



# UNFCCC SBSTA Dialogue on the Ocean and Climate Change to Consider How to Strengthen Mitigation and Adaptation Action

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## Mandate of the Dialogue

### DECISION 1/CP.25

30. *Commends* the efforts of the President of the Conference of the Parties at its twenty-fifth session to highlight the importance of the ocean, including as an integral part of the Earth's climate system, and of ensuring the integrity of ocean and coastal ecosystems in the context of climate change.
31. *Requests* the Chair of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice to convene at its fifty-second session (June 2020) a dialogue on the ocean and climate change to consider how to strengthen mitigation and adaptation action in this context.
32. *Also requests* the Chair of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice to convene at its fifty-second session a dialogue on the relationship between land and climate change adaptation related matters, not intervening in other processes under the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement, including those carried out under the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice.
33. *Invites* Parties and non-Party stakeholders to submit inputs via the submission portal by 31 March 2020 to inform the dialogues.
34. *Requests* the Chair of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice to prepare informal summary reports on the dialogues referred to in paragraphs 31–32 above.

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## Introduction

The ocean is an integral part of the Earth's climate system, both regulating global weather patterns and providing a critical buffer for heat and carbon. Simultaneously, the oceans provide resources critical for communities globally. The integrity of the ocean to regulate the climate and support a diversity of life has already degraded due to the impacts of climate change. The recent IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate (SROCC) clearly highlighted the impacts of increased greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the ocean and the continuation and acceleration of these impacts. The importance of working in partnership to strengthen the mitigation, adaptation and resilience potential of the ocean for marine ecosystems and dependent societies is essential and urgent.



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The impact of climate change on oceans demands rapid and at-scale reduction of global GHG emissions. Further, strengthening mitigation and adaptation action relies on ensuring the health, integrity and function of marine and coastal ecosystems, and their capacity to continue providing benefits important to people and their communities including food security, resilience to storms and flooding, carbon sequestration, water quality and biodiversity.

## A Clear Call for Continued and Integrated Ocean-Climate Action

The UNFCCC SBSTA Ocean-Climate Dialogue presents a unique opportunity to exchange information on how to strengthen mitigation and adaptation action in the ocean context under the UNFCCC. It also identifies areas for further action in the UNFCCC and across other fora.<sup>1</sup> The dialogue is an opportunity to identify key needs and gaps for how coastal and marine nature-based solutions, including coastal blue carbon can be practically implemented, financed, and reflected in Parties' national reporting (i.e. NDCs and NAPs).

While the topic of oceans and climate change, including aspects relating to coastal and marine nature-based solutions, are evident across UNFCCC bodies, workstreams, mechanisms and processes, the elements lack integration, coordination, and coherence. **The Dialogue should therefore provide a clear path forward to integrate ocean and climate change across relevant UNFCCC bodies and strengthen the mitigation and adaptation potential.** Clear conclusions and recommendations are needed as an outcome from the Dialogue for how the UNFCCC can accelerate and integrate ocean and climate change action into relevant processes and mechanisms. Clarity on the existing entry points within the UNFCCC and other fora will strengthen the mitigation, adaptation and resilience potential of marine ecosystems and dependent societies. Critical to this will be a recognition of the need to build capacity and expertise at national level to recognize nature as a key part of the solution.

## Options for Consideration by Parties

Parties will need to take strong leadership to ensure that the key messages from the informal summary report coming out of the dialogue are translated into action under the UNFCCC. To maximize the opportunities presented by this dialogue, below are a series of options that Parties may consider including during the Dialogue, organized by Discussion Group. These options focus on identifying clear actions that can be taken within the UNFCCC, the wider UN system and at national scale to advance integrated ocean-climate action beyond this dialogue.

<sup>1</sup> An informal list of submissions to inform the dialogue on the ocean and climate change to consider how to strengthen mitigation and adaptation action in this context: [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/OceanDialogue\\_SubmissionsList.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/OceanDialogue_SubmissionsList.pdf)

## **DISCUSSION 1: Strengthening understanding of and synergies across existing ocean-related work of UNFCCC workstreams, instruments, and constituted bodies**

Ensure continued action on the ocean-climate nexus by anchoring the outcomes of the dialogue in the UNFCCC to strengthen the contribution of coastal and marine ecosystems to GHG mitigation, climate adaptation and resilience benefits.

- 7 Parties could request the SBSTA Chair's Summary Report be presented at the next COP26 to provide the formality needed for continued action.
- 7 Parties could encourage that the constituted bodies are invited at that time to provide actionable recommendations to reflect on how the outcomes of the ocean-climate dialogue can be taken forward and reflected as relevant to their work in their reports to the COP.



