



Input to the United Nations Oceans Conference (UNOC) 2022: Scaling up Ocean Action Based on Science and Innovation for the Implementation of Goal 14: Stocktaking, Partnerships and Solutions

The expectations on the ocean as the new economic frontier are increasing and the demand for marine resources and space continues to grow. Although claiming marine resources and space is not new, the extent, intensity, and diversity of today's aspirations are unprecedented.¹ This has led to considerable investments in existing industries and the emergence of new ones. However, as the capacity to industrialize the ocean grows, marine ecosystems face unprecedented cumulative pressures from human activities and climate change. In their 2019 report, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)² stated that only 3 per cent of the oceans are free from human impact. Unsustainable fisheries, land and sea use change, pollution, and climate change - driven by unsustainable consumption and production – are the main causes for biodiversity loss in marine environments. The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) further reports that the oceans – our planet's greatest climate regulator – are warmer and more acidic than ever before while oxygen and salinity rates are decreasing.³ The loss of biodiversity along with climate change will lead to increased food and nutrition shortages, conflicts, disease outbreaks, poverty, and inequality. Small-scale fishing communities – particularly women and youth - are most vulnerable. At the same time, their rights, knowledge, and solutions are typically overlooked in decision-making and policy, as well as in the exploitation of the oceans.

The Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC) welcomes the political declaration of the UN Ocean Conference 2022, and its ambition to speed up action to conserve and sustainably use the ocean, seas, and marine resources. However, we are deeply concerned about the fact that no goals set for 2020 have been met. We are also concerned by the lack of attention given to small-scale fisheries and their major contributions to livelihoods, employment, food security, conservation, and revenue. To speed up the work towards healthy oceans for the prosperity and well-being of current and future generations, the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC), urge the global community to take bold and immediate action.

¹Jouffray, J. B., Blasiak, R., Norström, A. V., Österblom, H., & Nyström, M. (2020). The blue acceleration: the trajectory of human expansion into the ocean. *One Earth*, 2(1), 43-54.

²IPBES (2019): Summary for policymakers of the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. S. Díaz, J. Settele, E. S. Brondízio E.S., H. T. Ngo, M. Guéze, J. Agard, A. Arneth, P. Balvanera, K. A. Brauman, S. H. M. Butchart, K. M. A. Chan, L. A. Garibaldi, K. Ichii, J. Liu, S. M. Subramanian, G. F. Midgley, P. Miloslavich, Z. Molnár, D. Obura, A. Pfaff, S. Polasky, A. Purvis, J. Razzaque, B. Reyers, R. Roy Chowdhury, Y. J. Shin, I. J. Visseren-Hamakers, K. J. Willis and C. N. Zayas (eds.). IPBES secretariat, Bonn, Germany. 56 pages.

³IPCC, 2019: Summary for Policymakers. In: IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate [H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, V. Masson-Delmotte, P. Zhai, M. Tignor, E. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, A. Alegria, M. Nicolai, A. Okem, J. Petzold, B. Rama, N.M. Weyer (eds.)]. In press.



Low impact (small-scale) fisheries

Ending overfishing is the single most powerful solution to the ocean crisis. This must start with abandoning the narrow view of fish as stocks we can over-exploit, and instead consider them as vital parts of complex ecosystems, crucial for ocean resilience and human well-being. The sector requires a transformation from heavy subsidized, non-selective and destructive fishing, such as bottom trawling, to low impact fishing. Further, small-scale fisheries, which engage over 90 per cent of all fishers and fish workers are vital for global food and nutrition security, must further be granted prioritized access to coastal fisheries resources. We specifically call on Governments and their partners to:

- Immediately act to restore fish stocks and eliminate by-catch of sensitive species at national, EU and international level,
- Stop funding industrial fleets that contribute to overfishing and overcapacity in the on-going negotiations in the World Trade Organisation (WTO);
- Grant small-scale fishers' exclusive rights to coastal fishing, by closing inshore areas to industrial fishing and bottom trawling under the European Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and national fisheries policy;
- Build resilient small-scale fishing communities by developing national strategic plans to thoroughly implement the Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Small Scale Fisheries (SSF Guidelines); and
- Publish, to the minimum standards of the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI), all relevant information, including legislation, fishing authorisations, data on performance and the rationale for management regulations.

