5. Leveraging ocean, climate and biodiversity interlinkages.

This theme examines the connections between ocean health, climate change, and marine biodiversity. It encompasses understanding and managing these relationships, including the ocean's role in climate regulation and the impacts of climate change on marine species and habitats.

Additional considerations, as raised through the UN's stakeholder consultation on panel themes, include developing integrated approaches to ocean-climate action, implementing nature-based solutions, strengthening the science-policy interface, and ensuring coordinated responses to interconnected challenges.

Pacific Context

The Pacific region faces unprecedented challenges from the combined impacts of climate change, ocean degradation and biodiversity loss. Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) are experiencing escalating sea levels, ocean acidification, and extreme weather events that threaten both marine ecosystems and human communities[1]. Some Pacific islands will experience up to four times greater sea-level rise than the global average of 3.2 millimetres per year[2].

Climate impacts are having cascading effects across marine ecosystems. Ocean acidification, through the absorption of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, is damaging coral reefs that not only impact biodiversity, but threaten fisheries, tourism, and coastal protection[1,3]. Changes in ocean temperatures and chemistry are affecting species distributions and marine productivity, with particular concerns for tuna stocks projected to shift eastward by 2050[4]. These shifts threaten both food security and the economies of nations dependent on fishing licence revenues[4].

The region's unique marine biodiversity - including coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass beds - provides essential ecosystem services but faces mounting pressure[5]. These ecosystems act as natural climate buffers, with mangroves and seagrass meadows serving as significant carbon sinks[6]. However, their capacity to provide these services is increasingly compromised by multiple stressors including pollution, coastal development, and climate impacts[6]. These disruptions, in return create a feedback loop, that exacerbate climate change impacts further stressing ecosystems and leaving Pacific livelihoods more vulnerable to storm surges, flooding, and rising sea levels[7].

Pacific communities have deep cultural connections to marine environments and possess valuable traditional ecological knowledge[8]. This cultural heritage represents an important resource for understanding ecosystem interactions and developing locally appropriate

conservation strategies[8]. However, ecosystem changes are disrupting traditional practices and knowledge systems, affecting both cultural continuity and sustainable resource management[9].

Limited resources and capacity constraints hamper efforts to address these interconnected challenges comprehensively[10]. Many PICTs struggle to access the technical expertise, data, and funding needed to implement integrated approaches to ocean-climate-biodiversity management[10]. Geographic isolation further complicates coordinated responses and knowledge sharing[11].

Despite these challenges, the Pacific region has demonstrated consistent and powerful leadership in global climate advocacy and action. This leadership is demonstrated through key regional initiatives such as the 2021 Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the face of Climate Change-Related Sea-Level Rise, which establishes a unified position on maintaining maritime zones against climate impacts. Additionally, the establishment of the Pacific Resilience Facility (PRF) in 2023, as the first Pacific-led climate and disaster resilience financing vehicle, represents an innovative regional approach to addressing climate and disaster resilience at the community level.

Regional Instruments

- 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent
- Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the Face of Climate Change-related Sea Level Rise
- Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (FRDP)
- Pacific Islands Framework for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas 2021-2025
- Kainaki II Declaration for Urgent Climate Change Action Now (decision 19(viii))

International Instruments

- Paris Agreement
- Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

The Ocean Action panels at UNOC3 are collaborative, multi-stakeholder sessions designed to:

- Generate concrete commitments and actions to support SDG14 implementation
- Produce specific outcomes that will be captured in the "Nice Ocean Action Plan"
- Contribute to the Conference's overarching theme of "Accelerating action and mobilizing all actors to conserve and sustainably use the ocean"
- Foster partnerships between governments, civil society, private sector, and other stakeholders

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