ROW

Regenerative Ocean Week

#ReverseTheStripes

Powered by OCEAN INNOVATION AFRICA

Post-Event Report

24th - 28th February 2025
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Hosted by

Powered by OCEAN INNOVATION AFRICA

Co-organised by OCEANHUB AFRICA, IUCN, GBW Great Blue Wall, CATALYZE, OCEAN & CLIMATE PLATFORM

With the support of german cooperation, giz, SPARK, ReSea, Canada, mission inclusion

Contents

Summary

The **6th edition** of **Ocean Innovation Africa** (***OIA2025***) marked a major evolution for the summit. Staying true to its pan-African vision, OIA set out to host this edition outside of Cape Town for the first time. After the success of OIA2024 - and the release of the **Cape Town Manifesto** championing inclusive design principles for a regenerative blue economy - several partners approached OIA with the idea of building on that momentum and gravitas by aligning additional events, workshops, and meetups around the summit. The goal was to create a collaborative platform where each contribution would feed into a greater collective impact. This is what led OIA to team up with IUCN and the Ocean & Climate Platform (OCP) to launch **Regenerative Ocean Week** (***ROW***).

19 African Countries

43 Countries

529 Delegates Attended

384 Meetings

43 Sessions

89 Speakers

Powered and led by Ocean Innovation Africa (OIA), ROW was co-organized with IUCN ESARO, OceanHub Africa, Catalyze, and the Ocean & Climate Platform (OCP), each contributing to shaping the program and driving key sessions throughout the week. The event was hosted in partnership with the Tanzanian Government and TAFIRI, and supported by GIZ SPARK, the Resea Project, Government of Canada and Mission Inclusion. OIA led the program design, ensuring the summit stayed aligned with its mission of accelerating innovation and advancing the regenerative blue economy with this year a Science-to-Solutions lens.

Event Venue

The **Ramada Resort** and **Giraffe Beach Hotel** in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania provided the ideal setting for Regenerative Ocean Week, combining excellent facilities with spectacular ocean views that matched the summit's vision. These neighboring venues, connected by a short pathway, allowed for a smooth experience for all delegates.

With ample capacity to host plenary sessions, workshops and side meetings, the setup enabled a fully immersive program. The Grand Ocean Room at the Ramada hosted the opening and closing sessions of ROW, while Jetty 2 at Giraffe Beach Hotel served as the stunning natural-light stage right on the ocean for plenaries for OIA2025 on Days 2 and 3.

The venues also played a key role in supporting informal networking - with evening receptions in the Ramada garden, on the rooftop Sky Bar and around the pool - blending professional exchanges with a relaxed, coastal energy.

On the final day, delegates journeyed to Mbudya Island, closing the summit with nature, conversation, and a reminder of what we're working to protect.

With their prime location on the Tanzanian coastline and sustainable best practices in place, these hotels were an extension of ROW's mission, providing a scenic and functional space for driving ocean innovation and sustainability conversations.

170 - 171 Africana Road, Jangwani Beach Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

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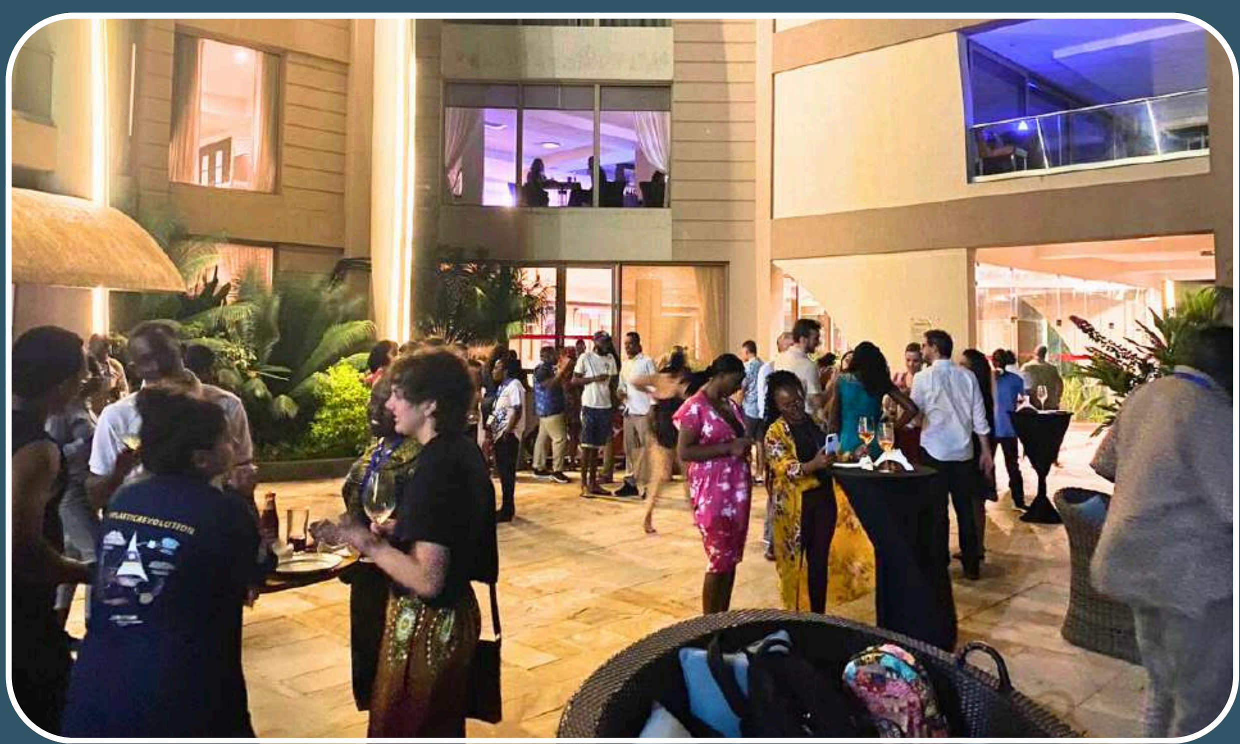
Networking & Interactive Platforms

ROW fostered seamless networking and engagement opportunities, ensuring that delegates had multiple ways to connect, collaborate, and exchange ideas throughout the event. While this year did not feature a live-streamed component, several digital engagement tools enhanced the experience for both in-person attendees and remote participants.



Catalyze B2B Matchmaking Platform

Catalyze's B2B matchmaking platform, **Engage**, played a crucial role in facilitating structured networking. All delegates were onboarded onto the platform upon ticket purchase, allowing them to schedule one-on-one meetings, discover potential partners, and connect with investors and other stakeholders. The platform was especially valuable during extended lunch breaks, where attendees could arrange business-to-business discussions while maximizing face-to-face engagement.

Interactive Audience Participation with Slido

Throughout plenary sessions, Slido was used to enhance audience engagement. Attendees could submit questions, participate in live polls, and provide real-time feedback, making discussions more dynamic and inclusive. The tool played a key role in amplifying voices from diverse backgrounds, ensuring that conversations remained inclusive, interactive and solutions-oriented.

