Report on the Diverse Values and Valuation of Nature: Summary for Policymakers* (Bonn, 2022). Available at <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6522392>.

B. Opportunities

Increasing awareness and engagement

29. Public and political interest in ocean and nature conservation is at a high. The adoption of Sustainable Development Goal 14 and the convening of United Nations conferences to support the implementation of that Goal reflect growing political will. Biodiversity awareness has significantly increased, with citizens recognizing biodiversity loss as a critical global issue. Tracking of public awareness of biodiversity through the Biodiversity Barometer has shown that biodiversity awareness has significantly increased since the inception of such tracking efforts in 2009. Biodiversity loss is recognized by citizens as a critical global issue, ranking as the second most urgent global environmental concern following climate change.¹⁰

30. Various stakeholders have not only been devoting greater attention to ocean biodiversity but also proactively seeking ways to be engaged in planning and management at various scales. The importance of robust stakeholder engagement is being increasingly recognized as an essential aspect of governance that substantially increases the effectiveness of management interventions. Furthermore, many stakeholders and rights holders, in particular Indigenous Peoples and local communities, have the right to be centrally engaged in discussions regarding either the use of their knowledge or resources or decision-making that will affect their well-being and livelihoods. The Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication constitute a framework for how to engage with fishing communities, based on a human rights-based approach. Pathways for increased sustainability are outlined in the study *Illuminating Hidden Harvests: The Contribution of Small-Scale Fisheries to Sustainable Development*.¹¹ The importance of intergenerational equity is also driving increased engagement of youth in various policymaking processes.

Cross-sectoral dialogue, coordination and collaboration

31. Integrated, interdisciplinary, multisectoral and participatory approaches are essential for addressing ocean issues, and increasing levels of dialogue and collaboration across policy processes are evident. Mechanisms such as UN-Oceans, the Sustainable Ocean Initiative Global Dialogue and regional seas conventions and action plans facilitate cross-sectoral cooperation at the secretariat levels to consider environmental, social and economic drivers of ecosystem degradation.

32. In addition, various sectoral bodies, such as FAO, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Seabed Authority, are lending greater attention to issues related to marine ecosystems. For example, FAO developed the Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors and created a unit dedicated to mainstreaming biodiversity across its various areas of work. The Marine Environment Protection Committee of IMO recently recognized the importance of the goals and targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework for its work on international shipping and has called for more attention to issues such as underwater noise. The Sustainable Seabed Knowledge Initiative of the Authority is devoted to describing over 1,000 new species from the Area, enabling scientists to create maps of life on the seafloor that will help to understand and manage the possible effects of anthropogenic activities on deep-sea ecosystems. Various regional fisheries management organizations have increasingly focused on the conservation and protection of sensitive marine habitats, with some organizations advancing efforts to identify and report other effective area-based conservation measures as a

¹⁰ See www.biodiversitybarometer.org/biodiversity-barometer-reports.

¹¹ FAO, Duke University and WorldFish (Rome, 2023).

contribution to achieving target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Strengthening the science-policy interface with new technologies

33. The Ocean Decade has catalysed attention and support for expanding ocean knowledge and technologies, thereby complementing the Regular Process and its World Ocean Assessments. Since its debut in January 2021, the Ocean Decade, which is led by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO-IOC), has become the largest coordinated global ocean science initiative ever undertaken. Through a massive portfolio of Decade actions, including over 50 global ocean science programmes and 400 national and regional projects, the Ocean Decade has catalysed synergies and collaboration among Governments, non-governmental organizations, local communities and the private sector to transform the way that ocean science and knowledge are generated and used. The implementation of the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction is expected to contribute to such efforts by promoting marine scientific research and by supporting science-based conservation and management measures.

34. The International Seabed Authority's years of efforts in promoting and encouraging marine scientific research in the Area have provided critical information on deep-sea environments. The exploration-related activities of the Authority's contractors have provided a valuable and ever-growing foundation for understanding deep-sea environments and ecosystems which are extremely challenging to study owing to their scale, conditions and, in many cases, remote nature.

