

Flanders Marine Institute VLIZ and
National Ocean Decade Committee for Belgium NDC-BE
Participation to the Ocean Decade Conference, Barcelona
Spain 8-12 April 2024



14 April 2024, Report by Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet, Juana Jimenez

Introduction – about the Ocean decade Conference 2024

2024 marks the fourth year of implementation of the [UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development \(2021-2030\)](#). Under the leadership of IOC/UNESCO, the Ocean Decade has brought together thousands of partners around the world to start delivering the science we need for the ocean we want. **The time is now ripe to address key questions related to the Ocean Decade: What have been the main achievements since the launch of the Ocean Decade? What should be the key areas for action over the next three to five years?** The 2024 Ocean Decade Conference (8-9)10-12 April 2024 in Barcelona, Spain aimed to set joint priorities for the future of the Decade. With the sub-title of ‘delivering the science we need for the ocean we want’, the Conference was firmly anchored in the precepts of the Ocean Decade related to solutions-oriented, transformative ocean science, and highlighted the role of the Decade as a framework to galvanize diverse groups in inclusive and equitable co-design and co-delivery processes.

The high-level objectives of the Conference were to:

- i. Showcase and **celebrate achievements** of the Ocean Decade from 2021 to 2024.
- ii. Generate consensus on **science – policy – society priorities** for the Ocean Decade over the **next 3 to 5 years through structured dialogue** around white papers resulting from the **Ocean Decade Vision 2030 Process**.
- iii. Create opportunities for networking to catalyse new partnerships and initiatives amongst diverse stakeholder groups and to bring new partners to the Ocean Decade.
- iv. Provide a global platform for announcements and commitments to support the solutions-oriented goals of the Ocean Decade.
- v. **Prepare** existing and future Ocean Decade partners and initiatives for a visible and meaningful role in the **2025 UN Ocean Conference** and related events.
- vi. Highlight initiatives led by local partners relevant to the Ocean Decade, in particular in relation to activities related to the role of science in the sustainable ocean economy.
- vii. Raise visibility and awareness of the Ocean Decade and the role of ocean science in sustainable development amongst the general public in Barcelona.

Hosted by Spain and co-organized with IOC/UNESCO, the event was co-led by the Government of Catalonia and the Barcelona City Council (Barcelona Capital Náutica Foundation), and the Spanish National Ocean Decade Committee (Ministry of Science and Innovation/Spanish Research Council (CSIC)).

Other Conference sponsors: Schmidt Ocean, HubOcean, RevOcean, Allianz, Balearia, Dalio Philantropies, OceanX, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Peches et Oceans Canada, MEXT-Japan, Republica de Portugal, European Commission. **Travel support:** Amundsen Science, Barcelona Turisme Convention Bureau, Federal Ministry for Economic cooperation and development-GIZ, **Flanders government- Flanders Marine Institute and Belgium NDC**, Lenfest Ocean Program, Union for the Mediterranean.

Note that Flanders and Belgium provided full travel grants to 6 ECOPs and 3 partners, see below

The Next Ocean Decade Conference will take place in 2027!

10 Ocean Decade Challenges and Vision – White Papers

A **key outcome** of the Conference consists in the publication of a set of **white papers related to the 10 Ocean Decade Challenges**, that identify future priorities for the Ocean Decade to generate the knowledge needed for science-based solutions. The Conference provided a unique opportunity to convene and prepare existing and future Ocean Decade partners prior to the 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference (San José, Costa Rica - 7-8 June 2024) and the 2025 United Ocean Conference itself (Nice, France - 9-13 June 2025). Vision 2030 and the white papers are considered key in this process. More details on the Vision 2030 and the WhitePapers: <https://oceandecade.org/vision-2030/>

The 2024 Ocean Decade Conference- Programme

In the lead up to the Conference, partners had the opportunity to complement the official Conference programme through 180 [Satellite Events](#). The Ocean Decade Week in Barcelona (8-12 April 2024) offered series of partner-led and partner-resourced Satellite Events over the course of five days prior to, and on the sidelines of, the Conference. These included meetings of and open events by the National Ocean Decade Committees to discuss their roles and strengthen their contributions to the decade objectives.

The ‘Science Solutions Forums’, parallel sessions in the main programme, started with a presentation of the key elements of the Vision 2030 White Paper for the relevant Challenge and were followed by a series of oral presentations from Decade and non-Decade partners on innovative science-society solutions that are contributing to or aligned with the Challenge. The parallel sessions closed with a moderated interactive dialogue to develop key recommendations from the session for reporting back to plenary.

MAIN PROGRAMME AGENDA

10 April 2024 | 15:00 – 18:00

Session 1 - Science and Solutions for a Clean, Healthy and Resilient Ocean: focusing on Challenges 1, 2 and 5 - Marine Pollution, Ecosystems and Ocean-Climate Nexus

15:00 - 16:00 | **Plenary session:** *Keynote speaker:* Kestutis Sadauskas, Deputy Director-General of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, European Commission;

Moderator: Jessica Brown, Back to Blue Initiative

Panelists:

- Jean-Pierre Gattuso, Research Director at the Laboratory of Oceanography of Villefranche, French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) - Sorbonne University - French Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI)
- Aileen Tan, Director of Centre for Marine and Coastal Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia
- Imogen Napper, Post-Doctoral Researcher, University of Plymouth
- Marc Simon, Director of Innovation and Strategic Projects, SUEZ France

11 April 2024 | 10:00 – 13:00

Session 2 - Science and Solutions for a Sustainable and Resilient Ocean Economy: focusing on Challenges 3 and 4 – Sustainable Ocean Economy and Sustainable Blue Food

10:00 - 11:00 | **Plenary session:** *Keynote speaker:* Steven Thur, Director of Research, NOAA

Moderator: Claire Jolly, Head of Innovation Policies for Space and Oceans Unit, OECD

Panelists:

- Sergi Tudela, Director-General for Maritime Policy and Sustainable Fisheries, Government of Catalonia
- Atsushi Sunami, President, Sasakawa Peace Foundation
- Peter Haugan, Policy Director, Institute of Marine Research; Professor at the Geophysical Institute, University of Bergen