Immersive In-Person Experiences

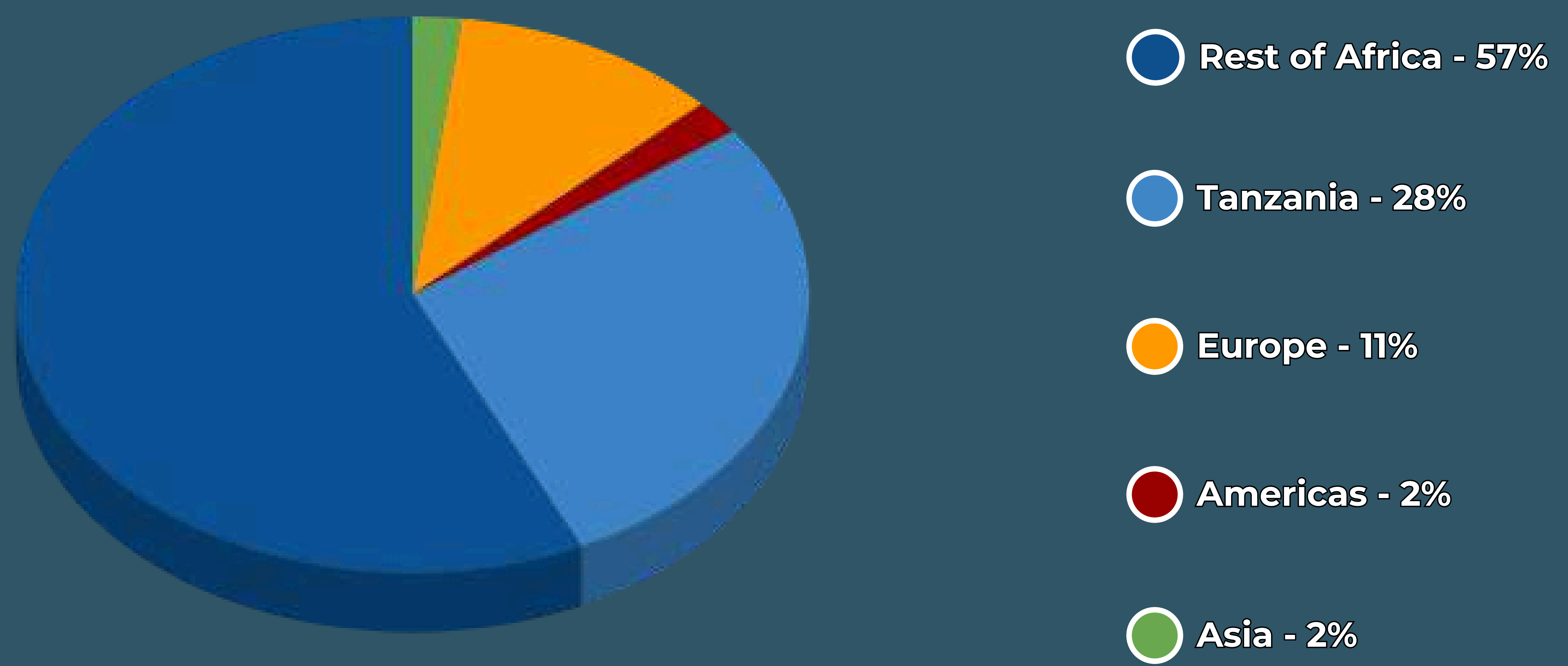
Beyond digital tools, ROW's format encouraged organic, high-value networking opportunities through curated side events, informal meetups, and cultural activities. From the cocktail receptions at the Ramada Resort and Sky Bar to the poolside networking event, the summit created multiple spaces where attendees could engage in meaningful discussions in a relaxed setting.

The final day's excursion to Mbudya Island also provided a unique networking environment, blending recreational activities with business discussions. Delegates had the opportunity to strengthen connections while enjoying activities like snorkeling, kayaking, and a scenic boat ride, reinforcing ROW's commitment to fostering collaboration beyond the conference room.

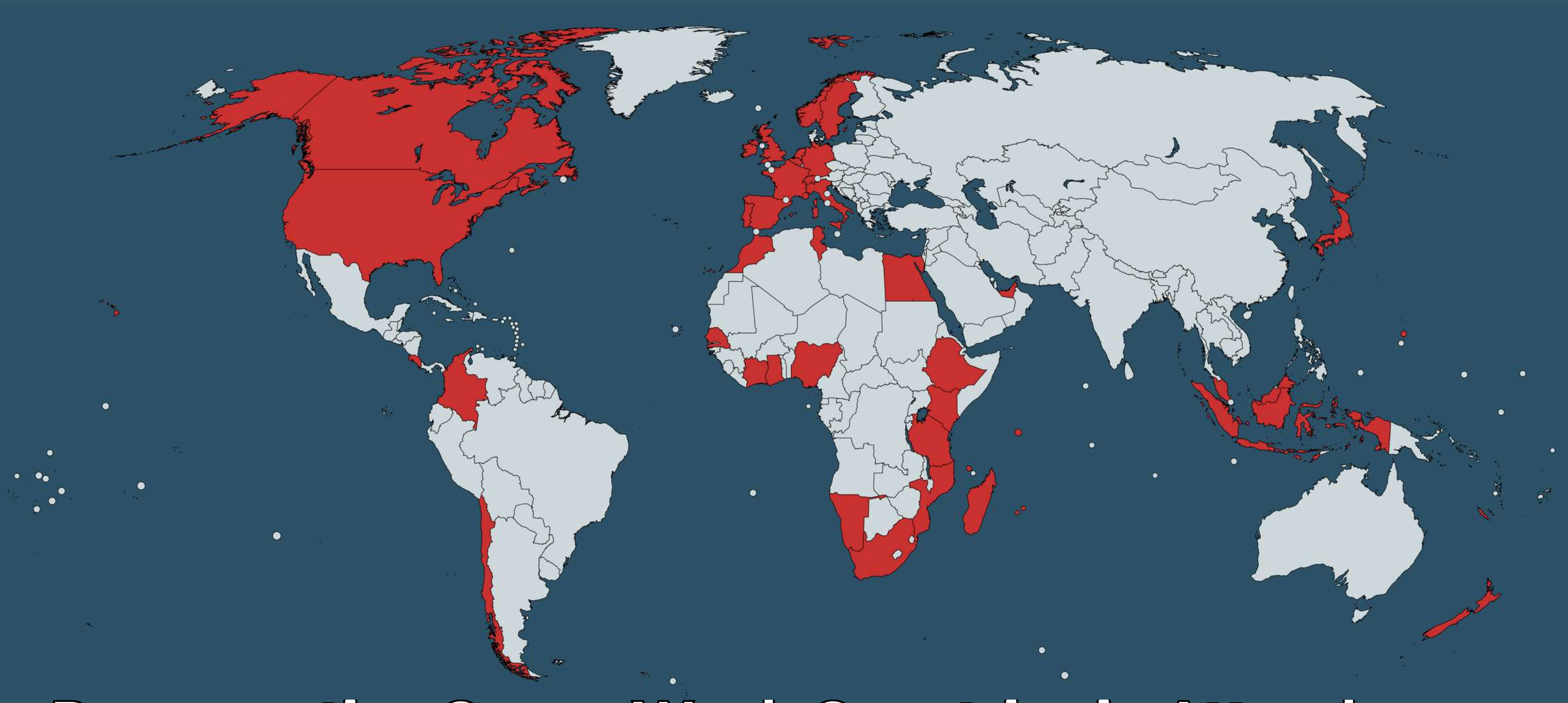
Attendance

This year, OIA2025-ROW reflected a significant shift in regional attendance patterns, following the move from Cape Town (OIA2024) to Dar es Salaam. As the host country, Tanzania accounted for 28% of total attendance, while delegates from the Rest of Africa made up a commanding 57%, reinforcing the summit's pan-African identity. Participation from Europe (11%), Asia (2%), and the Americas (2%) showcased the summit's growing international relevance and reach.