35. With advances in science and technology, there is also an increasing variety of technologies and tools available to support governance and management. For example, artificial intelligence is showing great promise and is already being used for activities such as tracking endangered species, monitoring air and water quality, surveying different parts of the ocean and projecting scenarios.

Recognition of diverse values of marine ecosystems

36. People relate to nature in multiple ways, reflecting different world views. However, as noted above, policymaking has often prioritized a certain set of values to the detriment of certain stakeholders, including Indigenous Peoples and local communities, as well as future generations. Efforts to recognize and respect diverse values are increasing, with new focused programmes and bodies, including, for example, a new programme of work adopted and a new subsidiary body created by the sixteenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity specifically on Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Recognizing and upholding the rights of various stakeholders can catalyse transformative change, including by strengthening the roles of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, women and youth as ocean stewards.

IV. Solutions and best practices

Adopting ecosystem management approaches

37. The ecosystem approach provides a strong concept and many relevant tools to address both use and conservation objectives and promote sectoral integration. Ecosystem approaches have been negotiated and developed under the Convention on Biological Diversity, FAO, the International Seabed Authority, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the United Nations Environment

Programme (UNEP) Regional Seas Programme, and those tools help to guide the implementation of change at the ecosystem level. Such holistic approaches prioritize ecosystem function and resilience in recognition of the value of both sustainable use and conservation efforts and the need for cross-sectoral integration – essentially, enabling joined-up efforts for management and conservation to achieve objectives for people and nature.

Nature-based solutions, including blue carbon

38. As defined at the fifth United Nations Environment Assembly, nature-based solutions are actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems which address social, economic and environmental challenges effectively and adaptively, while simultaneously providing human well-being, ecosystem services, resilience and biodiversity benefits.¹² Nature-based solutions contribute directly to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework by halting biodiversity loss, enhancing ecosystem connectivity and integrating biodiversity into policy and planning. Marine and coastal nature-based solutions also contribute to achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement on climate change. For example, rooted vegetation in the coastal zone – such as tidal marshes, mangroves and seagrasses – have high carbon burial rates on a per unit area basis and accumulate carbon in their soils and sediments, making it a key nature-based solution for climate change mitigation.

39. Since the adoption of the Paris Agreement, the International Partnership for Blue Carbon has worked towards achieving a vision of all global coastal blue carbon ecosystems being protected, sustainably managed or restored by promoting increased international commitments, improved national policies – including a better integration of national biodiversity and climate strategies – and accelerated on-the-ground action among its partners.¹³

40. Nationally determined contributions are commitments made by countries under the Paris Agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Climate action plans are economy-wide, country-owned strategic plans for how countries aim to decarbonize and enhance their resilience to the impacts of climate change. Ocean-based climate actions within the framework of nationally determined contributions can include measures such as protection and restoration of marine and coastal ecosystems, development of renewable ocean energy sources and reduction of maritime greenhouse gas emissions. Those actions not only contribute to global climate goals but also increase the resilience of marine ecosystems and coastal communities to climate impacts, with significant influence on the economic and social dimensions. Ocean-based solutions have a key role to play in leveraging synergies between climate and biodiversity agendas, weaving a “blue thread” between national biodiversity and climate strategies.¹⁴

Empowering local stakeholders in planning and management

41. Engaging and empowering local stakeholders in the planning and management of marine and coastal areas has proved to be an effective means to improve biodiversity outcomes and ensure long-term sustainability. Furthermore, besides leading on community-based management, Indigenous Peoples and local communities can contribute to countrywide policy planning and implementation.

¹² UNEP/EA.5/Res.5, para. 1.

¹³ See <https://bluecarbonpartnership.org/>.

¹⁴ M. Lecerf, M. Millington-Drake and L. Picourt, “Blue thread: aligning national climate and biodiversity strategies”, policy brief, Ocean & Climate Platform and Blue Marine Foundation, 2024.

