

Summary & Outcomes

Preparation for the Blue COP25 | Negotiators' Symposium on Ocean & Climate

Ocean Pathway Partnership | 8–9 May 2019 | Suva, Fiji

From Suva to Bonn

In May 2019, country representatives met in Suva, Fiji to discuss the ocean-climate nexus and to consider strategies to better integrate ocean issues into the processes of the UNFCCC.

Participants acknowledged that ocean-climate action is necessary to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement. The ocean plays an important role regulating the climate, including by absorbing heat and carbon dioxide. This imposes a heavy cost through effects such as deoxygenation and acidification, which damage both ocean ecosystems and local communities and economies. At the same time, the ocean is a source of climate mitigation and adaptation solutions, from the restoration of coastal blue carbon ecosystems to the creation of well-enforced marine protected areas. The challenge is to identify how the UNFCCC should address ocean issues—and how we can make this happen.

Participants also acknowledged that the ocean-climate effort has gained momentum since COP21—thanks in large part to Because the Ocean, the Ocean Pathway Partnership, the Global Ocean Forum, and the Friends of the Ocean and Climate, among others—and noted that COP25 provides a significant opportunity to increase ocean-climate action and bring ocean issues into the processes of the UNFCCC.

Participants also noted opportunities in the run-up to COP25 to raise awareness of the ocean-climate nexus, build political momentum, and mobilize ocean-climate action. These include the Secretary General's Climate Summit (SG Summit) and the launch of the IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate (SROCC). The focus of the Fiji symposium, however, was to discuss ocean issues in the context of the UNFCCC. Specifically, participants addressed two overarching questions:

- *What* are our goals for the integration of ocean issues into the processes of the UNFCCC?
- *How* do we need to act now to achieve those goals?

Participants considered the symposium to be a precursor to further engagement during the June 2019 session of the UNFCCC in Bonn, Germany, where negotiators will home in on the most promising strategies and the leadership groups to implement them. To inform the discussions in Bonn, this document provides a summary of the possible goals and next steps that emerged at the Fiji symposium.

Hosts & Participants

Fiji hosted the meeting with a leadership group including Sweden, Norway, and the COP25 Presidency of Chile.

Representatives from 27 governments attended the symposium, including Australia, Chile, Cook Islands, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, European Union, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Grenada, Indonesia, Japan, Kiribati, Mozambique, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Tonga, and the United Kingdom.

Goals

Participants identified several goals:

- **Raise climate ambition:** Limit warming to below 1.5°C to curb the effects of climate change on the ocean and the communities and economies that depend on it.
- **Increase ocean-related mitigation:** Enhance coastal blue carbon mitigation and other ocean-related mitigation, such as offshore renewable energy and clean domestic marine transport.
- **Support ocean-related adaptation:** Enhance the resilience of ocean ecosystems and ocean-based communities and economies.
- **Promote ocean-climate science:** Support scientific observation and research on the ocean-climate nexus.

Because each of these goals depends on the following activities, participants discussed them almost as goals in their own right.

- **Establish spaces for ocean issues in the UNFCCC:** Ensure that UNFCCC processes take account of the ocean-climate nexus.
- **Close the knowledge gap:** Raise awareness of ocean-climate linkages through effective communications and education.
- **Build political momentum:** Encourage strong leadership on ocean-climate issues through a focus on local needs and co-benefits.

Options for Next Steps

To move toward these goals, participants identified a range of possible next steps.

Requests for the COP25 Presidency

The COP Presidency of Chile expressed that it would like to take the lead of the Parties as it shapes COP25. Participants discussed several requests they could make of the Presidency to ensure a Blue COP.

- **Declaration.** The COP25 Presidency could issue a declaration, potentially along with high-level leaders, that acknowledges the SROCC and the need for ocean-climate action. It also could include or dovetail with some of the options for Parties below. Any declaration could call on other forums, such as the CBD, to account for the ocean-climate nexus as well.
- **High-level event.** The COP25 Presidency could host a high-level roundtable or ministerial to respond to the SROCC and highlight ocean-climate commitments and actions.
- **Platform.** The COP25 Presidency could create a platform to highlight ocean-related NDCs or other commitments, similar to the NAZCA portal.
- **Side events.** The COP25 Presidency could facilitate coordinated side events on ocean-climate issues.
- **Socialization.** The COP25 Presidency could discuss the SROCC with Parties ahead of its release—and at the leadership level—to mobilize ocean-climate action and a robust response to the report.

Individual or plurilateral actions for Parties

Participants noted a number of actions that are possible without the agreement of the Parties.

