

The Regional Kick-off Conference for the Tropical Americas and The Caribbean United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development December 16-17, 2021

A CALL FOR ACTION

<p><i>"Primero estaba el mar. Todo estaba oscuro. No había sol, ni luna, ni gente, ni animales, ni plantas. Sólo el mar estaba en todas partes. El mar era la madre. Ella era agua y agua por todas partes y ella estaba en todas partes. Así, primero sólo estaba la madre ..."</i> De la mitología Kogi (Comunidad Indígena Ancestral Caribe Colombia)</p>	<p><i>"In the beginning the ocean was there. Darkness all around. There was no sun, no moon, no people, no animals, no plants. Only ocean everywhere. The ocean was the mother. She was water and water everywhere as she was everywhere. And so, in the beginning only the mother was there ..."</i> From the Kogi mythology (Indigenous Colombian Caribbean Ancestral Community)</p>
--	--

Our Ocean plays a fundamental role in making Earth habitable.

Covering more than 70% of the Earth's surface, and due to its enormous depths, the Ocean holds 97% of the living space of the Planet." (Attenborough, 2020). Such global import and intersectionality with human welfare and economy, directly affects our region's achievement of multiple Sustainable Development Goals.

To reverse the decline in the health of the ocean, the UN Decade of Ocean Science mobilizes us to leverage our capabilities for the transformative science we need for the ocean we want.

Much of the ocean is now seriously degraded, with changes and losses in the structure, function, and benefits from marine systems. Scientific understanding of the ocean's responses to pressures and management action is fundamental for sustainable development. Ocean observations and research are also essential to predict the consequences of change, design mitigation and guide adaptation. (First World Ocean Assessment, 2016).

Economy and livelihoods are strongly dependent on the state, quality and stability of ecosystem provision of goods and services. Sustainable fisheries, tourism, agriculture, industry, communications, and energy sectors require healthy and sustainably managed ecosystems. Moreover, extreme events such as hurricanes, tsunamis or ecological disruptions such as pollution, oil spills or massive *Sargassum* beaching pose a strong burden on the life, economy and livelihoods of the Region. Furthermore, climate change and its impacts such as extreme weather and sea level rise, as well as deoxygenation and Ocean acidification, will lead to loss of diversity and the services it provides, and pose multiple and cascading challenges to the sustainability of the Region.

Finally, co-developed relevant scientific knowledge, ranging from "natural and social" science to local and indigenous knowledge, presented in a timely and appropriate language to stakeholders, should be the driver for sound decisions towards sustainability, and with support of sound scientific knowledge, mitigate the impacts and transform the hazards of environmental and climate change into opportunities.

Social and political diversity is reflected in a Region with more than 48 countries and territories ranging from large nations to small island developing states, all joined in a melting-pot of a variety of multifaceted communities, languages, capacity, and perspectives around economic development. The UN Decade will foster new social, economic and scientific innovation to build back better in a post covid-19 world and mobilize equitable and inclusive sustainable ocean economy development under a changing climate.

The Decade (UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development)

The Ocean Decade is a convening framework for diverse stakeholders to co-design and co-deliver solution-oriented research needed for a well-functioning ocean in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Capacity development, ocean literacy, best practices, and the removal of barriers to full gender, inter-generational, and geographic diversity are essential elements of the Decade. (IOC, 2021) The Decade will mobilize co-design partnerships to address the 10 grand challenges identified in the [Decade Implementation Plan](#).

Call to Action

“ACCELERATING SCIENCE BASED SOLUTIONS FOR SOLVING OCEAN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES IN THE TROPICAL AMERICAS AND CARIBBEAN REGION”

The Regional Kick-off Conference makes a call to:

- Protect, conserve and restore ocean ecosystems to enhance resilience of regional and global communities that depend on them;
- Engage and inspire stakeholders to develop and enhance partnerships for co-design and co-delivery of transformative solutions for the critical decadal sustainable development challenges, leaving no one behind in the design, implementation and access to benefits;
- Identify programmes, projects, actions including contributions for Decade solutions in the region;
- Support the creation of National Committees for the Ocean Decade to mobilize local and national collaboration to co-design and coordinate local, national and regional actions; and
- Participate through events, publications, exhibitions, workshops, conferences, offers for training opportunities, or contributions both financial or in-kind towards supporting the development of actions in the Decade.