

IOC Circular Letter No 3023
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To : Official National Coordinating Bodies for liaison with the IOC (IOC Member States)

C.c. : Permanent Delegates/Observers Missions to UNESCO and
National Commission for UNESCO of IOC Member States
Chair and Vice-Chairpersons of IOC
Officers of Major Subsidiary Bodies of IOC

**Subject: Information to support Member States in their preparation
for the 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference**

This Circular Letter has been prepared to provide Member States with information to support them in their preparations for engagement in the 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference (9–13 June 2025, Nice, France). Hosted by Costa Rica and France, the 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference is the third in a triennial series of conferences organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations (UN DESA). The Conference convenes Member States and other stakeholders to take stock of progress in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 14 – Life under water and to develop new actions, partnerships and initiatives to support SDG 14 implementation. Details of the Conference, including the draft programme can be found on the [Conference website](#).

Key Messages for the 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference Political Declaration

A zero draft of the 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference political declaration was shared with Member States by Australia and Cabo Verde in their role as co-facilitators of the declaration negotiation process. A first informal round of negotiations on the declaration will take place on 27 January 2025 at UN HQ in New York. This will be followed by three other rounds of negotiations before the finalization of the political declaration prior to the 1 May 2025.

To support Member States in the negotiation process, the IOC Secretariat has developed the following suggestions for key messages that could be raised by Member States to strengthen the current contents of the political declaration:

- The science and knowledge priorities identified through 2024 Ocean Decade Conference and captured in [The Barcelona Statement](#) are a basis for coordinated and transformative action in the generation and use of ocean science for sustainable development.
- Increased and tangible commitments for increased financing and investment by Member States and other actors are required for ocean science and knowledge generation to meet the goals of global

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ocean policy frameworks, including for observations and data infrastructure and capacity development.

- Accelerated efforts are needed across society to underpin sustainable ocean management and achievement of SDG 14 in several areas that are not mentioned in the zero draft of the declaration including seabed mapping, disaster risk reduction and preparedness in the face of extreme weather events, ocean literacy, and support to Indigenous-led research.

Annex 1 to this Circular Letter contains detailed suggested edits to the text of the zero draft of the declaration that address the above key messages as well as integrating other suggested edits to strengthen the overall declaration.

France, Costa Rica and IOC are organizing an in-person information session entitled 'Ocean Science for Decision-Making and Action at the 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference' on 27 January 2025 from 8.30 – 9.45 a.m. at UN HQ immediately preceding the first informal negotiations session. Member States will be informed of the location of this session via a separate communication.

Online Member State Information Session

An online information session for Member States will be organized by the IOC Secretariat on 5 February 2025 from 13.30 – 15h. Registration for this session is via this [link](#).

[signature]

Vidar Helgesen
Executive Secretary

Enclosure: 1/ Unofficial version of Zero Draft of 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference Political Declaration with suggested edits for the information of Member States of UNESCO-IOC

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Our ocean, our future: accelerating action

- 1 We, the Heads of State and Government and high-level representatives, meeting in Nice from 9–13 June 2025 at the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with the full participation of civil society and all stakeholders, affirm our strong commitment to conserve and sustainably use our ocean, seas and marine resources for sustainable development [*based on previous declarations*].
- 2 We share one ocean, and we remain gravely concerned with the global emergency it faces from the impacts of the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. Action is not advancing at the speed or scale required to meet SDG 14. A healthy and resilient ocean is essential for a sustainable ocean economy and underpins cultural and social connections to the ocean. We must act with urgency to face this challenge with bold, ambitious, just and transformative action, and ensure all people, including women and girls, people with disability, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and other marginalised groups are empowered and included in ocean-related decision-making [*based on UNSG background note*].
- 3 We emphasize that our actions to implement Goal 14 should be in accordance with, reinforce and not duplicate or undermine existing legal instruments, arrangements, processes, mechanisms or entities. We affirm the need to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean and its resources by implementing international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources, as recalled in paragraph 158 of *The Future We Want*. We recognise the importance of UNCLOS to advancing sustainable development and its near universal adoption by States, as recalled in paragraph 159 of *The Future We Want*, and in this regard, we urge all its parties to fully implement their obligations under UNCLOS [*based on previous declarations and 'The Future We Want' Outcome document*].
- 4 We recall *The Pact for the Future* and our decision to take ambitious action to restore the ocean and its ecosystems, and to improve its health, productivity, sustainable use and resilience [*based on 'The Pact for the Future'*].