Regenerative Ocean Week Regional Representation



OIA and it's partners placed strong emphasis on regional diversity and inclusion at ROW. Targeted funding support was mobilised to fly in participants from across Africa - including startups, youth leaders, early-career ocean professionals (ECOPs), and community representatives. A public call for speakers ensured diverse voices and narratives were featured across sessions, highlighting local experiences, Indigenous knowledge and grassroots innovation on the global stage.



Regenerative Ocean Week Countries in Attendance

OCEAN INNOVATION AFRICA

Agenda

Day 1
24th February

IUCN
'Science-to-Business'

PLENARY SESSIONS

- MC Welcome Address
- Goodwill Messages & Opening Address
- Keynote Address: Bridging Science, Business, and Policy: Advancing a Sustainable Future for Africa
- High-level Government Panel Discussion: Bold Leadership For The Regenerative Blue Economy
- Panel Discussion: Driving Innovation Through Collaboration: A Multi-Sector Perspective
- Program Launch: Bahari Accelerator, Tanzania
- Science-To-Business-To-Policy Showcase: Advancing Business and Empowering Women in the Ocean Space

LUNCH & B2B MATCHMAKING

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

WORKSHOP SESSIONS

- Enabling Science to Business for a Regenerative Blue Economy
- Accelerating Nature Based Solutions & Blue Carbon Action In The WIO Region
- Investing in IPLCs for Ocean Stewardship: Strengthening Rights, Finance, and Livelihoods in the WIO Region

CLOSED-DOOR MEETINGS

- Aligning Ocean Acidification Regional Programme with AUC Blue Economy Goals
- Re-envisioning the Governance of Marine Migratory Biodiversity
- An Ocean of Possibilities: Envisioning the Future of Ocean Sustainability (1/3)

NETWORKING COCKTAIL

Platinum | Gold | Silver

Agenda

Cont'd

Day 2
25th February

IUCN | OIA
'Science-to-Business & Technology'

PLENARY SESSIONS

- MC Welcome Address
- Keynote Address: The Role of Startups and Innovation in the Regenerative Blue Economy
- Pecha Kucha Sessions: Youth & ECOP Personal Ocean Journeys
- Seaside Chat Session: Regenerative Market Systems and Pathways of Change for the Blue Economy.
- Ocean Innovation Africa Pitch Competition: 5 Start-Up Pitches with Prizes

LUNCH & B2B MATCHMAKING

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

WORKSHOP SESSIONS

- Scaling Aquatic Food Systems Solutions for an Inclusive and Sustainable Blue Economy
- From Growth to Regeneration: Unlocking the Full Potential of African Seaweed
- Making Ocean Technology Accessible for Coastal Community Resilience

CLOSED-DOOR MEETINGS

- Building on the WIO LMMA Forum: Strengthening Strategy and Amplifying Impact
- NORAD Blue Entrepreneurship Consortium Meeting
- An Ocean of Possibilities: Envisioning the Future of Ocean Sustainability (2/3)

NETWORKING COCKTAIL

Platinum

Gold

Silver

Agenda

Cont'd

Day 3
26th February

OIA
'Science-to-Investment'

PLENARY SESSIONS

- MC Welcome Address
- Keynote Address: Scaling Up to Investment: Unlocking Financial Pathways for Blue Innovation
- Pecha Kucha Sessions: Outreach & Community Personal Ocean Journeys
- Programme Launch: WE4D Blue Economy Tanzania
- OceanHub Africa Demo Session: Start-Ups' Showcase from Cohort 5
- Ocean Innovation Africa Pitch Competition Winner Announcement

LUNCH & B2B MATCHMAKING

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

WORKSHOP SESSIONS

- Rethinking Plastics: Innovations in Management & Community Impact
- Revolutionizing Blue Finance for Regenerative Seascapes
- Unlocking the Potential of Blue-Tech Investments
- Nature-positive Shipping Industry
- Showcasing Francophone Blue Economy Innovators from Small Island Developing Nations
- Mozambique Blue Economy Engagement Session
- An Ocean of Possibilities: Envisioning the Future of Ocean Sustainability (3/3)

POOLSIDE NETWORKING ACTIVITY

Agenda Cont'd

Day 4
27th February

IUCN | OIA | OCP
'Science-to-Policy'

PLENARY SESSIONS

- MC Welcome Address
- Keynote Address: The Role of Ocean Stewardship and Finance in Advancing the Regenerative Blue Economy
- Workshops Feedback Session: Feedback & Discussing Outcomes
- BlueInvest Africa Togo 2025: Call for Applications
- Panel Discussion: Unlocking the Potential of Blue Investments: Collaborative Solutions
- IUCN Workshop Outcome Session: Defining Next Steps & Presentation of the Dar es Salaam Declaration
- Ocean & Climate Platform: Interactive Visioning Session & Workshop Outcome Session
- Pecha Kucha Sessions: Cultural & Government Personal Journeys
- Key Action Plan Session & Closing Statement

LUNCH & B2B MATCHMAKING

IMPACTFUL ACTIVATION

- **Beach Clean-up**

We organized a beach clean-up along the shoreline outside the Ramada Resort to leave a positive impact on the local coastline while closing the summit on a collective note of action.

VIP DINNER

Platinum

Gold

Silver

Agenda

Cont'd

Day 5
28th February

IUCN | OIA | OCP
'Networking Excursions'

MORNING ACTIVITIES

Scenic Boat Ride to Mbudya Island

- Delegates enjoyed a refreshing trip across the ocean, accompanied by music, a DJ, and refreshments.

Island Arrival & Welcome

- Participants were welcomed to the stunning Mbudya Marine Reserve, setting the stage for a relaxed yet productive networking experience.

MIDDAY & AFTERNOON ACTIVITIES

Networking Over a Beachfront Lunch

- A laid-back lunch allowed attendees to engage in organic conversations while enjoying the beautiful island backdrop.

