



Pacific  
Community  
Communauté  
du Pacifique



**SPREP**  
Secretariat of the Pacific Regional  
Environment Programme



## Voluntary Commitments at UNOC3

Voluntary commitments are concrete pledges by different stakeholders, including governments, to take action to support SDG14 implementation. At UNOC2 in 2022, over 700 new commitments were registered, demonstrating the power of voluntary action to drive ocean conservation and sustainable use. However, the lack of consistent reporting and monitoring has made it challenging to assess their collective impacts, with progress reports submitted for only 24% of the 2017 commitments<sup>1</sup>. This gap highlights the need for more robust mechanisms to track and evaluate the effectiveness of voluntary commitments over time.

As co-host of the 2017 UN Ocean Conference Fiji made 17 voluntary commitments. This included the expansion of large scale marine managed areas in Fiji, integrated coastal management to preserve ecosystems services, improve climate resilience and sustain livelihoods and delivering improved coastal fisheries management services. Overall, there were 134 voluntary commitments with the Pacific Island Countries and Territories government listed as a lead or partner at the first UNOC. Other notable commitments from the 2017 and 2022 UN Ocean Conferences included:

### 2017<sup>2</sup>

- SIDS-SIDS Partnership on Sustainable Energy for Blue Island Economies, which covers SIDS in Caribbean, Pacific, Indian Ocean and Africa, aims to accelerate the market introduction and commercialisation of ocean energy technologies such as wave, tidal or ocean thermal energy conversion (\$1,000,000 financing)
- New Zealand Pacific Partnership on Ocean Acidification to build resilience through practical adaptation actions, capacity building, and awareness raising in the Pacific region (\$NZ 2.1 million of financing)

### 2022<sup>3</sup>

- European Union initiative to support sustainable development of Pacific Island States and coastal countries through coastal zone management, ecosystem-based management, and coral reef protection (EUR 12 million financing, implemented by SPREP).
- AOSIS Declaration for the Enhancement of Marine Scientific Knowledge, Research Capacity, and Transfer of Marine Technology to Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to strengthen capacity-building and technology transfer partnerships.
- Protecting Our Planet Challenge to invest at least USD 1 billion by 2030 for the creation, expansion, and management of marine protected areas (MPAs) and Indigenous/local marine areas, aiming to protect 30% of the ocean.

For UNOC3, stakeholders can register new commitments or provide updates on existing ones, with all commitments being included in the Nice Ocean Action Plan. These voluntary commitments play a

<sup>1</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/publications/assessment-impacts-united-nations-ocean-conference-voluntary-commitments-43994>

<sup>2</sup> Analysis of the Voluntary Commitments from the UN Ocean Conference in 2017 can be found at <https://sdgs.un.org/topics/oceans-and-seas/vcs#resources>

<sup>3</sup> <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n22/454/51/pdf/n2245451.pdf>

crucial role in attracting both public and private financing for ocean conservation, as demonstrated by the multi-million-dollar investments secured through previous commitments. They also help build momentum for coordinated action and create opportunities for new partnerships between governments, NGOs, and the private sector, ultimately strengthening the global framework for ocean protection and sustainable use.

## **Key Global Voluntary Commitments**

As the international community prepares for UNOC3, several significant coalitions are emerging that aim to accelerate action on SDG14 through voluntary commitments. These initiatives present opportunities for Pacific nations to engage either individually or collectively as a region. Two key coalitions that Pacific members may wish to consider participating in are as follows:

### ***100% Alliance***

Led by the government of France, as Co-Chair of UNOC3 and in partnership with the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy (Ocean Panel) , the [100% Alliance](#) is a new global initiative calling for sustainable management of 100% of ocean areas under national jurisdiction by 2030 (Annex 1). This aligns with Pacific Leaders' existing commitment made in their 2021 Ocean Statement to "responsibly and effectively manage 100% of the Blue Pacific Ocean within and beyond national jurisdiction to ensure its health, productivity, resilience and safety, based on the best available scientific information and traditional knowledge.". Countries joining the Alliance commit to developing and implementing Sustainable Ocean Plans (SOPs) - comprehensive frameworks that integrate existing and new ocean policies, plans and management approaches. SOPs serve as "umbrella" documents that align diverse interests through policies contributing to economic growth, biodiversity conservation, climate action and sustainable fisheries.

