

**IHO File No. 6200/C8**

**CIRCULAR LETTER 05/2025**

**23 January 2025**

**UN OCEAN DECADE ACTIVITY REGISTER**

**UNOC 3 PARTICIPATION**

**UNOC 3 POLITICAL DECLARATION**

References:

- A. IHO Council Document: C8-05.2.2A
- B. IRCC CL01/2025
- C. IHO Council Document: C8-05.2.2B
- D. Bulletin Report UNOC High Level Retreat

Dear Hydrographer,

1. This Circular letter is to inform you of the creation of a UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (Ocean Decade) Activity Register and to provide an update on the latest IHO Secretariat preparations for participation in the forthcoming 3<sup>rd</sup> UN Ocean Conference (UNOC 3) in June 2025 in Nice, France, including the preparation of the UNOC 3 Political Declaration.

**Creation of an Ocean Decade Activity Register**

2. Following the presentation of Ref. A to the 8<sup>th</sup> Session of the IHO Council (C8), the Council invited the IHO Secretariat to consider developing a register of IHO Member States representatives who are involved in their national Ocean Decade Committee's work (if any) and individual Member States endorsed activities, voluntary commitments or other contributions to either the Ocean Decade or the UNOC series.

3. Subsequently, the Chair of IRCC notified the committee members via Ref. B that such a register had been created. Member States are hereby invited now to complete the [online questionnaire](#), to aid in the initial population of this register.

### **Preparation for Participation in UNOC 3**

4. Following the presentation Ref. C to C8, the Council welcomed the proposal from the IHO Secretariat and agreed with the proposed engagement in both the Blue Economy and Finance Forum (BEFF) June 2025 in Monaco and UNOC 3 in Nice. The Council also encouraged Member States to take advantage of the alignment of IRCC-17 to the BEFF and the UNOC 2025, and to engage early with national delegations to participate accordingly. Further, the Council invited the IHO Secretariat to inform Member States on UNOC 3 through an IHO CL, announcing a coordination VTC meeting.

5. Ref. B invited Member States to inform Assistant Director Samuel Harper ([samuel.harper@iho.int](mailto:samuel.harper@iho.int)) of their interest or intention to actively participate in UNOC 3 and advised of a planned VTC coordination meeting at 1000 CET (UTC+1) 24 January 2025, in anticipation of further details being provided in good time by the conference organizers. Due to a limited response to this request, and a delay in key information being provided by the organizers, the planned coordination meeting will now be held at 1000 CET (UTC+1) 30 January 2025. Please note that you must inform Assistant Director Harper in advance if you wish to participate in this meeting, as joining instructions will only be provided to those who do so

### **Contribution to the UNOC 3 Political Declaration**

6. A key output of UNOC 3 will be a political declaration, which sets out what UN Member States will commit to as the legacy of the conference. A zero draft of the 2025 political declaration was recently shared by Australia and Cabo Verde in their role as co-facilitators of the declaration negotiation process. A first, informal, round of negotiations on the declaration will take place on 27 January 2025 at UN HQ in New York. This will be followed by three other rounds of negotiations before the finalization of the political declaration prior to the 1 May 2025. The Zero Draft of the UNOC 3 Political Declaration is available on the [Conference website](#).

7. As reported in Ref. D, the IHO Secretariat was represented at a 'UNOC High-Level Retreat' where the political declaration was discussed in the presence of the Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs (and Secretary-General of UNOC3), the U.N. Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean, Permanent Representatives of States to the U.N., high representatives of the two co-host Nations (France and Costa Rica) and the two Political Declaration co-facilitators. It was brought to the attention of the participants that there is currently no mention of seabed mapping in the political declaration, and the case was made for its subsequent inclusion. This observation was well noted by organisers and co-facilitators and was acknowledged as a priority by H.E. the Special Envoy for the Ocean in his closing remarks. However, in order to ensure seabed mapping is included in the final draft of the political declaration, it must be proposed by UN member states as part of the negotiation process.

8. France, Costa Rica and IOC are organizing an in-person information session entitled 'Ocean Science for Decision-Making and Action at the 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference' on 27 January 2025 at the UN HQ immediately preceding the first informal negotiations session.