- **Adaptation commitments.** Parties could make ocean-related adaptation commitments. For example, countries could commit to / call for climate-smart marine protected areas or sustainable fisheries. They also could adopt targets related to habitat restoration or reducing ocean stressors—and could develop regional and coordinated resilience targets. They could include these commitments in adaptation plans, NDCs, or joint commitments or statements.
- **Finance commitments.** Parties in a position to do so could support ocean-climate science.
- **Global stocktake and Article 6 leadership groups.** A leadership group could work to ensure that ocean issues are well positioned to be integrated into the global stocktake. Fiji and Sweden are candidates to lead this. Similarly, a leadership group could work to ensure that ocean-climate issues are represented in key mechanisms such as Article 6.
- **Leadership declaration or call-to-action.** A leadership group or the Friends of the Ocean and Climate could call for ocean engagement in the UNFCCC. They also could acknowledge the SROCC and the need for ocean-climate action and commitments.
- **Mitigation commitments.** Parties could make ocean-related mitigation commitments. For example, they could commit to / call for coastal blue carbon mitigation (i.e., through a focus on mangroves, seagrasses, and saltmarshes) or clean domestic marine transport. They could include these commitments in NDCs or mid-century strategies. Participants recognized the important role of the NDC workshops being conducted by the Because the Ocean initiative and welcomed forthcoming guidance from NGOs on options for including ocean-climate action in NDCs.
- **Ocean impact scale.** Parties could call for a scale to assess the relative ocean impact of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.
- **Side events.** Parties could host / participate in ocean-related side events. Strong ocean voices include the SIDS (e.g., Seychelles, Grenada, Tonga); AOSIS (chaired by Belize); and Blue Charter countries.
- **Socialization.** Parties could socialize the SROCC and work to ensure that it receives a strong reception at the COP. Countries to lead this could include Fiji, Australia, Indonesia, and Chile.

Actions that require agreement of the Parties

Participants also discussed actions that would require consensus.

- **Work programme.** Participants noted that the COP could create an ocean-climate work programme. Questions for consideration include:
 - Does the UNFCCC have a coordinating role or responsibility to ensure that relevant non-UNFCCC forums and activities are safeguarding the ocean's critical role for the climate? Should this be part of a work programme?
 - Should the UNFCCC be informed annually if key functions of the ocean that are critical to the climate are threatened or require special action at the national and international levels? Would this require a work programme or could it be done externally?

- Could the Nairobi Work Programme address ocean-climate adaptation / resilience guidelines or would an ocean-climate work programme be helpful?

Participants noted that a work programme could potentially assist with topics such as:

- Guidance for creating climate-smart MPAs;
 - Guidance for quantitative—and potentially regionally coordinated—ocean-climate adaptation targets for inclusion in NDCs or adaptation communications;
 - Guidance, including technical guidance, for including coastal blue carbon and other ocean issues in NDCs;
 - An exchange of ocean-climate knowledge among Parties;
 - Knowledge gaps and areas for ocean-climate research;
 - A comprehensive stocktake of where ocean issues are included / excluded in the UNFCCC;
 - A stocktake of the ocean-climate action that is underway and the ocean-climate action that is still necessary, including regionally;
 - Annual reports to the UNFCCC on the status of ocean health, the critical functions the ocean performs for the climate, and the role of the ocean in climate mitigation and adaptation efforts, with recommendations for Parties.
- **Agenda item.** Participants discussed the idea of an agenda item and felt that this option needs careful consideration. They noted that:
 - Lessons from other sectors point to an agenda item being a long-term play. It is worth asking whether this is something we want to start now or whether we want to devote energy elsewhere. We need to make sure to focus on near-term progress.
 - The idea is controversial and can alienate countries that are potential allies.
 - It is unclear what an agenda would provide for—and whether existing processes in SBSTA or in a work programme such as the Nairobi Work Programme could achieve the same ends.
 - **Nairobi Work Programme.** The Nairobi Work Programme Focal Point Forum at COP25 could consider how to integrate ocean-climate issues.
 - **Recognition of the SROCC.** The Parties could recognize the SROCC report and its findings.
 - **Workshop.** The COP could call for a SBSTA workshop to take stock of and report on ocean-climate issues in the UNFCCC and a recommended way forward in 2020.

Looking Ahead

Participants considered the Fiji symposium to be an initial discussion on the options for better integrating ocean issues in the context of the UNFCCC.

During the forthcoming discussions in Bonn, negotiators expect to develop a roadmap—including the specific strategies they will pursue and the specific leaders who will champion them—to elevate ocean-climate action in the arc toward the Blue COP25.