For Pacific nations, this initiative aligns with existing regional commitments to manage the Blue Pacific Continent and offers additional resources to strengthen ocean governance. The Alliance particularly emphasises place-based, ecosystem-based and knowledge-based approaches, incorporating traditional knowledge and supporting local capacity development.

The initiative offers:

- Technical and financial assistance through Ocean Action 2030 coalition
- Access to Rapid Assistance Fund for eligible countries
- Support for developing Sustainable Ocean Plans
- Opportunities to build on Pacific leadership in ocean management

### ***Ocean Accounts Pledge***

As Co-Chair of UNOC3 and supported by the Global Ocean Accounts Partnership (GOAP), the government of Costa Rica is leading efforts to advance ocean accounts as a fundamental approach for measuring and valuing ocean resources. Ocean accounts are standardised information frameworks that bring together environmental, economic and social data about the ocean in a coherent way - from the extent and health of marine ecosystems to the economic benefits of ocean industries and the communities that depend on them.

Costa Rica's Minister of Environment and Energy, Franz Tattenbach, announced at Immersed in Change that Costa Rica will develop its first fully integrated environmental-economic account for its ocean area by 2030. Building off this commitment, Costa Rica is launching a global pledge for

countries to join them in developing ocean accounts by 2030 (Annex 2). The pledge recognises that sustainable development of the ocean economy requires comprehensive information systems to guide sustainable management and informed decision-making. Through this pledge, countries commit to advance ocean accounts while maintaining flexibility to tailor efforts to their national priorities and capacities.

To support this pledge Costa Rica, supported by the Global Ocean Accounts Partnership (GOAP) is hosting the Ocean Accounts Exchange (24-27 March 2024) to bring together global experts, government representatives, development banks, donors, policy makers and organisations to advance ocean accounting practices and inspire international commitments ahead of UNOC3.

In the Pacific region, six nations - Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu, Palau and Papua New Guinea - have begun developing ocean accounts with support from development partners. Pacific nations could consider including their existing and planned work on ocean accounts as part of the pledge. The coalition offers an opportunity for collective action, support and knowledge exchange for evidence-based ocean management by 2030.

### **Opportunity for a Regional Voluntary Commitment**

While joining existing global coalitions and contributing towards global commitments provides valuable opportunities to shape these initiatives, the Pacific could also consider developing its own regional voluntary commitment to strengthen collective action.

Drawing from the Regional Collective Actions (RCAs) outlined in the Ocean and Environment section of the 2050 Strategy Implementation Plan 2023-2030, several opportunities exist for regional voluntary commitments, including:

- Review and strengthen the regional ocean policy framework by updating the Framework for the Pacific Oceanscape to ensure effective integration of sectoral policies and cross-jurisdictional ocean governance, while addressing overlapping national interests (RCA 3)
- Support Pacific member efforts on two key legally binding instruments (RCAs 7 & 8):
  - Implementation of the new High Seas Treaty (BBNJ Agreement) and strengthening management in areas beyond national jurisdiction, advancing the Blue Pacific Continent vision
  - Development and implementation of the new global plastics treaty to address marine plastic pollution
- Develop regional models for natural resource sector management that ensure comprehensive assessment of environmental, social, and economic risks (RCA 4)
  - Such as the implementation of ocean accounts to provide an integrated statistical framework for measuring and monitoring ocean wealth, ecosystem health, and sustainable development of the blue economy

These regional commitments could complement participation in global initiatives while ensuring Pacific-specific priorities and approaches are advanced. They would build on existing regional coordination mechanisms while providing new frameworks for collective action on ocean management.

## Annex 1:

# 100%

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# ALLIANCE

FOR SUSTAINABLE OCEAN MANAGEMENT

### THE ASK

In uniting with the 100% Alliance, participating nations are invited to commit to and champion the goal of sustainable management of 100% of ocean areas under national jurisdiction, guided by Sustainable Ocean Plans, by 2030<sup>1</sup>.

### THE OFFER

Countries will be invited to join the [Ocean Action 2030 coalition](#) and access the support of leading global institutions dedicated to providing technical and financial assistance to develop and implement Sustainable Ocean Plans to countries that require additional resources and capacity. This includes access to a [Rapid Assistance Fund](#) to support initial development, for eligible countries.

In joining this united ambition and committing to 100% sustainable ocean management, countries will take a collective step forward towards the critical targets of SDG14, to *conserve and sustainably use the ocean, seas and marine resources for sustainable development*.

The ocean gives us so much, let's **give it 100%**.