Ocean Activities & Exploration:

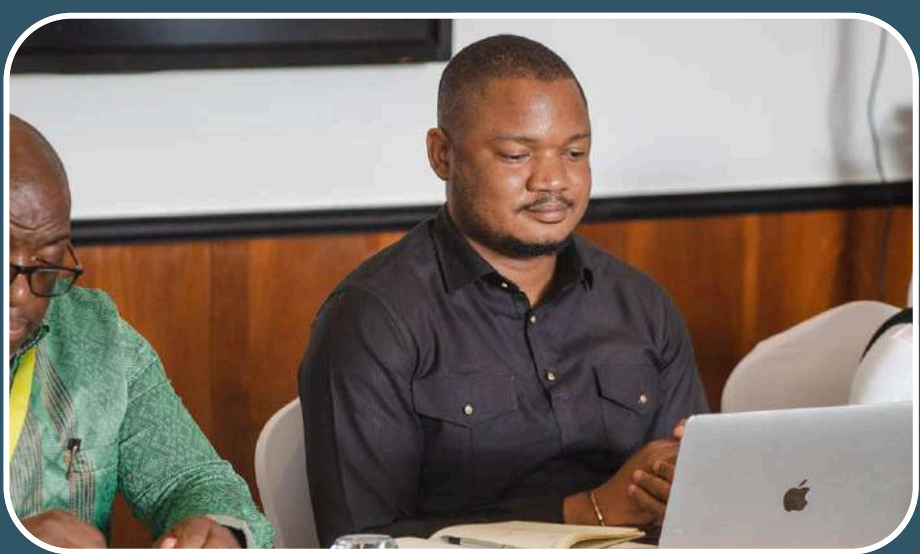
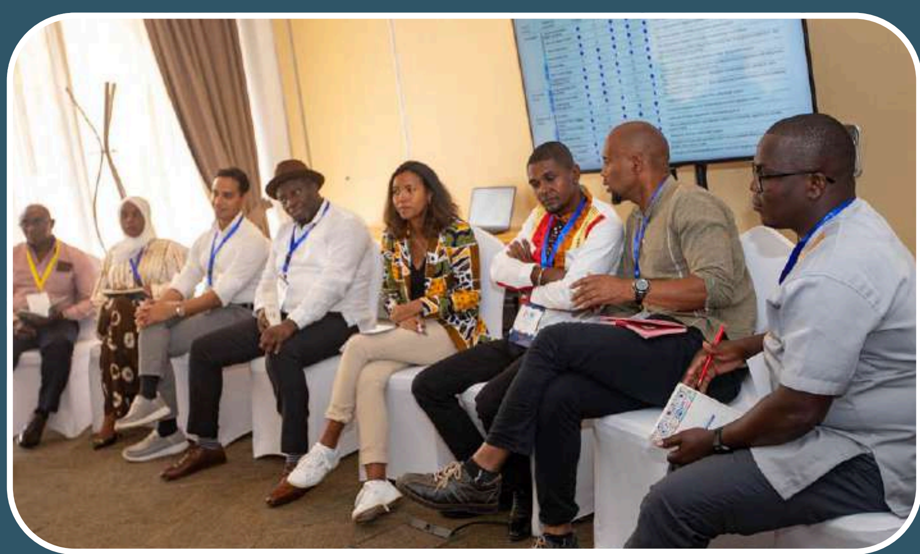
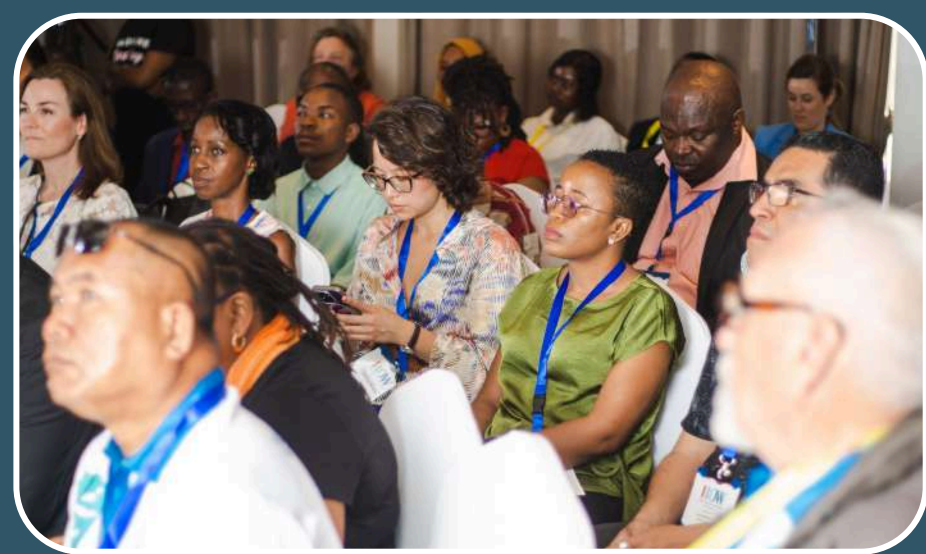
- Snorkeling
- Kayaking
- Swimming
- Exploring the island's historic ruins

Format & Structure

Regenerative Ocean Week followed the structured yet engaging format that Ocean Innovation Africa crafted a few editions back, designed to foster meaningful conversations, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing among blue stakeholders, but above all, to drive action and provide a platform to a different narrative to other mainstream conferences. Each morning featured plenary sessions, where delegates gathered for keynote speeches, high-level panels, Pecha Kucha presentations, and Seaside Chats. These sessions set the stage for the day's discussions, highlighting policy trends, scientific breakthroughs, and innovative solutions shaping the blue economy.



Afternoons were dedicated to focused breakout sessions, where the energy of collaboration truly came to life. Workshops offered open, hands-on spaces for deep dives into key topics, fostering co-creation, knowledge exchange, and strategy development among a diverse range of stakeholders. In parallel, closed-door meetings carried that same spirit of engagement but within a more private setting

Throughout the event, networking remained a core focus. Delegates were systematically onboarded onto the Catalyze B2B matchmaking platform, allowing them to schedule one-on-one meetings and explore new business opportunities. The extended lunch breaks and dedicated networking spaces further encouraged informal connections and industry partnerships.



Evening receptions offered valuable opportunities for delegates to connect in a relaxed and engaging atmosphere. Day 1's High Tide Happy Hour - sponsored by IUCN ESARO - opened with enthusiasm, complemented by stunning ocean views. Day 2's Sky Bar Networking Night, - hosted by Our Blue Future (OBF) - fostered meaningful conversations against a scenic rooftop backdrop. Day 3's Poolside Gathering - sponsored by Ocean Innovation Africa (OIA) - provided a laid-back setting for reflection, connection and light entertainment by the water.

IUCN GBW Great Blue Wall | OCEAN & CLIMATE PLATFORM | Our Blue Future

We also hosted two VIP Dinners - **OCP's** private dinner on Day 3, and the Closing VIP Dinner on Day 4, co-sponsored by **OIA and OBF** - both offering space for deeper connections as the week wrapped up.

OCEAN INNOVATION AFRICA

Commitments & Milestones

Bahari Accelerator Launch

ROW marked the launch of the Bahari Accelerator, a groundbreaking initiative to support ocean entrepreneurs and fast-track blue economy solutions. Announced by Ismael Kimirei (TAFIRI), the accelerator aims to bridge science, entrepreneurship, and investment by providing mentorship, technical support, and funding opportunities for high-impact startups.

The launch event featured a ribbon-cutting ceremony, a press conference, and high-level dignitaries, drawing strong media attention. With its focus on transforming ocean innovation into scalable businesses, the Bahari Accelerator is set to play a pivotal role in advancing Africa’s blue economy.


