
Ocean Health is Everyday Business

Submission to the Interactive Dialogues of the 2022 UN Ocean Conference

Only by creating an economy that actively values and contributes to ocean health and resilience can we achieve climate and Sustainability goals and secure future prosperity.

This brief is a contribution by Citizens' Climate International¹ to the Interactive Dialogues of the 2022 UN Ocean Conference. The brief responds to all eight thematic focus areas:

1. Addressing marine pollution;
2. Managing, protecting, conserving and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems;
3. Minimizing and addressing ocean acidification, deoxygenation and ocean warming;
4. Making fisheries sustainable and providing access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets;
5. Promoting and strengthening sustainable ocean-based economies, in particular for small island developing States and least developed countries;
6. Increasing scientific knowledge and developing research capacity and transfer of marine technology;
7. Enhancing the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea; and
8. Leveraging interlinkages between Sustainable Development Goal 14 and other Goals towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

We are also submitting segments of this brief to the following Interactive Dialogues:

- Managing, protecting, conserving and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems;
- Promoting and strengthening sustainable ocean-based economies, in particular for small island developing States and least developed countries;
- Leveraging interlinkages between Sustainable Development Goal 14 and other Goals towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

We submit this brief to the Interactive Dialogues on behalf of a network of more than 17,000 citizen stakeholders in 76 countries, across 6 continents. We consciously represent here the views, priorities, and interests of both coastal and inland communities, and urge consideration of actions and investments that surround them all with ocean-smart, resilience-building choices.

¹ Citizens' Climate International is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization that works to empower citizen volunteers to build political will for a livable world. We work across four programs: Volunteer Policy Advocates, Civic Diplomacy, Carbon Pricing, and Resilience Intelligence. Learn more at <https://citizensclimate.earth/mission>

Ocean health is human security.

At Citizens' Climate International, we recognize that without sustained, routine, reliable protection of ocean life and ecosystems, we will not be able to prevent dangerous climate change. The science is clear: Warming oceans destabilize climate patterns and generate feedbacks that accelerate global heating. Loss of ocean biomass releases still more carbon, reducing nature's capacity to rebalance disrupted ecosystems and climate patterns.

Without a healthy ocean and its thriving marine biosphere, our ability to produce enough food to feed the world is threatened, while climate feedbacks to land-based ecosystems exacerbate the risk of multiple breadbasket failure. Sea level rise threatens the physical security of human settlements in low-lying coastal areas, including some of the world's most populous cities and major centers of trade and commerce.

We need to shift local, national, and global political thinking to a mindset where safeguarding ocean life, preventing ocean warming, and countering the climate feedbacks of degraded ocean ecosystems, are mainstream concerns. Everyday human wellbeing and security require that we deploy strict and verifiable conservation measures across coastal waters, exclusive economic zones, and the high seas.

We need to widen the circle of ocean stakeholders and actors.

We want to see frontline ocean communities prioritized and protected, with conservation measures ensuring better health, higher quality of life, and sustainable economic opportunity. To make this an everyday part of our economies and financial systems, and to ensure sustainability of blue economy endeavors, we need to work toward healthy ocean outcomes upstream as well.²

Agriculture, industry, energy, and infrastructure, all need to be developed with healthy ocean outcomes in mind. Redevelopment and innovation toward that higher standard is investable, and should be actively incentivized through policy and new financial arrangements.

The blue economy needs to be all of us. At the point of consumption, people want to know their choices do good for dolphins and charismatic marine life, but also for people, and for the planetary systems we all depend on. We need policies and incentives that surround consumers with those better choices, and we need ways to measure impact.

Integrating data systems can reveal Earth systems value.

Our ocean, like ecosystems on land, anchors climate patterns and creates conditions for sustaining life as we know it. Connecting upstream and downstream actors and impacts also means connecting their activities and effects to a more complex web of interactions. Since many of our respective everyday impacts on ocean health and resilience are not immediately visible to us, we need to consciously create integrated data systems that connect the dots.

