

An underwater scene featuring a large school of small fish swimming towards a bright light source, likely the sun, creating a shimmering effect. Several larger fish are also visible swimming in the foreground.

SUMMARIES

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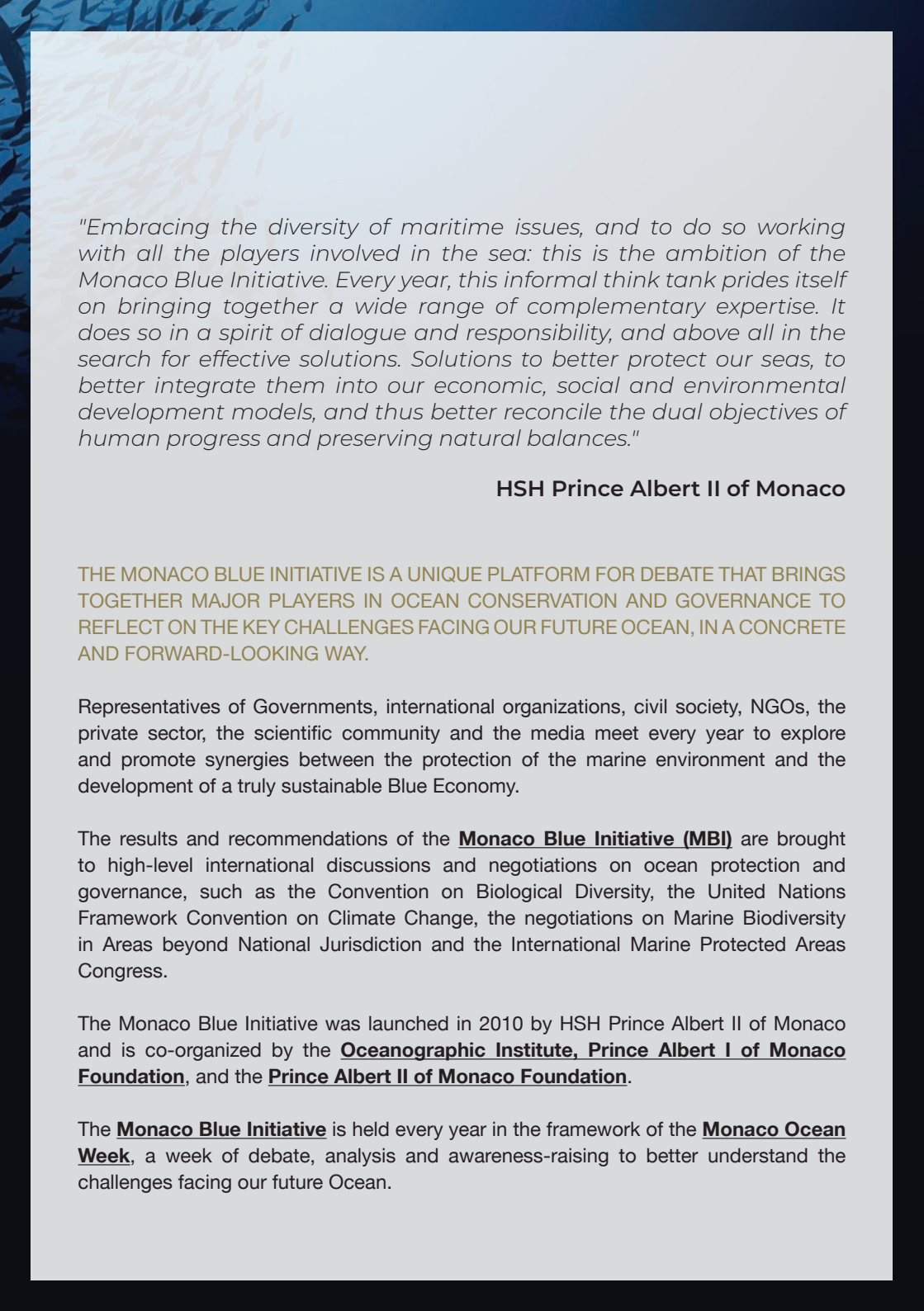
20 MARCH 2023

*14<sup>th</sup> edition - Monaco*

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*"Embracing the diversity of maritime issues, and to do so working with all the players involved in the sea: this is the ambition of the Monaco Blue Initiative. Every year, this informal think tank prides itself on bringing together a wide range of complementary expertise. It does so in a spirit of dialogue and responsibility, and above all in the search for effective solutions. Solutions to better protect our seas, to better integrate them into our economic, social and environmental development models, and thus better reconcile the dual objectives of human progress and preserving natural balances."*

## **HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco**

THE MONACO BLUE INITIATIVE IS A UNIQUE PLATFORM FOR DEBATE THAT BRINGS TOGETHER MAJOR PLAYERS IN OCEAN CONSERVATION AND GOVERNANCE TO REFLECT ON THE KEY CHALLENGES FACING OUR FUTURE OCEAN, IN A CONCRETE AND FORWARD-LOOKING WAY.

Representatives of Governments, international organizations, civil society, NGOs, the private sector, the scientific community and the media meet every year to explore and promote synergies between the protection of the marine environment and the development of a truly sustainable Blue Economy.

The results and recommendations of the **Monaco Blue Initiative (MBI)** are brought to high-level international discussions and negotiations on ocean protection and governance, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the negotiations on Marine Biodiversity in Areas beyond National Jurisdiction and the International Marine Protected Areas Congress.

The Monaco Blue Initiative was launched in 2010 by HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco and is co-organized by the **Oceanographic Institute, Prince Albert I of Monaco Foundation**, and the **Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation**.

The **Monaco Blue Initiative** is held every year in the framework of the **Monaco Ocean Week**, a week of debate, analysis and awareness-raising to better understand the challenges facing our future Ocean.





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monaco  
blue initiative

19-20 MARCH 2023  
1<sup>st</sup> edition - Monaco

KEYNOTE SPEECH

H.E. Mr Rodrigo Chaves Robles  
President of the Republic of Costa Rica

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2023 Monaco Blue Initiative took place amid effervescence following recent progress in international ocean governance, and focused on four topics: Sustainable Fisheries, Highly Protected MPAs, Marine Ecosystem Restoration, and Solutions for a Sustainable Mediterranean. This 14<sup>th</sup> edition saw record attendance, with over 180 participants at the Oceanographic Museum.

MBI is an annual platform for discussion on sustainable ocean management and conservation co-organized by the Oceanographic Institute and the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation. Participants hail from all continents and seas, and represent the full diversity of ocean stakeholders, from private sector actors to those from government, science, and international and civil society organizations.

The day began with a welcome address by HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco and a keynote speech by the President of Costa Rica. In addition to the four topical sessions, the programme featured keynote speeches by government representatives from China, Seychelles, the United States, Spain and France, and three "fireside chats" with representatives of international bodies.

## **SESSION 1** on **Sustainable Fisheries**

illustrated the extreme complexity of this issue, in which ecological considerations combine and often conflict with socioeconomic, nutritional, geopolitical and cultural aspects. Representatives from fisheries governance, community-based conservation, economics and philanthropy shared viewpoints and examples.

Most agreed far more fish were being caught each year than was sustainable, which has consequences not just for food security and biodiversity but also for the ocean's contribution to a healthy atmosphere and climate regulation. The causes of unsustainable fishing are widely known: scientific advice is largely ignored and existing agreements are poorly enforced and often disregarded. Some governments contribute to the problem through harmful subsidies and a lack of transparency and political will, while others simply don't have the resources necessary to protect their waters.

Solutions are not simple and need to be combined. Economic incentives and responsible, science-based management should replace harmful subsidies and unbridled competition, and bottom trawling should be banned. Local communities, journalists and civil society can join forces to pressure governments and make them transparent and accountable, and also name-and-shame those countries, companies and investors enabling unsustainable fishing.

## **SESSION 2** on **Highly Protected MPAs**

addressed ways to bridge the current gap between marine protected areas' quantitative coverage and their actual effectiveness in fulfilling conservation objectives. Speakers from science, conservation, blue finance and government emphasized local community involvement and the fact that ensuring protection also brought economic benefits. Reframing MPAs as resource replenishment zones helps, as does long-term financial and technical assistance to increase value for small-scale fishers or to develop alternative livelihoods. Increased funding and capacity-building are needed to enable proper surveillance and enforcement, particularly in smaller, less developed countries.

Indigenous communities' traditional knowledge and resource management practices hold valuable lessons for designing MPAs. Linking MPAs within networks and creating corridors for species throughout their ranges and life cycles multiply the benefits of protected areas. To reach the Global Biodiversity Framework goal of 30% effective protection by 2030, governments must also demonstrate greater political will and commit to ending destructive practices such as bottom trawling, and fast-track ratification of the High Seas Treaty.



**SESSION 3** on **Marine Ecosystem Restoration** explored nature-based solutions for enhancing carbon sequestration, reversing loss of biodiversity and protecting coasts from harmful impacts of climate change. Actors from governance, conservation and science debated the opportunities and challenges of rehabilitating degraded ecosystems.

Restoration must not be seen as a substitute for marine protection, nor as a get-out-of-jail-free card for those engaging in environmentally harmful activities. The priority should be to prevent damage by changing its economic drivers. Carbon credits for marine ecosystem restoration make little sense today due to great uncertainty as to the true sequestration capacity of so-called blue-carbon habitats, and represent a moral hazard.

Mangrove restoration is a positive example as it is fairly simple and can improve local communities' livelihoods while protecting them from extreme weather due to climate change. It makes ethical, environmental and economic sense and should be better funded. Small, inexpensive but effective projects have difficulty tapping into large funding mechanisms due to a "bigger-is-better" mentality. Regional trust funds and other tools should be developed to facilitate access, while quantifying and recognizing local communities' contribution to global biodiversity goals.

**SESSION 4** on **Solutions for a Sustainable Mediterranean** discussed existing mechanisms and potential future strategies for meeting the sustainability challenges inherent in a closed sea of great environmental, socioeconomic and cultural diversity. Government, blue finance and private sector representatives explored how to scale up action and presented case studies from the region.

Cooperation between EU countries and the southern Mediterranean is key, as is involvement of all stakeholders, from local to national and international, and from civil society to the private sector. Multilateral, hybrid tools like the MedFund conservation trust can help channel financial support to marine protected areas. Politicians need to build coalitions and improve public communication to be able to take necessary but sometimes unpopular action amid electoral pressures.