Dar es Salaam Declaration on the Regenerative Blue Economy

On the final day of ROW, the **Dar es Salaam Declaration** was unveiled, setting a clear vision for investment, governance, and innovation in Africa’s blue economy. Developed through multi-stakeholder collaboration, it builds on existing regional frameworks and calls for mobilizing $500 million for ocean innovation, expanding regenerative industries, and creating 2 million blue jobs by 2030.

Key commitments include:

- Driving investment in marine biotechnology, blue carbon, and sustainable coastal tourism.
- Recognizing IPLCs as key partners in ocean governance.
- Introducing innovative financing models like blue bonds and blended finance.
- Expanding research hubs and incubating blue startups.
- Scaling the Great Blue Wall initiative for regional marine conservation.

The Declaration is open for endorsement and will guide future policy, funding, and regional cooperation, reinforcing Africa’s leadership in the regenerative blue economy.

THE DAR ES SALAAM DECLARATION ON THE REGENERATIVE BLUE ECONOMY

Commitments & Milestones

Women Entrepreneurs for the Development of the Blue Economy (WE4D) Program Launch

ROW saw the official launch of the GIZ WE4D (Women Entrepreneurs for Development) Program, an initiative aimed at strengthening the role of women entrepreneurs in Africa's blue economy. The program provides a tailored support package including mentorship, capacity building, and access to funding opportunities, designed to help women-led businesses scale their impact in ocean innovation.

The launch set the stage for growing a strong community of women leaders driving change in the sector, tackling barriers to finance and market access while amplifying women's contributions to the regenerative blue economy. Delegates were invited to connect with the program and explore collaboration opportunities.

Visioning Session: Advancing a Joint Agenda for Ocean and Climate Action

The Ocean & Climate Platform (OCP) convened a collaborative visioning session to chart the path forward for joint ocean-climate action, with a focus on ensuring Africa's leadership is reflected on the global stage. Building on the week's conversations, the session brought together policymakers, scientists, community leaders, and private sector voices to align priorities and map collective next steps.

Discussions centered on strengthening Africa's presence at global forums like UNOC3 and UNFCCC, integrating coastal and island voices, and advancing partnerships with initiatives such as the Great Blue Wall. The session laid the groundwork for a shared roadmap, with commitments to amplify key messages from ROW and ensure coordinated engagement at upcoming global events.

Commitments & Milestones

SPARK Innovation Fund Facility (AEDIB 2.0 Launch)

As part of the SPARK initiative's mission to strengthen innovation ecosystems in Africa, the AEDIB Joint Innovation Facility was announced. This new fund will accelerate digital transformation and the green transition across Africa and Europe through direct financial support. Co-funded by the European Union and implemented by GIZ and HAUS, the facility will empower changemakers to bring bold ideas to life, scale solutions, and forge collaborations across continents.

White Paper Submission to the World Conservation Congress (WCC)

IUCN ESARO is spearheading the development of a white paper that captures the key outcomes and priorities discussed during ROW. The paper will be submitted to the upcoming World Conservation Congress (WCC) to help shape international policy dialogues on ocean and climate action. It aims to bring African perspectives and solutions to the forefront of global conservation discussions, supporting stronger alignment between regional priorities and international frameworks.

Launch of the BlueInvest Africa 2025 Call for Applications

At ROW, the European Union officially launched the call for applications for BlueInvest Africa 2025, which will be held in Lomé, Togo. This flagship initiative connects Africa's most promising blue economy entrepreneurs with private and public investors from across Africa and Europe. The event aims to accelerate funding for sustainable ocean solutions in areas such as fisheries, aquaculture, marine renewable energy, ocean conservation and sustainable maritime transport. Entrepreneurs selected through the open call will have the opportunity to pitch live, access B2B networking, and engage with stakeholders aligned with the Global Gateway — the EU's initiative for responsible and sustainable investment.

Meet the MC's

The Masters of Ceremonies (MCs) at ROW brought energy, expertise, and seamless engagement to the summit. Their diverse backgrounds in ocean conservation, governance, and innovation ensured that each session flowed smoothly, keeping the audience informed and engaged.

The opening day was hosted by **Chris Lugoe**, who set the tone for an inspiring week of collaboration. With a strong presence and deep knowledge of ocean sustainability, they guided the audience through high-level discussions, keynote speeches, and the launch of key initiatives like the Bahari Accelerator.

Kirshia Govender, Programme Manager at the International Ocean Institute – Southern Africa (IOI-SA), served as MC for Day 2 and 3 with warmth, insight, and confidence. A marine biologist, ocean literacy advocate, and founder of Aonyx Marine Experiences, she is passionate about education and connecting people to the ocean. Her ability to blend scientific knowledge with engaging storytelling made her an ideal guide through two days of keynote sessions, workshops, and start-up showcases.

Marine Lecerf, Head of International Policy at the Ocean & Climate Platform, took the stage on the final day of conferencing. With extensive experience in ocean policy and climate diplomacy, Marine ensured the discussions reflected global ocean governance priorities, setting the scene for the presentation of the Dar es Salaam Declaration. Her expertise helped bridge the gap between policy, science, and action, making her the perfect host to wrap up the core sessions of ROW.

Goodwill Message

Mr. Georges Mba Asseko, Head of Blue Economy Division at the African Union Commission

A goodwill message was delivered by Georges Mba Asseko, on behalf of the African Union Commission, reaffirming their commitment to advancing the continent's blue economy through Agenda 2063 and the AU Blue Economy Strategy. The address emphasized the importance of balancing traditional and emerging sectors, promoting environmental justice, and ensuring inclusive, sustainable growth across Africa's coastal and island states.

Opening Address

The official opening address was delivered by **Hon. Dr. Ashatu Kijaji, Minister of Livestock and Fisheries of the United Republic of Tanzania**. She welcomed delegates and reaffirmed Tanzania's commitment to sustainable ocean governance, investment in blue economy enterprises, and regional collaboration to drive long-term economic and environmental resilience.

Session Reports

Keynote Address

David Obura, Director, CORDIO East Africa - *Bridging Science, Business, and Policy*

David highlighted the need to connect science, business, and policy to advance ocean sustainability. He emphasized Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) as a key tool for balancing conservation and industry interests, ensuring better ocean management. He also stressed the importance of regional cooperation and financial reinvestment into conservation, urging stakeholders to prioritize long-term ecological and economic sustainability.

Ronald Tardiff, Lighthouse Lead, 1000 Ocean Startups - *Innovation for a Regenerative Blue Economy*

Ronald addressed the critical funding gap for ocean startups, stressing the need for better access to investment to scale regenerative solutions. He highlighted how 1000 Ocean Startups is working to mobilize capital for blue economy ventures and discussed successful financing models that have helped early-stage businesses grow. He reinforced the role of impact-driven investment in creating a sustainable ocean economy.

Sean Nazerali, Director of Innovation, BIOFUND Mozambique - *Scaling Up to Investment*

Sean explored how innovative financial mechanisms can unlock sustainable investment in marine conservation. His keynote emphasized the importance of blended finance, blue bonds, and public-private partnerships to scale ocean solutions beyond short-term projects. He underscored the need to de-risk investment, align public and private interests, and create long-term, scalable pathways for funding ocean resilience across Africa.