9. Given the IHO's close collaboration with the IOC, specifically as the co-parent organizations of GEBCO, the Secretariats' of the two organizations are working together to provide our respective member states with support in preparation for the negotiation process, to ensure that key priorities relating to hydrography, seabed mapping and ocean science are duly captured in the political declaration. To this end, Annex A provides suggested edits to an unofficial version of the political declaration for consideration by IHO member states (and by extension their national delegations to the UN). The suggested edits from the IHO Secretariat are in red, and the edits from the IOC Secretariat are in blue. These proposed edits are provided in good faith, respecting that individual member states have their own national positions on UN matters. If possible, it would be extremely useful if member states would keep the IHO Secretariat informed of their respective national positions, the desired support of the joint IHO / IOC suggestions and any other relevant domestic progress on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mathias Jonas', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr Mathias JONAS  
Secretary General

## ANNEX A

### Unofficial version of Zero Draft of 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference Political Declaration with suggested edits for the information of Member States of IOC/UNESCO

#### Our ocean, our future: accelerating action

- 1 We, the Heads of State and Government and high-level representatives, meeting in Nice from 9 – 13 June 2025 at the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with the full participation of civil society and all stakeholders, affirm our strong commitment to conserve and sustainably use our ocean, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
- 2 We share one ocean, and we remain gravely concerned with the global emergency it faces from the impacts of the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. Action is not advancing at the speed or scale required to meet SDG 14. A healthy and resilient ocean is essential for a sustainable ocean economy and underpins cultural and social connections to the ocean. We must act with urgency to face this challenge with bold, ambitious, just and transformative action, and ensure all people, including women and girls, people with disability, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and other marginalised groups are empowered and included in ocean-related decision-making.
- 3 We emphasize that our actions to implement Goal 14 should be in accordance with, reinforce and not duplicate or undermine existing legal instruments, arrangements, processes, mechanisms or entities. We affirm the need to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean and its resources by implementing international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources, as recalled in paragraph 158 of The Future We Want. We recognise the importance of UNCLOS to advancing sustainable development and its near universal adoption by States, as recalled in paragraph 159 of The Future We Want, and in this regard we urge all its parties to fully implement their obligations under.
- 4 We recall the Pact for the Future and our decision to take ambitious action to restore the ocean and its ecosystems, and to improve its health, productivity, sustainable use and resilience.

#### Defending ocean ecosystems

- 5 We note the ocean plays an essential role in addressing climate change, and are deeply alarmed that the ocean's ability to act as a climate mitigator has been weakened due to the adverse impacts of climate change including ocean warming, ocean acidification, eutrophication and deoxygenation, compounded by marine pollution and biodiversity loss.
- 6 We underline the importance of the ocean-climate-biodiversity nexus and call for concerted global action to minimise the impact of climate change on ocean biodiversity.
- 7 We affirm our commitment to continued cooperation to address climate change-related sea level rise and its effects, and acknowledge the High-Level Meeting on Sea Level Rise held in New York on 25 September 2024. We recognise sea level rise due to climate change disproportionately impacts Small Island Developing States (SIDS), least developed countries, and coastal communities, and acknowledge the urgent need for collective action to enhance

their adaptive capacities and resilience while mitigating climate change. Marginalised groups bear the brunt of many of the negative consequences of climate change and sea level rise.

- 8 [\[Proposed new text\] We reaffirm our commitment to supporting implementation of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS \(ABAS\) – a Renewed Declaration for Resilient Prosperity.](#) We commend the leadership of SIDS in managing the challenges associated with sea level rise, and note in particular the Pacific Islands Forum Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the face of Climate Change-Related Sea-Level Rise and the Alliance of Small Island States Declaration on Sea Level Rise and Maritime.
- 9 We welcome the contribution of the International Law Commission (ILC) to our understanding of the relationship between sea level rise and international law through its study on “Sea-level rise in relation to international law” and encourage States’ continued engagement with the ILC on this topic.
- 10 We acknowledge the 2024 Advisory Opinion of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea on the Request for an Advisory Opinion submitted by the Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law. We encourage all States to meet their obligations to prevent, reduce and control the pollution of the marine environment and to protect and preserve the marine environment in relation to the impacts of climate change.
- 11 We remain concerned the high and rapidly increasing levels of plastic pollution represents a serious environmental problem at a global scale, negatively impacting the environmental, social, health, and economic dimensions of sustainable development. We recognise the transboundary nature of plastic pollution and efforts to address this crisis through trade, including through the WTO Dialogue on Plastics Pollution.
- 12 We reaffirm our shared commitment to accelerate action to prevent, significantly reduce and control marine pollution of all kinds, [\[Proposed new text\] including emerging pollutants and pollutants from land-based sources.](#) We support the work of the IMO in further addressing ship-sourced pollution and dumping in the marine environment, including biosecurity risks, and encourage members to address the issue of ghost gear.
- 13 We reaffirm the need to strengthen integrated coastal zone management, marine spatial planning and climate [\[Proposed new text\] mitigation](#) interventions and adaptation strategies to enhance the resilience of coastal and marine ecosystems. [\[Proposed new text\] We recognize the need for improving disaster risk reduction and preparedness for more extreme weather events.](#) We commit to ecosystem-based approaches and nature-based solutions to protect [\[Proposed new text\] and restore](#) natural buffers such as mangroves, seagrasses, and coral reefs, while supporting sustainable livelihoods and biodiversity and pledge to support the implementation of the Early Warnings for All initiative to ensure coastal communities vulnerable to hazardous weather, water or climate events have equitable access to timely, accurate, and actionable information.
- 14 We reiterate the need to increase scientific knowledge on deep sea ecosystems and emphasise the importance of a precautionary approach, including for deep sea mining. We welcome the work of the International Seabed Authority towards the development of robust rules, regulations and procedures in accordance with the UNCLOS.