While contributing massively to Mediterranean economies, tourism has an equally outsized impact on the region's marine and coastal environment. Local authorities and private sector actors can contribute to sustainability with policies for reducing crowds, waste and pollution, and can use natural and cultural wealth to raise public awareness and support.

**Honorable President of the Republic of Costa Rica, Ladies and Gentlemen Honorable Ministers and Secretaries of State, Your Excellencies, Secretaries-General of Intergovernmental institutions, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends,**

**Monsieur le Président du Costa Rica, Mesdames et Messieurs les Ministres et Secrétaires d'État, Excellences, Mesdames et Messieurs les Secrétaires généraux d'institutions intergouvernementales, Mesdames et Messieurs, Chers Amis,**

A hearty welcome to Monaco for this fourteenth edition of the Monaco Blue Initiative.

Bienvenue à Monaco pour cette quatorzième édition de la *Monaco Blue Initiative*.

C'est un grand plaisir pour moi de vous recevoir ici, dans cette merveilleuse salle du Musée océanographique de Monaco, et c'est un honneur partagé par tous ceux qui, à Monaco, s'engagent pour les océans, à commencer par l'Institut océanographique, qui nous accueille cette année encore, et par ma Fondation, qui co-organise cette journée.

Au-delà de ces deux institutions, l'ensemble de la communauté monégasque est particulièrement mobilisé autour des enjeux maritimes, dans toute leur diversité.

Le très riche programme de la *Monaco Ocean Week*, dans laquelle s'inscrit notre rencontre d'aujourd'hui, en témoigne, et j'espère que vous aurez la possibilité de vous y intéresser, voire de participer à certaines des autres manifestations qui sont prévues cette semaine.

Embrasser la diversité des enjeux maritimes, et pour cela travailler avec l'ensemble des acteurs des mers, telle est bien l'ambition de la *Monaco Blue Initiative*.

Ce *think tank* informel s'honore en effet de réunir chaque année des expertises variées et complémentaires.

Il le fait dans un esprit de dialogue et de responsabilité, et surtout de recherche de solutions efficaces. Des solutions pour mieux protéger nos mers, mieux les intégrer à nos modèles de développement économiques, sociaux et environnementaux, et ainsi mieux concilier le double objectif de progrès humain et de préservation des équilibres naturels.

À cet égard, et cela est trop rare pour ne pas être souligné, nous avons cette année quelques motifs de satisfaction. Des avancées importantes ont été obtenues au cours de ces derniers mois.

Je pense bien entendu d'abord, à l'adoption le 4 mars dernier, par les Nations Unies, du Traité sur la haute mer. Ce Traité ouvre enfin de véritables perspectives, non seulement de préservation, mais aussi de gestion et d'exploitation durables de la haute mer, qui représente, vous le savez, plus de 60 % de l'Océan mondial.

Après des années – presque deux décennies – de négociations intenses et de longs efforts de conviction, après des moments de doute aussi, et parfois même de pessimisme, cet accord est un vrai motif d'espoir.

Grâce à lui, nous pourrions enfin disposer des outils juridiques qui pourraient nous permettre de mieux protéger les eaux internationales en pouvant créer des aires marines protégées en haute mer, que j'appelle de mes vœux, vous le savez, de longue date, tout en permettant une équitable répartition des produits des ressources biologiques.



# WELCOME ADDRESS

HSH PRINCE ALBERT II OF MONACO



Dans le sillage de ce que nous avons déjà accompli ponctuellement, par exemple en Antarctique dans la Mer de Ross, il s'agit-là d'une perspective déterminante pour les écosystèmes les plus menacés, pour l'ensemble des mers et pour tous les équilibres de la Planète.

Bien entendu, des difficultés potentielles de mise en œuvre subsistent, et nous continuerons à nous mobiliser pour que ce Traité soit suivi d'effets rapides et significatifs.

La même exigence vaut pour une autre avancée obtenue au cours de ces derniers mois : l'engagement dit 30x30, fixé par le Cadre mondial pour la biodiversité adopté en décembre 2022, et qui fixe enfin l'objectif de protéger un tiers des surfaces terrestres et marines d'ici à 2030.

Et je me plais à souligner, à cet égard, Monsieur le Président, le rôle clé qu'a joué votre pays, le Costa Rica, dans ce domaine, en particulier en co-présidant la *High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People*, que Monaco a été parmi les premiers pays à rejoindre.

Ces deux décisions successives sont bien entendu liées entre elles : le Cadre mondial pour la biodiversité a été un élément important dans l'aboutissement des négociations autour du Traité sur la haute mer. Elles témoignent donc d'un changement d'attitude global de nos contemporains autour des enjeux maritimes.

Ce travail, il nous faut le poursuivre et l'amplifier. C'est l'un des objectifs de la journée d'aujourd'hui.

La session qui sera consacrée aux aires marines à protection forte sera ainsi l'occasion de travailler à une utilisation optimale et à une amélioration des outils dont nous disposons. Mais elle nous permettra aussi d'envisager la manière dont nous devons nous servir du contexte favorable que j'évoquais, pour mobiliser de nouvelles volontés, susciter de nouveaux projets et réunir de nouveaux moyens.

Nos échanges sur le rôle des écosystèmes marins, et l'importance de leur restauration en vue de réaliser les Objectifs de Développement Durable, devraient également nous fournir l'occasion de porter plus haut encore nos ambitions pour l'Océan.

En réfléchissant à des solutions pratiques, nous pourrions mieux faire apparaître le lien essentiel entre les sujets qui nous occupent aujourd'hui et les grands enjeux qui traversent le monde. C'est l'une des clés d'une meilleure prise en compte de ces sujets océaniques. Cela implique en particulier d'intégrer les problèmes économiques dans leur complexité, mais aussi dans leurs potentialités.

L'une des vertus de la *Monaco Blue Initiative* est en effet de nous permettre de mieux associer les décideurs politiques, les scientifiques et les acteurs économiques.

Aucun succès durable ne peut être obtenu sans un travail conjoint.

Nous avons besoin d'une expertise scientifique solide, comme celle que le GIEC nous a fournie dans le Rapport Spécial sur les océans, qu'il a rendu public ici même, il y a un peu plus de trois ans, ou comme celle à laquelle travaillent de nombreux laboratoires, présents ici aujourd'hui.

Nous avons besoin des cadres politiques et juridiques adaptés, comme ceux que j'évoquais à l'instant, et qui résultent d'une mobilisation de tous les décideurs.

Nous avons besoin de l'engagement des initiatives privées, seules à même de faire advenir le nouveau modèle de développement qu'il nous faut inventer.



Je pense à notre première session, consacrée à la pêche durable, qui sera l'occasion de prouver les potentialités immenses, à moyen et à long terme, d'une stratégie partagée, innovante et surtout, responsable.

De la même manière, nos travaux de cet après-midi sur la Méditerranée devraient faire apparaître les vertus d'une mobilisation coordonnée de tous les acteurs.

Par ses caractéristiques géographiques et sa situation géopolitique, par les menaces qu'elle affronte et par les activités qu'elle génère, la Méditerranée est, à bien des égards, un laboratoire des défis qui nous attendent pour l'ensemble des mers.

Je pense que nous le constaterons en évoquant les avancées politiques que nous avons ici aussi obtenues, comme la zone de contrôle des émissions d'oxyde de soufre, ou Zone SECA, instituée en décembre dernier par l'Organisation Maritime Internationale dans toute la Méditerranée.

Et nous le constaterons aussi en évoquant les initiatives qui associent des acteurs privés, dans leur diversité.

C'est le cas de l'initiative BeMed, qui, depuis 2015, poursuit trois objectifs : soutenir et mettre en réseau les acteurs engagés contre la pollution plastique en Méditerranée, faciliter la mise en oeuvre de solutions efficaces et durables et encourager le partage d'expériences et de bonnes pratiques entre les différents acteurs.

Et c'est le cas de *The MedFund*, ce fonds fiduciaire innovant que nous avons lancé, en 2015 également, avec la France et la Tunisie, rejoints depuis par d'autres acteurs publics et privés. Il nous permet lui aussi de mobiliser les moyens importants au profit des aires marines protégées de Méditerranée, de leur développement et de leur mise en réseau.

Tous ces chantiers, auxquels nous travaillons quotidiennement en Méditerranée, sont je pense, de nature à nous inspirer à plus large échelle.

Je me réjouis à cet égard que la France et plus précisément la ville voisine et amie de Nice, à quelques kilomètres d'ici, ait été choisie pour accueillir, en 2025, la troisième Conférence des Nations Unies sur les océans.

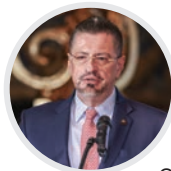
Elle permettra, j'espère, d'avancer dans une extension des mesures que j'évoquais, et, dès à présent, Monaco, vous le savez, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur de France pour les pôles et les enjeux maritimes, est totalement disposé à apporter sa part au succès de ce rendez-vous international essentiel.

Et c'est bien là le défi qui doit nous occuper au cours de cette journée : amplifier, accélérer et généraliser le mouvement de protection des océans que nous constatons. Le faire en associant tous les acteurs - je dis bien - tous les acteurs - dans un esprit de cohérence et inventer ainsi, tous ensemble, un modèle de développement capable de réconcilier enfin l'humanité et l'Océan.

Je vous remercie.

Thank you very much.

# KEYNOTE SPEECHES



**H.E. Mr Rodrigo Chaves Robles**  
*President of the Republic  
of Costa Rica*

Costa Rica is "a small country that doesn't say it, a country that does it", **Mr Chaves** said, noting it had reversed deforestation by increasing forest coverage from 25% to over 54% in just a few decades and established protected areas for more than 30% of its maritime territory.

While the recent success of UN negotiations on biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction should be celebrated, "*Vision without action is hallucination*", he warned. Despite our efforts, despite years of talk about unsustainable fishing, plastic pollution, climate change, and biodiversity loss, if we don't act quickly to mobilize resources and engage all stakeholders, ocean damage risks becoming impossible to control.

We should be losing sleep over the new threat of seabed mining, which certain countries are pushing for within the International Seabed Authority. Since 2019, Costa Rica has been emphasizing the Authority's obligation to comply with Article 145 of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea mandating protection of the marine environment from any harmful effects which may arise from seabed mining. The only way to comply is to not exploit any portion of the seabed until and unless we have enough scientific data to make informed decisions and effectively protect the marine environment.