Kristian Teleki, CEO, Fauna & Flora - *Disruption, Dialogue & Driving Change for the Ocean*

Kristian delivered a closing keynote that underscored the power of science, dialogue, and disruption in driving ocean action. He highlighted the importance of improving communication, valuing diverse knowledge systems, and fostering collaboration across regions. Teleki closed with a call to action, reminding delegates: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed ocean citizens can change the world.”

Pecha Kucha Storytelling

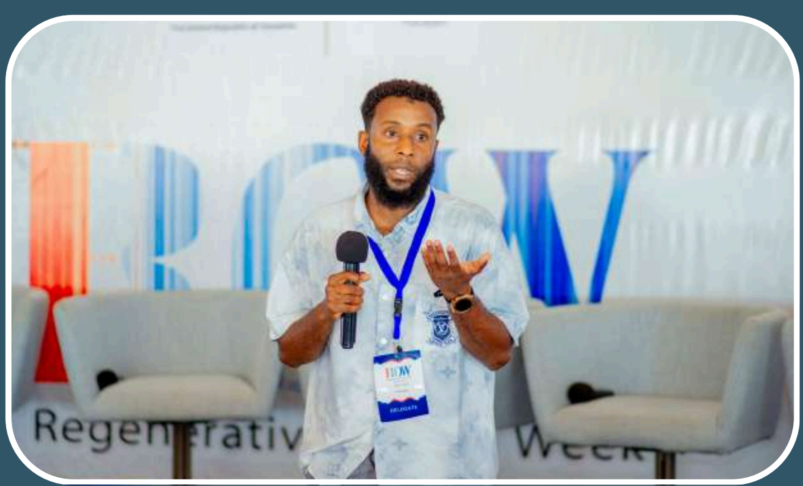
About

The **Pecha Kucha** sessions brought a refreshing, personal dimension to the summit, offering space for stories, reflections, and lived experiences often missing from formal presentations. Designed as a rapid-fire storytelling format, each speaker presented **20 slides**, with just **20 seconds** per slide, keeping talks short, dynamic and visually engaging.

This fast-paced structure pushed speakers to get to the heart of their message. Most importantly, Pecha Kuchas were not about organizational representation - speakers took the stage as individuals, free to share their own stories.

The session aimed to spotlight voices we don't always hear from, such as: youth, Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs), community leaders, women, and those with deep, personal connections to the ocean. It was a celebration of personal journeys and a reminder that behind every ocean initiative are people driving change, each with their own story.

Youth & ECOP



Omar Yusuf, Marine Programme Manager at REEFolution Kenya shared how community-driven reef restoration is empowering local coastal populations. He emphasized the role of youth engagement in marine conservation and how collaborative efforts can enhance the resilience of coral ecosystems. His work demonstrates how hands-on community initiatives can create long-term environmental and economic benefits while ensuring local ownership of conservation efforts.

Sharon Mutende, Policy Coordinator at Children and Youth Major Group to UNEP advocated for gender inclusivity in the blue economy, emphasizing the need for education, leadership opportunities, and funding access for women in marine science, conservation, and policy. She highlighted women-led initiatives already making waves and called for stronger policy commitments to support their growth and impac**t.**

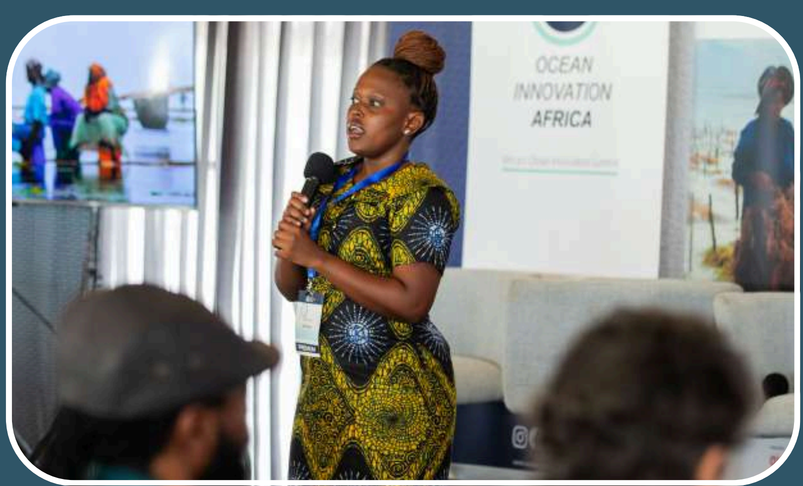
Mathias Andreas, Ocean Activist at VSO discussed community-led sustainable fishing and the challenges faced by small-scale fishers. Presenting in Swahili with a translator, he highlighted the importance of integrating traditional knowledge into ocean governance and securing better market access for local fishers. He reinforced the role of coastal communities in marine protection and the need for collaborative efforts between policymakers and local fishers to ensure sustainability.

Session Reports Cont'd

Community & Outreach

Paul Mutuku Kaluki, Executive Director at Keane International presented innovative ways to restore mangrove ecosystems using technology and micro-financing. He emphasized how local communities can lead restoration projects when equipped with the right tools and financial backing. His presentation showcased community-driven conservation models that combine scientific advancements with traditional knowledge to ensure long-term success.

Richmond Kennedy Quarcoo, Executive Director of Plastic Punch focused on plastic pollution reduction in Ghana, showcasing community-led waste management solutions and advocating for stronger policies on plastic use and recycling. He shared insights on how grassroots initiatives can effectively reduce plastic waste, promote environmental awareness, and create livelihood opportunities through innovative recycling models.



Sandra Ruhizi, Managing Director of Kijana Factory highlighted the potential of sea moss farming as a sustainable income source for women. She discussed the barriers to market entry, the role of cooperatives in scaling production, and the growing demand for seaweed-based products in cosmetics and nutrition. Her work is helping build a more inclusive blue economy, providing women with the tools to achieve economic independence through ocean-based businesses.

Culture & Government

Ambassador Nancy Karigithu, Blue Economy Advisor to the Executive Office of the President of Kenya explored ocean governance and policy advancements, stressing the need for regional collaboration, private sector engagement, and innovative financing mechanisms to support Africa's blue economy. She highlighted successful policy frameworks already in place and discussed strategies for strengthening governance to drive sustainable marine resource use.

Sheila Babauta, Board Member of Our Commonwealth 670 discussed indigenous knowledge and ocean conservation, highlighting how Pacific Island communities have safeguarded marine resources for generations and how these practices can inform modern conservation strategies. She called for greater recognition of traditional ocean stewardship and emphasized the role of indigenous-led conservation efforts in building more resilient marine ecosystems.

Session Reports Cont'd

Seaside Chat

Regenerative Market Systems: Pathways of Change for the Blue Economy

Hosted by: **Vikara Institute**

Moderator:
Margie Brand, Director, Vikara Institute

Speakers:
Karuna Rana, CEO, Big Ocean States Initiative (BOSI)
Cosmas Fednand, Researcher, University of Dar es Salaam

This session explored how market-driven solutions can drive regenerative economic growth in the Blue Economy. The discussion emphasized aligning governance, investment, and local community needs to create sustainable ocean economies. Panelists shared insights from island communities, focusing on self-reliance, funding models prioritizing local actors, and investment in transformative actions to unlock blue opportunities and strengthen ocean leadership.

