

European Union generates global action for our ocean

Oceans cover more than 70% of the planet. They produce most of the oxygen we breathe and absorb 30% of the carbon we emit. Three billion people world-wide depend on the ocean for their livelihoods. One billion people rely on seafood as their main source of animal protein. But the oceans face a multitude of threats, such as pollution, climate change, overfishing and criminal activities at sea.

The Our Ocean conferences are a response to these mounting challenges. In preparation of this year's conference, the EU has successfully been working with governments, private companies and non-profit organisations from a wide range of sectors to mobilise ambitious and measurable commitments to action, ranging from smaller, but high-potential, innovative approaches to industry-scale global undertakings.

Selected commitments

Marine pollution is a massive problem with over 10 million tonnes of litter annually ending up in the sea. By 2050, our oceans could contain more plastic than fish. Among the many initiatives put forward at the EU-hosted conference were:

- **MULTINATIONAL:** Major consumer-goods companies such as Unilever, Procter & Gamble, PepsiCo, Marks & Spencer, MARS, Werner & Mertz and Carrefour all announced significant reductions in plastic use over the coming few years.
- **AUSTRIA:** Vienna-based chemicals and fertilizers group, Borealis, announced a €15 million investment in mechanical recycling of polyolefins, a substance found not least in packaging.
- **UNITED KINGDOM:** The Ellen MacArthur Foundation handed out the prestigious Circular Design Award to inspire innovation under its €8.5 million New Plastic Economy initiative. Sky announced €30 million over 5 years to create an Ocean Rescue Innovation Fund to develop ideas and technology to stop plastics entering the ocean.
- **EU:** The European Commission announced that it will phase out by end 2017 all single-use plastic cups in water fountains and vending machines in its buildings in Brussels.

Marine protection – Less than 5% of the world's marine and coastal areas are currently protected by law, even less is enforced. Yet, the 4th Our Ocean conference created important momentum and progress towards the UN's 2020-target of 10% protection.

- **PACIFIC OCEAN:** Chile, the Cook Islands, Indonesia, Niue and Palau committed to a number of additional marine protected areas.
- **AFRICA:** With a commitment of €70 million over the next 5 years, the MAVA Foundation will advance conservation projects, notably in the

Mediterranean and West Africa.

- ATLANTIC/PACIFIC: Germany will lead an initiative with various partners, including World Wildlife Foundation (WWF), to reinforce marine protection in the South Pacific and South Atlantic
- INDIAN OCEAN: The Oxford-led NEKTON project earmarks €30 million to boost sustainable management of the Indian Ocean.
- ACP: The EU committed €20 million to support the management of marine protected areas in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific and proposed fishing restrictions in sensitive areas of the Adriatic Sea.
- WORLD: The Sea Ranger initiative will establish the world's first maritime ranger service in cooperation with business partners.

Maritime security is the basis for global trade and prosperity, but it is under threat – from natural disasters, to piracy, trafficking and armed conflict. The EU-led conference secured a significant step toward safer seas.

- OUTER SPACE: Airbus announced plans to reinforce marine surveillance capacity by putting into orbit a new constellation of optical satellites from 2020, improving the anticipating threats.
- UNITED STATES: Microsoft co-founder Paul G. Allen's Vulcan Inc. will invest €34 million 'SkyLight' detection system, availing cutting-edge technology in the fight against illegal fishing.
- INDIAN OCEAN: To improve maritime security and fight piracy, the EU announced inter alia €37.5 million for initiatives in East Africa and the Indian Ocean, including support for alternative livelihoods.

The **blue economy** is forecast to double towards 2030, from an estimated €1.3 trillion today. The theme was added by the EU to this year's edition of the Our Ocean conference to foster stronger synergies between sustainable and circular ocean solutions and economic growth and employment, including in developing, coastal communities.

- EU-SWEDEN: The EU with Sweden announced a €45 million Pacific-EU Marine Partnership, supporting sustainable development in the Pacific.
- FINANCE: Althelia Ecosphere, Aviva Investors, the BPCE Group, the European Investment Bank, Seventure Partners, Willis Towers Watson and the World Bank agreed to develop a set of sustainability principles that will guide investment and financing decisions in the blue economy, with a view to announcing these principles in 2018.
- FRANCE: The opening of the world's first tidal turbine plant by Naval Energies in Cherbourg, France, marks the start of industrial-scale renewable ocean energy.
- WORLD: Over the next six years, the World Bank will dedicate nearly €300 million to advance sustainable blue economy in developing countries, including Indian Ocean and Pacific regions.
- CARIBBEAN: Royal Caribbean Cruises in the coming years will partner closely with WWF to reach ambitious and measurable sustainability targets for its global operations.

Sustainable fisheries are a prerequisite for continued access to sufficient, nutritious seafood for coming generations.

- **INSURANCE:** AXA announced a code of conduct between global insurance industry leaders including Allianz AGCS and AXA prohibiting coverage to vessels involved in illegal fishing activity.
- **FRANCE:** The region of Brittany has partnered with science and industry to achieve maximum sustainable yields (MSY) for fisheries by 2020.
- **PHILIPPINES:** An important push towards science-based management of its main fishing grounds and an expansion of its Vessel Monitoring System to cover 35% of its registered fleet.
- **SHARKS:** The Global Partnership for Sharks and Rays announced plans to award over €6 million supporting shark and ray conservation globally.
- **WEST AFRICA:** The EU announced support of fisheries management in West Africa amounting to €15 million.
- **UNITED STATES:** Sustainable fishery also means decent labour conditions for fishermen. A €4.2 million program will aim to combat forced labour and human trafficking on fishing vessels in the Asia-Pacific region.

Climate change has very direct consequences for the oceans, with rising sea levels and increasing acidification among the most alarming.

- **SPAIN:** The world biggest fishing port, Vigo, announced 30% emission reductions by 2022, including through innovative algae capture of CO₂.
- **ARCTIC:** An initiative led by the Clean Arctic Alliance aims at ending the use of heavy fuel (HF0) in the fragile Arctic environment.
- **EU:** WindEurope announced nearly €25 billion of investments in offshore wind energy towards 2019, whilst the European Union together with the International Maritime Organisation committed €10 million to promote energy-efficiency in maritime transport in developing countries.

The listed commitments are only examples. A full list of the commitments made during Our Ocean 2017 can be found [here](#).

Background

Starting in 2014, high-level participants from more than 100 countries have attended the Our Ocean conferences (hosted by the Governments of the United States in 2014 and 2016 and Chile in 2015 and by the European Union in Malta this year), including Heads of State or Government and ministers, companies ranging from large industry and the traditional fisheries sector to Silicon Valley tech, NGOs and philanthropic organisations. They have made over 700 concrete, measurable and tracked commitments. Next year's conference will be hosted by Indonesia, followed by Norway in 2019.

More information

[Our Ocean 2017 website and livestream](#)

[Our Ocean 2017 commitments](#)

[Our Ocean 2017 media centre](#) (i.e. infographics on all Our Ocean themes).

Factsheet: EU leads the way with ambitious action for cleaner and safer seas