Costa Rica and other countries are calling for a precautionary pause to seabed mining and will continue to work constructively with all delegations in the framework of the Seabed Authority to move in the right direction - not one established based on the short-term economic interests of a few while ignoring the costs to all.

At a regional level, Costa Rica is pushing for a Transboundary Marine Biosphere Reserve in the Eastern Pacific Tropical Marine Corridor. Nationally, Costa Rica's Blue Agenda includes plans for a public-private Blue Fund for conservation, and for a new payment mechanism for Marine Ecosystem Services based on Costa Rica's well-known land-based Payments for Environmental Services programme.

Costa Rica and France will be honoured to co-host the United Nations Ocean Conference in 2025 in Nice. A high-level preparatory event will be organized in Costa Rica in 2024, bringing together Governments and a broad array of stakeholders to enhance the political and financial mobilization needed to meet the Sustainable Development Goal 14: Life below water.

As explorer Robert Swan said: "*The greatest danger to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it*". On all of us lies the responsibility to act, and act now – for future generations.





**Mr Huang Runqiu**  
*Minister of Ecology and  
Environment, People's  
Republic of China*

In a video message, **Mr Huang** highlighted the Chinese government's ecological efforts of the past decade. China's pollution and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions have fallen while water and air quality, renewable energy use and forest coverage have all increased significantly. The Chinese Communist Party Congress in October 2022 outlined initiatives to reduce carbon emissions and pollution, expand green coverage, conserve and effectively use resources, and pursue economic growth.

The Chinese government is accelerating the green transformation of traditional marine industries such as mariculture while vigorously developing offshore wind power and other low-carbon marine industries. It is strengthening management of marine pollution, and has restored 1,500 kilometres of coastline and 30,000 hectares of coastal wetlands since 2016. Lastly, China is deepening international cooperation on marine environmental monitoring and microplastics management.

China hosted the CBD COP15 Part 1 in October 2021, resulting in the Kunming Declaration on reducing negative human impacts on the ocean, protecting biodiversity, and enhancing marine and coastal ecosystems' resilience to climate change.

This formed the basis for the "[Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#)" adopted at COP15 Part 2 in December 2022 in Montreal. Mr Huang also noted the recent agreement on a BBNJ treaty, calling it a milestone in international ocean development and cooperation.

China is willing to work with all countries in the world to implement the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Biodiversity Framework, strengthen the integration of land and sea, promote marine pollution prevention and control, increase marine protection and restoration, and enhance ocean resilience to climate change. At the same time, we should jointly promote development of the blue economy, Mr Huang affirmed. Lastly, we should adhere to genuine multilateralism and firmly uphold the ocean order based on international law.

# SESSION 1



## FIRESIDE CHAT

**H.E. Ms Razan Al Mubarak**

*President, International Union for Conservation of Nature*

H.E. Ms Al Mubarak suggested this was a moment of celebration for oceans, following the historic Global Biodiversity Agreement and the High Seas Treaty. Celebration should be used to galvanize action, and we must work together to ensure the High Seas Treaty is ratified.

Climate change requires a whole-world, whole-of-society approach. We must further define the metrics and standards and ensure that people working on the ground gain recognition and access to finance. Half the world's population is already impacted by climate change, and governments cannot ignore this.

The United Arab Emirates' presidency of COP28 will deliver the first global assessment of progress made towards reaching the goals of the Paris Agreement. Not much has been done, so the question is how to turn the tide to reduce emissions by half within seven years. We must phase down and phase out fossil fuels and embrace new technologies, and not forget the technology nature provides, at scale and at zero cost other than that of protection.

We will not reduce warming if we continue activation of fossil fuels. The UAE needs to demonstrate that it is walking the talk. Today 70% of its GDP does not rely on oil. The phase-out of fossil fuels is imminent and if the UAE wants to maintain a role as an energy provider, we need to transition out today, she said.

Moderator Yalda Hakim pointed out that while the Emirates' economy may have diversified at home, it still provided 10% of global oil. Ms Al Mubarak said the UAE had invested \$50 billion in renewable energy in 70 countries and would double that in the next 10 years, and was home to the three largest, lowest-cost solar plants in the world. On Yalda Hakim's question if it was difficult to reconcile her IUCN and UAE roles, Ms Al Mubarak said everyone needed to be at the table, and that fossil fuel providers need to be responsible providers. You cannot achieve the Paris Agreement without nature, and you cannot protect nature without the financing that has to come out of the Paris Agreement. She concluded by ensuring that the Ocean will play front and centre in our journey to COP28.



## SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES: RECONCILING CONSERVATION AND EXPLOITATION IN THE NEXT DECADE AND BEYOND

### PANEL DISCUSSION

#### MODERATOR

**Ms Yalda Hakim**, *Chief Presenter and International Correspondent, BBC World News*

#### PANELISTS

**Dr Miguel Bernal**, *Executive Secretary, General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean*

**Mr Stephen Kankam**, *Co-founder and Deputy Director, Hen Mpoano (Our Coast), Republic of Ghana, and Edinburgh Ocean Leader*

**Prof Ussif Rashid Sumaila**, *Professor of Oceans and Fisheries Economics, The University of British Columbia, Canada*

**Ms Nina Jensen**, *Chief Executive Officer, REV Ocean AS, Norway*

Making fisheries sustainable is an urgent necessity for the future of ocean health. Yet progress towards this goal faces formidable obstacles, from overfishing, Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing (IUU), and destructive practices such as bottom trawling. Climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution further stress the resource. Reforming unsustainable fisheries requires balancing ecological goals with socioeconomic, nutritional, geopolitical and cultural aspects. This session explored these challenges and ways to address them, illustrated by examples from fisheries governance, community-based conservation, economics and blue finance.





UBC fisheries economics professor **Rashid Sumaila** began by observing that the estimated 100 million tonnes of fish caught each year, both legally and illegally, represented nearly double the biomass of mature cattle killed annually for meat. Economically, fishing brings in about \$200 billion at port and almost half a trillion dollars in added value, while some 260 million people around the world earn income from it.

Ecologically speaking, overfishing means extracting more than nature can generate in a given period of time. In other words, we are not just spending the interest, but depleting the capital. Economists would prefer to leave more fish in the ocean, more even than conservationists, as the more fish you have in the ocean, the less costly it is to fish. Overfishing stems from competition to profit from what is common property before someone else does. Yet if fishing were well-managed, we could have fish forever, Mr Sumaila said. This is the hypothesis of his recent book *Infinity Fish*.

**Nina Jensen** of Norwegian non-profit REV Ocean stated it bluntly: we're overfishing because we're greedy. We're ignoring what science has been telling us for years; we have international agreements in place for doing what we know needs to be done but we're not doing it.

It all comes down to money: people are making a huge profit out of doing the wrong things, and unless we can get the economic incentives in place, we won't be able to stop overfishing. Worse, we continue to subsidize harmful activities in the ocean. In 2022 an important agreement was reached in the World Trade Organization to end harmful fisheries subsidies but as Costa Rica's president said in his speech, vision without action is hallucination. It doesn't help to have an agreement in place unless individual nations act upon it, she said.

To **Miguel Bernal** of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, the overfishing issue is more complex, as many aspects make fisheries unique.



Fishing is the only food production system that relies completely on the productivity of the environment, and fish is a high-quality food. We can't separate the problem of overfishing from other Sustainable Development Goals regarding hunger, poverty, and malnutrition.

It is true that the Mediterranean is the most overfished area in the world, but it's also one of the few areas to have seen a reduction of overfishing in the last decade. We now know that if the fishing community follows appropriate rules, we can reverse this situation. Efficiently managed fisheries can be sustainable, he argued.

Nina Jensen agreed the issue is complex. Fish stocks are shared by multiple nations, which don't always agree on how much each should take. Take the example of herring stocks in the North Atlantic, which totally collapsed in the 1960s due to systematic overfishing. It took 25 years and close attention to science to rebuild them, yet today we're on the verge of a new collapse, because the countries sharing this resource are unable to reach an

agreement and heed scientific advice. To achieve sustainable fisheries, we must put science at the core of everything we do, she affirmed.

Edinburgh Ocean Leader **Stephen Kankam** said overfishing resulted from a lack of political will and a lack of commitment to transparency. His non-profit Hen Mpoano works with local communities in Ghana to foster sustainable governance of marine and coastal ecosystems along the Gulf of Guinea. As over 70% of the fish caught is consumed locally, overfishing there has significant implications for food and livelihood security. The threat to the resource also destabilizes social cohesion and distorts culture, because fishing is a way of life.

Weak governance in the region makes it difficult to ensure transparency and accountability are enshrined in the law and enforced, but we mustn't castigate governments in developing countries; they lack the capabilities, resources and technology for enforcement of fisheries laws, Mr Kankam said.

Civil society organizations in the region have a responsibility to mobilize local fisherfolk and the public to bring pressure to bear on government. His NGO works to mobilize women in more than 50 coastal communities in southern Ghana to ensure they have voices and are brought into fisheries management decision-making. It also works

Nina Jensen declared that bottom trawling should be banned completely, and that it would never have begun in the first place if today's scientific data had been available at the time. Bottom trawling not only destroys fish stocks and benthic habitats, it also releases an estimated half a billion tons of carbon each year, she noted.



with fisherfolk, journalists and other stakeholders to press for government transparency and accountability and ensure the authorities publish information about vessel owners and other data that is necessary for sustainable management of fisheries. The distant water fleet of trawlers that operate in Ghana are licensed to do bottom trawling, but not within the inshore exclusive zone, which is reserved for the artisanal fleet.

Reacting to Miguel Bernal's suggestion that overfishing was not just about economics, Rashid Sumaila said that while that may be true, the profit motive of the commercial distant-water fishing fleet overran the needs of local communities, small-scale fishers and indigenous peoples. Subsidies aggravate that effect: his studies show that around 80% of all fishing subsidies worldwide go to large-scale fishers, most of them bottom trawlers who plough the seabed, release stored carbon and aggravate climate change.



This in turn kills fish due to temperature rise, ocean acidification and deoxygenation. These impacts are well known, but bottom trawling and subsidies continue because of powerful lobbies that influence governments, and also because of corruption: the elephant in the room. The solution will only come through pressure from citizens. The UN Biodiversity Treaty and the June 2022 WTO agreement on fisheries subsidies will mean nothing until the population, including experts like people in this room, really push, Mr Sumaila said.

