

SOS OCEAN

PARIS MEETING



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Paris, 31 March 2025

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To Those Who Will Decide and Act for the Ocean

When a distress signal — an "SOS" — is heard at sea, all sailors must change course to assist those in danger. To those who bear the responsibility to act at local, regional, national, and international levels, we, women and men of goodwill, issue, on March 31, 2025, in Paris, an "SOS OCEAN".

As in the past year we have already exceeded the globally recognized safety threshold of 1.5°C of global warming, as set by the Paris Agreement in 2015, **the world's Ocean** — covering nearly three-quarters of our planet — **is now in turmoil**.

Yet, as land-dwellers, we continue to turn our backs on the sea. Taking it for granted, we persist in inflicting major, sometimes irreversible, damage. In addition to the well-identified, increasingly frequent, and devastating effects of climate change and biodiversity loss, we continue to exert growing pressure on our Exclusive Economic Zones, the High Seas, and, perhaps soon, the deep seabed.

We must change course immediately. The Ocean is universally recognized as the most essential system for sustaining life on Earth. You, leaders, can no longer feign surprise. **Ten years after the international community raised the alarm at the Climate COP 21, you must now** — alongside us, friends and allies of the Sea — **rise to the Ocean challenge.**

The United Nations Member States, representing over eight billion people, have chosen to take on this challenge by entrusting France and Costa Rica with organizing the largest global gathering ever dedicated to the Ocean. The 3rd United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3), to be held in Nice from June 9 to 13, 2025, must be a major turning point. **The Nice Agreements for the Ocean should thus leave a lasting mark on history by reconciling the blue planet, the Ocean, climate, biodiversity, and humanity.**

Exactly seventy days before UNOC3 opens, amid not only climate disruption but also an unprecedented geopolitical crisis for generations, you, leaders, and stakeholders of the maritime world, have the opportunity to demonstrate a renewed unity that is both benevolent and beneficial to all, particularly for coastal and small island States facing existential threats.

We urge you to lead by example and make the most ambitious, protective, and regenerative decisions in Nice for marine life and ecosystems. These decisions must be the most advantageous for coastal and island populations, Indigenous peoples and local communities, and for all countries and economies directly or indirectly dependent on the Ocean's exceptional system.

This global and transformative program, geared toward real action and a 2025-2030 agenda, **must be embodied through five major commitments**: five arms of a starfish, symbolizing this ambition.

These five commitments must culminate, on June 13, 2025, final day of the UNOC3, in the creation of a "Blue Future Alliance," bringing together all States that wish to be guardians and champions of this new agenda for the Ocean.

I.

Establish an International Framework for the Ocean based on the Rule of Law, Security, Peaceful and Integrated Governance, and an Ambitious Agenda

WE CALL FOR:

- At least sixty of your States to have ratified the BBNJ treaty ("Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction") by June 9, 2025, as its implementation is essential for the governance of the High Seas. The first COP dedicated to the Ocean, as a global common good, could thus convene by the end of 2026 and focus on knowledge, protection, and the sharing of resources from over 60% of the entire global maritime area.
- That all Ocean decision-making and governance processes include Indigenous peoples, citizens and sea users, scientists, civil society, youth, and women, who have too often been forgotten until now.
- That the freedom and security of maritime navigation be respected, the human and social rights of maritime workers be upheld, and, with regard to maritime rescue, the Ocean be recognized as a humanitarian space.

- That the 3rd United Nations Ocean Conference integrates the Ocean, climate and biodiversity nexus into the Nice Agreements for the Ocean, and that it decides on messages addressed to both Climate COP30 to be held later this year, and during the Biodiversity COP17 in 2026 on clear steps to achieve such alignment; that the 3rd United Nations Ocean Conference promotes the establishment of a work program common to the Rio Conventions, identifying the best ocean-based solutions for a coherent action in favor of climate and biodiversity.

2.