Blue economy

The rhetoric of a "blue economy" that would combine economic growth with sustainable use and climate change mitigation is increasingly finding its way into national and international policy documents and investments. Concerned scientists^{4,5,6}, civil society organisations⁷ and coastal communities have pointed to the fact that such policy proposals in most cases are far from restoring 'ocean health'. In many countries it has rather recast control of and access to blue resources, with major impacts on small-scale fishers and fish workers while large-scale and capital-intensive uses continue. To avoid

⁴Bennett, N. J., Blythe, J., White, C. S., & Campero, C. (2021). Blue growth and blue justice: Ten risks and solutions for the ocean economy. *Marine Policy*, 125, 104387.

⁵Chuenpagdee, R. (2020). Blue justice for small-scale fisheries: What, why and how. *Blue Justice for Small-Scale Fisheries—A Global Scan*, 3.

⁶Jentoft, S., & Chuenpagdee, R. (2022). Blue justice in three governance orders. In *Blue Justice* (pp. 17-32). Springer, Cham.

⁷Brent, Z., Barbesgaard, M., & Pedersen, C. (2018). *The Blue Fix: Unmasking the politics behind the promise of blue growth*.



adverse negative environmental impacts and violations of human rights and coastal communities' livelihoods, the blue economy must be navigated in a just and sustainable way. This requires a particular emphasis on the equity implications of increased ocean use across the globe. We specifically call on Governments and their partners to:

- Apply the precautionary approach to any new ocean activity, followed by a thorough, independent, and transparent social and environmental impact assessment, with the full and effective participation of affected coastal and fishing communities including the development of mechanisms for conflict resolution between users of maritime spaces, and grievance redress;
- Prohibit any new ocean use that may negatively impact coastal ecosystems and the communities that depend on them for their livelihoods; and make sure that free, prior, informed consent (FPIC) is applied; and
- Demonstrate adequate provision in national budgets for enforcement of environmental regulation before any new ocean use is allowed.

Management and conservation of marine and coastal biodiversity

Despite the alarming situation for the world's oceans and coastal ecosystems, the vast majority remain poorly managed, and most countries have failed to fully apply an ecosystem-based approach. In addition, less than eight per cent are covered by marine protected areas (MPA:s)⁸ and many of the existing MPA:s are too small, lack a holistic approach and have outdated management plans.⁹ Most of them have also been established without the full and meaningful participation of coastal communities, which has led to violations of human rights.¹⁰ To reach the 30x30 target, larger marine and coastal areas must be protected from industrial and environmentally harmful sectors. A community-led 30x30 is key to benefit people and nature alike, delivering sustainable fisheries, vibrant oceans, and improved human well-being for all. We specifically call on Governments and their partners to:

- Ensure that equitable and appropriate management systems - based on an ecosystem approach - are in place for 100 per cent of all coastal areas.
- Recognize and respect areas traditionally owned, occupied, and sustainably managed by IPLC:s to enhance cultural and biological diversity, and support their initiatives for new conservation areas (ICCA:s/LMMA:s) in the 30x30 agenda. The principle of free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) should apply; and

⁸MPA Atlas (2022). <https://mpatlas.org/>

⁹Chaigneau, T., & Brown, K. (2016). Challenging the win-win discourse on conservation and development: analyzing support for marine protected areas. *Ecology and Society*, 21(1).

¹⁰Tauli-Corpuz, V., Alcorn, J., Molnar, A., Healy, C., & Barrow, E. (2020). Cornered by PAs: adopting rights-based approaches to enable cost-effective conservation and climate action. *World Development*, 130, 104923.



- Guarantee sufficient financial and human resources are devoted to support conservation and restoration of marine environments, including community-based and community-led coastal marine protected areas.