Miguel Bernal stated that 80% of the fish consumed in the world came from sustainably fished stocks according to the scientific community. He noted that bottom trawling was completely forbidden in more than 60% of the Mediterranean. Yet, there is a lack of compliance and a lack of a well-established regulatory framework in some areas, he admitted.

Rashid Sumaila strongly contested these figures: if 80% of our fish was sustainable, then we could all go home. In Malaysia where he visited recently, in the same port where signs advertised fuel subsidies, fishermen were no longer fishing because they could not catch anything. Fishmongers in the local market had nothing but a few tiny fish to sell. We can see there is a lot of overfishing, and how it impacts people. We need to mobilize and solve it, he said.

Nina Jensen noted insufficient public awareness of the situation, and of what countries had committed to, as opposed to what they were actually doing. She called for a global transparency system to expose clearly which nations were doing what, where; and what companies and individuals were investing in these activities. That would be a game-changer for holding countries, organizations, companies and people accountable for harming the ocean.

She asked Miguel Bernal whether it wouldn't be better to ban bottom trawling completely, as on paper it was already banned in large parts of the ocean. He argued that no food production system could avoid damage, and that when entering a discussion to ban a whole activity like bottom trawling one had to compare it with other food production systems, and know what would replace it, since banning it would have consequences for food security.

Rashid Sumaila disagreed, arguing that agriculture and forestry are tackling their issues. If you say that before you can do something here, you have to do something everywhere, then we get stuck in the prisoner's dilemma, where nobody does anything and we get nowhere, he said.

## QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Mission Blue founder and marine biologist **Sylvia Earle** suggested it was time we started thinking about fish as something other than just products. The more than 30,000 types of fish are a critical part of the ocean as a living system, which is not just a place to extract whatever we want. By massively overfishing, humans are disrupting this living system. The International Monetary Fund has assigned a \$1 trillion carbon value to whales; this could also apply to tuna, swordfish, herring, cod and all the others. We respect humans, chimpanzees, lions and tigers for who they are. We should give all fish the dignity of recognizing that they are individuals before mindlessly taking them by clearcutting the ocean, just because we can.

# SESSION 2

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## KEYNOTE

### **The Hon. Minister Mr Jean-François Ferrari**

*Designated Minister & Minister for Fisheries and the Blue Economy,  
the Republic of the Seychelles*

The ocean provides food and climate regulation, yet too often we have taken it for granted, disregarding the harmful effects of pollution, over-fishing and many other destructive practices, which are aggravated by climate change, Minister Ferrari began.

While marine protected areas help species and ecosystems recover by countering negative pressures, today less than 3% of the world's ocean is adequately protected MPAs. The global objective to reach 30% ocean protection by 2030 remains a real challenge due to the lack of political will and of financial, technical, scientific and human resources, Mr Ferrari noted. Despite the difficulty, Seychelles reached this goal in March 2020, with 32% of its Exclusive Economic Zone designated as MPAs.

The real challenge, however, is not designating MPAs, but effectively managing, monitoring and enforcing them. Many countries, especially Small Island Developing States, lack the resources to enforce protection within their EEZ, let alone to chase illegal vessels beyond these zones.

The Seychelles EEZ covers over 1.35 million km<sup>2</sup> of ocean space, while its coast guard has only 3 patrol vessels, and no research vessels. Seychelles and other SIDS need support to give meaning to these MPAs.

Mr Ferrari thanked the [Monaco Explorations](#) and HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco for the successful research expedition with Seychellois and Mauritian scientists around Saya de Malha Bank and Aldabra Atoll. They expect significant benefits for the management of the Aldabra MPA, Seychelles' largest. More generally, we need to develop a relationship of solidarity and responsibility with one another, recognizing that any action we take could have an impact elsewhere; this is why international conferences like the MBI are so important.



## FIRESIDE CHAT

**The Rt Hon. Patricia Scotland KC**  
*Secretary-General of the Commonwealth*

Ms Scotland pointed out that SDG14 on conservation and sustainable use of the ocean was woefully underfunded, drawing just 0.1% of development finance. This is particularly dramatic for Small Island Developing States, as oceans make up 96% of their jurisdictions. Forty-nine of the 56 Commonwealth countries are ocean states, while 25 are SIDS, two-thirds of the world total. They are experiencing the existential threat of climate change today: in the space of just a few weeks Vanuatu has been struck twice by a cyclone, and increasing sea level rise represents an existential threat.

Ms Scotland rejected the notion that political will was lacking among the 56 leaders she works with. Mostly situated in the global South, these countries have contributed the least to the climate crisis but are suffering the most from its impacts. In 2009, developed countries pledged \$100 billion in support for climate mitigation and adaptation in the global South bearing the brunt of the threat. Yet here we are in 2023 and that assistance has yet to be delivered.

The Commonwealth Blue Charter was created to structure and scale up Commonwealth ocean action, while the [Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub \(CCFAH\)](#) helps member states navigate complicated procedures to access global

climate funds. The hub also deploys national climate finance advisors to help governments deliver policies like those of the Seychelles.

As of March 2023, CCFAH had delivered \$67.5 million for approved projects in small states, with \$100 million to come, and trained more than 2,000 officials across the Commonwealth.

Kiribati is an example of the difficulties tiny island states face. With just 325 square miles of land, it is trying to protect some 3.5 million square miles of ocean. The developed world must help. Nothing is more depressing for a member state that is already fighting tooth and nail to be told they lack political will. The perception of a lack of political will is because of countries in the global North who make promises and do not deliver, or who make it so difficult for small and poor countries to access assistance that they simply give up.

Political will needs oxygen, just like the ocean, but in the form of people, scientific knowledge, implementation strategies, and capacity building. Progress in the last 6 months gives hope because people are now not just committing, but saying how they are going to deliver.





## HIGHLY PROTECTED MPAS: WHAT'S AT STAKE AND WHAT'S THE VISION FOR 2030?

### PANEL DISCUSSION

#### MODERATOR

**Ms Yalda Hakim**, *Chief Presenter and International Correspondent, BBC World News*

#### PANELISTS

**Prof Heather Koldewey**, *Programme Lead, Bertarelli Foundation's Marine Science Programme, Zoological Society London & Honorary Professor, University of Exeter, United Kingdom*

**Mr Roland Coulon**, *Business Director, Blue Finance, France*

**Ms Shirley Binder**, *Ministerial Senior Office Advisor, Ministry of Environment, Panama, and Edinburgh Ocean Leader*

**Ms Funda Kök**, *Conservation manager, Akdeniz Koruma Derneği (Mediterranean Conservation Society), Türkiye*

**The Rt Hon. Patricia Scotland KC**, *Secretary-General of the Commonwealth*

**The Hon. Minister Mr Jean-François Ferrari** *Designated Minister & Minister for Fisheries and the Blue Economy, the Republic of the Seychelles*

Global MPA coverage is growing quickly from a spatial standpoint, yet many protected areas are not fulfilling their conservation objectives. Highly and Fully Protected Areas that are well-implemented and enforced are known to be the most effective. The recent Global Biodiversity Framework and the long-awaited draft agreement on a legally binding High Seas Treaty present new opportunities to expand and improve marine protection. In this panel, representatives from science, governance, conservation and blue finance explored how to bridge the gap between ambitious targets and effective action, addressing the role of local communities, civil society, governments and the private sector and highlighting geopolitical, socio-economic and other challenges.

**Heather Koldewey** defined Highly Protected Areas as those in which no destructive or extractive activities are allowed. Global targets have been missed repeatedly in recent decades; while we were supposed to have reached 10% protection by 2010, then in 2020, in 2023 we've only reached 8%, with only 3% Highly Protected.

The landmark CBD agreement calls for 30% of land and sea areas to be under protection by 2030. This means not just spatial coverage, but also ensuring protected areas are effective and inclusive. We're falling short on all three goals.

The main reason is conflict among users and economic interests, as per the earlier discussion in Session 1 about overfishing and bottom trawling. The Covid-19 episode also caused disruptions. Well-documented solutions exist for MPAs to achieve that triple win, Ms Koldewey affirmed. Highly protected areas deliver the best conservation benefits, but must not come at the cost of the local economy. As an adviser to marine protected areas in Mozambique, she brought teams from the Philippines to share knowledge from fisher to fisher, which helped locals to see MPAs as replenishment zones.

Climate must be factored in, too, as more and more data demonstrate the climate value of protecting the ocean, from carbon stored in deep-sea sediments to carbon stocks in recovering fish populations. Ms Koldewey cited *The MPA Guide* as a very clear resource about what MPAs could and couldn't do, and about their different objectives.

Joining the panel, Seychelles Fisheries and Blue Economy **Minister Jean-François Ferrari** emphasized that engaging local communities was fundamental to successful implementation of MPAs. Seychelles initially tried to push through protection without community participation: it didn't work.

We changed our approach, and now have fishermen's associations in every fishing district, who look after their protected areas and facilities, he said. The fisherman needs to know he has control and that it's not somebody else telling him what to do.

**Funda Kök's** Mediterranean Conservation Society began work 10 years ago in the Gökova MPA off the southwestern coast of Türkiye. It took years of working with communities to gain their support. Small-scale fishers were using dynamite and other destructive practices, but over time, scientific monitoring showed them the harm this was doing and encouraged more sustainable practices. Being able to show that restrictions on fishing in one area gave species space to grow helped convince them. Ms Kök also emphasized the importance of networks and ecological connectivity between MPAs.

**Shirley Binder** shared Panama's experience with highly protected marine areas. While 54% of Panama's waters are under some type of protection, they need more resources to be effective. Panama's expansion of oceanic protected areas has benefited coastal communities where fishers can't go far out to sea. Taking care of these highly productive spaces has spillover effects, bringing fish into waters closer to shore where local fishers can harvest them, which is a strong argument for making fully and highly protected areas in the High Seas.

It takes a long time for communities to see benefits, oftentimes more than 10 years, which is problematic because they have little trust in governments, she noted. Cabo Pulmo National Park in Mexico's Sea of Cortez, a small, community-led MPA, is a positive example where ocean health and fish life have greatly increased and spilled over into waters around it.



It is not so much a matter of convincing local communities as of working with them. One community in Panama actually asked for expansion of a protected area where they were allowed to fish by hook-and-line, as outsiders were going into the area with prohibited gear. Thanks to the expansion, local fishers are now catching larger tuna with a higher market value. Insufficient processing and cold-chain capacity is a problem that leads to a lot of waste; communities need help to develop these and other means to improve fishing livelihoods.