ANNEX

Integrating Climate Change and the Ocean: Forging a Path under the FCCC/Paris Agreement and More Broadly

Discussion paper to inform discussions at the May 2019 Fiji symposium

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Objective

- To agree upon a concrete set of steps to be taken and/or supported by interested Parties to the Paris Agreement (the “Friends of the Ocean”), in concert with stakeholders.

Background

- Interested Parties met at the UNFCCC’s intersessional meeting in Bangkok last September to consider possible next steps to improve consideration of climate-ocean linkages under the UNFCCC/Paris Agreement and elsewhere.
- They reviewed a paper entitled “Climate Change and the Ocean: Key Linkages, Needed Actions, and Options for Further Steps” (prepared by Climate Advisers, Ocean Conservancy, and the Governments of Fiji and Sweden).
- The paper identified four key climate-ocean linkages, along with needed actions and specific options for consideration.
- Given the press of the Paris “rulebook” negotiations, Parties were generally not in a position at that time to thoroughly consider, and make decisions on, the options – other than to express support for the preparation of an analysis of the draft rulebook from an ocean-friendliness perspective.
- Climate Advisers/Ocean Conservancy subsequently prepared an analysis of the draft Paris rulebook, which revealed that the vast majority of proposals did not raise particular ocean-related issues.
- It should also be noted that, thanks to the Parties that referred to ocean-related issues in their Talanoa Dialogue-related interventions, the Talanoa Call for Action prepared by the Governments of Fiji and Poland (past and current COP Presidents) expressly recognizes the need for a healthy ocean.

Two Basic Sets of Concerns

- There are two macro concerns when it comes to the climate-ocean linkage.
 - One is **substantive**: Given the ocean’s physical role in relation to climate change, it is critical that every effort be made to limit climate impacts on the ocean and maximize potential opportunities to use the ocean to responsibly mitigate climate change.
 - The other is **institutional**: The international climate regime has not yet sufficiently considered the ocean as a critical climate regulator, a casualty of climate impacts, and a source of mitigation and adaptation solutions. Nor have ocean-related regimes taken sufficient account of the climate-ocean nexus in their work. These institutional deficiencies have helped to inhibit substantive progress.

Substantive Goals

- There appear to be at least four substantive goals:
 - Increasing mitigation ambition generally (so as to reduce warming impacts on the ocean);
 - reducing emissions of carbon dioxide in particular (so as to reduce ocean acidification);
 - enhancing the ability of the ocean to respond to climate impacts (including through reducing other ocean stressors) and to continue to provide services to human communities; and
 - taking advantage of ocean mitigation opportunities (e.g., blue carbon, offshore renewable energy).
- These goals should be pursued in all relevant fora at all levels (States, sub-national governments, businesses, civil society, etc.).

Institutional Goals

- The overarching international goal is presumably to **ensure that climate-related processes adequately integrate ocean considerations and vice versa**. In a sense, every climate meeting should be an ocean meeting, and every ocean meeting should be a climate meeting.
- Of course, not every climate or ocean agreement or forum is expected to play the same role, but each should actively consider and account for its added value in relation to the other issue.
- In terms of the international climate regime, opportunities for the UNFCCC/Paris Agreement to better integrate ocean considerations are set forth below.
- On the flip side, it is important for Friends of the Ocean to **pursue consideration of the climate dimension when participating in various ocean fora**. Climate considerations are obviously front and center when they are the main purpose of an ocean-related venue, such as the IMO's development and implementation of its greenhouse gas strategy. But, given that climate impacts on the ocean are exacerbated by other stressors, such as fishing and marine pollution, it is important that fora devoted to those issues also take into account the climate-ocean nexus. As just one example, the current negotiations at the UN on biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction should consider climate impacts on the ocean (and the cumulative effect of multiple stressors) when coming up with its approach to marine protected areas.
- The lack of integration in both sets of fora stems, at least in part, from an overly "silo-ed" approach to each topic at the domestic level. Thus, one important action that Friends of the Ocean could take at home is to **promote better internal coordination** on climate and ocean issues.
- Internationally, Parties making up Friends of the Ocean could transform into **Friends of the Climate** in ocean-related venues (or call itself "Friends of the Climate and Ocean" in both sets of venues). In addition, such Parties could promote fora and activities that explicitly connect the ocean and climate change.

