

## UN OCEAN SUMMIT 2025

NEWS: The third UN ocean summit in **Nice, France** concluded with a wave of commitments and a strong call to action to protect marine ecosystems, curb pollution, and secure financing for vulnerable coastal nations.

### WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

#### About the UN Ocean Conference (UNOC3)

- **Global Platform for Ocean Action:**

The UN Ocean Conference is a high-level international platform convened to promote urgent global action on **ocean conservation and sustainable marine governance**, aligned with **SDG 14: Life Below Water**.

- **Purpose and Objectives:**

The core objectives include:

- Promoting the implementation of SDG 14.
- Addressing pressing marine challenges such as **overfishing, plastic pollution, ocean acidification**, and **habitat destruction**.
- Mobilizing **multi-stakeholder partnerships** for sustainable ocean-based economies, commonly referred to as the **blue economy**.

- **Organizers and Host Countries:**

The 2025 UNOC (third edition) was **co-hosted by France and Costa Rica**, in partnership with the United Nations.

- **Conference Theme (2025):**

**“Accelerating action and mobilizing all actors to conserve and sustainably use the ocean”** – emphasizing urgency, inclusivity, and implementation.



### Focus Areas of UNOC3

- **Marine Pollution:**  
Special attention on reducing **plastic waste** entering oceans and supporting legally binding instruments to tackle pollution at source.
- **Sustainable Fisheries:**  
Focus on eliminating **illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing** practices and promoting fair, science-based fishery management.
- **Climate-Ocean Nexus:**  
Addressing the dual impacts of **ocean warming and acidification** through climate adaptation strategies and ecosystem resilience building.
- **Marine Biodiversity Conservation:**  
Supporting the global commitment to **protect 30% of the ocean area by 2030 (30×30 goal)**, especially through Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).
- **Blue Economy:**  
Promoting sustainable, inclusive, and regenerative ocean-based industries, including **fisheries, tourism, shipping, and marine biotechnology**.

### Previous and Future Conferences

- **UNOC1 (2017, New York):**  
Marked the **first UN-level conference focused exclusively on oceans**, setting the stage for marine SDG action.

- **UNOC2 (2022, Lisbon):**  
Advanced commitments toward ocean governance and announced funding and partnership frameworks.
- **UNOC4 (2028, Chile–South Korea):**  
The fourth conference will be jointly hosted by **Chile and South Korea**, aiming to build on momentum from Nice and fast-track treaty implementation.

### Key Outcomes of UNOC3 (2025, Nice)

- **Nice Ocean Action Plan:**  
The conference produced a two-part outcome document:
  - **Political Declaration** titled “*Our Ocean, Our Future: United for Urgent Action*”.
  - Over **800 voluntary commitments** from diverse stakeholders, including governments, NGOs, academia, and businesses.
- **Political Declaration Highlights:**
  - Reaffirms commitment to the **30×30 global protection target** (30% land and ocean area by 2030).
  - Aligns with the **Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework**.
  - Supports the implementation of the **High Seas Treaty (BBNJ)**.
- **Innovative Global Partnerships and Initiatives:**
  - **High Ambition Coalition for a Quiet Ocean:**  
Led by **Panama and Canada**, involving 37 nations targeting **noise pollution** from shipping and industrial activity.
  - **Coral Bond:**  
Joint initiative by **Indonesia and the World Bank**, offering innovative finance mechanisms to support **reef restoration** and conservation.
- **Plastic Pollution Treaty Momentum – The “Nice Wake-Up Call”:**
  - **96 countries** endorsed a statement demanding a **legally binding global treaty on plastic pollution**.
  - India was notably **absent** from the endorsing countries despite voicing support in previous forums.
  - Key measures in the declaration include **cutting plastic production**, banning toxic plastics, and establishing extended producer responsibility.

## Key National and Financial Commitments Announced

- **European Union:**  
Pledged **€1 billion** to fund **marine conservation, scientific research, and sustainable fisheries**.
- **French Polynesia:**  
Announced plans to establish the **world's largest marine protected area**, spanning **5 million km<sup>2</sup>**.
- **Germany:**  
Committed **€100 million** for the **removal of underwater munitions** in the **Baltic and North Seas**, improving marine safety.
- **New Zealand:**  
Pledged **\$52 million** to support **Pacific Ocean governance** and regional capacity-building.
- **Spain:**  
Declared the creation of **five new MPAs** to enhance biodiversity conservation in national waters.

