

Proteus Partners update: The third UN Ocean Conference

The United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC) is convened in support of the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)14: *Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development*.

UNOC3 was the largest UNOC to date, following UNOC 1 in 2017 and UNOC 2 in 2022. It was held in Nice, France, from 9 to 13 June 2025, under the theme “*Accelerating Action and Mobilizing All Actors to Conserve and Sustainably Use the Ocean*”. The Conference brought together government representatives, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, academia, the private sector, Indigenous Peoples and local communities and civil society to discuss progress towards SDG 14, share solutions and identify barriers to conserving and sustainably using the ocean.

Our Ocean, Our Future

The Conference declaration, *‘Our Ocean, Our Future: United for Urgent Action’* reaffirms the critical role of a healthy, resilient ocean for life on Earth and expresses deep alarm at the threats posed by climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and unsustainable practices. It highlights the urgency of bold, inclusive, and transformative action to accelerate progress towards SDG 14. The declaration underscores the importance of international cooperation and multilateral ocean governance. It further highlights the potential of sustainable ocean-based economies to support poverty eradication and food security while safeguarding marine ecosystems, and calls for scaled-up, accessible finance and private sector engagement to close the SDG 14 funding gap.

Over 800 voluntary commitments were made during the conference, by a wide variety of governments and organisations. These include [an investment of 1 billion EUR](#) by the European Commission to protect marine life and strengthen the blue economy, and countries pledging to establish [20 new Marine Protected Areas](#). New international initiatives announced include the [High Ambition Coalition for a Quiet Ocean](#), which aims to reduce ocean noise pollution, and the [International Platform for Ocean Sustainability \(IPOS\)](#), which is a global demand-driven platform to link ocean knowledge, policy and society and help accelerate the fulfilment of states’ international ocean commitments.

The Business Call to Action

Over 80 companies and business networks endorsed the Business Call to Action *‘Land and Sea, a Vital Connection for a Thriving and Resilient Economy’* which calls on businesses to accelerate action to conserve and sustainably use the ocean while supporting a thriving, resilient economy. Recommendations within the Call to Action include:

- Partner with scientific bodies and share business data to strengthen ocean knowledge
- Integrate ocean considerations into climate, nature and social impact roadmaps, including setting targets on ocean-related metrics
- Measure, assess and disclose on material dependencies, impacts, risks and opportunities relating to oceans across the value chain
- Develop and implement strategies to prevent, reduce and eliminate pollution, including plastic pollution, across the value chain

- Apply science-aligned, precautionary approaches to new initiatives and projects
- Scale innovative finance solutions that incentivize ocean conservation and sustainable use
- Support a just transition by developing skills, improving livelihoods, and including coastal communities in decision-making.

Progress Towards Entry into Force of the BBNJ Agreement

During UNOC3, 19 countries ratified the [Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction](#) (BBNJ Agreement), bringing the total number of ratifications to 51. Sixty are needed for the Agreement to come into force. The BBNJ Agreement would seek to strengthen the governance of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, including by:

- Enabling the fair and equitable sharing of benefits from marine genetic resources
- Improving the conservation and sustainable use of areas requiring protection, including through establishing marine protected areas (and other area-based management tools)
- Requiring environmental impact assessments for activities that may affect marine biodiversity
- Supporting capacity building, knowledge sharing and technology
- Applying guiding principles such as the polluter-pays principle, precautionary approach, ecosystem approach, and respect for Indigenous and local knowledge.

Increasing momentum for the Moratorium on Deep-Sea Mining

The number of countries supporting a [moratorium](#) on deep-sea mining has risen to 37, following four new commitments made during UNOC3. These countries have pledged not to sponsor or support the issuing of licenses for deep-sea mining, at least until sufficient scientific evidence is available to assess the environmental impacts of such activities. While pressure from non-governmental organizations, the public and civil society remains high, a call for a moratorium in international waters was not included in the Conference's final declaration.

Growing support for an instrument to address plastic pollution

Ninety-six countries signed a [joint declaration](#), committing to an international treaty that addresses the entire life cycle of plastics. The declaration calls for a global target related to the reducing the production and consumption of plastics and to phase out the most problematic plastic products.

Nearing agreement on harmful fishing subsidies

Support for the [World Trade Organization Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies](#) grew during UNOC3, with 102 out of the required 111 countries now having ratified the agreement. The Agreement prohibits harmful fisheries subsidies, including those that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. The agreement aims to improve the sustainability and equity of fisheries, as critical components of a sustainable blue economy.

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