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**Address the needs and gaps in the UNFCCC framework** to strengthen the existing ocean-climate elements under the constituted bodies and relevant negotiation tracks.

- 7 Parties could request an increase in the opportunities for capacity building and understanding of existing ocean-climate elements under UNFCCC constituted bodies and relevant negotiation tracks, including through social learning, broad participation, and technology transfer. Parties could also enhance understanding of opportunities within the UNFCCC to ensure a strong collective voice in submission requests, where relevant, and coordination opportunities, such as through the Nairobi Work Programme, Research and Systematic Observation, Enhanced Transparency Framework, Technology Executive Committee, Global Stocktake and NDC development and implementation, as seen in the SBSTA Chair's Information Note.<sup>2</sup>
- 7 Parties could encourage that the ocean elements from their NDCs and NAPs, or other relevant inputs, are adequately represented in the Global Stocktake (GST). The GST could be a potential place where the ocean and coasts could be regularly considered as a basis to assess progress and inform future action within the existing structure,<sup>3</sup> given that there is currently no regular process through which the ocean-climate relationship or related action are regularly considered at the UNFCCC.

## **DISCUSSION 2: Strengthening understanding of, and synergies between, UNFCCC and other UN system organizations, bodies, funds and programs, in their support for action.**

Identify needs and gaps as well as recognize benefits of collaboration and coherence across institutions for ocean-climate action to improve understanding of the pathways and actions that will contribute to strengthening coherence and delivering results across multiple international agreements including the UNFCCC, UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Convention on Biological Diversity, Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), Ramsar Convention and other relevant agreements. For example, Parties could explore the following options:

- 7 Developing consistent indicators that maximise synergies across international agreements.
- 7 Establishing strong linkages to and between relevant efforts such as the UN Decade of Ocean Science, Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, UN Ocean Conference and UN Food Systems Summit to support the knowledge needs of ocean-climate action.
- 7 Committing to people-centered approaches that recognize the importance of building the capacity of coastal developing countries to respond to ocean-related impacts from climate change. This also means to build long-term resilience and sustainability ensuring that ocean-related scientific knowledge, including traditional knowledge, provides the foundation for decision-making.

<sup>2</sup> SBSTA Chair Information Note on "Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue to consider how to strengthen adaptation and mitigation action" (November 9, 2020) [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/OD\\_InformationNote.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/OD_InformationNote.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Decision 19/CMA.1, Katowice Climate Package, 2018.

**DISCUSSION 3: Current action, lessons and opportunities for strengthening action related to adaptation and mitigation, and for strengthening action as part of national response under the UNFCCC.**

**Integrate ocean into climate change action and climate change action into ocean action.** Parties could highlight that there is a need to integrate ocean into climate change action and climate change action into ocean action.

- 7 Parties could highlight the need for building capacity at national level to account for the role of ocean and coastal ecosystems in climate action, using clear examples of needs and gaps. For example: improving and strengthening how coastal ecosystems are reflected in their GHG inventories, and exploring the gaps or obstacles they may face given lack of data and/or capacity. Inclusion of these ecosystems in GHG inventories is an important precursor to including them in national climate action.
- 7 Parties could illustrate and share how they plan to integrate ocean and coastal ecosystems into national climate strategies and action plans. The conservation, restoration and sustainable management of coastal ecosystems for mitigation (blue carbon) and ocean-based adaptation (community resilience, food security, sustainable incomes, COVID recovery) should be an explicit component of NDCs, NAPs and Long-term Low Emissions and Development Strategies.

**DISCUSSION 4: Options and opportunities for strengthening finance and funding, technology transfer, capacity-building and other cross-cutting support**

**Identify and highlight the importance of securing increased funding opportunities for ocean climate financing for technology transfer, capacity-building and other cross cutting support to countries, including capacity building for accessing funds.**

- 7 Parties could request the next Standing Committee on Finance Forum (2021), which will be focused on financing nature-based solutions, to prepare a Note and ensure a strong focus and outcome that explores the opportunities and gaps for financing coastal and marine contributions to mitigation and adaptation.
- 7 Parties could highlight finance options and gaps by ensuring there is an understanding that clear opportunities exist for Parties to access financing, and that barriers to accessing finance be removed wherever possible.

## Conclusion

The above recommendations are aligned with these four overarching principles for Parties' consideration. **1. Raise Ambition and Urgently Deliver Stronger and Sustained Mitigation and Adaptation Actions; 2. Make Nature a Key Part of the Solution; 3. Put People at the Centre; 4. Connect the Climate and Ocean Finance Agendas.** Strong leadership from Parties is vital in ensuring that recommendations arising in the Dialogue are integrated and implemented such that impactful ocean-climate action under the UNFCCC is actualized and on-going beyond COP26.