For more information contact Stephanie Ockenden and Cynthia Barzuna: [100alliance@wri.org](mailto:100alliance@wri.org).

### WHAT IS A SUSTAINABLE OCEAN PLAN?

A **Sustainable Ocean Plan (SOP)** is a comprehensive framework designed to guide the sustainable management of a country's ocean resources. It serves as a unifying "umbrella" for ocean-related governance, integrating existing and new plans, processes, and policies into a coherent and integrated whole. The primary goal of an SOP is to sustainably manage 100% of ocean areas under national jurisdiction, ensuring that economic activities are compatible with environmental protection.

SOPs outline actionable steps such as regulatory reforms, marine spatial planning, integrated coastal and watershed management, and the establishment of marine protected areas. They reconcile conflicting uses of the ocean by aligning diverse interests through policies and mechanisms that contribute to economic growth, biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and sustainable fish stocks.

Implementation of an SOP will provide numerous economic, social, and environmental benefits across governments, businesses, coastal communities, Indigenous Peoples, and other stakeholders.

SOPs should reflect the nine key attributes outlined in the Ocean Panel guide [100% Sustainable Ocean Management: An Introduction to Sustainable Ocean Plans](#). These attributes are:

- The **process** should be **inclusive, integrative, and iterative**
- The **content** should be **place-based ecosystem-based, and knowledge-based**
- The **impact** should be **endorsed, financed, and capacitated**

SOPs are country-specific, and will vary given different country contexts, starting conditions and resources. All SOPs will chart a country's course towards 100% sustainable ocean management, and will evolve over time through the iterative cycles.

<sup>1</sup> All coastal and ocean states, as members of the 100% Alliance, shall develop and implement their SOPs in line with international law and in the spirit of international and regional cooperation.

## Annex 2: Costa Rica Pledge

# Advancing Ocean Accounts by 2030

## What are Ocean Accounts?

Ocean accounts are integrated records of regularly compiled and comparable data concerning ocean environmental conditions, economic activity related and dependent upon the ocean, and social and livelihood indicators. They align with existing international accounting standards and frameworks and retain a similar structure to national accounts maintained by national statistical offices or finance ministries.

## Why are Ocean Accounts important?

Ocean knowledge and data are fragmented across sectors and institutions and a lack of standardisation limits the ability to collate data in a coherent and transparent manner. Ocean accounts provide an integrated foundation for all ocean data, including indigenous and local knowledge, to inform evidence-based decision making and policy development of sustainable ocean management and blue economic development. Ocean accounts are able to:

- **Re-enforce evidence-based decision-making** for ocean planning and management to balance the sustainable use of the marine ecosystem across multiple sectors and stakeholders.
- **Activate private sector financing** in the ocean economy and ecosystem restoration projects.
- **Identify who is benefitting** from the ocean economy (e.g. through ocean-related income, dependence, food security and resilience).
- **Organise, present, and communicate information** in manner that decision-makers can easily understand (e.g. as dashboards or scenarios).
- **Support and enhance international reporting** by identifying comparable, headline indicators that include environmental and social dimensions.

Ocean accounts support the implementation of sustainable ocean plans, implement Sustainable Development Goals 14 (life below water), targets 15.9 (value nature in decision-making) and 17.19 (measurement of progress complementing GDP) and the Global Biodiversity Framework Target 14 (value of biodiversity).

## The Pledge

Nations are asked to join under the headline pledge to progress ocean accounts by 2030 for sustainable ocean development in line with national priorities. Further, to consider the ocean accounts data in decision-making processes and support efforts that enhance capacity and share knowledge to improve global capabilities in ocean accounting.

We invite all nations to join in this effort to develop and implement ocean accounts by 2030, creating a foundation for informed decision-making and sustainable ocean management.

## Support

Costa Rica has already committed to developing their national ocean accounts by 2030. The Global Ocean Accounts Partnership (GOAP) is the global organisation set up to assist countries and stakeholders to go beyond GDP. The GOAP is co-chaired by the Indonesian Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries and the Charles Darwin Foundation of the Galapagos Islands, Ecuador. The organisation will assist all countries to mobilise funding to support their efforts, provide technical advice and support to deliver on the pledge and provide a network and community to go beyond GDP.

## Contact

For more information contact Marianne Feoli Martinez and Philip James at the GOAP Secretariat: [info@oceanaccounts.org](mailto:info@oceanaccounts.org)