- Shakuntala Thilsted, Director, Nutrition, Health and Food Security Impact Area Platform, CGIAR
- Almotaz Abadi, Deputy Secretary-General, Union for the Mediterranean

11 April 2024 | 15:00 – 18:00

Session 3 - Science and Solutions for a Safe and Predicted Ocean: focusing on Challenges 6, 7 and 8 – Coastal Resilience, Observations, Data and Predictions

15:00 - 16:00 | **Plenary session:** *Keynote speaker:* Dwikorita Karnawati, Head, Indonesian Agency for Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics (BMKG)

Moderator: Mark Heine, CEO, Fugro

Panelists:

- Patricia Miloslavich, Program Lead of the East Antarctic Monitoring Program, Australian Antarctic Program
- Pierre Bahurel, Director-General, Mercator Ocean International
- Ann-Christine Zinkann, Program Manager, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA); International Ocean Program Specialist, University Corporation for Atmospheric Research (UCAR)
- Dawn Wright, Chief Scientist, Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (ESRI)
- Kimberly Mathisen, CEO, HubOcean

12 April 2024 | 10:00 – 13:00

Session 4 - An Inspiring and Engaging Ocean for All: focusing on Challenges 9 and 10 – Capacity Development, Ocean Literacy, Indigenous and Local Knowledge and Cultural Heritage

10:00 - 11:00 | **Plenary session:** *Keynote speaker:* H.E. Nadiem Makarim, Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, Indonesia

Moderator: Jacqueline Uku, Senior Research Scientist and Research Coordinator, Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI)

Panelists:

- Vivienne Solis Rivera, Founder, CoopeSoliDar R.L., Costa Rica
- Lora Fleming, Professor, European Centre for Environment and Human Health; Chair of Oceans, Epidemiology and Human Health, University of Exeter
- Ronaldo Christofoletti, Professor at the Institute of Marine Sciences, Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP)
- Josep L. Pelegrí, Senior Researcher at the Institute of Marine Sciences (ICM), Spanish National Research Council (CSIC)

12 April 2024 | 15:00 – 18:00

15:00 - 16:00 | **Plenary: Resources and Partnerships for the Ocean Decade**

Moderator: Alfredo Giron, Head of Ocean Action Agenda, World Economic Forum

Panelists:

- François Houllier, President and CEO, French Research Institute for Exploitation of the Sea (IFREMER)
- Sylvia Michele Diez, Senior Environmental Specialist, World Bank
- Hide Sakaguchi, President of the Ocean Policy Research Institute (OPRI), Sasakawa Peace Foundation
- Susan Gardner, Director of Ecosystems Division, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- Barbara Karuth-Zelle, Allianz Board Member and Group COO

Key take-away messages

10 April 2024 | Session 1 - Science and Solutions for a Clean, Healthy and Resilient Ocean:

Opening ceremony

Heads of State from Small Island Developing States (SIDS), H.E. Jose Maria Neves from Cabo Verde and H.E. Wavel Ramkalawan from Seychelles: SIDS have specific needs and challenges that need to be addressed, however member states as Seychelles are committed and take upon the leadership representation needed in the Ocean Decade through their participation in the Ocean Decade Alliance. This alliance is a group of eminent partners catalyzing support for the Ocean Decade through resource mobilization, networking, and influence. They were joined by other national and local governments, UN and intergovernmental leaders in recognizing **the need for robust ocean science and knowledge**, reiterating their commitment to collectively contribute to **advancing transformative ocean science**.

Audrey Azoulay, Director General of UNESCO: “We know that the big blue should be our obsession, because the ocean is suffocating. The Ocean Decade is a movement that has already exceeded expectations, and this movement is based on three goals: understanding, educating, and protecting...”

Jose Maria Neves, President of Cabo Verde: “My country is aware that the is its greatest natural wealth. From our seas, we can produce energy and water, create food, develop higher education, science, and innovation. The sea is the future of Cabo Verde”.

Wavel Ramkalawan, President of Seychelles: “The Ocean Decade provides a framework to advance ocean science. We need to understand how our ocean works, and how to make use of its resources for the betterment of our people. In the Seychelles, science is vital to our survival.”

His Serene Highness (H.S.H.) Prince Albert II, Sovereign Prince of Monaco: “Ocean issues are key to everyone’s future. What brings us together is our desire to tackle these issues together, through multilateralism. The Ocean Decade is a key opportunity to improve the way we tackle the challenges facing the world, collectively”.

Vidar Helgesen, Executive Secretary of UNESCO’s Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) and Assistant Director-General of UNESCO: “We need the right decisions to be made, and we need science to be relevant and integrated in policy processes, for the ocean we want.”

The speakers underscored:

- Inclusivity, equity, and diversity as fundamental pillars in achieving the Ocean Decade's ambition.
- The co-design approach is a game changer, enabling the welcoming of new voices, including local and Indigenous communities, SIDS, Least Developed Countries (LDCs), and Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs)
- It is necessary to continue existing engagement efforts to convince governments and resource providers to align their funding and support strategies with the priorities of these under-represented groups.
- Heritage of local and indigenous knowledge is an invaluable contribution to bolster ocean science and sustainability.
- Highlighted interventions: Jack Thatcher (New Zealand’s coastal navigator), members of the traditional owners of the great barrier reef. Their role in supporting and influencing decision-making in reef management, as well as participating in the co-design and co-delivery of conservation programmes in Australia and the Pacific.

White paper review during parallel sessions for Challenges 1, 2 and 5: Pollution, Ecosystems and Climate:

- Key findings, main pillars and recommendations for the white papers of Challenge 1, 2 and 5 were presented. Drafts can be found here: <https://oceanexpert.org/document/33599>

- Common denominators were holistic and inclusive approach, application of science in policy and innovation interfaces, funding and resource strategies, data sharing, cooperation with affected communities, and enhancement of ocean literacy.