Defending ocean ecosystems

- 5 We note the ocean plays an essential role in addressing climate change, and are deeply alarmed that the ocean's ability to act as a climate mitigator has been weakened due to the adverse impacts of climate change including ocean warming, ocean acidification, eutrophication and deoxygenation, compounded by marine pollution and biodiversity loss [*based on UNSG background note*].
- 6 We underline the importance of the ocean-climate-biodiversity nexus and call for concerted global action to minimise the impact of climate change on ocean biodiversity [*based on UNSG background note and Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF)*].
- 7 We affirm our commitment to continued cooperation to address climate change-related sea level rise and its effects, and acknowledge the High-Level Meeting on Sea Level Rise held in New York on 25 September 2024. We recognise sea level rise due to climate change disproportionately impacts Small Island Developing States (SIDS), least developed countries,

and coastal communities, and acknowledge the urgent need for collective action to enhance their adaptive capacities and resilience while mitigating climate change. Marginalised groups bear the brunt of many of the negative consequences of climate change and sea level rise [[based on 'Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS' \(ABAS\) and High-Level Meeting on Sea Level Rise modalities](#)].

- 8 **[Proposed new text] We reaffirm our commitment to supporting implementation of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS) – a Renewed Declaration for Resilient Prosperity.** We commend the leadership of SIDS in managing the challenges associated with sea level rise, and note in particular [The Pacific Islands Forum Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the face of Climate Change-Related Sea-Level Rise](#) and [The Alliance of Small Island States Declaration on Sea Level Rise and Maritime](#) [[new language](#)].
- 9 We welcome the contribution of the International Law Commission (ILC) to our understanding of the relationship between sea level rise and international law through its study on “Sea-level rise in relation to international law” and encourage States’ continued engagement with the ILC on this topic [[new language](#)].
- 10 We acknowledge the [2024 Advisory Opinion](#) of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea on the Request for an Advisory Opinion submitted by the Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law. We encourage all States to meet their obligations to prevent, reduce and control the pollution of the marine environment and to protect and preserve the marine environment in relation to the impacts of climate change [[new language](#)].
- 11 We remain concerned the high and rapidly increasing levels of plastic pollution represents a serious environmental problem at a global scale, negatively impacting the environmental, social, health, and economic dimensions of sustainable development. We recognise the transboundary nature of plastic pollution and efforts to address this crisis through trade, including through the WTO Dialogue on Plastics Pollution [[based on UNSG background note and KMGBF](#)].
- 12 We reaffirm our shared commitment to accelerate action to prevent, significantly reduce and control marine pollution of all kinds, **[Proposed new text] including emerging pollutants and pollutants from land-based sources.** We support the work of the IMO in further addressing ship-sourced pollution and dumping in the marine environment, including biosecurity risks, and encourage members to address the issue of ghost gear [[new language](#)].
- 13 We reaffirm the need to strengthen integrated coastal zone management, marine spatial planning and climate **[Proposed new text] mitigation** interventions and adaptation strategies to enhance the resilience of coastal and marine ecosystems. **[Proposed new text] We recognize the need for improving disaster risk reduction and preparedness for more extreme weather events.** We commit to ecosystem-based approaches and nature-based solutions to protect **[Proposed new text] and restore** natural buffers such as mangroves, seagrasses, and coral reefs, while supporting sustainable livelihoods and biodiversity and pledge to support the implementation of the Early Warnings for All initiative to ensure coastal communities vulnerable to hazardous weather, water or climate events have equitable access to timely, accurate, and actionable information [[based on UNSG background note](#)].
- 14 We reiterate the need to increase scientific knowledge on deep sea ecosystems and emphasise the importance of a precautionary approach, including for deep sea mining. We welcome the work of the International Seabed Authority towards the development of robust rules, regulations and procedures in accordance with the UNCLOS [[based on role of the International Seabed Authority](#)].