**Heather Koldewey** commented that Western science did not invent marine protected areas. Most traditional fishing communities have spatial management practices that can be built upon. A short-term extraction mentality comes from other forces and from illegal and unsustainable fishing, while some of the best-managed protection comes from indigenous communities. Western science is getting much better at recognizing local and traditional ecological knowledge and opportunities for capacity-sharing, rather than capacity building, to amplify these traditional values.

**Patricia Scotland** mentioned local community involvement in mangrove restoration, which returns those habitats to their traditional role as nurseries for marine life, improving livelihoods.

Blue Finance Business Director **Roland Coulon's** social enterprise develops and manages MPAs in Belize, Philippines, Tanzania and Indonesia and facilitates multi-party co-management agreements. He agreed working with local communities was key; in some situations, communities were helping Blue Finance to manage and enforce protected areas. The main thing is to make them proud of their natural resources and ensure they understand the reasons for protection, and that it can't be done without them, he said.

Blue Finance works to improve enforcement, compliance, and management while developing funding sources and sustainable revenues for MPAs. Some can develop ecotourism, small-scale aquaculture or blue carbon activities such as mangrove restoration. Blue Finance also provides support for fisheries supply and cold chains and is involving



communities in creating a company to manage new activities made possible by MPAs.

Shirley Binder warned that developing alternative livelihoods with fishermen was difficult, as fishing was their culture and their way of life. Governments and NGOs start off working with communities, but they often leave once the MPAs are created, she said. They need to engage over a long period, not leaving until the tools are in place to deliver improved livelihoods, whether through tourism, aquaculture, or better fishing practices.

She expressed frustration with the gap between talk and action. During discussions on the Global Biodiversity Framework, Panama sought to incorporate language into the 30x30 target stating that protected areas must prohibit environmentally damaging activities. To her dismay, even High Ambition Coalition countries objected. These activities must be prohibited in MPAs to benefit local communities, most of which fish sustainably.

Funda Kök's organization involves communities in active enforcement through a marine ranger system. Expansion of the Suez Canal has resulted in the additional threat of invasive species such as the Randall's threadfin bream, which accounted for 30% of landings in Gökova MPA by 2015. In cooperation with [MedPAN](#), they took a market-based approach to increase the species' value through food festivals and awareness campaigns. In just a few years, 30% of small-scale fishers' income was coming from this fish.

Using lessons from the Caribbean, a similar strategy boosted the value of invasive lionfish, whose high reproduction rate is a big threat to native Turkish species. This approach increased incomes of over 300 small-scale fishers within two years while decreasing the invader's negative impact on the ecosystem.



Heather Koldewey reiterated the highly destructive nature of bottom-trawling, noting that in parts of Asia this now amounts to indiscriminate biomass fishing for fertilizer. This has huge implications for biodiversity, for small-scale fishers and for climate. Transitioning out of a widespread practice is always tricky, but we have seen it done in agriculture and other sectors. The concept of bottom trawling in a protected area is insane, she said. We already know how long other habitats take to recover; in trawled habitats, particularly deeper and slower-growth ecosystems, recovery takes decades if not centuries.

Jean-François Ferrari noted that Seychelles had already banned bottom trawling, yet Indian Ocean countries continue to suffer harm from illegal fishing. Last year, after being thrown out of the Gulf of Guinea by Senegal, Mauritania and other countries all the way up the western African coast, five vessels fishing illegally crossed the Mediterranean and ended up on the Seychelles plateau. When Seychelles authorities arrested, charged, and kicked them out, they went to Madagascar, and they're fishing there now, Mr Ferrari said.

We must find a way to ban bottom trawling worldwide, engaging everyone. With my colleagues in the southern Indian Ocean, we want to be part of the solution, to fish less and to fish sustainably, he said. But the world must come together. If you ask for an effort, you must ask for everyone to make an effort. If the guy next door doesn't kill the rats, they'll end up in your kitchen.

## QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

**Geneviève Pons** of Antarctica 2020 drew attention to Southern Ocean MPAs, noting that with 90% of the world's ice and 70% of its fresh water,

Antarctica played a crucial biodiversity and climate role. Proposed protection of this area covering 4 million km<sup>2</sup> has been on the table for years but is still opposed by China and Russia. While the situation is complicated as far as Russia is concerned, China was instrumental in the Kunming-Montreal Agreement and adoption of the 30x30 objective and has agreed to protection of the High Seas, she said.



Ms Pons suggested involving China in scientific missions in the proposed Antarctic protected area. She also highlighted the need to address the unsustainable appetite for krill in the Southern Ocean by promoting alternatives and modifying regulation imposing a certain percentage of marine protein in farmed fish.

**Minna Epps** of the IUCN asked for panelists' vision for areas beyond national jurisdiction following the March 4 agreement on the High Seas Treaty, particularly with regard to MPA networks in these areas.

**Shirley Binder** replied that by creating the legal framework for establishing MPAs in the High Seas, the BBNJ treaty would elevate efforts Seychelles, Panama, Colombia and other countries



were already making to achieve 30% protection in their waters. It will also allow the creation of MPA networks, which are essential, especially for migratory species. She again deplored the lack of quality language in the Global Biodiversity Framework, which neither mentions prohibiting environmentally harmful activities nor protecting "highly and fully". The Blue Leaders countries are pushing for

stronger language to materialize the political will necessary to ensure the High Seas Treaty and 30% protection will actually be effective. All countries must be on board, even landlocked ones, as all countries are reliant on a functional and thriving ocean.

**Heather Koldewey** warned that the 30x30 goal could not be reached without the High Seas. The High Seas Treaty is a milestone, after decades of negotiation, but we have to make sure it gets ratified as soon as possible and that the legal language translates into marine protection in international waters.

**Anand Singh**, a filmmaker from South Africa, highlighted the importance of storytelling and messaging to encourage the public to influence governments and other actors.

**Peggy Kalas**, former director of the High Seas Alliance, noted that currently only 1% of the High Seas were protected though they made up 70% of our global ocean. The BBNJ Agreement has delivered a process for creating MPAs in international waters. One remarkable point about the treaty is that agreement will only require a majority vote, not a consensus, so if a majority of countries vote for a High Seas MPA no single country such as Russia will be able to block it. This is a moment to celebrate, but 2030 isn't far away, and we can't get to the 30% target unless we fast-track ratification of the BBNJ agreement.

**Jean-François Ferrari** mentioned last year's Monaco Explorations Indian Ocean Mission, a joint endeavour between Mauritius, Seychelles, La Réunion and Monaco, as a great example of the kind of international cooperation needed in the global south. He called for more engagement in this type of scientific venture.

# SESSION 3

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## KEYNOTE

**Ms Kate Guy**

*Senior Adviser, US Department of State, U.S.A.*

Ms Guy outlined recent US initiatives to address the growing and intersecting planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and plastic pollution. Domestically, the US has passed historic climate change legislation paving the way for unprecedented investment in strengthening coastal resilience.

Globally, the US has secured ambitious commitments from governments and partners on ocean-based climate solutions such as offshore renewable energy, reducing shipping emissions and promoting sustainable tourism and fisheries. One tool is the Green Shipping Challenge, which will help align the shipping sector with the goal of limiting temperature rise to 1.5°C.

At COP27 last year the US pledged more than \$40 million to expand climate disaster early warning systems to Africa, Least Developed, and Small Island Developing States. It also launched the Ocean Conservation Pledge to rally countries to protect at least 30% of their territorial ocean by 2030.

A similar effort is needed to address another major threat, especially on the High Seas: Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported fishing. President Biden has issued a national security memorandum mobilizing the whole US government on this issue, while the US Congress passed the [Maritime Security and Fisheries Act](#). The US is also acting within the IUU Fishing Action Alliance launched in June 2022 by the US, UK and Canada and since joined by many others to increase support for smaller states to be able to take action.

Plastic pollution is another area of much vision and too little action, but at the 5<sup>th</sup> UN Environment Assembly last year, the US joined other countries to pass a resolution towards a new global legal instrument to combat plastic pollution on land and in the ocean. The US has committed major new funds to build capacity in places bearing the brunt of the pollution crisis; when President Biden said the US was back at the table, he meant it, she said.



## THE ROLE OF MARINE ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION IN ACHIEVING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

### PANEL DISCUSSION

#### MODERATOR

**Ms Yalda Hakim**, *Chief Presenter and International Correspondent, BBC World News*

#### PANELISTS

**Ms Leticia Carvalho**, *Principal Coordinator, Marine and Freshwater Branch, United Nations Environment Programme, Kenya*

**Mr Marco Lambertini**, *Special Envoy at WWF International, Switzerland*

**Prof. Jean-Pierre Gattuso**, *Research Director, Laboratoire d'Océanographie, CNRS-Sorbonne Université & Ocean Scientist, Associate Researcher, Institut du développement durable et des relations internationales, France*

**Mr Peter Manyara**, *Regional Program Manager, Coastal and Ocean Resilience IUCN, Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office, South Africa, and Edinburgh Ocean Leader*

Marine ecosystem restoration is seen as a nature-based way to reverse biodiversity loss, enhance carbon sequestration, and protect coasts from harmful impacts of climate change. As such, it is part of the commitments made by signatories of the new Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework of December 2022, which adopted the goal of 30% degraded terrestrial, inland water, and marine and coastal ecosystems under effective restoration by 2030, alongside the goal of 30% protection of nature by 2030. Yet there are scientific, cost and time-scale challenges related to restoration, in addition to the risk that actors engaged in destructive activities may view it as a viable substitute for protection. This session explored the opportunities and challenges around marine ecosystem restoration, with input from governance, conservation, and ocean science.



**Leticia Carvalho** of UNEP set the scene by noting that this was the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration. The Decade is a movement, providing a platform and a catalyst not just for rehabilitating degraded ecosystems, but also for preventing and halting the drivers of degradation.

**Marco Lambertini**, Special Envoy at WWF International, said restoration was critical because we had lost so much, particularly in the last 60 to 70 years. While restoration is a key component of the move away from a nature-negative economy to a nature-positive one, it must be combined with protection and prevention lest it create a kind of cat-and-mouse race where degradation is allowed to continue, followed by restoration to correct the damage done. Destruction happens much faster than restoration, so prevention of the negative impacts of our current economic model should be the priority.

