



**5th United Nations
Ocean Forum**

3–5 March 2025 on trade-related aspects of
Sustainable Development Goal 14

UN trade & development | **UNCTAD**

Co-sponsors: France, Costa Rica, Portugal and the United Kingdom
Co-organizers: UN DESA, FAO, UNEP, the UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States and the International Ocean Institute

5th United Nations Ocean Forum on Trade-related aspects of SDG 14: Ocean economies, trade policy, and the climate and development interaction

Palais des Nations, Room XIX, 3–5 March 2025

CHAIRS' SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

From Geneva to Nice: A Road Map for Sustainable Ocean Economies

5 March 2025

H.E. Mr. Olivier Poivre d'Arvor, Ambassadeur pour les Pôles et les Affaires Maritimes et Envoyé spécial du Président pour la troisième Conférence des Nations Unies sur l'Océan, Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Étrangères, France

H.E. Ms. Gina Guillén-Grillo, Embajadora, directora general de Política Exterior y Enviada Especial Presidencial para el Océano de Costa Rica

Supported by:

H.E. Christian Guillermet Fernández, Representante Permanente de Costa Rica ante la Organización de las Naciones Unidas en Ginebra

Mr. Ashok Adicéam, Deputy Presidential Special Envoy, Délégué Général, 3rd United Nations Ocean Conference (France)

In presence of:

H.E. Mr. Arnoldo André Tinoco, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto (Costa Rica)

H.E. Mr. Thani Mohamed Soilihi, Ministre délégué auprès du ministre de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères, chargé de la Francophonie et des Partenariats internationaux (France)

H.E. Ms. Lúcia Bulcão, Secretary of State for Maritime Affairs (Portugal)



I. INTRODUCTION

The 5th Ocean Forum has once again proven to be a unique platform for dialogue, peer and expert exchanges, and consensus-building on the implementation of trade-related aspects of SDG 14, organised by the United Nations and its partners. The forum gathered over 500 participants from 80 countries over three days, including ministers, ambassadors, delegates, UN entities, international organizations, businesses and startups, the youth and civil society actors over three days.

The Forum placed particular emphasis on the importance of decarbonising ocean economies by implementing climate action plans and reporting commitment and progress through nationally determined contributions (NDCs) harnessing and strengthening ocean trade, maritime transport and port infrastructure and reflecting it in NDCs, to sustain livelihoods and equity; promoting sustainable South-South trade in fisheries and aquaculture as a means for value addition and diversification; and enabling innovation in food and non-food marine-based and natural product sectors in response to food security and pollution reduction challenges. Additionally, there is an urgent need to scale up novel forms of public and private investment and finance in sustainable ocean sectors under a proposed call for a New Blue Deal.

As the Co-Chairs of the Forum, we have compiled the main recommendations made at the forum by member states, panellists, and participants. Not all recommendations made at the Forum are reflected here, as there is a need to focus on the more urgent issues for the 3rd UN Ocean Conference in Nice, the Blue Economy and Finance Forum (BEFF), at Monaco, and the UNCTAD 16 Conference, all in 2025.



II. RECOMMENDATIONS

SESSION 1: CURRENT TRADE-RELATED TRENDS IN OCEAN ECONOMIES

- a) Improve availability and access to quality data and indicators on trade in ocean goods and services to foster sustainable ocean economies, by supporting national capacities to collect and compile data and strengthening and expanding the sustainable use of marine resources. Ocean Forum organisers, such as UNCTAD, UNDESA, FAO, UNEP, DOALOS, and other partners, must have enhanced capacity to develop relevant economic, social and environmental indicators, databases, and country profiles, to measure ocean ecosystem services and potential consequences from new activities, such as seabed mining and impacts of changing temperatures on the seawater surface.
- b) Enhance global ocean governance by calling to urgently ratify the Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) and the WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement (FSA), by concluding the WTO negotiations on Additional Disciplines on Fisheries Subsidies and an internationally legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including on the marine environment, and by supporting their implementation in partnership with UNCTAD, FAO, UNEP and DOALOS. Additionally, support is needed to design Sustainable Ocean Plans for economic and marine ecosystem management. Access and benefit sharing (ABS) principles when accessing and utilising marine resources must be included, and cooperation amongst UN agencies, as demonstrated at the Forum, must be strengthened.
- c) Accelerate support for early warning systems and operationalize ocean carbon data collection efforts, under the leadership of the WMO and in collaboration with UN agencies, including UNCTAD, to address risks from extreme weather events, improve shipping efficiency, and reduce carbon emissions in ocean economies.