11 April 2024 | Session 2 – Science and solution for sustainable and resilient ocean economy

Steven Thur, director of research, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA): “Science alone is not sufficient,” calling for effective communication and coordination between science and society. the concept of a new blue economy that “leverages data, information, and knowledge, including those from traditional, tribal, and cultural societies.” Success relies on the intersection of a clear vision, a people-centred holistic approach, inclusive technical and policy decisions, broad stakeholder engagement, international collaboration, and scientific communication.

Peter Haugan, University of Bergen: “In today's global context, there is an urgency: we need solutions that work and that can be scaled now. We need to experiment. We need to deliver knowledge – both scientific and practical – that is relevant to policy decisions.”

Dwikorita Karnawati, Head of Indonesian Agency for Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics (BMKG): “Key strategies to support a safe and predicted ocean include network alliance, strengthening the local context for communities in remote areas, and involving private sector to accelerate the deployment of early-warning systems”

Patricia Miloslavich, program lead of the East Antarctic Monitoring Program: “to improve ocean observations, we need to work along the data value chain: we need automated and cost-efficient technologie, we need to expand it to remote areas, and we need a big workforce to do all this work.”



Left to right: Claire Jolly, OECD; Peter Haugan, University of Bergen; Shakuntala Thilsted, CGIAR; Sergi Tudela, Government of Catalonia; and Almotaz Abadi, Union for the Mediterranean. Photo by IISD/ENB | Mika Schroder

Panel discussion highlights, participating Claire Jolly, OECD; Peter Haugan, University of Bergen; Shakuntala Thilsted, CGIAR; Sergi Tudela, Government of Catalonia; and Almotaz Abadi, Union for the Mediterranean:

- Success relies on the intersection of a clear vision, a people-centred holistic approach, inclusive technical and policy decisions, broad stakeholder engagement, international collaboration, and scientific communication
- Suggestion to orientate research and innovation towards consumption rather than production of aquatic food.
- Catalonia’s experience in implementing a system of fisheries co-management.
- Needs for practical expertise alongside scientific knowledge
- The role of the Union for the Mediterranean in fostering political will, building partnerships, and providing technical support.
- Shift from “feeding” to “nourishing” the global population, in line with a science that supports a “one food system” approach.

- Addressed the need to update the scientific advisory process and systematically integrate data gathered by industry.
- Ensuring that knowledge is co-created and co-used; localizing data through training; and addressing food loss and consumption patterns.
- Emphasis on strategic partnerships should be inclusive and collaborative across sectors and produce locally adapted solutions.
- Need for private-sector adoption of sustainable practices and investments in green technologies

11 April 2024 | 15:00 – 18:00 | Session 3 - Science and Solutions for a Safe and Predicted Ocean



Left to right: Mark Heine, Fugro; Kimberly Mathisen, HubOcean; Pierre Bahurel, Mercator Ocean International; Patricia Miloslavich, Australian Antarctic Program; Ann-Christine Zinkann, NOAA, US; and Dawn Wright, Environmental Systems Research Institute. Photo by IISD/ENB | Mika Schroder.

The session on science and solutions for a safe and predictable ocean:

- Need to foster resilience in light of worsening ocean hazards
- Lack of investment from private entities in data collection and sharing
- Learn from successful partnerships between private and scientific sectors
- To assess coastal vulnerability effectively, the experts stressed the need for a clear ocean observing roadmap, the enhancement of existing technologies, the development of new ones, and democratization of access to ocean data.
- The experts underscored the critical need of structural changes in investment strategies to avoid risks linked to understanding, assessing, and predicting ocean dynamics.
- A trusted, inclusive, and interconnected ocean data system will address critical gaps in scientific understanding and knowledge related to risk assessment, risk reduction, and coastal resilience.

12 April 2024 | 10:00 – 13:00

Session 4 - An Inspiring and Engaging Ocean for All: focusing on Challenges 9 and 10 – Capacity Development, Ocean Literacy, Indigenous and Local Knowledge and Cultural Heritage

Ken Paul, principal/owner, Pokiok associates: “the societal balance concept of my ancestors guides my thinking. It includes politics, culture, community, economics. I add: knowledge systems, environment, biodiversity, technology.”

Josep Pelegri, senior researcher at the Institute of Marine Sciences (ICM), Spanish National Research Council (CSIC): “We have an opportunity to take the ocean and the Ocean Decade as what unite us all. We need to invest in it for all of us, and to continue to bring in young people to the discussion.”

Susan Gardner, director of ecosystems division, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP): “To catalyze investments, we need the right incentives, and we need to recognize the true value of nature. What does it cost of we don’t have clean water for instance? We need to help countries put a value on their natural assets.”

Barbara Karuth-Zelle, Allianz board member and Group COO: “Only a healthy ocean is a good ocean because we ensure risk, and risk is ever increasing if the ocean is deteriorating. Because if the ocean collapses, the planet collapses.”

Highlights:

- Community engagement and capacity development hinge upon a deep understanding and awareness of human influence on the ocean and the ocean’s reciprocal impact on people.
- Beyond gender, geographic and generational boundaries, access to ocean data, knowledge, and technology ensures a positive shift in humanity’s relationship with the ocean, translating changes in behavior into real action.
- The integration of Indigenous and local knowledge holders, and cultural heritage into capacity sharing and investment strategies will advance the proportionate and broad distribution of ocean science and create a diverse community of ocean scientists.
- The human rights-based approach is the only way to eliminate the systemic barriers that local communities have to face.
- Need for initiatives for skill development, enhancing access to ocean data, fostering constructive, multi-directional partnerships, and implementing regional coordination mechanisms, with a particular focus on Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).
- These components are poised to catalyze a culture shift within the ocean community, promoting pro-ocean behaviors and fostering stronger emotional connections with the ocean.