Sustainable ocean economies

- 15 We recognise the tremendous opportunities offered by sustainable ocean-based economies for States, particularly SIDS, to achieve economic growth and social development while safeguarding the health, resilience and productivity of marine ecosystems for present and future generations [[based on UNSG background note](#)].
- 16 We recognise the essential role of sustainable ocean plans in achieving sustainable ocean economies [[Proposed new text](#)] **whilst ensuring the sustainable use and conservation of marine ecosystems** and call on all coastal and ocean States to commit to the 100% Alliance, ensuring 100 per cent of ocean areas under national jurisdiction are sustainably managed by 2030. We commit to supporting capacity building, knowledge exchange, and financial mobilisation to enable countries, especially SIDS, to develop and implement sustainable ocean plans [[new language](#)].
- 17 [[Proposed new text](#)] **We recognize the importance of supporting the achievement of the goals and targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework as it relates to marine and coastal ecosystems including actions related to marine protected areas, marine invasive species and ocean acidification.** We will ensure by 2030 at least 30 per cent of terrestrial, inland water, marine, and coastal areas are effectively conserved and managed through ecologically representative, well-connected, and equitably governed systems of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures, and at least 30 per cent of areas of degraded ecosystems are under effective restoration (30x30). These efforts should align with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, prioritise areas of critical importance for biodiversity, ecosystem functions and services, and recognise the integral role of Indigenous Peoples, and of local communities, including their traditional territories [[based on KMGBF](#)].
- 18 We underscore the central role of a healthy and resilient ocean in sustaining life on Earth, ensuring global food security, and supporting billions of lives. We are deeply troubled by the escalating depletion of many global fish stocks through overfishing and call for decisive and collective action to accelerate transition to sustainable fisheries and aquaculture systems, through enhancing marine spatial planning, science-based management, promoting, scaling up and replicating successes, and working together to fight illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. [[based on UNSG background note](#)].
- 19 We encourage World Trade Organization (WTO) Members to deposit their instruments of acceptance of the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies to accelerate its entry into force and implementation. We call on members to conclude negotiations as soon as possible on additional provisions that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing to secure a comprehensive fisheries subsidies agreement [[new language](#)].
- 20 We recognise the critical roles of maritime transport in the global economy and the challenges to transition the sector to sustainability. Decarbonisation of shipping remains an urgent priority. We welcome the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) adoption of the 2023 Strategy on Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Ships and its enhanced common ambition to reach net-zero emissions from international shipping by or around 2050 [[based on IMO 2023 Strategy](#)].

Accelerating action

- 21 We welcome the adoption of the Agreement under UNCLOS on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity Beyond National Jurisdiction, and encourage States to sign and ratify the Agreement to ensure its early entry into force. We welcome resolution 78/272 of the General Assembly establishing the Preparatory Commission to prepare for the entry into force of the Agreement and for the first Conference of the Parties

and call upon States to engage in the Commission. We recognise the important role the Agreement will play in achieving 30x30 [*new language*]. *[Proposed new text] We recognize the need to equip all nations with suitable technical and marine scientific capacity to benefit from and contribute to the implementation of the Agreement.*

22 We encourage States to take advantage of the updated modalities for describing ecologically or biologically significant marine areas and explore potential synergies with the future implementation of the BBNJ [*based on decision 16 of CBD COP 16*].

23 We recognise the importance of the ongoing work of the *Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on 'an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment'*, reaffirm our commitment to preventing, reducing and eliminating plastic pollution by taking effective measures throughout the lifecycle of plastics, and call upon participating delegations to work together to reach an ambitious agreement without delay [*based on UNSG background note and UNEP background document*].