To Tackle and Fight Against All Forms of Pollution and the Major Impacts of Climate Change

WE CALL ON POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND INDUSTRIAL LEADERS:

- To publicly express, at UNOC3 in Nice, their strong commitment to finally developing an ambitious and legally binding international instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, particularly focusing on reducing plastic production, single-use plastic, and taking in consideration the entire plastic life cycle; and to ensure that this agreement can be approved under UNEP's auspices during the negotiation session in Geneva starting August 5, 2025.
- To accelerate as from the April 2025 session of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) the ambitious decarbonization of maritime transport the implementation at the International Maritime Organization (IMO), aiming to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, and to make maritime transport completely carbon-neutral by 2050.

- To take resolute action against all forms of phytosanitary, chemical, industrial, terrestrial pollution, and all waste from terrestrial and space environments, as well as to support the implementation of sanitation policies in coastal areas of developing countries.
- To establish a Sargassum Action Group in the Caribbean and on the Latin American coastline, to industrialize, with the leadership of a few countries, including Mexico, prevention and recycling solutions for sargassum.
- To take into account the dramatic effects of climate change on global coastlines and on Indigenous peoples and local communities living there, to work in close cooperation between countries, cities, and regions affected by sea-level rise on adaptation solutions, technology, and financing; to reduce the vulnerability of infrastructure systems to disasters, tsunamis, and erosion phenomena; to create a dedicated forum bringing together all actors to anticipate and build a future in which our littorals will not be condemned, but resilient.

3.

To Conserve, Protect, Restore, Educate

WE CALL FOR:

- Countries, particularly the members of the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People (HAC for Nature & People), its co-chairs, Costa Rica, France, the United Kingdom, and all maritime countries that have joined it, to ensure that the protection of exclusive economic zones increases from 8.3% today (with just 3% under effective protection) to 12% at UNOC3, that the goal set in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework of 30% is met by 2030, including at least 10% fully protected.
- Destructive activities such as bottom trawling to be banned by 2030 within marine protected areas, and in the meantime, for a moratorium to be put in place on the issuance of permits for any new bottom trawling operations.

- All countries represented at the International Seabed Authority, given the significant and irreversible impacts on all Ocean systems that would result from the development of a new deep-sea mining industry, to align with the opinion of the Global Deep Seabed Consultation, recommending "a moratorium on deep-sea mining for at least 10 to 15 years, or until sufficient knowledge is available to make informed decisions."
- A special attention to be given to fragile areas highly exposed to the effects of climate change, such as the Arctic Ocean and its surrounding coasts, Antarctica, current and future marine protected areas; attention should also be given to islands and island spaces, coral-rich waters, mangroves or seagrass meadows, deltas, rivers, and wetlands. Also, fifty years after the signing of the Barcelona Convention, for significant progress to be made by all Mediterranean coastal States to protect this heavily frequented yet degraded sea in terms of its resilience capacity.

- In connection with the IUCN, and in anticipation of the next World Conservation Congress (October 9-15, 2025, Abu Dhabi), as many States and marine conservation actors as possible should mobilize within a coalition to protect the many marine species threatened with extinction.
- Leaders of the maritime countries of the United Nations, who will be represented in Nice, to develop educational marine areas along their coastlines, to integrate Ocean, polar, and climate issues into national educational programs, and more generally, to listen to the messages of young generations concerned about a sustainable future; for example, the introduction of the Ocean “protection principle”, indicating that the protection of the Ocean should be the norm rather than an exception.

4.

To Make the Ocean a Model of Coordinated, Regulated, and Sustainable Economy;
to Encourage Innovation and Financial Investment in a Regenerative Blue Economy

THIS AMBITION IS BASED ON:

- A true sharing of vision and implementation between political leaders, entrepreneurs, public institutions, economic and financial entities, scientific experts, and, of course, local actors for fair, inclusive, and sustainable governance, use and exploitation of the Ocean.
- Full awareness that while the Ocean is indeed the richest global ecosystem and the life support system of our planet, and therefore of the human species, we must avoid the excessive exploitation of resources, and ensure, as a priority, that the Ocean remains a source of livelihood and protein for billions of people, particularly for island and coastal populations, notably by promoting short supply chains, particularly for fishing and aquaculture.