Protecting 30% by 2030 is critical, but the other 70% is equally important, and is where we need to work on the economic drivers of nature loss. The absolute priority today is to make sure habitats in good health don't deteriorate. In parallel, we need to restore as much of what we have lost as possible. Restoration must not serve as an excuse to sacrifice existing habitats with the idea we can restore them later on, he said.

Leticia Carvalho agreed that protection and restoration went hand in hand, and that it was important to change economic models while accelerating restoration. [The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration](#) has so far involved 61 countries and restored 23 marine and water-related sites, proving these ecosystems can recover. We know how to do it, but we need to escalate the means to do so, she said.



Research scientist **Jean-Pierre Gattuso** emphasized the need to avoid damage in the first place, as restoration is costly and difficult. He and colleagues published a paper in 2020 suggesting that substantial recovery could be achieved by 2050, and that rebuilding marine life made ethical and economic sense. The Mekong Delta is one example of successful restoration: 1,500 km<sup>2</sup> of mangrove forest have been fully restored 40 years after complete destruction, and now sequesters as much carbon as before.

While mangrove restoration is a fairly easy, low-regret action that involves local communities and offers many co-benefits, restoring seagrass beds is more difficult, especially slow-growing seagrass species such as *Posidonia oceanica* in the Mediterranean. Coral reefs have proven to be quite resilient but they are sensitive to warming ocean temperatures, and if we don't act on climate change there is little hope they can be restored, Mr Gattuso warned.

**Peter Manyara** of the IUCN's Coastal and Ocean Resilience Program in Eastern and Southern Africa highlighted the relevance of marine ecosystem restoration in the Indian Ocean region in the wake of cyclone Freddy. The exceptionally long-lasting and deadly storm killed hundreds and wrought terrible destruction on agriculture and infrastructure, particularly in Mozambique and in Malawi. The worst devastation was in Mozambique's Zambezi Delta, where the mangrove had already suffered significant degradation due to overharvesting.

The IUCN is working with Wetlands International, the WWF and the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development to assess the potential for mangrove restoration in Kenya, Tanzania, Madagascar and particularly Mozambique

where most of the population lives near coastal areas and derives a lot of benefit from these ecosystems.

Many small initiatives lack the funding to scale up. To remedy this, IUCN and partners established the Great Blue Wall Initiative to mobilize financial resources and political leadership to scale up mangrove restoration. The restoration potential of mangroves in the western Indian Ocean region represents about 40,000 hectares, but would need significantly less funding than current investment into growing palm trees for palm oil production in Indonesia, for example.

Marco Lambertini highlighted the need to invest directly in protection and restoration, as the underfunding of marine protected areas seriously hinders their effectiveness today. At the same time, we need to steer investment away from the activities driving harmful impacts on the ocean, whether overfishing, extractives, or unsustainable aquaculture.

Based on the WWF's experience, success of restoration and protection projects requires taking an integrated, holistic look at the local socioeconomic reality and ensuring projects deliver benefits there. Too often we stop at just creating a protected area, but that is not enough: the protected area needs to regenerate fish stocks and attract ecotourism to benefit local people, while also reducing land-based pressures. To be able to do that, protected areas need durable funding.

The Medes Islands in Spain and the Tuscan Archipelago in the Tyrrhenian Sea are two successful Mediterranean examples. Initially there was a lot of opposition, as local people felt dispossessed. This required a change in narrative to emphasize that protection supported replenishment of

resources and sustainable development. Now that the ecosystem is healthier, ecotourism, sustainable fishing and harvesting of other goods like seaweed has improved livelihoods. This kind of triple environmental, economic and social win is both necessary and possible.

sequestration. While blue carbon is all the rage in discussions of marine restoration, there is great uncertainty about the amount of carbon stored by ecosystems like seagrass beds, mangroves and salt marshes, and not all can be restored, he cautioned.



Leticia Carvalho agreed that connecting protection and restoration with job generation was a critical aspect in empowering societies connected to these ecosystems. The UN Decade on Restoration anticipates some 70 million direct and indirect green and blue jobs.

Jean-Pierre Gattuso mentioned that one dollar invested in ocean protection and restoration would yield an estimated \$10 back. Restoration is a smart investment both for jobs and for co-benefits such as coastline protection, food security, and maintaining biodiversity, but not necessarily for carbon

To Mr Gattuso, delivering carbon credits for blue carbon ecosystem restoration is problematic. A recent paper he co-authored estimated that blue carbon could mop up at most maybe 1% of present CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. While any percentage is important, it is almost impossible to determine how much carbon has been stored through a restoration project, which makes it difficult to do robust carbon crediting. Mr Gattuso questioned the honesty of the carbon crediting system, noting that the REDD+ mechanism to reduce emissions from deforestation had been shown to be largely a failure and a recent Guardian article had also



exposed issues with the Verra carbon crediting system. He stressed however, that restoring blue carbon ecosystems remains essential for many other reasons: protecting biodiversity, food security, fighting erosion, etc.

Marco Lambertini agreed this was a very heated and tricky debate. Crediting must not replace emission reductions. Offsetting is not meant to give a green pass to emitters, it is meant to be used only as a last resort for mitigating unavoidable residual emissions. A company that wants to offset must first do all it can to avoid and reduce, and that's where we need to put pressure. However, credits and offsetting for those last unavoidable emissions do offer an opportunity to channel resources to nature-based climate mitigation solutions, so we need to find the right way to do it.

Peter Manyara noted the High Seas Treaty, the Global Biodiversity Framework and the Paris Climate Agreement all recognized we had to protect, conserve, restore and wisely use. IUCN-backed efforts in the Western Indian Ocean region involve a lot of local communities in mangrove restoration. The impact within a country is acknowledged, but evaluating community initiatives' contribution to global GBF targets is more difficult. The IUCN and others have developed tools to help with this. The [Species Threat Abatement and Restoration \(STAR\) metric](#) assesses the impacts of specific actions on a specific location. The [IUCN Red List](#) tracks the level of threat and rates of extinction of different species, while the [Green List](#) helps to properly design and assess protected areas, and to account for economic, environmental and social outcomes.

Asked about assisted evolution, Marco Lambertini said the idea "gave him shivers". It sounds like playing God, and is yet another example of

focusing on downstream problems rather than root causes. Instead, we must reduce emissions; conserve and restore; "green" the financial system; and reform the main killers of nature and the ocean: agriculture, overfishing, extractives, forestry and land use. The data are terrifying and time is running out. We shouldn't be thinking about what is possible, but what is necessary, he said.

Scientist Jean-Pierre Gattuso agreed assisted evolution clearly did not top the list of recommended ocean-based solutions. It depends on the definition, however: propagating one particularly resilient species of coral could help reefs, for example, but not on the necessary scale. It is a fantasy to think we can rely on assisted evolution to help solve these problems and conserve biodiversity, he said.

Regarding the likelihood of meeting the goal of 30% land and sea protection by 2030, Leticia Carvalho said hope could be drawn from the new proposed multilateral agreement on plastic pollution, which has a very ambitious timeline of just two years, and which is hoped to deliver systemic transformation. She agreed the priority was to look upstream and tackle the drivers of harm, as we cannot keep mopping up forever. That the CBD Framework and the particularly challenging BBNJ Treaty were reached in the middle of a global geopolitical crisis is further grounds for optimism. While deploring the massive underfunding of SDG14 on conservation and sustainable use of oceans, Ms Carvalho pointed to the Global Fund for Coral Reefs as one effective mechanism, using a blended finance approach to mobilize both public and private investment towards community led coral reef protection and restoration.



## QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

**Sam Teicher**, co-founder of coral restoration company Coral Vita, asked how funding could be channelled to scalable but smaller projects that can contribute significantly to a restoration economy, but are often overlooked or excluded by people wanting to write \$5 million, \$50 million, or \$500 million checks.

**Peter Manyara** noted that Canada at [IMPAC5](#) announced new funding of CAD 30 billion to help support five countries in the Western Indian Ocean region towards meeting climate obligations and scaling up ocean action under the Great Blue Wall initiative. He agreed smaller projects often had difficulty accessing small sums from large global frameworks. [Great Blue Wall](#) partners and financing mechanisms like the [Green Climate Fund](#), Citibank and others are in discussions to create a regional trust fund or other mechanism to bridge the gap between big funding and small but unfunded needs.

**Marco Lambertini** noted the "strange cultural mindset" that meant \$54 billion could be coughed up overnight to rescue a Swiss bank while we struggled to find \$20 billion by 2030 to rescue our planet, the bank that holds our natural capital. Clearly there is still a serious issue with understanding the business case for investing in nature.

The most important financial mechanism for driving the transition is redirecting subsidies, incentives, capital costs and interest rates towards supporting small initiatives and communities. That's where the real revolution should happen. The biodiversity fund is to be \$200 billion, of which \$120 billion has already been spent, whereas the ocean economy today is worth over \$2.5 trillion per year. Only by redirecting mainstream finance will we be able not just to protect the 30% but sustainably manage the other 70%, he said.



**Thierry Chopin** of the University of New Brunswick in Canada and Chopin Coastal Health Solutions offered a word of caution as to the carbon sequestration potential of seaweeds, which is a debated topic today. When seaweeds are harvested and processed, the stored carbon is transformed, not permanently sequestered, which means we should be very careful with carbon credits or tax and avoid double accounting. Nevertheless, seaweeds can help by being part of the dietary shift towards lower-carbon food production systems like integrated multi-trophic aquaculture.

**Jean-Pierre Gattuso** agreed, noting that seaweeds were not considered a blue carbon ecosystem because they didn't store carbon in the sediment, unlike salt marshes, mangroves and seagrass beds. He advocated growing seaweeds on a large scale to be used for food and many different products, and to improve water coastal water quality by storing nitrogen and phosphorus, rather than growing and sinking seaweed in deep



waters for carbon sequestration which is being discussed today.

**Sian Owen** from the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition noted that while conversations had mainly focused on coastal and territorial waters, 95% of the biosphere was deep ocean. Calling for a precautionary pause on deep seabed mining, she asked the panel what was needed to protect the deep ocean, where the concept of restoration was vastly different.

**Leticia Carvalho** noted that the BBNJ Treaty would require that any interested party present all planned activity to all other parties in a transparent manner, to be judged by a scientific body according to the highest scientific standards. Just creating this opportunity for disclosure by private interests in a common collective space represents huge progress.