## Sustainable ocean economies

- 15 We recognise the tremendous opportunities offered by sustainable ocean-based economies for States, particularly SIDS, to achieve economic growth and social development while safeguarding the health, resilience and productivity of marine ecosystems for present and future generations.
- 16 We recognise the essential role of sustainable ocean plans in achieving sustainable ocean economies [\[Proposed new text\] whilst ensuring the sustainable use and conservation of marine ecosystems](#) and call on all coastal and ocean states to commit to the 100% Alliance, ensuring 100 per cent of ocean areas under national jurisdiction are sustainably managed by 2030. We commit to supporting capacity building, knowledge exchange, and financial mobilisation to enable countries, especially SIDS, to develop and implement sustainable ocean plans.
- 17 [\[Proposed new text\] We recognize the importance of supporting the achievement of the goals and targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework as it relates to marine and coastal ecosystems including actions related to marine protected areas, marine invasive species and ocean acidification.](#) We will ensure by 2030 at least 30 per cent of terrestrial, inland water, marine, and coastal areas are effectively conserved and managed through ecologically representative, well-connected, and equitably governed systems of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures, and at least 30 per cent of areas of degraded ecosystems are under effective restoration (30x30). These efforts should align with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, prioritise areas of critical importance for biodiversity, ecosystem functions and services, and recognise the integral role of Indigenous Peoples, and of local communities, including their traditional territories.
- 18 We underscore the central role of a healthy and resilient ocean in sustaining life on Earth, ensuring global food security, and supporting billions of lives. We are deeply troubled by the escalating depletion of many global fish stocks through overfishing and call for decisive and collective action to accelerate transition to sustainable fisheries and aquaculture systems, through enhancing marine spatial planning, science-based management, promoting, scaling up and replicating successes, and working together to fight illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.
- 19 We encourage World Trade Organization (WTO) Members to deposit their instruments of acceptance of the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies to accelerate its entry into force and implementation. We call on members to conclude negotiations as soon as possible on additional provisions that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing to secure a comprehensive fisheries subsidies agreement.
- 20 We recognise the critical roles of maritime transport in the global economy and the challenges to transition the sector to sustainability. Decarbonisation of shipping remains an urgent priority. We welcome the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) adoption of the 2023 Strategy on Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Ships and its enhanced common ambition to reach net-zero emissions from international shipping by or around.

## Accelerating action

- 21 We welcome the adoption of the Agreement under UNCLOS on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity Beyond National Jurisdiction, and encourage States to sign and ratify the Agreement to ensure its early entry into force. We welcome resolution 78/272 of the General Assembly establishing the Preparatory Commission to prepare for the entry into force of the Agreement and for the first Conference of the Parties and call upon States to engage in the Commission. We recognise the important role the Agreement will play in achieving 30x30. [\[Proposed new text\] We recognize the need to equip all nations with suitable technical and marine scientific capacity to benefit from and contribute to the implementation of the Agreement.](#)
- 22 We encourage states to take advantage of the updated modalities for describing ecologically or biologically significant marine areas and explore potential synergies with the future implementation of the BBNJ *[based on decision 16 of CBD COP 16]*.
- 23 We recognise the importance of the ongoing work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, reaffirm our commitment to preventing, reducing and eliminating plastic pollution by taking effective measures throughout the lifecycle of plastics, and call upon participating delegations to work together to reach an ambitious agreement without delay *[based on UNSG background note and UNEP background document]*.