There are clear examples of this approach from around the world, including the following:

- The fishers of the rural community of Mangagoulack in Senegal led the creation of an Indigenous and community conserved area with support from the ICCA Consortium and the Global Environment Facility (GEF).¹⁵
- The Vailoa Village Council and Women's Committee, supported by the United Nations Development Programme and GEF, developed a biodiversity baseline audit and a mangrove management plan, resulting in the establishment of a mangrove protected area that is now the third largest in Samoa, which has replenished fish, mud crab and shellfish populations and generated income for the local community.¹⁶
- The Indigenous Advisory Committee provides advice to the Government of Australia on policy and implementation matters, in particular in relation to Indigenous land and sea country.¹⁷
- UNEP, through several GEF-funded international waters initiatives, including the CReW+ project, continues its work with Indigenous communities in Costa Rica (several communities), Honduras (the Miskito community), Mexico (the Mayan peoples) and Panama (the Guna Yala community), among others.

42. The empowerment of stakeholders is highlighted in newly adopted legal and political documents. For example, the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction supports more inclusive efforts towards the conservation and sustainable use of such areas, including by promoting the participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, gender-responsiveness in capacity-building and gender balance and equitable geographical representation in the composition of the bodies established under the Agreement.

Accelerating implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans

43. Following the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework in 2022, a global effort has emerged to provide support to countries in updating, revising, implementing and monitoring their national biodiversity strategies and action plans. The NBSAP Accelerator Partnership is a country-led initiative aimed at supporting the implementation of ambitious national biodiversity strategies and action plans to collectively achieve the goals and targets of the Framework and live in harmony with nature. The overarching purpose of the NBSAP Accelerator Partnership is to ensure coherent support for the revision and implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans and to promote increasing ambition over time through an enhanced process of country-specific support, coordination, collaboration and shared learning. It will promote the following mutually reinforcing and interrelated goals: support implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans; strengthen technical and institutional capacity; facilitate access to biodiversity finance; align financial flows for biodiversity mainstreaming; foster peer-to-peer learning and international collaboration; and elevate such strategies and action plans in national development planning.

¹⁵ See www.iccaconsortium.org/index.php/2014/12/15/an-icca-in-casamance-the-story-of-kawawana/.

¹⁶ See www.cbd.int/doc/nr/nr-06/ws-nr-06-en.pdf.

¹⁷ See www.cbd.int/doc/nr/nr-06/au-nr-06-en.pdf.

Enhancing and upscaling ecosystem restoration globally

44. The United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030) is aimed at supporting the effective protection and revival of ecosystems all around the world for the benefit of people and nature. It aims to halt the degradation of ecosystems and restore them to achieve the global goals of enhancing people’s livelihoods, counteracting climate change and halting the collapse of biodiversity. Led by UNEP and FAO, and in collaboration with hundreds of partners, participants in the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration are building a strong, broad-based global movement to accelerate restoration globally. This includes building political momentum for restoration as well as thousands of initiatives on the ground. Through communications, events and a dedicated web platform, the Decade provides a hub for everyone interested in restoration to find projects, partners, funding and the knowledge needed to make their restoration efforts a success.

Improving public awareness and appreciation for nature and biodiversity

45. Increased public awareness and appreciation for nature is driving individual action and behavioural change and pressure on Governments to act. Tailored approaches that align with the unique sociocultural dynamics of different countries and communities using platforms and modes of communication appropriate for the target audience are essential. One interesting example comes from Belize, where a radio drama series and call-in show on marine protected areas and sustainable fishing, supported by the Wildlife Conservation Society and PCI Media Impact, led to increased knowledge and sustainable fishing behaviour among listeners.¹⁸

Supporting biodiversity mainstreaming in sectoral policies and economic development

46. The integration of biodiversity considerations into sectoral regulatory processes and development planning supports sustainable economic growth. One interesting approach is the capitals approach, which is designed to enable organizations to understand how their success is directly – or indirectly – underpinned by natural capital (renewable and non-renewable natural resources yielding a flow of benefits to people), social capital (networks and shared norms, values and understanding that facilitate cooperation within and among groups) and human capital (knowledge, skills, competencies and attributes of individuals contributing to improved performance and well-being).¹⁹