**Marco Lambertini** adamantly urged a moratorium on deep seabed mining.

**Peter Manyara** said regarding Africa that there was no continent where more countries readily agreed to adopt and domesticate the provisions of international legal and policy frameworks. They are always doing their part. The problem is not political will, it's that these countries are cash-strapped. At the Our Ocean Conference we were seeing pledges of \$15 billion, \$20 billion, \$30 billion, with photo shoots and applause. But how does that manifest on the ground? There's a breakdown somewhere there, he said.

**Assunção Cristas**, lawyer and former Portuguese environment minister, noted the European Commission had proposed new regulation to certify carbon removals, and that marine ecosystem restoration was among the nature-based solutions suggested. How can this be made to function efficiently and scientifically and attract investment, as there is interest from the private sector?

**Jean-Pierre Gattuso** expressed unease at the idea of attributing credits to restoration for CO<sub>2</sub> removal. The scientific monitoring and verification is costly, and impossible to do at the current carbon price of €50/tonne, a ridiculously low price that doesn't provide incentives to companies to reduce emissions.

Restoring mangrove or seagrass ecosystems also risks releasing other powerful greenhouse gases such as methane and nitrous oxide, which needs to be calculated and monitored, and the durability of this kind of action is very uncertain. Queensland saw a massive mangrove die-off of 40 million trees in 2015. If that had been a mangrove restored for credits, all the carbon would have returned to the atmosphere. In the time of climate change, it is extremely difficult to be sure that carbon will be stored for very long.

# SESSION 4



## KEYNOTE

**Ms Teresa Ribera Rodriguez**  
*Third Vice-President of the Government of Spain and Minister for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge*

In a video message, **Ms Ribera** noted that a healthy ocean could contribute \$1.5 billion annually to the global economy. The ocean today faces threats from warming, acidification, coral bleaching, invasive species and pollution, as well as from over-fishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, which put global food security at risk. According to the [EU Blue Economy Report](#), deterioration of the ocean's health could cost \$400 billion per year by 2050 and even \$2 trillion by 2100.

Ocean-based solutions to climate change and other threats include renewable marine energy, decarbonizing maritime transport, blue carbon storage, a shift to sustainable protein and restoration of coastal protection areas such as mangroves. Alongside the 30x30 target adopted as part of the Global Biodiversity Framework, and recent agreement on a High Seas Treaty, Ms Ribera cited the [Biodiversity strategy for 2030](#), a core part of the [European Green Deal](#) and the [European Strategy for a Blue Economy](#) as other useful tools. The restoration and protection of marine environments require partnerships and very substantial investments, but these can have huge returns for everyone.

Spain plays an active part in international cooperation through its Plan for the protection of the coastline and is an important player in seawater desalination, Ms Ribera noted.

The [Mediterranean Water Knowledge Platform](#) and [l'Institut Méditerranéen de l'Eau \(The Mediterranean Water Institute\)](#) are among tools enabling coordination and should be exploited.

She highlighted the cultural, historic, economic and ecological importance of the Mediterranean, and also its extreme vulnerability as a closed sea in a region of intense human activity. Since the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean in 1976, various instruments and strategies have enabled progress, but more needs to be done to ensure our survival and fulfil our obligation to future generations.



## KEYNOTE

**Mr Renaud Muselier**  
*President of the Regional Council of Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (PACA), France*

With 5 million inhabitants, the PACA region is akin to a small country. It is France's second-wealthiest region and second most popular tourist destination. With 1,000 km of coastline including Marseille, France's most important sea port, and Toulon, Europe's largest naval base, PACA seeks to balance economic development and environmental health.

By 2028 some €30 billion will be invested in the region through a partnership with the French government, supported by EU funding, which has designated PACA a pilot zone for sustainable development.

The PACA region cooperates with international partners such as Costa Rica, with whom it will co-host the [2025 UN Ocean Conference](#) in Nice. It is also working with Djibouti on water treatment, and with the Union for the Mediterranean on issues of common concern to all countries of the region. The [Pelagos Sanctuary](#) is an example of cross-border cooperation that shows we can protect our environment without damaging our economy, he noted.

Beyond the major decisions taken internationally within these indispensable multilateral institutions, it ultimately comes down to the reality of application for citizens on the ground. Small countries face particular difficulties in trying to protect their environment against pressure from certain countries who plunder their waters or scrape their seabed, and the global community has the obligation to address this. Governments also need to plan for rising sea levels, which will affect highly populated areas that lack the financial capacity to organize their survival, in turn creating waves of migration, Mr Muselier warned.



#### FIRESIDE CHAT

**Mr Nasser Kamel**

*Secretary General, The Union  
for the Mediterranean, Spain*

**Mr Kamel** affirmed that the Mediterranean was already living the climate emergency. It is warming 20% faster than the rest of the world, while the sea level is rising and could reach 30-40 cm by 2040 and one metre by the end of this century. Drought and biodiversity loss are other major on-going threats.

Fortunately, Mediterranean environmental cooperation is very dynamic, and the region has a wealth of resources and a strong capacity to mobilize funds compared to other regions of the world.

It has developed political consensus behind climate action, as shown by Mediterranean environment ministers' adoption of an ambitious common declaration in the lead-up to the last UNFCCC COP. Union for the Mediterranean member countries cover the whole range from least developed to emerging to developed economies, making this agreement on a set of policies all the more remarkable.

The [UN report\\*](#) released today is very grim, and the whole question boils down to finance. If we're not willing to commit the necessary resources to adaptation and mitigation, we will not reach the goal of 1.5°C, Mr Kamel warned. We have to act aggressively on national, regional and international levels. The global South is being asked to adopt a CO<sub>2</sub>-free development strategy, which costs money; the global North has to step up cooperation. Europe aims for carbon neutrality by 2030 and zero emissions by 2050. The southern Mediterranean region has the capacity to produce all the energy Europe needs, based on renewables, yet Europe is neither investing in the global South nor in its own immediate neighbourhood to decrease its dependence on fossil fuels. Europe is aware that issues such as immigration and extremism could be solved by those investments, but they're not doing it.

This is not about aid, but about investing profitably together to transition out of fossil fuels and achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement. The private sector must engage. Science shows that investing in nature can have an economic return; renewables are already profitable. As a previous speaker said, \$50 billion have just disappeared in a matter of hours; imagine the returns and how much good this amount of money could do for our planet if it was invested.

*Editor's note: IPCC AR6 Synthesis Report: Climate Change 2023*





## RAISING AMBITION AND SCALING SOLUTIONS FOR A PROTECTED, RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

### PANEL DISCUSSION

#### MODERATOR

**Ms Yalda Hakim**, *Chief Presenter and International Correspondent, BBC World News*

#### PANELISTS

**H.E. Mr Karim Amellal** [remotely],  
*French Ambassador for the Mediterranean*

**H.E. Mr Bernard Fautrier**, *Minister plenipotentiary, Special Advisor of HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco for Environment, and General Secretary, The MedFund, Monaco*

**Ms Efstathia Liarou**, *Mayor of Elafonisos, Hellenic Republic*

**Mr Federico Cardona Pons**, *Coastal Health Strategy Manager, Europe-Middle East-Africa and Cuba, Iberostar Group, Spain*

**Mr Nasser Kamel**, *Secretary General, The Union for the Mediterranean, Spain*

**Mr Renaud Muselier**, *President of the Regional Council of Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, France*

As a closed sea of great environmental, socio-economic and cultural diversity, the Mediterranean presents particular challenges for conservation and sustainable use. Building on the themes of earlier panels, this session concluded the day's discussions with a special focus on tools and strategies to achieve a more protected and resilient Mediterranean Sea. Representatives from the private sector and from national, regional and local government also shared concrete examples and identified priorities in the next decade, with an emphasis on funding, sustainable tourism and multilateralism.

His Excellency **Mr Karim Amellal** noted growing consensus around environmental action both within the EU and between EU and Southern Mediterranean countries. The situation is alarming, as the Mediterranean has one of the world's highest rates of biodiversity loss, but coalitions of stakeholders and government action are fuelling progress. The 2025 UN Ocean Conference in Nice, co-hosted by France and Costa Rica, will be a key opportunity for acting on climate and biodiversity. He cited the PAMEx (*Plan d'Action pour une Méditerranée Exemple*) Action Plan as one tool for reversing marine biodiversity loss in the Mediterranean through concrete, collective actions. PAMEx includes the PAMEx Local Investment Finance Facility (PLIFF), a financial mechanism for local investment in conservation and climate change, targeting €1 billion from both public and private finance.

Mr Amellal emphasized the importance of coalitions such as the Union for the Mediterranean to propel action collectively at an international, national and regional level. He suggested it should be considered progress that everyone around the Mediterranean, from public opinion to local and national governments, recognized the urgency of the situation. While deterioration is happening faster than action to remedy it, a number of tools being implemented can have an impact not in 10 years but tomorrow.

Regional politician **Renaud Muselier** of France suggested that urgency was a matter of perception: for a 15-year-old swimming through plastic debris, action is too slow in coming; for a yacht owner, it is too fast. It is particularly tricky for political leaders because of the pressures of election

cycles and because people don't understand why the political representatives, unions and multilateral organizations working on these things can't fix them immediately. The greatest difficulty is to find the necessary coalitions and the right political discourse on the ground.

Special Advisor of HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco for Environment and General Secretary of The MedFund, His Excellency **Mr Bernard Fautrier** offered some background on this financial mechanism established in 2015 by France, Tunisia and Monaco, with the support of the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation. It channels funding to support and strengthen long-term effective management of marine protected areas in the Mediterranean, where many of the over 1,000 MPAs today exist only on paper. Raising funds from governments, specialized international organizations and private philanthropy, today the MedFund supports 15 MPAs in 7 countries, and aims to support over 20 by 2025.

While the international community agreed two months ago to a target of 30% of global land and sea area under protection by 2030, protection today in the Mediterranean barely reaches 8%. However, we can be satisfied by the progress made by the MPAs the MedFund supports, Mr Fautrier said. It is not the first mechanism of its kind - several others operate in Latin America and Africa - but it is an appropriate system that can really help existing MPAs to become fully operational.

**Ms Efstathia Liarou** is Mayor of Elafonisos, a very small Greek island of 22 km<sup>2</sup> and 700 inhabitants at the southeastern end of the Peloponnese.

Part of the Natura 2000 network of protected areas, the whole island of Elafonisos has been declared an archaeological site. Alongside a rich diversity of flora and fauna, what makes Elafonisos unique is Pavlopetri, a submerged ancient city that attracts large numbers of visitors.