24 *[Proposed new paragraph] We recognize the importance of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030) and its vision to achieve the science we need for the ocean we want. We support the Decade mission to generate and use knowledge for the transformative action needed to achieve a healthy, safe and resilient ocean for sustainable development by 2030 and beyond, and support the science-based measures identified as priorities by the 2024 Ocean Decade Conference that will accelerate this action.*

25 Ocean action must be based on the best available science and knowledge, including Indigenous Knowledge, and that of all members of local communities. To that end we:

- a. Affirm the value of strengthening *[Proposed new text] the co-stewardship and* sharing of knowledge and expertise, including, where there is free, prior and informed consent, the knowledges and practices of Indigenous Peoples, traditional knowledge of local communities, and local knowledge systems. *[Proposed new text] We highlight the importance of supporting the generation and application of Indigenous-led research.*
- b. Support new *[Proposed new text] and ongoing* scientific research *[Proposed new text] focused on improving understanding and developing solutions* to meet the multiple challenges of climate change, food security, energy transitions and biodiversity loss.
- c. Commit to improving the scientific understanding of the ocean and supporting science-based measures to accelerate action, including through the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030) and the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects, and its World Ocean Assessments.
- d. Support a strong science-policy *[Proposed new text] -society* interface to provide timely, credible and salient scientific information to inform policies and actions.
- e. Commit to strengthening *[Proposed new text] investments in* coordinated international, regional, subregional and national scientific observation and data collection, *[Proposed new text] sharing and management* efforts, including the development of integrated information management, infrastructure and systems that provide *[Proposed new text] open* access to reliable, timely and high-quality marine data.
- f. Prioritise investments in the creation, expansion, and effective management of MPAs *[Proposed new text] and other effective area-based conservation efforts* to support the health and resilience of ocean ecosystems and the communities that depend on them [*based on UNSG background note*].
- g. *[Proposed new text] Commit to implementing Ocean Literacy initiatives in educational frameworks and wider public awareness initiatives, emphasizing*

transdisciplinary, experiential and inclusive learning approaches that merge scientific and traditional knowledge to address systemic challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and sustainable marine resource management, and to cultivate ocean stewardship across all sectors of society.

- h. **[Proposed new text] Commit to achieving a fully mapped seabed by creating a favorable policy environment that results in increased funding, advancement of suitable technology, and increased data sharing on based on FAIR principles.**

26 We recognise **[Proposed new text] that SDG 14 is one of the least well-funded SDGs and that** accelerating ocean action requires significantly increased finance. In this regard, we:

- a. **[Proposed new text] Commit to increased financing and investment to meet SDG targets and to support capacity development for SIDS, LDCs and marginalized groups including women and girls, youth, and Indigenous communities.**
- b. Promote the recognition of the sustainable ocean economy as an attractive investment opportunity among mainstream financial institutions through instruments such as Blue Bonds and Blue Loans.
- c. Encourage the private sector, including banks, insurers and investors, to redirect their products and services towards the transition to sustainable ocean-based economies by finding innovative solutions to support the health and resilience of the ocean.
- d. Encourage the creation of financial instruments such as microfinance, payments for environmental services, credit mechanisms, grants, and subsidies.
- e. Encourage collaboration on blended finance mechanisms to de-risk investments in developing countries, facilitating a just transition.
- f. Ensure the mobilisation of resources, including concessional financing, from Multilateral Development Banks, sovereign wealth funds, and governments with a view to overcoming financial barriers, especially in developing countries.
- g. Support small-scale fishers, women and girls, youth, and Indigenous communities.
- h. Highlight that charities, philanthropies and other donors will be essential, including in providing grants and enabling capital and through concessional financing [*based on UNSG background note*].

27 We value the voluntary commitments made to implement SDG 14, including at UN Ocean Conferences, and encourage partnerships to expand initiatives and increase their impact. We support the inclusive nature of voluntary commitments and underscore the need to implement a simple monitoring and reporting process to provide a collective metric for progress [*based on UNSG background note*].