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United Nations Oceans Conference adopts declaration to tackle the global ocean emergency



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After a week of deliberation and discussion, the third United Nations Oceans Conference (UNOC3) organized by France and Costa Rica has concluded in Nice, France, with the adoption of a consensus-backed package aimed at securing the future of the world's oceans.

At the sun-kissed Côte d'Azur, UNOC3 adopted a [political declaration](#) titled "Our ocean, our future: united for urgent action," stressing that the ocean plays an essential role in mitigating the adverse effects of climate change.

"The ocean is fundamental to life on our planet and to our future, and we remain deeply alarmed by the global emergency it faces," the Conference's so-called "Outcome Document" read. "Action is not advancing at the speed or scale required to meet Goal 14 and realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," it added.

The Conference's dedication to ocean governance being more inclusive ensures that every voice is heard," Special Adviser to the Presidents of the Conference on oceans and legal matters, Elinor Hammarskjöld, said delivering closing remarks. "Together, we are shaping a future where cooperation leads to real lasting change," she said. The adoption of this historic document has been a major achievement for the UN and is a vital step to reversing damage done to the climate.

"The signs of the ocean in distress are all around us," said Peter Thomson, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the Ocean. "The time of debating with the denialists is over," he added.

The declaration, also known as the "Nice Ocean Action Plan," expressed deep concern that the ability of the ocean and its ecosystems to act as a climate regulator and to support adaptation has been "weakened."

Underlining the importance of interlinkages between the ocean, climate and biodiversity, the declaration called for enhanced global action to minimize the impact of climate change and ocean acidification, the UN said in a [press release](#). It emphasized the particular importance of implementing various UN agreements and frameworks, recognizing that it would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change and help to ensure the health, sustainable use and resilience of the ocean.

Further emphasizing the need to adapt to the "unavoidable effects" of climate change, the declaration affirmed the importance of the full and effective implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Protocols, as well as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Commending the leadership of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in highlighting and aiming to address sea level rise, the declaration also expressed concern for the high and rapidly increasing levels of plastic pollution and its negative impacts on the environment.



Further, the Conference's outcome document recognized the "tremendous opportunities" offered by sustainable ocean-based economies for states, especially developing countries, and particularly the Small Island Developing and Least Developed Countries, to eradicate poverty and hunger and achieve economic growth and social development.

The declaration recognized the fundamental role of management tools, such as sustainable ocean plans, in achieving sustainable ocean-based economies and the sustainable management of ocean areas under national jurisdiction. It encouraged all states to promote participatory management schemes for small-scale fisheries and highlighted the importance of efforts in regional fisheries management organizations to establish sound management measures for sustainable fisheries and recognized the critical role of maritime transport, routes and infrastructure in the global economy, trade, food and energy security.

Noting the adoption of the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction, the declaration called upon states and regional economic integration organizations that have not done so to consider signing and ratifying, approving or accepting the Agreement, the UN said in the press release.

Furthermore, the declaration called on states to promote awareness and education campaigns at the local, national, regional and international levels to inform the public about the importance of a healthy ocean and resilient marine ecosystems. Additionally, it emphasized the critical need for national ocean accounting and mapping of coastal and marine ecosystems, and of the ocean floor to inform policy decisions, development planning, integrated coastal zone management and conservation planning.

Ocean action must be based on the best available science and knowledge, including, where available, traditional knowledge, knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local knowledge systems, while recognizing and respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples, and local communities, in conserving, restoring and sustainably using the ocean, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, the UN said in the press release.

The declaration also recognizes that Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 is one of the least funded SDGs and that accelerating ocean action globally requires significant and accessible finance and the fulfilment of existing commitments and obligations under relevant intergovernmental agreements.

France's Special Presidential Envoy for the Ocean, Olivier Poivre d'Arvor, said that for thousands of years the ocean has shaped the "global world as we know it," and for centuries, men have been using the ocean to explore other worlds. For centuries, the ocean has allowed people to trade in goods. "How have we been able to get to the stage where we serve the ocean so poorly," he asked, adding that fully achieving SDG 14 is "not just a simple task."

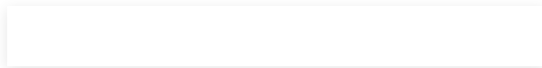
Commission adopts European Ocean Pact

Also, at UNOC3 in Nice, Spyros Kouvelis, EU Ocean Mission Board Member and Team Leader of the EU-GCC Cooperation on Green Transition, said on June 13 the UN Oceans Conference provided insightful discussions about the increase of the number of marine-protected areas as well as their effective management and protection. "There were also important discussions, and decisions



He reminded that on June 5, the European Commission adopted the European [Ocean Pact](#), a comprehensive strategy to better protect the ocean, promote a thriving blue economy and support the well-being of people living in coastal areas. “The Pact brings together EU ocean policies under one single reference framework, addressing the significant threats facing our ocean, our coastal communities, islands and outermost regions,” Kouvelis said, adding: “The European Ocean Pact turns a new page because Europe, the region in the world with the biggest exclusive economic zone and the world’s biggest coastline has become a global leader on issues related to the ocean and is showing the way how we can address very important issues like the Blue Economy, the protection of the seas, of fisheries and how we can combine development with the protection and well-being of the coastal populations.”

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