These integrated data systems are not only ocean data systems, or clean finance data systems; they are decision engines that make it easier to make responsible choices in our

² More information on upstream ocean action is available in the report "Invest at the Source": <https://resilienceintel.org/2019/06/08/invest-at-the-source-the-blue-economy-is-everything/>

everyday lives. To achieve optimal function and maximum reach, integrated data systems that connect Earth systems insights to financial, economic, human health, and agricultural insights, need to also include, and feed into local stakeholder decision matrices.

We recommend that ocean-smart integrated data platforms not be restricted to high-level expert institutions or global information systems, but connect to locally rooted points of input and output. A multiscale, multisystem approach should be used to achieve the most widely applicable, adaptive understanding of economy-wide impacts on ocean health and resilience.

Unlock finance for ocean health and resilience.

By using science and evidence to activate connections between upstream and downstream communities, and their respective sustainable development priorities, it is possible to trace cascade effects that unlock financial opportunity. By cascade effects, we mean specifically the dynamic sequence of operations and impacts where one development opens new possibilities in several other already existing systems.

For instance, revaluing agricultural land to account for soil carbon richness, soil moisture, and other signs of ecological resilience, can unlock credit, banking, and insurance opportunities for farmers, creating conditions commodities markets are more likely to respond to. By making the land itself more resilient to natural and human-caused shocks, it becomes easier to repurpose that land in case of crop failure and so it becomes easier to insure.

Enhancing intermediary services available to farmers to leverage Earth systems data to better deploy nature-based climate solutions as core farming operations can attract new investment and accelerate mitigation timelines. Both policies and practices, if well designed, can lead to cascade effects that improve the overall speed at which natural systems can begin to contribute substantially to carbon drawdown objectives.

Reward whole-value-chain ocean stewardship.

As financing begins to flow to sustainable practices that leverage integrated science, financial, economic, agricultural, and health data, we can rethink how we structure incentives that result in more or less responsible management of waste. This means not only favoring activities that reduce climate-forcing emissions, but also chemical inputs that pollute watersheds, degrade ecosystems, and lead to hypoxic “dead zones” in the ocean.

We will also be able, with the accelerated deployment of such financing strategies, to map, incentivize, invest in, and realize a more circular economy in many sectors. This will be critical for ensuring the elimination of plastics and microplastics, along with other chemical runoff, from watersheds and ocean ecosystems. Pollution reduction is not, however, the only way to use this circular economy financing.

By building ocean-smart value chains that eliminate pollution and leverage reuse and regeneration as everyday practices, we can also connect SDG14 activities to all of the other SDGs, including—though not limited to—Health, Elimination of Hunger, Decent Work, Water and Sanitation, Sustainable Consumption, Climate Action, and Ecosystem Restoration. Treating every community, and every actor across the economy, as an investable agent of

ocean stewardship is an opportunity to reduce preventable harm, build resilience, and drive new investment to underserved communities.

Connect policies and incentives between scales and across borders.

Article 6, Paragraph 8 of the Paris Agreement recognizes “non-market approaches” to cooperative decarbonization between nations. Such policies, incentives, and financing strategies can include not only climate-friendly tax adjustments, but also direct payments for climate services, ecosystem services, ecosystem restoration, and contributions to ocean health and resilience. The Glasgow Pact also considers ways of conditioning development finance to foster climate-smart capital flows and climate-smart trade.

Intergovernmental efforts toward conservation of biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction create opportunities for vastly expanding the reach of conservation efforts, and for connecting ocean conservation, climate stabilization, and green and blue investment, in ways that make trade flows more conducive to planetary health. The success of such processes should be an international priority.

Finally, we see a clear need for connecting efforts toward carbon border adjustments to a wider process for aligning incentives to achieve maximum sustainability and climate mitigation and adaptation effects. In other words, people everywhere have an everyday stake in the integrity and ambition of intergovernmental negotiations to accelerate climate, ocean, ecosystem, and biodiversity stewardship incentives. Drawing those connections, as laid out above, can rapidly scale up everyday sustainable development.

Follow-up

- To follow up on this submission, contact the CCI team at ocean@citizensclimateintl.org
- For a fully updated, annotated version of this document, go to: <https://public.3.basecamp.com/p/V5jkRJ79ypaRnjGgWPAQNZw8>