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Blueprint for International Ocean-Climate Action

Goals and Steps for Governments and Stakeholders

July 2019

Introduction

The ocean and climate are inextricably linked. The ocean plays a central role regulating the climate, including by absorbing heat and carbon dioxide. This imposes a heavy cost through effects such as deoxygenation and acidification, which are decimating ocean ecosystems and damaging local communities and economies. At the same time, the ocean is a source of climate mitigation and adaptation measures, from the restoration of coastal blue carbon ecosystems to the creation of well-designed and well-enforced marine protected areas.

Governments and stakeholders therefore should address the climate and ocean crises holistically. With a number of international climate and ocean summits on the horizon, this document presents a set of near-term steps that governments and stakeholders could announce—as well as a set of medium-term and midcentury goals that they could adopt—to create a thriving climate and ocean.

Options for Near-Term Actions

Individual governments and stakeholders—or leadership coalitions—could announce:

- Increased ambition reducing greenhouse gas emissions in updated climate plans, such as nationally determined contributions, midcentury strategies, and subnational climate commitments, in order to address the climate crisis, including protection of the ocean.
- Development of specific targets to reduce carbon dioxide emissions—which would complement and be in addition to general targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions—to combat ocean acidification.
- Maximal inclusion of coastal blue carbon mitigation, well-sited offshore renewable energy, and emissions reductions from ocean industries in updated climate plans, such as nationally determined contributions, midcentury strategies, or subnational climate commitments, or in the implementation of those plans.
- Endorsement of the World Conservation Congress (WCC) goal to highly protect at least 30 percent of the ocean, including the high seas, by 2030 to build the climate resilience of the ocean and the communities and economies that depend on it.¹
- Enhancement of coastal and ocean ecosystem-based adaptation in climate plans, such as nationally determined contributions, adaptation communications, or subnational climate commitments, with the intention to facilitate increased funding opportunities, as appropriate.

- Support for the development of a measure that assesses the relative ocean impacts of different greenhouse gases, to supplement or be integrated with the existing measure of global warming potential (GWP), in recognition of the role of carbon dioxide in driving not just warming but also ocean acidification.
- A pledge to consider climate mitigation and adaptation in ocean management, including with respect to marine protected areas, fisheries, and coastal development, where appropriate.
- A pledge, from parties in a position to provide it, for new funding to support international ocean-climate efforts, such as coastal blue carbon mitigation or coastal and ocean ecosystem-based adaptation measures.

Medium-Term Goals

By 2030, governments and stakeholders:

- Should be on track to reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions, measured by enhanced climate plans and implementation of existing commitments.
- Should have included and enhanced specific targets in their climate contributions to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, noting the role they play in combating ocean acidification.
- Should be including coastal blue carbon, well-sited offshore renewable energy, and emissions reductions from ocean industries in their climate plans, such as nationally determined contributions, midcentury strategies, and subnational climate commitments, or in the implementation of those plans, as appropriate.
- Should have highly protected 30% of the ocean, including the high seas, to build the climate resilience of the ocean and the communities and economies that depend on it.
- Should be including the range of coastal and ocean ecosystem-based adaptation measures in their climate plans, such as nationally determined contributions, adaptation communications, or subnational climate commitments, as appropriate.
- Should have ensured that emissions from marine transport and shipping are on track to reach zero by 2050.
- Should be using relevant provisions of the Paris Agreement to promote sustainable coastal blue carbon mitigation (e.g., Article 4 [nationally determined contributions], Article 14 [global stocktake], and Article 6 [cooperative mechanisms]).
- Should have a common metric that can help states and subnational entities evaluate the ocean impacts of their greenhouse reduction schemes, given the disproportionate effects that carbon dioxide has on ocean ecosystems.
- Should have ensured that international processes have reduced the silos with respect to ocean and climate issues, understanding and including each issue as appropriate in relevant forums.

Mid-Century Goals

By 2050, governments and stakeholders:

- Should have ensured that greenhouse gas emissions reach net zero, enabling a healthy, functioning, and biodiverse ocean into the long term.
- Should have ensured that coastal blue carbon mitigation reaches its full potential and is integrated into countries' climate plans and related greenhouse gas inventories.
- Should have ensured that ocean ecosystems, and the communities and economies that depend on them, are maximally resilient to the effects of climate change through a focus on ecosystem-based adaptation.
- Should have ensured that emissions from marine transport and shipping reach zero.
- Should have ensured that well-sited offshore renewable energy is scaled up to reach its full potential.

Notes

¹ Resolution 50, “Increasing Marine Protected Area Coverage for Effective Marine Biodiversity Conservation” (2016), available at [WCC_2016_RES_050_EN.pdf](#).

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