12 April 2024 | 15:00 – 18:00

15:00 - 16:00 | Plenary: Resources and Partnerships for the Ocean Decade

Highlights:

- Critical significance of implementing sustained, long-term strategies for resource mobilization, enabling the translation of ocean science into concrete policies.
- The objectives of the Ocean Decade represent a compelling and resilient value proposition, rallying a broad spectrum of financial and in-kind resources to bolster initiatives dedicated to ocean conservation, research, and sustainable development.
- Under the umbrella of the Ocean Decade, the development of the concept of 'open and shared science' is blurring boundaries between countries, irrespective of their political orientations.
- Strengthening global innovative multi-actor, multi- and interdisciplinary partnerships will enable stakeholders to collectively align their research, investments, and initiatives around the Ocean Decade priorities.

The Conference ended with a landmark series of major announcements and commitments which represent a substantive first step towards achieving the above priorities:

- Launch of a roadmap for cooperation between IOC/UNESCO and the European Commission's Directorate-General for Research and Innovation in the framework of the Ocean Decade.
- Launch of new Ocean Decade programmes on sustainable ocean planning, and on sustainable ocean management in Africa.
- Commitment by the Barcelona City Council and the Port of Barcelona to develop a Decade Collaborative Centre focusing on sustainable ocean economy.
- Launch of the Ocean Matcher Tool to enhance opportunities for philanthropic funding to Decade Actions.
- Launch of new funding opportunities for Africa through the Belmont Forum, and SIDS through the Marine Institute, Ireland.
- Launch of the 'Cities with the Ocean Platform' to enhance the use of science for policy and decision making by coastal cities, including the offer of Qingdao Municipality to host the first Ocean Decade Coastal Cities Conference in 2025.

The Conference concluded by setting the tone for further collective and concrete actions, outlined in the newly launched 2024 Ocean Decade Barcelona Statement. Based on insights shared by the global ocean community, the Statement identifies the priority areas of action for the Ocean Decade in the coming years. Vidar Helgesen, IOC/UNESCO Executive Secretary and Assistant Director-General of UNESCO, called to consider it as an actionable framework to be included in implemented scenarios to orient, guide, and refine existing initiatives, as well as new ones, on local, national, and global scales.

Consult the Barcelona Statement: <https://oceanexpert.org/document/34098>

PARTICIPATION TO THE OCEAN DECADE CONFERENCE

VLIZ and/or NDC-BE MEMBERS AS SPEAKER/PRESENTER IN CONFERENCE SESSIONS

(includes only formal contributions, not 'ad-hoc' interaction during session)

- **8 April | 9:00 – 11:00 AM | The Ocean Decade from a national perspective: What does success look like? National Decade Committees' testimonies | Marie Curie, Parc de Recerca Biomèdica de Barcelona (event is by invitation only).**
The Ocean Decade is supported by National Decade Committees (NDCs), “voluntary, inclusive, multi-stakeholder platforms set up to coordinate, support and increase a country’s participation in the Ocean Decade by mobilizing the whole ocean community at the national level”. This event brings together NDC representatives to: (1) discuss operational and strategic issues such as how the NDCs can support transformational change at the national level (management, funding of ocean science and its connection with policy and society); (2) hear from NDCs in order to share best practice (including how challenges have been addressed); and (3) identify support / next steps for action for NDCs. Matthew Frost: mafr@pml.ac.uk; Ann-Katrien Lescauwaet and Juana Jimenez for NDC-BE and VLIZ.
- **8 April | Interview with Mission Ocean - PREP4BLUE MOJOS (Mobile journalist)**
Presenting ECOP Belgium node (publication to be confirmed). Presenter: Phaedra Van Kerrebrouck and Juana Jimenez. Contact Jella Kandziora: kandziora@deutsche-meeresforschung.de.
- **8 April | Interview with Mission Ocean – Atlantic (José Moutinho) Friday webinars and Blue Mission Atlantic – PREP4BLUE. Presenter:** Ann-Katrien Lescauwaet
- **9 April | 09:30 – 11:30 | Digital Twins of the Ocean and Early Career Ocean Professionals: Leveraging ocean data networks with cloud technologies to deliver the ocean we want, today and tomorrow.**
The event revisits existing ocean data sharing efforts across regions - including data and information management and capacity building initiatives and networks (e.g. GEOBluePlanet, Ocean Info Hub, SPINCAM) - and take stock of ongoing ocean digital twinning efforts (e.g. EDITO, ILIAD, as key components of the European Digital Twin of the Ocean) to discuss how cloud technologies can catalyze the successful delivery of Ocean Decade goals focused on accessibility to ocean information. The event is specifically geared at bringing the voice of Early Career Ocean Professionals into the ongoing global dialogue on Digital Twins of the Ocean, as future ocean leaders. Julia Vera Prieto: julia.vera@seascapebelgium.be, Bente Lilja Bye: Bente@blb.as, and Isabela Katime: isabela.katime@invemar.org.co. VLIZ as co-organizer and represented by Frederic Leclercq and Juana Jimenez (also from NDC-BE). Website event: <https://events.edito-infra.eu/dto4ecops>
- **9 April | 12:00 – 14:00 PM | Technologies in sustainable ocean observations – from low cost to new technologies development | World Trade Center room S9-S10.**
GEORGE project (Next Generation Multiplatform Ocean Observing Technologies for Research Infrastructures) hosted a satellite event in collaboration with other partners to dismantle technology barriers and identify opportunities towards achieving a mature and vibrant ocean observing enterprise. The event brought together the stakeholders and scientific community, private sector, industry and policy makers to discuss and elevate the challenges and opportunities in this area. Presenter/panelist: Thanos Gkritzalis (VLIZ) for the GEORGE project.
- **10 April | virtual | “In situ monitoring of marine plastic pollution” - Virtual Early Career Ocean Professionals (V.ECOP) Days 2024**

The Virtual Early Career Ocean Professional (V.ECOP) Day is a unique livestream event showcasing testimonials of change in applying science to ocean sustainability from ECOPs from around the world. It is hosted by and for young professionals as a contribution to the Ocean Decade. Organized by the German Marine Research Consortium and supported by the Global ECOP Programme, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, IOC/UNESCO, the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, WIOMSA and UPC, V.ECOP Days 2024 will bridge a global virtual community with the Ocean Decade Conference in Barcelona from 9-11 April 2024. Website: <https://vecop.net/>. Reference contact: Jella Kandziora - kandziora@deutsche-meeresforschung.de. Presenter: Matthias Sandra (VLIZ).