47. There are a wide range of approaches for biodiversity mainstreaming at different scales. Mainstreaming biodiversity considerations into individual sectors can yield fruitful outcomes. In addition, biodiversity can be mainstreamed into national development planning: in Mozambique, the national goal of protecting 30 per cent of terrestrial and marine ecosystems by 2030 was integrated into the National Territorial Development Plan for 2020–2040, which is intended to achieve a “prosperous, competitive, sustainable, and inclusive Mozambique”.²⁰

48. Area-based management tools are being utilized by specialized agencies in guiding the regulation of use of the ocean to support the conservation of marine and coastal ecosystems. States members of IMO have identified 19 special sensitive areas based on ecological, socioeconomic and/or scientific justification, requiring that appropriate regulations be put in place to reduce damage to those areas by

¹⁸ See <https://chm.cbd.int/database/record/7E3D234F-E8AD-520C-C92B-490CE2806718>.

¹⁹ See <https://capitalcoalition.org/capitals-approach/>.

²⁰ See <https://panorama.solutions/en/solution/integrating-mangroves-and-nature-based-solutions-nbs-blue-economy-strategies-sustainable>.

international maritime activities. Around 20 special areas have been established under the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, requiring a higher level of protection. The International Seabed Authority has established and implemented the environmental management plan for the Clarion-Clipperton Zone in which a network of 13 areas of particular environmental interest have been identified that are entirely protected from deep seabed mining. Spatial and temporal closures of areas to fishing have been implemented at the subnational, national and regional levels by appropriate bodies.

Enhancing the effectiveness of area-based conservation measures, including for marine protected areas

49. Effective implementation, ecological representativeness, connectivity and equity are essential factors to ensure that protected areas can deliver the biodiversity outcomes sought. To improve the effective implementation of marine protected areas, the online Marine Protected Area Tool Hub,²¹ a learning platform, has been launched by UNEP, The Nature Conservancy, the World Wide Fund for Nature and partners to support the effective and equitable development and implementation of marine protected areas. At its core, it provides an innovative, easily accessible problem-solving and “learning journey” platform with insightful guidance, decision support tools and practical knowledge.

50. Regional seas conventions and action plans have a significant role in supporting the designation and effective management of marine protected areas by enhancing the exchange of best practices, knowledge-sharing and provision of access to priority resources, including by incorporating work on integrated coastal zone management frameworks, marine spatial planning tools and the application of coastal adaptation strategies. Regional seas conventions and action plans provide a pathway that allows marine users to aggregate and share their key goals and objectives. For example:

(a) Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean have created a network of 1,233 marine protected areas and implemented other area-based conservation measures in the Mediterranean, including 39 specially protected areas of Mediterranean importance, and the numbers are likely to increase;

(b) Seychelles, which is a Party to the Amended Nairobi Convention for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Western Indian Ocean, has made tremendous strides in increasing the extent of marine protected areas coverage. At present, its 16 marine protected areas protect about 26 per cent of its exclusive economic zone. This is a good indicator that the island country has gone beyond its pledge to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 14 and its associated target 5. The enhancement of Seychelles marine protected areas has greatly increased the resilience of its fisheries and tourism sectors;

(c) The nine participating countries of the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia formally endorsed the Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Framework in April 2023 in order to address collectively the targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, focusing on marine spatial planning, marine protected areas and marine habitats. They are also in the process of establishing a regional network of marine protected area institutions and managers bringing together key actors, including the Asean Centre for Biodiversity, Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the Climate Technology Network and the Economic and Social Commission

²¹ Available at <https://mpath.unep.org/>.

for Asia and the Pacific, which was to be discussed at the tenth Our Ocean Conference, held in Busan, Republic of Korea, in April 2025;