Key takeaways included building resilient market systems, empowering local actors, and designing financial mechanisms that prioritize long-term regenerative practices over short-term gains. The discussion reinforced the importance of policy integration, knowledge-sharing, and funding blue leadership initiatives to create a thriving, inclusive blue economy.

Session Reports Cont'd

Powering Women in the Blue Economy

Hosted by: **IUCN**

Moderator: **Magdalyne Were**, Regional Lead Gender & Blue Economy at Mission Inclusion

Speakers:

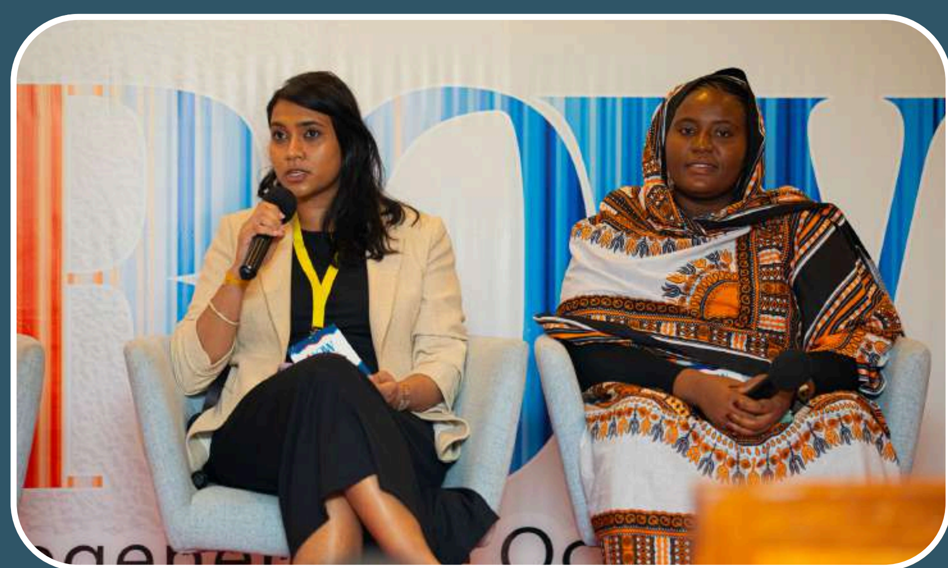
Nancy Iraba, Marine Scientist at National Geographic

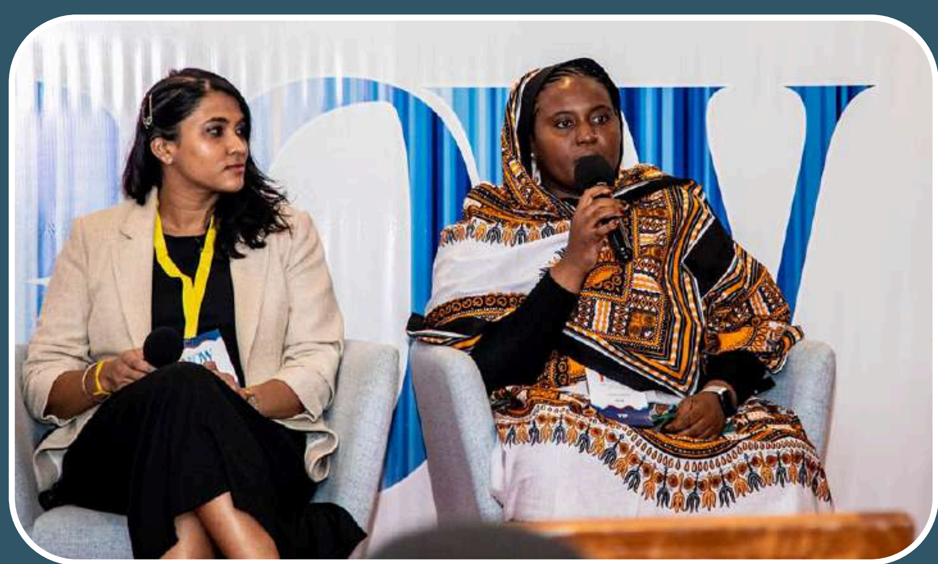
Loubna Hamidi, Vice President of WIOMSA Women in Marine Science Network

Josheena Naggea, Blue Food Futures Program Manager at Stanford Center for Ocean Solutions & Chairperson, National Steering Committee at GEF Small Grants Programme, Mauritius

This session focused on breaking barriers and fostering inclusivity by empowering women in the Blue Economy. The discussion explored the systemic challenges women face in marine industries and highlighted practical solutions to promote gender equity in marine science, conservation, and entrepreneurship.

Key takeaways included the need for capacity-building programs, financial access, and policy reforms to enhance women's leadership roles in ocean governance. Panelists emphasized that investing in women-led initiatives strengthens entire communities, ultimately driving socioeconomic resilience and environmental sustainability.





Session Reports Cont'd

Science-to-Policy Showcase – Advancing Business Through Knowledge

Hosted by: **IUCN**

Moderator:

Sware Semesi - Director General of NEMC

Speakers:

Elhadji Fall, Ministry of Finance, Comoros

Alejandro Rojas, UNIDO Industrial Development Officer and Coordinator for Blue Industry Strategy

This session brought together scientists, policymakers, and business leaders to explore how evidence-based research is influencing ocean policy and industry. Discussions highlighted case studies from the Western Indian Ocean where science-driven policies have led to sustainable business growth and conservation wins.

Key takeaways emphasized the role of Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) in optimizing ocean resource use, the importance of collaboration between scientists and industry leaders, and the need for regional cooperation to scale regenerative ocean initiatives. The session showcased how bridging science, policy, and business can unlock new investment opportunities and strengthen ocean governance.

Session Reports Cont'd

An Ocean of Possibilities

Hosted by: **Ocean & Climate Platform (OCP)**

Moderator: **Loreley Picourt**, Executive Director of Ocean & Climate Platform

Speakers:

Arthur Tuda, Executive Director ofWIOMSA

Cynthia Barzuna, Director of Ocean Action 2030 Coalition at the World Resources Institute

Cameron Diver, Vice President - Conservation Programs at Island Conservation

Tatiana Antonelli, Chair of MENA Oceans Initiative

This session gathered leading voices from science, finance, and policy to explore how collaborative action can unlock transformative opportunities at the ocean-climate nexus. Speakers shared experiences driving change across regions, from advancing blue finance mechanisms to empowering local actors in ocean governance. Discussions highlighted the growing momentum to align climate and ocean agendas, emphasizing the critical role of African and island nations in shaping global priorities.

Key takeaways reinforced that scaling impact requires strengthening partnerships, mobilizing climate finance for coastal and marine resilience, and ensuring that community-led solutions remain central to ocean-climate action. The session offered a powerful reminder that realizing an ocean of possibilities starts with elevating diverse voices and bridging local realities with global ambitions.