- **11 April | 13:15 – 14:45 PM | What can National Decade Committees do for you? NDCs stakeholder event (networking event, with formal representation from NDC-BE secretariat) | Indian Ocean Room (127+128), Barcelona International Convention Centre (CCIB).**

Linking global and national priorities through stakeholder engagement. The Ocean Decade is supported by National Decade Committees (NDCs), “voluntary, inclusive, multi-stakeholder platforms set up to coordinate, support and increase a country’s participation in the Ocean Decade by mobilizing the whole ocean community at the national level”. There are currently (april 2024) 38 NDCs and also other countries expressing interest in establishing an NDC. This event aims to encourage stronger collaboration between NDCs and other Decade stakeholders and provide a forum to increase the visibility of NDCs within the Ocean Decade community. The event provided the necessary information and showcased best practice to support NDC establishment. Ann-Katrien Lescauwae and Juana Jimenez (NDC-BE and VLIZ). Matthew Frost: mafr@pml.ac.uk

- **12 April | 08:30 – 09:45 am | The contribution of the International Seabed Authority to the scientific objectives of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development Southern | Ocean Room (133+134), Barcelona International Convention Centre (CCIB)**

The International Seabed Authority (ISA) launched a report that will demonstrate the breadth and depth of the ISA mandate in relation to marine scientific research in the Area (see art.143 of UNCLOS) and takes stock of the contributions to the Ocean Decade that ISA facilitates, anchored in its mandates awarded by UNCLOS. The ISA's Action Plan for Marine Scientific Research is consolidated as a global framework informing the deep-sea research agenda. Researchers pitched their work and panelists debated the status and future of marine deep-sea science, technology, and the advancements in capacity development in light of the activities the ISA facilitates. Organiser Noemie Wouters: nwouters@isa.org.jm. Presenter/panelist: Ann-Katrien Lescauwae, for the ISA-WoRMS cooperation (VLIZ-WoRMS-NOC).


- **12 April | 08:30 – 09:45 am | Ocean Census: Discovering Marine Life | Plenary room, Barcelona International Convention Centre (CCIB)**

Ocean Census introduced its programme to the Ocean Decade community, with an update on latest initiatives, through the voice of science and expedition partners Challenger 150, Schmidt Ocean Institute, UNEP-WCMC and WoRMS. Ocean Census aims to create a wealth of data, WoRMS participates presenting its role in this partnership and collaboration efforts, showcasing how the needs of marine science and conservation experts including policymakers help to inform and shape the development of data management processes, and how can we continue to engage with data users, specifically participating in WoRMS. Participating in panel: Ocean Census director, Oliver Steeds; Mr. Mitsuyuki from Nippon Foundation; Kerry Howell, from Challenger 150 programme, Corinne Bassin from Schmidt Ocean and Ella Howes of UNEP. Presenter/panelist: Juana Jimenez for the OceanCensus-WoRMS cooperation, and an endorsed Ocean Decade action under the auspices of the NDC-BE (VLIZ) .

PARTICIPATION IN POSTERS


National Decade Committees' poster section | National Decade Committee for Belgium, core-group members contributions. Key information was share via linktree (QR in poster): <https://linktr.ee/oceandecadebe>

BELGIUM




2021
2030 United Nations Decade
of Ocean Science
for Sustainable Development


Navigating together societal challenges in the Ocean Decade




We are a multi-sectoral group

Societal Outcomes







We focus on action




ECOP
for a Cleaner
Oceanoceans
Belgium node




Blue Schools




Scientific events for ECOPs




Citizen engagement through art







Making your data FAIR workshop




Exchange: Taxonomy and global databases




Exchange: Zooplankton research




Blue Economy Summer School




Data management training



Monsoon School



Ocean Literacy WIO region workshop



Our priority areas


01 Ocean observation and prediction

02 Citizen Science and Ocean Literacy

03 Capacity development and knowledge transfer/exchange

04 Ocean Data management and sharing

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More info 

PARTICIPATION IN BOOTHS

Booth 10: Ocean Data Sharing Helpdesk | Lead institutions: International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange (IODE) and Decade Coordination Office (DCO) for Ocean Data Sharing.

The data-sharing helpdesk runs throughout the duration of the three-day conference and was open to all Conference participants. Booth staff provided expert support and advice on tools, processes and resources to find, access, use and share ocean data. Through regularly scheduled live demos at the booth ([programme here](#)), we showcased existing programmes and developments across multiple disciplines and geographies – from bathymetry to biodiversity and capacity development – and how these are all contributing towards a federated data and information ecosystem for all. Discussions with Conference participants also helped prioritise recurring challenges related to data management and sharing that the Ocean Decade and its partners must address. Organiser Louis Demargne: l.demargne@unesco.org. VLIZ guest presentation: Ann-Katrien Lescauwae (VLIZ), for Marine Regions (VLIZ), an endorsed Ocean Decade action under the auspices of the NDC-BE.

Booth 9: The future of ocean prediction to address the Decade Challenges | Lead institutions: Mercator Ocean International (MOI), OceanPrediction Decade Collaborative Center (OceanPrediction DCC).

As the world faces ocean change in the context of climate change, the future of global ocean prediction activities must be federated and designed to address directly and indirectly the ten Decade Challenges to achieve the seven Outcomes to have the ocean “we want.” This booth directly addressed Challenge 8 of the Decade on the digital representation of the ocean, and Outcome 4 “a predicted ocean,” while also covering the indirect contributions of ocean prediction activities to an assortment of other Decade Challenges and Outcomes. This booth acted as a hub for engagement and discussion for the global community, addressed all actors in the ocean prediction value chain, those involved in the Ocean Decade and to all current and prospective users. Across this chain, a range of topics was covered: ocean data, science, user services and decision-making. This space provided also a place for interactions on digital twinning activities and the needs in terms of integration, interoperability and standards from the ocean prediction community. The booth highlights the ocean prediction value chain in the context of the OceanPrediction Decade Collaborative Center, implemented by Mercator Ocean International (which is currently transitioning into an intergovernmental organization) and MOI’s convening role in federating this ocean prediction community. Highlighting synergies within the OceanPrediction DCC ecosystem, the booth supports the message of the programmes related to ocean forecasting. Gratianna Quade: gquade@mercator-ocean.fr, Stéphanie Cuven: scuven@mercator-ocean.fr, Enrique Alvarez: ealvarez@mercator-ocean.fr. VLIZ guest presentation: Frederic Leclercq (VLIZ) for EDITO and EMODnet.