- The recognition that the Ocean is the only ecosystem where humans industrially hunt wild animals, and that this industry has led to a strong decline of large predatory fish and wild animals with devastating effects on coral reefs and other ecosystems; therefore, the need for persistent action at the State level, including by national navies, through transparency and satellite means, by economic actors, regional sea conventions, and regional fisheries management organizations, against all illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing activities, overfishing, krill fisheries, deep-sea species fisheries, and, in general, against any destructive or harmful fishing practices.
- The need to adopt sustainable fishing practices in areas within and beyond national jurisdiction and to curb the environmental impacts of aquaculture, notably on local habitats and species, in a manner consistent with halting the depletion of the Ocean's biodiversity and restoring the health of fish stocks, including by unquestionably curbing harmful fisheries subsidies, guaranteeing preferential access for small-scale fisheries in the territorial sea, and investing in new ways to produce food, as over half of wild-caught fish is used as feed for farmed animals.

- Mobilization of financial actors, multilateral development banks, and philanthropists, to launch a large-scale investment mechanism to finance projects in economic and industrial development, ecosystem protection, and research.
- An effort focused on researching new decarbonized technologies and biotechnologies in each field (for example, wind propulsion for maritime transport), renewable energy, and the development of a network of "smart" cables producing data on the state of the Ocean.
- A commitment to exemplary action by large global companies in certain areas: blue tourism, banking and insurance, tackling plastic pollution (including from the fishing industry and notably nets), participation in a biodiversity restoration fund, etc.

5.

To Explore, Observe, and Understand the Ocean Sharing and Transmitting Knowledge

WE CALL FOR:

- The States of the five continents and regional organizations, such as the European Union, already having advanced oceanographic scientific research, along with programs, technical centers, and space operators, to present at UNOC3 a large-scale Ocean exploration mission for the next fifteen years (2025-2040), involving philanthropists and other actors, for the benefit of all countries and for freely shared knowledge among all.
- The member States of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission to strengthen, within the framework of the Decade of Ocean Science (2021-2030) and beyond, its mission of supporting Ocean public policies; to support the implementation of a program and a service platform for Ocean sustainability (IPOS, International Panel for Ocean Sustainability) that, building on existing platforms, could be tasked with advising States on the development of "Sustainable Ocean Plans" within their EEZs.

WE SALUTE:

- The joint mobilization of scientific Ocean and space actors, the creation of new knowledge tools, such as the future intergovernmental organization Mercator Ocean and its digital twin, as well as the production of an annual reference barometer on the health of the Ocean.
- The United Nations resolution on the creation of a Decade of Action for Cryospheric Sciences (2025-2035), which will be officially launched at UNOC3 and should document the collapse of ice caps and major glaciers around the world and propose adaptation frameworks.

WE EMPHASIZE THE NEED TO INTEGRATE THE FOLLOWING IN OCEAN KNOWLEDGE:

- All uses, environmental challenges, and scientific, traditional, Indigenous, professional, administrative, and legal knowledge.
- The entire scientific community, notably by promoting the careers of researchers from developing countries and small island States, as well as the universities and Ocean research centers in these nations.

WE, THE PEOPLE OF EARTH,
MUST TODAY DECISIVELY
CHOOSE THE OCEAN.

We, the people of Earth, must today decisively choose the Ocean.

It is from this dream, one of the last we have left, that we wish to speak on this June 8, World Ocean Day, in Nice, by the Mediterranean, on the eve of a decisive United Nations Conference for the Ocean.

Through the Nice Agreements for the Ocean, we expect and ask from the international community an ambitious, precise, and engaging roadmap for Ocean action in the next five years.

On March 31, 2025, in Paris, by launching this "SOS OCEAN" on the eve of the United Nations Ocean Conference, one of the most important gatherings for the international community, we must not merely speak or settle for a consensual political declaration negotiated before the Conference.

We must act. Act for the Ocean, act with the Ocean, act in the Ocean.

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