"Blue-ing" the FCCC/Paris Agreement

- Taking into account both the "substantive" and "institutional" points above, there are many steps Friends of the Ocean could take, both short-term and longer-term, to better integrate ocean considerations into the FCCC/Paris Agreement.
- Without the agreement of other Parties:

- Friends of the Ocean could **make references to climate-ocean linkages**, including in high-level COP/CMA interventions and as part of the Global Stocktake. Such statements, which would also be included as part of the record, would raise awareness of the linkages.
- They could **jointly issue an action-oriented declaration**, which might, among other things, make reference to the IPCC Report on the Ocean and the Cryosphere, articulate concrete medium-term goals for advancing ocean-climate issues in the UNFCCC/Paris regime, and/or endorse ocean-based climate solutions that Parties could pursue.
- They could **include ocean-related actions in their nationally determined contributions and/or adaptation communications**, as well as in subsequent reporting under the enhanced transparency framework. They could also include ocean-related actions in their mid-century strategies. Ocean-related mitigation could relate to, e.g., reducing emissions through offshore renewable energy, reducing emissions from offshore-based industries, or increased restoration of blue carbon ecosystems), while adaptation could relate to, e.g., coastal protection.
- They could **hold side events**, including with stakeholders, on both concerns and opportunities in the climate-ocean space.
- They could **form coalitions** that take on particular commitments, such as reductions in carbon dioxide emissions specifically.
- They could **call for the actions** set forth below, which require agreement of other Parties.
- With the agreement of other Parties:
 - There could be a **workshop** on relevant cross-cutting issues, including, e.g., sharing of best practices, lessons learned, etc.
 - There could be a new COP/CMA **agenda item** on climate and the ocean.
 - The CMA could take **decisions under relevant provisions** of the Paris Agreement to promote ocean-oriented actions (e.g., under Article 6.4).
 - **Methodologies** could be developed for measuring, verifying, and assessing the environmental soundness of techniques to conserve and restore ocean sinks.
 - A scale could be developed to **assess the relative ocean impact of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases**. It could address ocean impacts specifically (e.g., "ocean impact potential") and supplement the existing scale, which is based solely on "global warming potential." Alternatively, a new scale could integrate both ocean impacts and global warming impacts.

COP 25 in Particular

- Coming on the heels of the IPCC's Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere, and being hosted by Chile (a country at the forefront of the climate-ocean connection), COP 25 has a unique opportunity to spur progress on the integration of climate and the ocean.
- As an illustration, and noting the other options above:
 - Chile could refer to the Conference as the "blue" or "ocean" COP.
 - The COP/CMA could **provide a platform for Parties** to show/announce how they are integrating ocean-related actions into their climate contributions under the Paris Agreement. For example, they might:
 - include ocean-related mitigation in NDCs;
 - undertake CO₂-specific reduction commitments in NDCs;
 - include ocean-related adaptation actions in, e.g., NDCs or adaptation communications;

- include the ocean in their mid-century strategies; and/or
- make specific ocean-targeted mitigation and adaptation funding commitments.
- The COP/CMA could **provide a platform for stakeholders** -- including sub-national governments and private-sector actors -- to show how they are integrating ocean-related actions into their mitigation/adaptation plans and activities.
- The COP/CMA could call for a workshop in 2020 to address various aspects of the climate-ocean relationship.
- Drawing on the IPCC Special Reports, the COP/CMA could **promote awareness of the climate-ocean links**, including, e.g., the need to:
 - increase mitigation ambition to address the severe impacts of GHG emissions (and in particular CO₂ emissions) on the oceans;
 - better integrate climate and ocean issues throughout the international system of agreements and institutions;
 - build the climate resilience of the ocean, including with respect to acidification and by accounting for climate-related impacts in international ocean conservation and management processes and decision-making; and/or
 - protect and restore coastal wetland ecosystems, such as mangrove forests, tidal marshes, and seagrass meadows, which can provide significant adaptation benefits and are powerful blue carbon sinks.

Steps beyond the FCCC/Paris

- A variety of events in the near term provide opportunities for improved integration.
 - First, the Secretary-General will hold a **UN Climate Summit** in September, which includes, as one of its nine tracks, a track on “nature-based solutions.” Friends of the Ocean could use this opportunity to promote an ocean-related outcome to the Summit, as well as possible side announcements by States and/or civil society groups. A declaration could be developed, akin to the Forest Declaration that was announced at the 2014 UN Climate Summit.
 - Second, as noted, the **IPCC’s Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere** will be released in September. Friends of the Ocean could work on a common response, as well as help to ensure that its messages are readily understood by the public and widely publicized.
 - Third, Norway will host the next **Our Ocean Conference** in October of this year, and Portugal will host the second **UN Ocean Conference** in 2020. Each of these could be used to highlight, and bolster, climate-ocean interactions.
- In addition, there are ongoing processes such as BBNJ, conferences, Convention on Biological Diversity meetings, and planning meetings for the UN Decade on ocean science in 2019-2020 that could be used as venues for coordination.