

**Integrating Climate Change and the Ocean:**  
**Forging a Path under the FCCC/Paris Agreement and More Broadly**

**Objective**

- To agree upon a concrete set of steps to be taken and/or supported by interested Parties to the Paris Agreement (the “Friends of the Ocean”), in concert with stakeholders.

**Background**

- Interested Parties met at the UNFCCC’s intersessional meeting in Bangkok last September to consider possible next steps to improve consideration of climate-ocean linkages under the UNFCCC/Paris Agreement and elsewhere.
- They reviewed a paper entitled “Climate Change and the Ocean: Key Linkages, Needed Actions, and Options for Further Steps” (prepared by Climate Advisers, Ocean Conservancy, and the Governments of Fiji and Sweden).
- The paper identified four key climate-ocean linkages, along with needed actions and specific options for consideration.
- Given the press of the Paris “rulebook” negotiations, Parties were generally not in a position at that time to thoroughly consider, and make decisions on, the options – other than to express support for the preparation of an analysis of the draft rulebook from an ocean-friendliness perspective.
- Climate Advisers/Ocean Conservancy subsequently prepared an analysis of the draft Paris rulebook, which revealed that the vast majority of proposals did not raise particular ocean-related issues.
- It should also be noted that, thanks to the Parties that referred to ocean-related issues in their Talanoa Dialogue-related interventions, the Talanoa Call for Action prepared by the Governments of Fiji and Poland (past and current COP Presidents) expressly recognizes the need for a healthy ocean.

**Two Basic Sets of Concerns**

- There are two macro concerns when it comes to the climate-ocean linkage.

- One is **substantive**: Given the ocean's physical role in relation to climate change, it is critical that every effort be made to limit climate impacts on the ocean and maximize potential opportunities to use the ocean to responsibly mitigate climate change.
- The other is **institutional**: The international climate regime has not yet sufficiently considered the ocean as a critical climate regulator, a casualty of climate impacts, and a source of mitigation and adaptation solutions. Nor have ocean-related regimes taken sufficient account of the climate-ocean nexus in their work. These institutional deficiencies have helped to inhibit substantive progress.

### **Substantive Goals**

- There appear to be at least four substantive goals:
  - Increasing mitigation ambition generally (so as to reduce warming impacts on the ocean);
  - reducing emissions of carbon dioxide in particular (so as to reduce ocean acidification);
  - enhancing the ability of the ocean to respond to climate impacts (including through reducing other ocean stressors) and to continue to provide services to human communities; and
  - taking advantage of ocean mitigation opportunities (e.g., blue carbon, offshore renewable energy).
- These goals should be pursued in all relevant fora at all levels (States, sub-national governments, businesses, civil society, etc.).

### **Institutional Goals**

- The overarching international goal is presumably to **ensure that climate-related processes adequately integrate ocean considerations and vice versa**. In a sense, every climate meeting should be an ocean meeting, and every ocean meeting should be a climate meeting.

- Of course, not every climate or ocean agreement or forum is expected to play the same role, but each should actively consider and account for its added value in relation to the other issue.
- In terms of the international climate regime, opportunities for the UNFCCC/Paris Agreement to better integrate ocean considerations are set forth below.
- On the flip side, it is important for Friends of the Ocean to **pursue consideration of the climate dimension when participating in various ocean fora**. Climate considerations are obviously front and center when they are the main purpose of an ocean-related venue, such as the IMO's development and implementation of its greenhouse gas strategy. But, given that climate impacts on the ocean are exacerbated by other stressors, such as fishing and marine pollution, it is important that fora devoted to those issues also take into account the climate-ocean nexus. As just one example, the current negotiations at the UN on biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction should consider climate impacts on the ocean (and the cumulative effect of multiple stressors) when coming up with its approach to marine protected areas.
- The lack of integration in both sets of fora stems, at least in part, from an overly "silo-ed" approach to each topic at the domestic level. Thus, one important action that Friends of the Ocean could take at home is to **promote better internal coordination** on climate and ocean issues.
- Internationally, Parties making up Friends of the Ocean could transform into **Friends of the Climate** in ocean-related venues (or call itself "Friends of the Climate and Ocean" in both sets of venues). In addition, such Parties could promote fora and activities that explicitly connect the ocean and climate change.