SESSION 2: NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTIONS (NDCS) FOR THE SUSTAINABLE USE OF EXPORT-ORIENTED OCEAN ECONOMY SECTORS

- a) Measure GHG and other polluting emissions from ocean economy sectors by improving data generation, collection and sharing and expanding existing databases, such as the UNCTAD's Ocean Trade and Maritime Transport databases, FAO FishStatJ, IMO, WMO, and UNFCCC databases, to develop emissions data at the sectoral level.
- b) Support developing countries, in particular SIDS and LDCs, in leveraging trade, investment and novel technologies and know-how for climate adaptation and mitigation, including responses to sea level rise, by providing policy advice and increased capacity building, by strengthening UNCTAD's ocean economies and climate change program, and by supporting UNCTAD's SIDS Strategy and the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda. To support climate mitigation and adaptation objectives, trade, finance and investment in ocean sectors as well as port adaptation should be integrated into countries' 2025 NDCs. This would include developing ocean-based renewable energy and implementing targeted resilience-enhancing measures in fisheries, aquaculture, regenerative tourism, maritime transport infrastructure, and logistics.
- c) Build the sustainability and the resilience of maritime transport, including shipping, port infrastructure and operations, and logistics in the face of disruptions to ensure smooth trade



flows across supply chains and reliable access to ocean economy activities. This requires building the capacity to monitor, prepare, and adapt to disruptions from a range of causes. It also requires incentivising public and private investments to decarbonise fisheries, shipping, ports, and the broader ocean economies and their supply chains. Support is critically needed for climate adaptation, by partnering with businesses, industry, financial institutions and local communities, to design instruments that allow the scale-up of innovative solutions and reduce the cost of low-carbon and climate adaptation measures and technologies.

SESSION 3: THE POTENTIAL FOR SOUTH-SOUTH TRADE IN OCEAN-BASED GOODS, PARTICULARLY FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE PRODUCTS

- a) Strengthen South-South trade in fisheries, aquaculture, and other ocean goods by considering the launch of a new round of negotiations under the Global System of Trade Preferences among Developing Countries (GSTP). This round could focus on market access and cooperation to enhance the availability, affordability, and value addition of sustainably sourced ocean products, including primary and processed fisheries and aquaculture. It could also facilitate trade by reducing non-tariff measures (NTMs), promoting affordable access to technology, including for maritime transport, and establishing financial agreements to facilitate international transactions.
- b) Enhance market access opportunities and address non-tariff barriers for fisheries and aquaculture products by conducting surveys and qualitative assessments of relevant NTMs. Responsive actions could also include promoting mutual recognition of catch records and reporting requirements, streamlining border procedures, reducing delays, minimising waste in trade processes, and building the capacities of small-scale fishers (SSF) and MSMEs to increase their market access and technology skills, with the support of UNCTAD and FAO.
- c) Enhance sectoral cooperation to improve the transparency and environmental and social dimensions of fisheries by sharing best practices and country experiences in mitigation and adaptation strategies for fisheries and aquaculture, taking advantage of centres of excellence when appropriate, and by leveraging technologies, including digital, artificial intelligence, and satellite surveillance, to ensure traceability under the UNCTAD' BioTrade Principles and Criteria.