## High Seas Treaty (BBNJ Agreement)

- **Legal Status and Background:**  
Known as the “**Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction**” (BBNJ) Treaty, adopted in 2023 under the **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)**.
- **Coverage:**  
The treaty applies to the **high seas**, which constitute around **two-thirds of the ocean surface** and lie **beyond national jurisdiction**.
- **Core Provisions:**
  - **Area-Based Management Tools (ABMTs):** Includes designating **Marine Protected Areas** to safeguard fragile marine ecosystems.
  - **Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs):** Mandates **pre-assessment of any activity** likely to impact high seas biodiversity.
  - **Marine Genetic Resources (MGRs):** Establishes **equitable sharing frameworks** for benefits derived from MGRs, particularly for **developing countries**.
  - **Capacity Building & Technology Transfer:** Provides for **scientific, technical, and institutional support** to poorer nations.
  - **Governance Mechanisms:** Sets up a **Conference of Parties (COP)** and **advisory scientific bodies** to guide and oversee implementation.
- **Ratification Status (as of June 2025):**

- **50 countries** have ratified; **60 ratifications** are required for the treaty to enter into force.
- Once the 60th ratification is deposited, the treaty takes effect **120 days later**.
- **India's Position:**
  - **Signed in September 2024**, but has **not yet ratified**.
  - Delay is due to pending amendments in India's **Biological Diversity Act** and the need for **parliamentary approval**.
  - India supports **equitable access and benefit sharing** and a **legally binding global plastics treaty**.

## Key Oceanic Challenges

- **Rising Sea Surface Temperatures (SST):**
  - SSTs in 2025 reached **record highs**, intensifying **coral bleaching** and disrupting marine species migration and productivity.
  - The **Mediterranean Sea** is warming **20% faster than the global average**.
- **Ocean Acidification:**
  - Oceans absorb **90% of excess atmospheric heat** and **30% of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions**, causing increased acidity.
  - Acidification harms **shell-forming organisms** such as corals, plankton, and mollusks, threatening entire food chains.
- **Marine Plastic Pollution:**
  - An estimated **8 million metric tons** of plastic enter oceans every year.
  - Nearly **200 trillion plastic particles** are already present; without action, this could **triple by 2040**.
- **Overfishing and Destructive Practices:**
  - Over **60% of global fish stocks** are either overfished or fully exploited.
  - **IUU fishing, bottom trawling, and bycatch** contribute to severe ecosystem damage and species loss.
- **Marine Biodiversity Loss:**
  - Coral reefs, which support **25% of marine species**, are undergoing the **worst bleaching events** in recorded history.

- **Mangroves and seagrasses** are disappearing at an annual rate of **7%**, largely due to **urban expansion and aquaculture**.
- **Governance and Funding Deficits:**
  - Despite oceans contributing **\$2.5 trillion/year** to the global economy, **SDG 14** receives **less than 0.01%** of global sustainability funding.
  - **Slow treaty ratification** and lack of enforcement mechanisms undermine global conservation goals.

## Way Forward and Strategic Actions

- **Accelerate Treaty Ratification:**
  - Push for **swift ratification** of the **BBNJ Treaty**, especially by major ocean economies like India, Brazil, and the US.
  - Streamline domestic legislation and political consensus to meet the **60-country threshold**.
- **Achieve the 30×30 Goal:**
  - Expand **MPAs** to cover **30% of global ocean area by 2030**, focusing on **ecologically significant zones** like coral reefs and coastal nurseries.
- **Combat Pollution at Source:**
  - Enforce bans on **single-use plastics**, promote **extended producer responsibility**, and scale **circular economy models**.
- **Invest in the Blue Economy:**
  - Promote **restorative aquaculture** (e.g., seaweed farming) and **blue carbon solutions** (mangroves, salt marshes) for climate resilience.
- **Use Technology for Marine Monitoring:**
  - Leverage **AI, satellite surveillance, and drones** to monitor illegal fishing, pollution hotspots, and ecosystem health in real time.
- **Community Engagement & Equity:**
  - Support **community-led conservation**, particularly involving **Indigenous communities and women-led coastal cooperatives** (e.g., Kenya, Canada).
- **Coral Reef Restoration:**
  - Use **assisted evolution techniques, 3D-printed reefs**, and coral nurseries to recover climate-resilient reef systems.

## Conclusion

- The ocean is nearing a **tipping point**, but it remains possible to reverse damage through **science-based action, international cooperation, and sustained public investment**.
- Platforms like the **UN Ocean Conference** and upcoming **COP30 (2025)** provide critical momentum to convert **pledges into concrete results** for ocean health and planetary sustainability.

Source: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/06/1164381>