### **"Blue-ing" the FCCC/Paris Agreement**

- Taking into account both the "substantive" and "institutional" points above, there are many steps Friends of the Ocean could take, both short-term and longer-term, to better integrate ocean considerations into the FCCC/Paris Agreement.
- Without the agreement of other Parties:

- Friends of the Ocean could **make references to climate-ocean linkages**, including in high-level COP/CMA interventions and as part of the Global Stocktake. Such statements, which would also be included as part of the record, would raise awareness of the linkages.
- They could **jointly issue an action-oriented declaration**, which might, among other things, make reference to the IPCC Report on the Ocean and the Cryosphere, articulate concrete medium-term goals for advancing ocean-climate issues in the UNFCCC/Paris regime, and/or endorse ocean-based climate solutions that Parties could pursue.
- They could **include ocean-related actions in their nationally determined contributions and/or adaptation communications**, as well as in subsequent reporting under the enhanced transparency framework. They could also include ocean-related actions in their mid-century strategies. Ocean-related mitigation could relate to, e.g., reducing emissions through offshore renewable energy, reducing emissions from offshore-based industries, or increased restoration of blue carbon ecosystems), while adaptation could relate to, e.g., coastal protection.
- They could **hold side events**, including with stakeholders, on both concerns and opportunities in the climate-ocean space.
- They could **form coalitions** that take on particular commitments, such as reductions in carbon dioxide emissions specifically.
- They could **call for the actions** set forth below, which require agreement of other Parties.
- With the agreement of other Parties:
  - There could be a **workshop** on relevant cross-cutting issues, including, e.g., sharing of best practices, lessons learned, etc.
  - There could be a new COP/CMA **agenda item** on climate and the ocean.
  - The CMA could take **decisions under relevant provisions** of the Paris Agreement to promote ocean-oriented actions (e.g., under Article 6.4).
  - **Methodologies** could be developed for measuring, verifying, and assessing the environmental soundness of techniques to conserve and restore ocean sinks.
  - A scale could be developed to **assess the relative ocean impact of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases**. It could address ocean

impacts specifically (e.g., “ocean impact potential”) and supplement the existing scale, which is based solely on “global warming potential.” Alternatively, a new scale could integrate both ocean impacts and global warming impacts.

### **COP 25 in Particular**

- Coming on the heels of the IPCC’s Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere, and being hosted by Chile (a country at the forefront of the climate-ocean connection), COP 25 has a unique opportunity to spur progress on the integration of climate and the ocean.
- As an illustration, and noting the other options above:
  - Chile could refer to the Conference as the “blue” or “ocean” COP.
  - The COP/CMA could **provide a platform for Parties** to show/announce how they are integrating ocean-related actions into their climate contributions under the Paris Agreement. For example, they might:
    - include ocean-related mitigation in NDCs;
    - undertake CO<sub>2</sub>-specific reduction commitments in NDCs;
    - include ocean-related adaptation actions in, e.g., NDCs or adaptation communications;
    - include the ocean in their mid-century strategies; and/or
    - make specific ocean-targeted mitigation and adaptation funding commitments.
  - The COP/CMA could **provide a platform for stakeholders** -- including sub-national governments and private-sector actors -- to show how they are integrating ocean-related actions into their mitigation/adaptation plans and activities.
  - The COP/CMA could call for a workshop in 2020 to address various aspects of the climate-ocean relationship.
  - Drawing on the IPCC Special Reports, the COP/CMA could **promote awareness of the climate-ocean links**, including, e.g., the need to:
    - increase mitigation ambition to address the severe impacts of GHG emissions (and in particular CO<sub>2</sub> emissions) on the oceans;

- better integrate climate and ocean issues throughout the international system of agreements and institutions;
- build the climate resilience of the ocean, including with respect to acidification and by accounting for climate-related impacts in international ocean conservation and management processes and decision-making; and/or
- protect and restore coastal wetland ecosystems, such as mangrove forests, tidal marshes, and seagrass meadows, which can provide significant adaptation benefits and are powerful blue carbon sinks.

### Steps beyond the FCCC/Paris

- A variety of events in the near term provide opportunities for improved integration.
  - First, the Secretary-General will hold a **UN Climate Summit** in September, which includes, as one of its nine tracks, a track on “nature-based solutions.” Friends of the Ocean could use this opportunity to promote an ocean-related outcome to the Summit, as well as possible side announcements by States and/or civil society groups. A declaration could be developed, akin to the Forest Declaration that was announced at the 2014 UN Climate Summit.
  - Second, as noted, the **IPCC’s Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere** will be released in September. Friends of the Ocean could work on a common response, as well as help to ensure that its messages are readily understood by the public and widely publicized.
  - Third, Norway will host the next **Our Ocean Conference** in October of this year, and Portugal will host the second **UN Ocean Conference** in 2020. Each of these could be used to highlight, and bolster, climate-ocean interactions.
- In addition, there are ongoing processes such as BBNJ, conferences, Convention on Biological Diversity meetings, and planning meetings for the UN Decade on ocean science in 2019-2020 that could be used as venues for coordination.