(d) The Nairobi Convention has a *Marine Protected Areas Outlook* for the region and an associated dashboard that tracks the progress of Contracting Parties towards the now lapsed target 14.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (By 2020, conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas) and that also serves as a baseline for the target under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework of protecting at least 30 per cent of the planet's land and marine areas by 2030. A *Critical Habitats Outlook*, which is a sister publication to the *Marine Protected Areas Outlook*, has just been completed and will help Contracting Parties not only to identify potential areas to be placed under different protection regimes under the "30 by 30" target but also to strengthen protected area management. Several decisions have been taken at meetings of the Conference of the Parties to the Nairobi Convention on strengthening marine protected area management and the application of other area-based management tools for biodiversity conservation, with some now including a reference to ratification of the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction, thereby extending work under the Nairobi Convention to areas beyond national jurisdiction. Together with their partners in the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association, the Parties to the Nairobi Convention have established the Western Indian Ocean Marine Protected Area Management Network, which brings together all protected area managers in the region for shared learning;

(e) Ongoing efforts across regional seas conventions and action plans with regard to integrated coastal zone management and marine spatial planning are promoting the blue economy in the context of sustainable development.

Effectively implementing relevant legal frameworks

51. Action must be grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out, as annually recognized by the General Assembly. Universal participation and effective implementation of the Convention and its implementing agreements, including the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction, are crucial to ensure effective governance for the conservation, sustainable management and restoration of marine ecosystems, including deep-sea ecosystems. Accordingly, there is also a need for effective national legal frameworks that facilitate inclusive and equitable ocean governance in synergy with international legal frameworks.

Technology for management

52. Advances in technology provide a promising resource for improving the state of marine ecosystems. However, they should be carefully considered in terms of unintended negative consequences. In 2020, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and the Huawei TECH4ALL programme launched Tech4Nature, an open partnership to apply and promote digital solutions for fair and effective protected areas. The partnership applies a unique "benchmarking tool" that uses digital technology to track progress and improvements in protected areas.²²

Achieving sustainability in use by managing impacts on the marine environment

53. The management of the use of marine resources can be sustained only through the realization of sustainable use objectives. Initiatives aimed at achieving sustainable development by managing impacts on the marine environment are becoming more

²² See <https://tech4nature.iucngreenlist.org/>.

prevalent. For example, frameworks²³ have been established for achieving long-term sustainability in fisheries and aquaculture sectors while combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and promoting effective implementation of the 1995 Fish Stocks Agreement. In managing exploration activities, the International Seabed Authority employs a series of environmental protection tools to ensure effective protection for the marine environment from harmful effects which may arise from activities in the Area, including through developing and applying such tools as environmental impact assessments, environmental baselines and monitoring, environmental management plans and emergency orders.²⁴

Ensuring fair and equitable sharing of benefits from marine resources

54. Ensuring fair and equitable sharing of financial and other economic benefits derived from certain marine resources is an integral part of related regimes. This is essential, not only for ensuring an equitable and just approach to the use of certain marine resources but also for ensuring that stakeholders and rights holders retain ownership and stewardship over the resources that they are in the best position to manage.

55. A significant amount of experience has been built up under the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from Their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Protocol provides a framework for accessing genetic resources and sharing the benefits arising from their use. At the sixteenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention, a new multilateral mechanism for benefit-sharing from the use of digital sequence information, including a global fund, was established. To fulfil the principle of the common heritage of mankind, the Finance Committee of the International Seabed Authority is working on the equitable distribution formulas and a Common Heritage Fund for the equitable sharing of financial benefits derived from activities in the Area.²⁵

56. There are also emerging frameworks to facilitate access and benefit-sharing relating to resources in areas beyond national jurisdiction. For example, in the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction, the uneven capacity to carry out and benefit from activities with respect to marine genetic resources and related digital sequence information is addressed, ensuring that such activities are in the interests of all States and for the benefit of all humanity.

Holistic national planning for the implementation of biodiversity, climate and sustainable development

57. To develop a sustainable blue economy, States ought to integrate considerations of biodiversity, climate, economic development, the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities and the interests of other stakeholders such as women and youth. Efforts in this regard include:

- **UNEP Sustainable Blue Economy Initiative.**²⁶ The Initiative helps countries to apply a whole-of-government perspective in sustainable blue economy policy and integrated management. UNEP has developed a novel framework that enables countries to develop and implement tangible transition pathways to sustainable, resilient and equitable blue economies that are tailored to their

²³ FAO, *Blue Transformation: Roadmap 2022–2030 – A Vision for FAO's Work on Aquatic Food Systems* (Rome, 2022); and the Coastal Fisheries Initiative.