VLIZ and PARTNER SUPPORT TRAVEL GRANTS

The National Decade Committee for Belgium NDC-BE members and VLIZ as Decade Implementing Partner DIP funded nine early-career ocean professionals (ECOP) and ocean professionals working in local and traditional knowledge exchange. Bringing representatives from four different continents and six countries:

	Name	Affiliation	Country	Support travel grant
1	Phaedra Van Kerrebrouck	Horizon Educatief	Belgium	Province West-Flanders
2	Mario Gaitan-Arce	Ghent University	Belgium-Costa Rica	Province West-Flanders
3	Pauline Nyambura Mwangi	Kenyan Marine Research Fisheries Institute KMFRI	Kenya	VLIZ-ECOP support
4	Evonne Tan	University of Hong-Kong	China-Malaysia	FPS Health-Marine Environment
5	Ewube Kelly Laure Egbe	One Green Africa-OGA, Buea-Camer	Cameroon	FPS Health- Marine Environment
6	Julio Chamorro	REDCAMP Monitoring Network of MPAs in Chile / IFOP (Fundación Red de Aprendizaje para la Pesca Artesanal de Chile)	Chile	VLIZ-bilateral cooperation
7	Layla Osman	Fishers and Science in Action (Fundación Red de Aprendizaje para la Pesca Artesanal de Chile)	Chile	VLIZ-bilateral cooperation
8	Oscar Espinoza	Fishers and Science in Action (Fundación Red de Aprendizaje para la Pesca Artesanal de Chile)	Chile	ECOP-VLIZ-bilateral cooperation
9	Aina Le Don Nomenisoa	Madagascar Oceanographic Data Center	Madagascar	ECOP- The Sea As a Good Cause – VLIZ Philanthropy

The support consisted of:

1. Travel support: return flight tickets, local transport, accommodation and city tax, and meals (unless provided by the conference).
2. Participation support: guidance and follow-up by the secretariat of NDC-Belgium and VLIZ. Liaising ECOP and OP with interested organisations and key stakeholders. This commitment is extended also after the conference to continue a connection at professional and institutional level.

As a follow-up, awarded ECOPs and partners shared their experience via a written report and two representatives (Mario and Phaedra) participated at the post-conference ocean decade event “*Ocean Decade meets Mission Ocean*” to share their experience in a panel discussion.

Some testimonials by awarded ECOPs and partners:

Aina Nomenisoa: “Despite receiving initial guidelines for establishing our National Decade committee in 2022, numerous questions remained unanswered. However, the interactive discussions throughout the conference provided a platform to connect with NDCs from other countries. These interactions granted me clarity on several crucial aspects, including progress tracking, resource allocation, [...]. This Barcelona conference reinforced existing partnerships with

my home institution, expanded my personal network, and provided deeper insights into the expectations for each country towards the UN Decade 2021-2030 Agenda.”

Evonne Tan: *“Throughout the conference week, I have learned that ocean science is trivial without the involvement of the relevant stakeholders and the society at large. [...] I am particularly in awe of the work and passion of Layla Osman from FRDA. Her determination to empower the fishery community in Chile is truly a remarkable inspiration, motivating me to do the same for Malaysia. [...] Therefore, the ECOP team in Malaysia is committed to make waves because these fishermen are the true spirit of the ocean! I look up to both organizations (VLIZ & FRDA) as role models and envision having frequent in-depth discussions with the core team of ECOP Malaysia to strategize our approach to promote the inclusivity of different societal levels, especially Malaysian fishers.”*

Phaedra Van Kerrebrouck: *“One of the main highlights for me was the event I attended on Tuesday: Blue Education in Action. Thanks to a French partnership I already had, I was able to present my own project: Expedition Coastline. [...] Which was very rewarding for me personally, was received comments on the project such as “What you are doing is important” and “I really like your work”. It was nice to receive positive feedback from the general public and people in the field (especially the ones active within the educational field). [...] There was an overwhelming amount of events. Absolutely incredible. I felt like a kid in a candy store [...] I never expected to leave Barcelona with such a feeling of grief. Meeting and living together with beautiful people, of all possible cultural backgrounds, has been such an enrichment in my life. I learnt about how things work in other countries and the challenges other ECOPs face. But I also learnt respect and gratitude. And that is simply the most amazing gift of life.”*

Kelly Ewube: *“Throughout the conference conversations, highlights and attention was given to the challenges and opportunities for sustainable ocean conservation worldwide, an avenue to make everyone part of the solution. [...] I presented a compelling poster titled “Ocean Waste Upcycling for Refugee Communities Empowerment Projects in Africa.” [...] A highlight of the conference was the Innovation Showcase, where pioneer leaders and ocean communicators presented their groundbreaking projects garnered significant attention and acclaim. [...] It is worth mentioning that my participation was made possible through sponsorship from the National Decade Committee for Belgium and Flanders Marine Institute- VLIZ. [...] This support highlights the international collaboration and commitment to advancing meaningful projects that contribute to the objectives of the UN Ocean Decade”.*



From left to right: Aina Nomenisoa, Evonne Tan, Phaedra Van Kerrebrouck, and Kelly Ewube the second day of the Ocean Decade Conference. Picture by Evonne Tan.