SESSION 4: TRADE POLICIES AND TOOLS FOR INNOVATIVE MARINE-BASED AND LOW CARBON PRODUCTS BY MSMEs AND STARTUPS (INCLUDING FOODS, NUTRACEUTICALS, COSMETICS, AND NON-PLASTIC SUBSTITUTES)

- a) Guide the transformation of ocean sectors by applying robust science-based sustainability criteria, including adherence to the Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) principle under the Nagoya Protocol and the BBNJ Agreement, enabling socio-environmental entrepreneurs and Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) entities to expand their offerings, and fostering trade, investment, and innovation in marine-based non-plastic substitutes, including seaweed, algae, and marine minerals. Stakeholders, including consumers, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, must be engaged in the development of innovative products.
- b) Address trade and growth barriers from land to sea for innovative marine-based products by encouraging actions that minimise pollution impacts from manufacturing and consumption to



regenerate ecosystems, strengthen local markets and communities, and enhance resilient and circular economies. This includes developing international standards and specific Harmonized System codes and reducing and harmonising applicable tariffs and NTMs, including for marine and natural non-plastic substitutes. Science and evidence-based approaches to bring these innovations to the market can be very costly. Funding to support compliance with science to policy-based approaches, particularly by MSMEs and startups, is essential.

- c) Call for the creation of a UN wide system Task Force on Seaweed and a Technical Advisory Body on sustainable biomaterials, within UNCTAD, to fill regulatory and standard gaps and scale-up marine-based innovation and related product development.

SESSION 5: BLUE FINANCE FOR A JUST ENERGY TRANSITION AND TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE EXPORT-ORIENTED OCEAN-BASED SECTORS

- a) Bridge the ocean finance gap for implementing SDG14, estimated at \$175 billion per year, by calling for a New Blue Deal promoting a cohesive approach to ocean finance, investment, trade, technology, and innovation. This should be in alignment with UNCTAD's Blue Deal and FAO's Blue Transformation, and leverage private capital, public procurement, public development banks, existing funds, such as the UNFCCC Fund for responding to Loss and Damage, and funds that will soon be operational, such as the WTO Fisheries Funding Mechanism. Additionally, natural ocean assets may be used to develop blue finance instruments, such as blue carbon schemes, debt-for-nature swaps, and other blended finance solutions that can reach MSMEs, start-ups and SSE entities through national intermediaries. Accessible adaptation funding for maritime transport and ports in developing countries should be scaled up. Blue finance must be included in other SDGs, making the 2030 agenda a reality, such as SDG2 on food, SDG3 on health and SDG7 on clean energy, to maximise financing for ocean solutions.
- b) Explore the feasibility of a United Nations driven One Ocean Finance Facility to unify and facilitate financial support for trade and ocean economy initiatives, especially in SIDS and LDCs, that are ineligible for existing climate funds or uninsurable due to increases in climate disaster risks. This facility should strengthen mechanisms for private-sector notification, the disclosure of non-confidential financial investments and philanthropic contributions, and public-private partnerships and risk-sharing. A call was made for UNCTAD to expand its Ocean Trade database to provide a single platform covering finance and investment data.
- c) Reform fiscal incentives to promote sustainable use in ocean economic sectors, including by establishing dedicated financial support mechanisms for socio-environmental entrepreneurs and SSE entities (e.g. cooperatives, associations of small-scale fishers, women and seaweed associations) that generate environmental, social, and economic benefits within sustainable ocean economies, and by redirecting fossil fuel and harmful fisheries subsidies towards more sustainable programs and practices that promote healthy fisheries, livelihoods, food security and value addition and diversification.

FROM THE 3RD UN OCEAN CONFERENCE TO THE 16TH UN TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT MINISTERIAL:

We call on member states to strengthen the role of UNCTAD on the sustainable use of marine resources and on building sustainable ocean economies at the UNCTAD16 Conference, and to act on the recommendations made at this Forum.