²⁴ See www.isa.org.jm/the-mining-code/.

²⁵ See www.isa.org.jm/equitable-sharing-of-benefits/.

²⁶ See www.unep.org/topics/ocean-seas-and-coasts/ecosystem-based-approaches/sustainable-blue-economy.

unique settings and needs. A stepwise Sustainable Blue Economy Transition Framework supports holistic approaches that protect and regenerate ocean ecosystems while facilitating the sustainable use of marine and coastal resources for human well-being. An accompanying rapid readiness assessment tool helps countries to put in place the enabling conditions to implement nature-based solutions and conservation and restoration actions for coastal resilience and sustainability. This regenerative approach recognizes society's dependence on healthy aquatic and marine ecosystems and natural resources and the complex interactions between human activity and the ocean. The rapid readiness assessment method has been applied in different contexts in countries such as Antigua and Barbuda,²⁷ Kenya, Trinidad and Tobago²⁸ and Viet Nam.

- **UNESCO-IOC Marine Spatial Planning Global programme (MSPglobal).** The programme has developed a rapid assessment methodology to support countries in advancing their marine spatial planning process through enhanced coordination and cooperation among authorities as well as international and regional organizations that are willing to provide support. The three-step methodology serves to identify marine spatial planning activities and tasks that have already been undertaken by a country, understand existing gaps, and then co-develop an action plan designed to guide resourcing and capacity development, as an entry point for other initiatives. Since 2024, the rapid assessment methodology has been implemented in Benin, Brazil, Côte d'Ivoire, Fiji, Ghana, Thailand and Togo, while UNESCO-IOC is preparing to implement it in more countries in the coming months and years.²⁹

Promoting capacity development and transfer of technology

58. Capacity development is crucial for sustainable ocean governance, the effective conservation of marine ecosystems and the sustainable use of marine resources. Some examples include:

- **Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission.** The Commission's Capacity Development Strategy (2023–2030) is designed to enable all its member States to participate in and benefit from ocean research and services.
- **Ocean Decade Capacity Development Facility.** The Facility was launched in December 2023 to address the capacity-development needs of partners in small island developing States and least developed countries, and of early career ocean professionals.
- **United Nations-Portugal Ocean Fellowship Programme.** The Programme supports developing countries, particularly small island developing States, in sustainable ocean governance and the blue economy.
- **International Seabed Authority.** The International Seabed Authority contractors' training programme ensures that personnel from developing States gain operational expertise in order to participate in activities in the Area and protect the marine environment. Regional and national training and research centres have been established in China and in Egypt to foster expertise, facilitate research and promote responsible marine resource management. Dedicated

²⁷ See <https://thecommonwealth.org/publications/rapid-readiness-assessment-transition-sustainable-blue-economy-pilot-project-antigua>.

²⁸ See <https://thecommonwealth.org/publications/rapid-readiness-assessment-transition-sustainable-blue-economy-pilot-project-trinidad>.

²⁹ See <https://mspglobal2030.org/rapid-assessment-methodology/>.

actions were implemented to support and enhance the participation of women in deep-sea research activities.

- **Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, Office of Legal Affairs, United Nations Secretariat.** The Division provides information, advice and technical assistance to support the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and its implementing agreements, including by exercising secretariat functions in relation to the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction until the permanent secretariat established under it commences its functions.
- **UNEP Regional Seas Programme.** The Programme provides policy advice, technical guidance, tools and capacity-building to support effective nature-based solutions and other means of achieving global biodiversity, climate and pollution goals under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and marine environmental assessments under other instruments, including regional seas conventions and action plans.

59. With the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction, a contribution will probably also be made to addressing the uneven capacity for undertaking activities in areas beyond national jurisdiction, with expected spillover effects on the capacity to implement other instruments, and will serve to assist States in strengthening cooperation and coordination with regard to such activities through capacity-building and the transfer of marine technology.