Reference list for attending talks and satellite events

1. Connecting the world around ocean prediction: A vision for the Decade and beyond | 8 April | attended by Juana Jimenez
This event aims to catalyze action and facilitate collaborations to effectively respond to evolving ocean conditions, aligning with the “Predicted Ocean” objective of the Ocean Decade. Throughout this event, the OceanPrediction Decade Collaborative Center (DCC) will convene stakeholders in ocean forecasting and applications to deliberate on the future of ocean prediction. Panels will delve into OceanPrediction DCC objectives and initiatives, as well as innovations and advancements in ocean forecasting. As an integral part of the Ocean Decade initiative, the OceanPrediction DCC offers a global platform for all stakeholders, fostering dialogue and encouraging innovation in the realm of digital ocean solutions. Website: <https://events.unoceanprediction.org/connecting-the-world-around-ocean-prediction>
2. Ocean Futures 2030: Marine genetic resources and global benefits | 9 April | attended by Juana Jimenez
This Satellite Event looks at a set of complex global challenges for the future of the ocean: how can we best manage marine genetic resources (MGRs) and their potential for the emerging blue-green economy? How can we successfully harvest the treasures of the ocean without unsettling the ocean’s ecosystems? Benefit sharing from natural resources is a contentious issue, understood quite differently by the rich countries of the Global North and the countries of the Global South. The notion that the ocean may contain MGRs which have the pharmacological potential to cure the diseases of the world, point to shared global issues, as well as scenarios of high conflict and inequality. Website: <https://www.uib.no/en/osb/168925/ocean-futures-2030-marine-genetic-resources-global-benefit-sharing-and-ocean-science>
3. What is the ocean we want? SmartNet Global Survey to understand perspectives on Ocean Decade Outcomes| 9 April | attended by Juana Jimenez
There are three main elements to this Satellite Event. The first is to introduce the activities of "SmartNet"; the second is to report, share and solicit input on the results of the Global Survey pilot study and hear attendees' opinions; and the third is to hold a scoping panel to discuss future activities that build off the results of the Global Survey, expand our networks and share capacity. Website: <https://makinolab.aori.u-tokyo.ac.jp/en/satellite-event-182/>

4. The data we need for the ocean we care for | 9 April | attended by Juana Jimenez and Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet
 Data collection, analysis and application are key enablers for ocean data innovation. Data integration/interoperability is needed. With input by EMODnet, Copernicus Marine and leading marine research infrastructures, Blue-Cloud is contributing to the open science transformation by an easier discovery and access of blue data, open to all to implement open science and AI. The workshop will be opened by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD) and Directorate-General Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE). Best practices of marine data federation from the Blue-Cloud2026 and the iMAGINE European projects will be showcased. The OceanTeacher Global Academy (OTGA) and the Ocean Best Practices System (OBPS) of IOC/UNESCO will dive into the education and training needs to ensure data management practices and standards are put in place at a global level. The DITTO Programme will complement with insights from the global efforts to build awareness around the ensuring cross-regional data sharing towards the development of digital twins of the ocean. Website: <https://blue-cloud.org/events/data-we-need-ocean-we-care-satellite-event-2024-un-ocean-decade-conference>
5. Challenge 3 sessions on sustainable blue food | 11 April | attended by Juana Jimenez and Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet
 - a. From the science we need to the science we use: addressing trade-offs in international fisheries governance fora (Mark Dickey-Collas, IUCN FEG Fisheries Expert Group – United Kingdom)
 - b. Transformative strategies for sustainable fisheries: Bridging gaps and accelerating progress in Asia (Yoko Tamura, University of Tokyo – Japan)
 - c. Blueturfing the blue transformation agenda? One more huddle to cross (Terhemba Ambe-Uva, University of Ottawa – Canada)
 - d. A will-o'-the-wisp? Systematic integration of knowledge co-produced with the fishing industry into marine science and advice (Marta Ballesteros, Instituto Español de Oceanografía (IEO-CSIC) – Spain)
 - e. Fisheries subsidies exacerbate inequities in accessing seafood nutrients in the Indian Ocean (Vania Andreoli, School of Biological Sciences and Oceans Institute, University of Western Australia – Australia)
6. Challenge 6 sessions on safe and predicted ocean | 11 April | attended by Juana Jimenez
 - a. Cascading geohazards analyzed through a combined, multidisciplinary land-sea approach in an excellent natural lab (W Mediterranean): The BARACA Project (Víctor Tendero-Salmerón, University of Granada – Spain).
 - b. Decreasing tsunami and climatic vulnerability in Costa Rican coastal National Parks through an interdisciplinary and multi-institutional effort (Silvia Chacón-Barrantes, Universidad Nacional Costa Rica – Costa Rica).
 - c. Early Warning System: Climate-smart, economically viable and socially acceptable marine planning across the UK Nations (Ana Queiros, Plymouth Marine Laboratory – United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland).
 - d. Empowering coastal communities for Least Developed Countries through weather field school initiatives (Dava Amrina, Indonesian Agency for Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics – Indonesia).
 - e. SMART Cables: A global effort to use subsea telecommunication cables for scientific environmental sensing of climate and ocean hazards (Rachid Omira, Joint Task Force SMART Cables and Portuguese Institute for Sea and Atmosphere – Portugal).
7. Advancing the United Nations World Ocean Assessment: Supporting Future Ocean Sustainability and Informing Decision Making on ocean policy. | 10 April | attended by Juana Jimenez
8. Looking SEAWARD: African Oceans and the Ocean Decade Narrative | 12 April | attended by Juana Jimenez
9. **GOOS Regional Alliance Forum XI (event is by invitation only) 8 April/ attended by Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet:** The 11th GOOS Regional Alliance Forum (GRF-XI) represents an opportunity to engage in person with experts and partners, and underscore the contributions of GOOS Regional Alliances (GRAs) and observing system partners to GOOS and the Ocean Decade. The key objectives are to: discuss the progress and challenges of the GRAs over the last two to three years;

examine and explore how GRAs are engaged and contributing to the Ocean Decade, the GOOS Strategy 2030, the GOOS Programmes/projects and other GOOS initiatives; discuss strategies to strengthen and revitalize GRAs and improve how they deliver data, products and services to the benefit of partners and users; discuss how GRAs can engage more effectively with other GOOS structures, panels and GOOS National Focal Points, SIDS, Africa, as well as the private sector and industries; discuss and agree on GRA priorities, actions and leadership (Chair and Vice-Chairs) for the next two years

