
THE UNITED NATIONS OCEAN CONFERENCE
“Our oceans, our future: partnering for the implementation of
Sustainable Development Goal 14”
5-9 June 2017
United Nations Headquarters, New York

The UN Ocean Conference took place on 5-9 June 2017 in New York, in which Member States, International Organisations and Agencies, Civil Society Groups and the Private Sector agreed to a set of measures that would address the issues of declining ocean health and the sustainable development of the oceans. The conference resulted in more than 1,300 voluntary commitments as a global approach to the management and conservation of the oceans.

During the conference, the dialogues focused on the multiple problems and challenges facing the ocean, including marine pollution, illegal and over fishing, ocean acidification, and lack of high seas governance. Participants from Member States, NGOs, civil society, the private sector, the scientific community and academia engaged in wide-ranging discussion and shared state-of-the-art knowledge and latest information on marine science and challenges. Furthermore, in view of addressing these challenges, the stakeholders during the conference led to a comprehensive and actionable range of solutions, which can help achieving Sustainable Development Goal 14, and through its inter-linkages the other SDGs and targets.

The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) participated in several side events and was attended by high dignitaries. As such, the side event on “Partnerships for Blue Economy – the Indian Ocean Experience”, which was organised by the Government of Seychelles and the Indian Ocean Rim Association, was chaired by The Hon. Mr. Vincent Meriton, Vice-President of the Republic of Seychelles and the panel was moderated by H.E. Mr K.V. Bhagirath, Secretary General of Indian Ocean Rim Association. The side event also included distinguished ministerial panels comprising of Hon. Havas Oegroseno, Deputy Minister for Maritime Affairs of Indonesia and Chair of IORA, the Hon. Mrs Edna Molewa, Minister of Environment of Affairs of South Africa and Vice Chair of IORA and H.E. Dr Thani Al Zeyoudi, Minister of Climate Change and Environment of the United Arab Emirates and the Rt Hon. Mrs Patricia Scotland, QC, Secretary General of Commonwealth Secretariat.

The side-events in which IORA participated is listed below:

1. Partnerships for Blue Economy – the Indian Ocean Experience, 06 June 2017, organised by the Government of Seychelles and the Indian Ocean Rim Association;
2. Illegal fishing, 06 June 2017, organised by the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries of Republic of Indonesia;
3. Marine plastic debris, 07 June 2017, organised by the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries of Republic of Indonesia;
4. Establishment of Regional Instrument on Crime against related fisheries industry, 08 June 2017, organised by the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries of Republic of Indonesia; and
5. Oceans in the 2030 Agenda: The role of regional governance, 06 June 2017, organised by the German Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety; Swedish Ministry for Environment; UN Environment.

In order to boost the long-term development prospects of emerging ocean industries and their contribution to growth and employment, while managing the ocean in responsible, sustainable ways, IORA has registered six voluntary commitments in the margin of the conference that are geared at driving implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 and its associated targets. IORA hopes that by 2030, it will increase the economic benefits of Small Islands Developing States and Least Developed Countries from sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture, and tourism.

IORA's Voluntarily Commitments Registered:

1. Pilot Project on Oyster (*Crassostrea* spp.) Culture
#OceanAction18217
<https://oceanconference.un.org/commitments/?id=18217>
2. IORA Training Programme on Enhancing Sustainable Port Services and Management in the Indian Ocean Region for Improved Maritime Connectivity
#OceanAction18220
<https://oceanconference.un.org/commitments/?id=18220>
3. Somalia and Yemen Development Programme (SYDP) on Banking and Artisanal Fisheries
#OceanAction22216
<https://oceanconference.un.org/commitments/?id=22216>
4. IORA Workshop on Regional strategy to address issues of sustainable management and development of fisheries resources in the Indian Ocean rim region
#OceanAction18226
<https://oceanconference.un.org/commitments/?id=18226>
5. Blue Economy Handbook
#OceanAction18328
<https://oceanconference.un.org/commitments/?id=18328>
6. Workshop on Seafood Products Safety and Quality
#OceanAction21971
<https://oceanconference.un.org/commitments/?id=21971>

The Ocean Conference outcomes recognise the well-being of the present and future generations which are inextricably linked to the health and productivity of the ocean. Countries collectively agreed in the Call to Action “to act decisively and urgently, convinced that our collective action will make a meaningful difference to our people, to our planet and to our prosperity.” The conference saw the adoption of the Call for Action and the reports of the seven partnership dialogues and the reports from the seven partnership dialogues that have focused on scaling up solutions, and the voluntary commitments to action.

In the Call for Action, consensus was reached for the implementation of long-term and robust strategies to reduce the use of plastics and micro-plastics, as well as to develop and implement effective adaptation and mitigation measures that would address issues of ocean and coastal acidification, sea-level rise and increase in ocean temperatures. The importance of the Paris Agreement on climate change is also highlighted in the Call, which also includes measures to protect coastal and blue carbon ecosystems, such as mangroves, tidal marshes, sea-grass and coral reefs, and wider interconnected

ecosystems. It also includes measures for enhancing sustainable fisheries management, including restoring fish stocks in the shortest time feasible at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield. Countries were also called on to decisively ban certain forms of fisheries subsidies and eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

The commitments addressed the issues needed to achieve SDG 14 indicate their focus to protect over 10% of the globe's marine areas by 2020, adding 4.4% of marine areas to the existing area. Countries announced various steps to reduce and eliminate plastic usage, sewage and pollution from land-based activities that ultimately find their way to the ocean. Many commitments also focus on expanding scientific knowledge about the ocean and developing and sharing innovative technologies to address ocean challenges. Participating countries also focussed on protecting and managing fisheries while committing themselves to combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and to curtail fishing subsidies that are working to deplete fish stocks.