Sustainable financing for conserving, sustainably managing and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems

60. Ocean finance needs have grown under increasing pressure, partly driven by subsidies that harm the ocean, and the desire to achieve ambitious ocean-related development and conservation goals. While investments have increased across both the public and private sectors, those gains are already being significantly outpaced by the growth in ocean finance needs, which is widening the finance gap. The ocean finance gap has become a clear obstacle to meeting global ocean goals and achieving ocean sustainability. Sustainable financing models, including blended finance vehicles, are critical for conserving, sustainably managing and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems.

61. A good example of a blended financing model for the ocean is the Global Fund for Coral Reefs, which is the first United Nations multi-partner trust fund dedicated solely to Sustainable Development Goal 14. The Global Fund's coalition strengthens the resilience of coastal reef ecosystems, communities and economies by mobilizing new public and private resources that advance sustainable businesses and innovative financial solutions to the coral reef crisis. The Global Fund's locally driven implementation and investments follow an integrated ecosystem-based approach focused on "coral refugia", which are coral reef habitats that demonstrate resilience to climate change impacts. It is active in over 20 coral reef countries globally.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

62. Marine and coastal ecosystems, including deep-sea environments, form the foundation of planetary health, biodiversity, and human livelihoods. Those ecosystems offer a wide range of ecosystem services, from supporting biodiversity and regulating climate to providing food security and generating economic prosperity as well as social and cultural values. However, since the 2022 United Nations

Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, the general trend of ecosystem degradation due to human-induced pressures has not been reversed. This situation poses a significant threat to achieving global sustainable development goals.

63. Considerable efforts in all aspects have been made to understand, conserve, sustainably manage and restore marine and coastal ecosystems. The marine and coastal area under protection and conservation has been gradually increased. Through marine spatial planning and the application of other area-based management tools, States have gradually and substantially integrated biodiversity and climate action considerations into development policy and management. Through global initiatives, such as the Ocean Decade, the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, the UNEP Sustainable Blue Economy Initiative, the UNESCO-IOC Marine Spatial Planning Global programme and others, not only has public awareness been raised, but efforts have been catalysed and resources mobilized to close knowledge gaps, promote capacity-building and advance science-based policymaking. With internationally negotiated frameworks and agreements such as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction, the groundwork has been laid for transformative change in marine and coastal ecosystems governance.

64. Despite the progress made, challenges persist. Pressures on ecosystems and drivers of biodiversity loss continue to rise. Climate change, pollution and overexploitation continue to intensify and exacerbate the decline of marine ecosystems. Ocean warming, acidification and sea-level rise amplify those threats, creating cascading effects on biodiversity and ecosystem services. Indirect drivers of biodiversity loss, such as demographic change, social and cultural dynamics and market trends, add more complexity to the whole picture, with trade-offs that need to be recognized and addressed. Many countries lack the financial, technical and institutional capacity to implement effective conservation and sustainable use measures. Policies, regulations and frameworks often operate in silos, limiting their effectiveness. While public awareness of ocean conservation has increased, more efforts are needed to translate that awareness into actionable change and sustained political will.

65. Amid those challenges, significant opportunities exist to catalyse transformative actions. Public awareness of biodiversity and nature has significantly increased, which catalyses concrete global, regional, subregional, national and local actions. Robust stakeholder engagement is being increasingly recognized and integrated at different levels of governance. Evolving international legal and policy frameworks are filling the gaps in marine and coastal ecosystems conservation, management and restoration. Dialogues, coordination and collaboration at the secretariat level across different policy processes have been steadily improving. Mechanisms such as UN-Oceans, the Sustainable Ocean Initiative and the Sustainable Blue Economy Initiative promote cross-sectoral collaboration, fostering synergies between biodiversity, climate and sustainable development agendas. Strengthening the science-policy interface is well recognized as critical for evidence-based decision-making. Advances in science and technology offer new tools for monitoring, managing and restoring marine ecosystems. The diverse values of ocean ecosystems for diverse stakeholders have been gradually recognized, which suggests that progress towards sustainable outcomes is possible.