10. **Ocean Literacy Dialogues: Transforming our relationship with the ocean / 8 april/ (partially) attended by Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet and by Jan Seys (VLIZ).** The Ocean Literacy Dialogues are a set of open and participatory events that are part of the Ocean Decade Programme "Ocean Literacy with All". The purpose of these events is to assess the progress of ocean literacy worldwide through an inclusive and comprehensive approach. The aim is to offer tangible opportunities for new collaborative efforts to rethink humanity's relationship with the ocean. The event is an opportunity to expand the ocean literacy community and include different narratives and sectors of society, in order to achieve the objectives of the Ocean Decade. Decision-makers, journalists, entrepreneurs, educators, artists, indigenous peoples and youth should be engaged and share their values and how ocean literacy impacts their fields of activity.
11. **Unveiling the role of G20 in the implementation and legacy of the Ocean Decade/ 8 april/ attended by Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet.** The panel will convene a diverse array of stakeholders, such as scientists, civil society and policymakers, to explore the interplay between the goals, expected outcomes, and challenges set forth by the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (Ocean Decade) and the G20 process. It aims to shed light on the role the previous, current and future G20 Troikas have in supporting the Ocean Decade implementation and building its legacy.
12. **Financing blue carbon: Opportunities to scale conservation and restoration of blue carbon ecosystems / 9 april/ attended by Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet:** The conservation and restoration of blue carbon ecosystems have received increasing attention as a natural climate solution for carbon mitigation. This workshop, co-hosted by Verra and Forest Foundation, will provide information on available opportunities to mobilize finance to scale blue carbon activities, including carbon finance. Verra develops and manages the world's leading standards for climate action and sustainable development. This workshop will review voluntary carbon market concepts and VCS Program methodologies that quantify the GHG benefits of conservation and restoration activities for carbon finance in coastal ecosystems, highlighting Forest Foundation's experience as a public institution managing blue carbon ecosystems in Brazil.
13. **Sailing into the future for the Ocean Decade /9 april/attended by Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet.** Join The Ocean Race and UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC/UNESCO) in a joint event on the impact of the data collected by teams and sailors in some of the most remote areas of the ocean through the race's science on board programme, a concrete contribution to this year's theme: "the science we need for the ocean we want." Speakers include the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for the Ocean, Peter Thomson; The Ocean Race Chairman, Richard Brisius; Alexandra Rickham, Head of Sustainability at World Sailing; Yutaka Michida, IOC/UNESCO Chairperson; Haakon Vatle, Director of Statsraad Lehmkuhl Foundation & Expedition Leader for One Ocean Expedition; Rosalin Kuiper, Co Skipper, Team HOLCIM; Toste Tanhua, Senior Scientist, Geomar & Global Ocean Observing System, SOOP; Claire Vayer, Sustainability & Partnerships, IMOCA; Cornelius Eich, Sustainability & Partnerships, Team Malizia.
14. **Emerging technologies for climate change mitigation /9 april/ attended by Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet IEEE OES,** an international society, fosters partnerships for ocean-based technologies, especially for climate solutions. Emphasizing also student and early career professional participation, the event addresses the vast ocean carbon reservoir and explores carbon dioxide removal mechanisms, including natural ecosystem recovery and sargassum management as emerging technologies for climate change mitigation. Success hinges on national and international-level policy adoption and a robust regulatory framework. The side event features a panel discussing emerging technologies for climate mitigation especially focusing on carbon dioxide removal, uniting multidisciplinary perspectives/
15. **Advancing a biodiversity-positive offshore renewable energy transition: / 9 april/ attended by Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet** Due to the growing use of marine space and associated environmental pressures, a holistic multi-objective approach to planning and managing our ocean is required. This includes delivering Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) projects that support both climate and biodiversity goals. To this end, the UN Global Compact, Ørsted and The Nature Conservancy convened a workshop series with a multi-sector group of stakeholders to establish requirements to deliver ORE with net-positive biodiversity impact. The results of this work, its relevance to Ocean Decade biodiversity objectives and programmes, and how to drive global action on it was discussed in this event
16. **Moving from science to action on ocean acidification—Why does it matter? How is it being achieved.** 11 april/ attended by Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet . Ocean acidification (OA) has gained increasing recognition across international frameworks including the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Convention on Biological Diversity as well as national climate strategies or ocean policy. However, to move forward with

meaningful mitigation and adaptation responses to OA, governments need guidance on the type of data and information that is available—or that must be further invested in—to aid specific management and decision-making outcomes. This side event will discuss a need for OA awareness, the importance of capacity building programmes in increasing regional science and policy response, pathways forward for OA action and commitments to OA actions under the Ocean Decade.

17. **Launching the philanthropic matchmaking tool for Decade Actions.** 12 April/attended by Ann-Katrien Lescauwat. This Satellite Event will serve as the official launch of a new, data-driven tool that provides a seamless interface to match the resource mobilization needs of Decade Actions with the funding priorities of the philanthropic community. Driven by core members of the Ocean Decade Foundations Dialogue, this event will demonstrate the pilot version of the tool and hear testimonials from philanthropic partners and Decade Actions that have been engaged in its development. The Satellite Event aims to incite new partners from philanthropy to join the efforts to support the rich ecosystem of Decade Actions.
18. **Ocean and water governance: Towards sustainable blue economies in cities and regions.** 12 april/ attended by Ann-Katrien Lescauwat. Against the backdrop of the Ocean Decade and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, there is increasing momentum for boosting sustainable blue economies while strengthening the resilience of coastal, marine and freshwater ecosystems. Building on the results of an OECD Global Survey gathering insights from 80+ cities, regions and basins from 41 countries, this high-level event will launch a new OECD report on the Blue Economy in Cities and Regions focusing on the link between ocean and water governance to unlock the potential of a resilient, inclusive, sustainable and circular blue economies/

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