Gender equity

Women make up half the population and play a key role in fisheries management, biodiversity conservation and restoration, and for climate change adaptation.^{11,12} Their contributions in terms of labour, knowledge, practices, innovative ideas, and entrepreneurship are thus critical to reach SDG 14 and several other SDG:s. Yet, statistics and policy typically fail to fully integrate gender. Such gender bias block women's full and meaningful participation, and undervalue their essential contribution to the SDG:s. At the same time, women are disproportionately impacted by overexploitation of natural resources, climate change and the increasing competition from industrial blue sectors. The largest 'blue sector' – fisheries – show similar gender bias. Although women make up almost half the workforce in pre and post harvesting activities and are key providers of food and nutrition at both household and community level¹³, their role is often overlooked. For any solution to be successful, gender equity must be placed at the centre. We specifically call on Governments and their partners to:

- Improve gender sensitive data collection and dissemination of information to make visible women's contributions to food security, livelihoods, and sustainable use of the ocean;
- Secure women's access to land and natural resources, including fisheries resources, and markets;
- Empower women and youth to actively engage in professional organisations and decision-making, including for fisheries management decisions; and
- Prioritise investments in basic services - such as access to potable water, electricity, drainage, sanitary facilities at fish processing sites - and investments in infrastructure - such as decent housing, day care centres near processing sites, or training in the use of new technologies -that improve women's living conditions and those of their families.

The ocean – climate nexus

The ocean plays a key role in regulating the Earth's climate and is a vital carbon sink. It absorbs almost 25 per cent of annual CO₂ emissions¹⁴ and has taken up more than 90 per

¹¹UN Environment (2020), "New guidelines aim to support mangrove restoration in the Western Indian Ocean", Ecosystems and Biodiversity.

¹²Prakash, A., Mcglade, K., Call, R., Roy, J., Some, S., & Rao, N. (2022). Climate adaptation interventions in coastal areas: a rapid review of social and gendered dimensions. *Frontiers in Climate*, 785212.

¹³Gopal, N., Hapke, H. M., Kusakabe, K., Rajaratnam, S., & Williams, M. J. (2020). Expanding the horizons for women in fisheries and aquaculture. *Gender, Technology and Development*, 24(1), 1-9.

¹⁴NOAA GFDL Earth System Model (ESM2M).



cent of the excess heat in the climate system.¹⁵ In addition, marine and coastal ecosystems such as mangroves and seagrasses are among the most effective carbon sinks on Earth. However, climate change has caused great damage to the oceans. Higher surface water temperatures, rising sea levels, oxygen deficiency zones, acidification, and changes in ocean currents are some of the impacts. This has a significant impact on coastal ecosystems, biodiversity, and the distribution of marine organisms, particularly in tropical regions such as Africa. Marginalized coastal communities in the global South are most severely impacted. Small-scale fishers risk their lives as they are forced to fish further out at sea; erosion causes great damage to infrastructure; and sea level rise risks forcing tens of millions of people to leave their homes. These communities are also the ones having the least means to deal with the effects. Apart from drastically reducing industrial greenhouse gas emissions, promoting renewable energy such as offshore wind power, and decarbonizing the global shipping fleet, the Earth's nature-based solutions such as seagrasses, mangroves and saltmarshes must be protected and restored to work in favour of the climate, not against it. We specifically call on Governments and their partners to:

- Make oceans and carbon-storing ecosystems an integral part of national and EU climate and biodiversity strategies;
- Ensure that any investments in nature-based solutions (NbS) are functional and promote sustainable local solutions. These initiatives must respect human rights;
- Develop, in consultation with coastal communities, specific policies and plans for climate change adaptation and mitigation, and measures for disaster risk reduction and emergency response; and
- Support initiatives that improve the communities' resilience, particularly facing resource scarcity, helping them reduce post-harvest losses or developing supply alternatives.

¹⁵IPCC, 2019: Summary for Policymakers. In: IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate [H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, V. Masson-Delmotte, P. Zhai, M. Tignor, E. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, A. Alegria, M. Nicolai, A. Okem, J. Petzold, B. Rama, N.M. Weyer (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, USA, pp. 3–35. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009157964.001>.