Overtourism during the summer is damaging the environment, which has led her government to develop a strategy to reduce crowds in July and August. Ms Liarou noted that Elafonisos was able to spread tourism throughout the year thanks to its mild climate. A new marketing campaign highlights the advantages of visiting for longer but at less-busy times, targeting older travellers and those seeking an experience based more on nature and local culture.

Pavlopetri is unique as both an archaeological and a natural site; as such it obtained in 2021 the INHERITURA label for sustainable marine and coastal heritage preservation under the [EU's Interreg MED Programme](#). What is essentially an underwater museum is very accessible as it is shallow, and doesn't require diving tanks or special equipment other than snorkelling gear. In a first for Greece, in 2022 the local government installed explanatory underwater signage in Pavlopetri, and has discovered that once visitors understand the meaning of the site, they wish to protect it.

**Mr Federico Cardona Pons** spoke about how the private sector could contribute to ocean conservation, sharing experiences from Spanish hotelier Iberostar Group, a family company whose 100 hotels in the Caribbean and the Mediterranean host more than 5.5 million guests annually. Iberostar relies on scientific data and advice when dealing with problems like water



scarcity and coastal erosion, and collaborates with different universities and research centres in all its destinations. In the Caribbean a scientific team is engaged in restoring coral reefs, while in the Mediterranean projects focus on *Posidonia oceanica*, collaborating with the marketing department to help clients understand what this seagrass is and the role it plays in protecting the coast. This helps to increase acceptance of what guests may otherwise view as debris on the beach. In the Mediterranean, coastal erosion due to climate change is affecting some of Iberostar's properties.

Waste reduction is another priority: Iberostar abandoned single-use plastics in 2019 and works to sort and recycle trash. The tourism sector can



also contribute to sustainability by ensuring the seafood it offers clients is responsibly sourced, Mr Cardona said, as hotel groups like his consume a huge amount. Iberostar has committed to have 100% of the fish served in its hotels come from sustainable fisheries by 2025.

Union for the Mediterranean's **Nasser Kamel** agreed that tourism had a big role to play, which was also a way to protect its own investment. The sector represents a large portion of the Mediterranean's blue economy, which is estimated to be worth \$450 billion per year.

**Renaud Muselier**, whose region is subject to drought, expressed optimism that human ingenuity would find the solutions to the environmen-

tal difficulties we faced. However, multilateral alliances are necessary to help the smaller and weaker countries.

**Karim Amellal** reminded participants of two huge milestones in the last three months alone, the objective of protecting 30% of land and sea by 2030 in Montreal and the High Seas Treaty, which show that progress can be made through coalitions of stakeholders. He called for greater involvement from the private sector, which the Union for the Mediterranean is encouraging through the PLIFF Investment Facility. The UN Ocean Conference in Nice in 2025 represents an opportunity to increase the percentage of highly protected MPAs to be able to achieve 30x30 in the Mediterranean, he said.



## QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

**Khalil Attia** of the United Nations Environment Program's Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas ([RAC/SPA](#)) asked panelists for their vision for collective protection of the Mediterranean given the technical, human and financial needs of less developed countries where programmes and strategies were not implemented because of a lack of means.

**Nasser Kamel** said this was the Union for the Mediterranean's purpose as a multilateral regional framework. He cited the Blue Economy Partnership Fund backed by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the European Investment Bank and the European Commission as a useful tool. It has the capacity to mobilize €1 billion to be spent in the southern Mediterranean countries, mainly Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt.

This instrument hasn't required reinventing the wheel: it was modelled on a Baltic Sea partnership done 10 years ago which led to a 60% reduction in pollution in the Gulf of Finland, he noted.

Another small, €5 million project involving two northern and two southern Mediterranean countries trains local authorities to identify plastic pollution hotspots, to reinforce and effectively apply the regulatory framework, and to clean the coast of this type of pollution. This project is simple and inexpensive. More generally, European financial institutions and other private sector actors are willingly investing, on both shores of the Mediterranean. It is one of the regions cooperating the most in terms of climate and environmental finance, so the situation is not as bleak as one may think.

**Katerina Kokinaki** of Greece is Green Marketing Director of the Elafonisos Eco-Association. She asked how feasible it was to use more small islands like hers as laboratories for implementing new technologies and new business models to raise ambitions and find new solutions.

**Renaud Muselier** noted that political instability and war threatened environmental action, a factor often overlooked. While world leaders understand the need to protect their environment while feeding their people and developing their economies, they cannot act alone in a context of political instability, or even war, as in the Mediterranean basin or at our borders today. Hence the importance of multilateralism for resolving conflicts; only peace and political stability make development and environmental protection possible.





## KEYNOTE

### H.E. Mr Laurent Stefanini

*Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of France,  
on behalf of Mr Hervé Berville, Secretary of State for the Sea, France.*

In a message delivered on his behalf by France's Ambassador to Monaco **Laurent Stefanini**, **Mr Berville** said Monaco was a precious ally in environmental diplomacy, especially on ocean protection and climate policy. The two countries have long cooperated with Italy within the Pelagos Agreement for the protection of marine mammals and on integrated coastal management and the fight against marine pollution with the RAMOGE Agreement. The Pelagos Sanctuary is the first international marine protected area partly covering the High Seas, he noted.

France and Monaco helped propel agreement in early March on the international treaty for protecting biodiversity in the High Seas. The Treaty is decisive for three reasons: it requires environmental impact studies for all new activities on the High Seas; it enables creation of High Seas marine protected areas; and for the first time in the history of environmental negotiations, decisions will no longer be taken by consensus but by majority, which will prevent any one State from blocking measures.

France will host in June 2025 together with Costa Rica the UN Ocean Conference in Nice, which will focus on ocean protection, blue economy and blue finance, and ocean culture and science, hoping that it will be a national and international movement. Mr Berville expressed his wish to co-construct this key conference together with Monaco.

France will continue to combat deep seabed mining, which it has already banned in its territorial waters. It is the first and thus far only country to go beyond a moratorium or precautionary pause, a decisive act for the world's second-largest maritime power. Alongside other countries and organizations such as the Sustainable Ocean Alliance and the IUCN, France will jointly recommend a precautionary pause on deep seabed mining to the International Seabed Authority.

France is devoting a major €350 million public research effort to study the deep seas and launch new projects. However, effective action will be impossible if we fail to reform the International Seabed Authority and strengthen its mandate to protect the deep seas, relying on the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, Mr Berville said.

# CLOSING REMARKS



## **Mr Robert Calcagno**

*Chief Executive Officer, Oceanographic Institute, Prince Albert I of Monaco Foundation, Principality of Monaco*

Working with scientists and civil society remains crucial, but we need to integrate private sector businesses, which are major indispensable players for ocean preservation. If the private sector were to fully turn towards this issue, its impact could be 100 times greater than that of the public sector.

He emphasized the need for a network of MPAs in the Southern Ocean in the context of the 30x30 objective. The 2 million km<sup>2</sup> Weddell Sea, where the situation is blocked today, could be one of the new BBNJ Treaty's first applications. The Oceanographic Institute is planning an expedition to take business leaders to the Antarctic. Monaco is already known as a point of convergence for ocean science and politics; efforts are underway to make the Principality a focal point for businesses working in the ocean space as well, he said.

**Mr Calcagno** said this 14<sup>th</sup> edition had fulfilled its promise and demonstrated the tremendous progress in awareness of ocean issues since the MBI began in 2010. Virtually absent from international environmental diplomacy 15 years ago, today the ocean is central. While celebrating recent international agreements including the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the BBNJ UN Treaty, we must now implement strong action.



### **Mr Olivier Wenden**

*Vice-President and Chief Executive Officer,  
Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation,  
Principality of Monaco*

**Mr Wenden** thanked participants for the quality of their exchanges and the perspectives they opened up. He noted the global commitment to scale up action and funding to meet the goals of the Global Biodiversity Framework and protect 30% of our land and seas by 2030.

He recalled two remarks Costa Rica's President Chaves made earlier in the day: "When in doubt, don't" and "Vision without action is hallucination". The day's exchanges fully reflect the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation's priorities: existing solutions to ocean challenges should be scaled up and accelerated, taking a transversal, holistic approach, and data and expertise should be shared in a transparent way. He mentioned the Ocean Innovators' Platform launched in 2022 to promote development of a sustainable blue economy.

Mainstreaming biodiversity conservation is also at the core of the Foundation's mission, particularly in the Mediterranean; it is clear we need to act faster and more decisively in this region, in accordance with the Foundation's Mediterranean Programme's clear goals for the next five years.

Underscoring the Monaco Blue Initiative's role in reconciling ocean protection and a sustainable blue economy, he noted this year's MBI had seen record attendance; it is a great pleasure to see it grow year after year. Lastly, he called for international cooperation in the lead-up to the 2025 UN Ocean Conference in Nice.



# ACRONYMS

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<b>BBNJ</b>	The international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction
<b>CBD COP15</b>	15 <sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity
<b>CCFAH</b>	Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub
<b>COP28</b>	The 28 <sup>th</sup> session of the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
<b>EEZ</b>	Exclusive Economic Zone
<b>EBRD</b>	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
<b>EIB</b>	European Investment Bank
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GBF</b>	Global Biodiversity Framework
<b>GFCR</b>	Global Fund for Coral Reefs
<b>IMPAC5</b>	The 5 <sup>th</sup> International Marine Protected Areas Congress
<b>IPCC</b>	The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
<b>IUCN</b>	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
<b>IUU</b>	Illegal, Unreported, Unregulated fishing
<b>MBI</b>	Monaco Blue Initiative
<b>MedPAN</b>	The Mediterranean Protected Areas Network
<b>MOW</b>	Monaco Ocean Week
<b>MPAs</b>	Marine Protected Areas
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>PACA</b>	Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur
<b>PAMEX Action Plan</b>	Plan d'Action pour une Méditerranée Exemplaire
<b>PLIFF</b>	PAMEx Local Investment Finance Facility
<b>RAC/SPA</b>	United Nations Environment Program's Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas
<b>REDD+ / UN-REDD</b>	The United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SECA</b>	Sulphur Emission Control Area
<b>SIDS</b>	Small Island Developing States
<b>UAE</b>	United Arab Emirates
<b>UBC</b>	University of British Columbia
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNEP</b>	United Nations Environment Programme
<b>UNFCCC COP</b>	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of Parties
<b>WTO</b>	World Trade Organization
<b>WWF</b>	World Wildlife Fund

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The 15<sup>th</sup> Edition of the  
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