[\[Proposed new paragraph\] We recognize the importance of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development \(2021 – 2030\) and its vision to achieve the science we need for the ocean we want. We support the Decade mission to generate and use knowledge for the transformative action needed to achieve a healthy, safe and resilient ocean for sustainable development by 2030 and beyond and support the science- based measures identified as priorities by the 2024 Ocean Decade Conference that will accelerate this action.](#)

- 24 Ocean action must be based on the best available science and knowledge, including Indigenous Knowledge, and that of all members of local communities. To that end we:
  - a. Affirm the value of strengthening [\[Proposed new text\] the co-stewardship and sharing of knowledge and expertise](#), including, where there is free, prior and informed consent, the knowledges and practices of Indigenous Peoples, traditional knowledge of local communities, and local knowledge systems. [\[Proposed new text\] We highlight the importance of supporting the generation and application of Indigenous-led research.](#)
  - b. Support new [\[Proposed new text\]](#) and ongoing scientific research [\[Proposed new text\] focused on improving understanding and developing solutions](#) to meet the multiple challenges of climate change, food security, energy transitions and biodiversity loss.
  - c. Commit to improving the scientific understanding of the ocean and supporting science-based measures to accelerate action, including through the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030) and the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of

the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects, and its World Ocean Assessments.

- d. Support a strong science-policy [\[Proposed new text\] - society](#) interface to provide timely, credible and salient scientific information to inform policies and actions.
  - e. Commit to strengthening [\[Proposed new text\] investments in coordinated](#) international, regional, subregional and national scientific observation and data collection, [\[Proposed new text\] sharing and management](#) efforts, including the development of integrated information management, infrastructure and systems that provide [\[Proposed new text\] open](#) access to reliable, timely and high-quality marine data.
  - f. Prioritise investments in the creation, expansion, and effective management of MPAs [\[Proposed new text\] and other effective area-based conservation efforts](#) to support the health and resilience of ocean ecosystems and the communities that depend on them [*based on UNSG background note*].
  - g. [\[Proposed new text\] Commit to implementing Ocean Literacy initiatives in educational frameworks and wider public awareness initiatives, emphasizing transdisciplinary, experiential and inclusive learning approaches that merge scientific and traditional knowledge to address systemic challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and sustainable marine resource management, and to cultivate ocean stewardship across all sectors of society.](#)
  - h. [\[Proposed new text\] Commit to achieving a fully mapped seabed by creating a favorable policy environment that results in increased funding, advancement of suitable technology, and increased data sharing based on FAIR principles.](#)
- 25 We recognise [\[Proposed new text\] that SDG14 is one of the least well-funded SDGs and that](#) accelerating ocean action requires significantly increased finance. In this regard, we:
- a. [\[Proposed new text\] Commit to increased financing and investment to meet SDG targets and to support capacity development for SIDS, LDCs and marginalized groups including women and girls, youth, and Indigenous communities.](#)
  - b. Promote the recognition of the sustainable ocean economy as an attractive investment opportunity among mainstream financial institutions through instruments such as Blue Bonds and Blue Loans.
  - c. Encourage the private sector, including banks, insurers and investors, to redirect their products and services towards the transition to sustainable ocean-based economies by finding innovative solutions to support the health and resilience of the ocean.
  - d. Encourage the creation of financial instruments such as microfinance, payments for environmental services, credit mechanisms, grants, and subsidies.



- e. Encourage collaboration on blended finance mechanisms to de-risk investments in developing countries, facilitating a just transition.
- f. Ensure the mobilisation of resources, including concessional financing, from Multilateral Development Banks, sovereign wealth funds, and governments with a view to overcoming financial barriers, especially in developing countries.
- g. Support small-scale fishers, women and girls, youth, and Indigenous communities.
- h. Highlight that charities, philanthropies and other donors will be essential, including in providing grants and enabling capital and through concessional financing.

26 We value the voluntary commitments made to implement SDG 14, including at UN Ocean Conferences, and encourage partnerships to expand initiatives and increase their impact. We support the inclusive nature of voluntary commitments and underscore the need to implement a simple monitoring and reporting process to provide a collective metric for progress.