66. To secure a sustainable future for marine and coastal ecosystems, States may wish to consider the following recommended actions:

- **Support effective implementation of existing legal frameworks and promotion of milestone policy initiatives.** Fully and effectively apply the

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and its implementing agreements, as well as other relevant global, regional and subregional instruments. Facilitate and prepare for the early entry into force and effective implementation of the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction. Promote and encourage countries to implement the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and their nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement.

- **Strengthen a holistic approach.** Encourage States to adopt unified ocean policies that address biodiversity, climate and development, ensuring equitable participation. Apply an ecosystem approach, the precautionary approach, nature-based solutions, ocean-based climate actions, innovative technologies and sustainable development goals to achieve maximum integrated effects and sustainability.
- **Sustainably manage 100 per cent of the ocean under national jurisdiction.** By 2030, ensure that 100 per cent of ocean areas under national jurisdiction are sustainably managed, strengthening national and regional efforts across all coastal and ocean States.
- **Build capacity.** Strengthen international efforts, including coordination and collaboration among competent international organizations, States, private entities, research institutions and financial institutions, to address capacity gaps through targeted training, technology transfer and financial support for developing States, taking into consideration the practical needs and long-term development goals of specific countries.
- **Mobilize financial resources.** Bridge the biodiversity finance gap through innovative mechanisms such as blue bonds and blue loans, carbon credits, and public-private partnerships.
- **Promote equity and inclusivity.** Encourage broad engagement by stakeholders and rights holders. Recognize and support the roles of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, women and youth in biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. Ensure equitable benefit-sharing and integrate diverse cultural perspectives into policymaking.
- **Leverage technology and innovation.** Expand the use of advanced technologies for monitoring, research, enforcement and restoration. Foster partnerships to accelerate innovation.
- **Improve public awareness and education.** Launch global campaigns to raise awareness of marine and coastal ecosystems and the interconnectedness of ocean health and human well-being. Strengthen ocean literacy initiatives to inspire behavioural changes and drive political actions.
- **Enhance area-based conservation measures.** Focus on the quality and effectiveness of marine protected areas and other conservation measures. Prioritize connectivity, representativeness and management effectiveness.
- **Realize sustainable use.** Ensure the sustainable use of marine resources while strengthening ecosystem conservation. Investment in sustainable use is integral to achieving ecosystem maintenance and restoration.

67. The degradation of marine and coastal ecosystems is a crisis that transcends national borders and affects all aspects of human and planetary well-being. By fostering global collaboration, leveraging scientific advancements and promoting equity and inclusivity, the international community can chart a path towards the conservation, sustainable management and restoration of the oceans. Achieving this

vision requires urgent action from all stakeholders – Governments, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, financial institutions, local communities, the private sector and individuals alike. The future of marine ecosystems depends on the collective ability to act decisively and inclusively.

VI. Guiding questions

68. The following guiding questions may be used to inform the panel:

(a) What are the most pressing challenges and barriers preventing the effective conservation, sustainable management and restoration of marine and coastal ecosystems, including deep-sea ecosystems?

(b) Are there any practical examples of holistic and integrated policy and management approaches that protect ocean and coastal health while facilitating the sustainable use of ocean resources for human well-being?

(c) What innovative financing mechanisms can be introduced or expanded to support large-scale ecosystem restoration and conservation efforts and nature-based climate solutions?

(d) What gaps exist in marine and coastal policy frameworks, and how can those gaps be addressed to align actions across sectors and regions?

(e) What can be done to foster the integration of international goals such as Sustainable Development Goal 14 and those of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the Paris Agreement and regional seas conventions and action plans into marine spatial planning and integrated coastal zone management?

(f) What can be done to build upon and expand the experience of marine spatial planning under national jurisdiction to the implementation of measures such as area-based management tools under the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction?

(g) How can the Indigenous Peoples and local communities be protected and their roles as ocean stewards be promoted?

(h) What can be done to better enhance the role of the Ocean Decade as a catalyst to accelerate global and regional action and mobilize diverse stakeholders for the conservation, sustainable management and restoration of marine and coastal ecosystems?

(i) How can multilateral ocean governance, including in relation to marine species, be strengthened in order to ensure the protection of marine and coastal biodiversity?