Session Reports Cont'd

Panel Discussion

Driving Ocean Innovation through Collaboration: A Multi-Sector Perspective

Moderator: **Susanne Wanjiku**, Innovation & Investment Fund Manager at GIZ SPARK

Speakers:

Fahd Al-Guthmy, Programme Director at WCS

Lamine Diallo, Head of Natural Resources at the European Delegation in Tanzania

Olaf Seidel, Project Head of GIZ SPARK

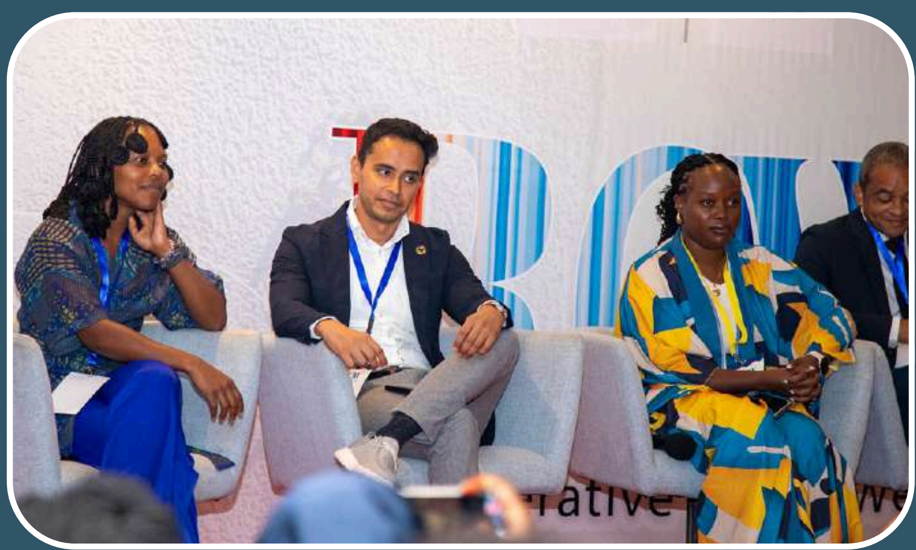
Flavia Mbuki, Tech Innovation Manager at Bosch Innovation Hub

Lorna Mudegu, COO of WAVU

Thando Mazomba, Venture Development Lead at OceanHub Africa

This session explored how cross-sector collaboration is key to driving innovation in the Blue Economy. Panelists shared perspectives from conservation, finance, technology, and entrepreneurship, highlighting the importance of science-based policies, private sector engagement, and innovative financing to unlock new opportunities.

Discussions focused on creating enabling environments for start-ups, scaling up blue economy enterprises, and bridging gaps between policy, science, and investment. The panel reinforced that inclusive partnerships and coordinated action are essential to advance sustainable ocean industries in Africa.



Session Reports Cont'd

Bold Leadership for the Regenerative Blue Economy

Moderator: **Julius Francis,** Senior Lecturer at School of Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Technology, Tanzania

Speakers:

Hon. Shaban Ali Othman, Minister of Blue Economy and Fisheries of Zanzibar

Hon. Ashatu Kijaji, Minister of Investment, Industry and Trade at Tanzania Government

Ambassador Nicola Brennan Ireland's Ambassador to Tanzania

Luther Bois Anukur, Regional Director of IUCN ESARO

Nuru Salum, Regional Coordinator of Mwambao Coastal Community Network Tanzania

Hon. Paubert Mahatante, Secretary General of SADC.

This high-level panel gathered ocean leaders and policymakers to explore how bold leadership can advance Africa's regenerative blue economy. The discussion focused on bridging science-to-business gaps, strengthening ocean governance, and scaling investments in marine conservation.

Key themes included advancements in OECMs (Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures), the role of IPLCs in ocean stewardship, and creating enabling frameworks for large-scale blue economy investments. Panelists emphasized the importance of regional collaboration and political will to transform Africa's ocean agenda into tangible, impactful action.

Session Reports Cont'd

Unlocking the Potential of Blue Investments: Collaborative Solutions

Led by: **Our Blue Future (OBF)**

Moderators:

Brenda Kibiku, Technical Advisor, GIZ WIOGI

Jonas Tesfu, CEO, Pangea, member of Our Blue Future Initiative

Speakers:

J**umanne Mtambalike**, CEO of Sahara Ventures

Joyce Klu, Waste Sector Expert at European Investment Bank

Kai Mollel, Business Incubator Head at Stanbic Bank

David Ogiga, Director of SoteHub

Joanne Muchai, Market Systems Development & Partnerships Manager at TechnoServe

This session focused on unlocking capital for ocean-based enterprises by addressing investment barriers and identifying innovative financing solutions. Panelists discussed blended finance models, public-private partnerships, and community-led blue bonds as mechanisms to de-risk investments and mobilize private sector funding. The panel stressed the need to strengthen early-stage support for ocean startups, create investment-ready pipelines, and ensure inclusive financing that empowers local communities and small-scale entrepreneurs.

The session concluded with a call to develop coordinated financing strategies that can scale ocean-based solutions across Africa.

Pitch Session

Ocean Innovation Africa 2025 Pitch Competition

Powered by: **Schmidt Marine Technology Partners**

In partnership with: **Monaco Ocean Protection Challenge**

Jury:

Tom Sparke, Head of Impact at ODISEA

Mark Schrope, Director of Schmidt Marine Technology Partners

Alexis Grosskopf, CEO of OceanHub Africa

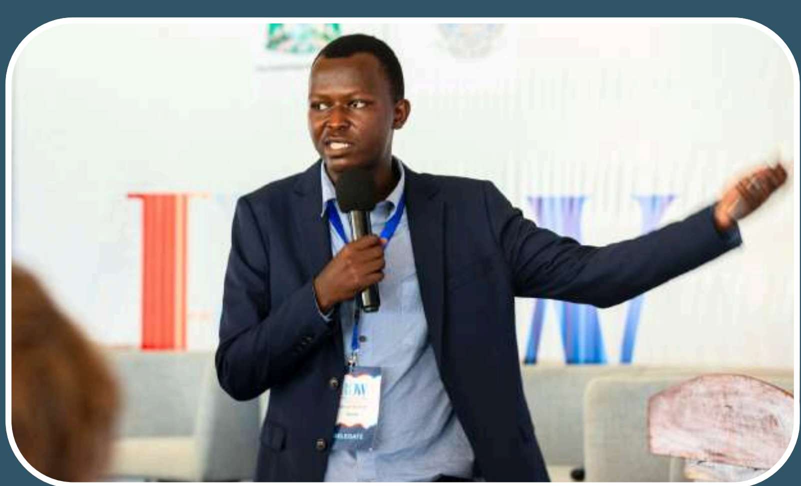
Nassima Sadar-Gravier, CEO of Afroclimate

Sean Nazerali, Director of Innovative Finance at BIOFUND Mozambique

The Ocean Innovation Africa (OIA) 2025 Pitch Competition brought together five innovative start-ups tackling some of the most pressing challenges facing the ocean today. These entrepreneurs pitched their solutions to a panel of expert judges for the chance to win cash prizes and global exposure.

Vahid Fotuhi, CEO of BlueForest (Mozambique)

BlueForest is driving large-scale mangrove restoration and wetland conservation projects across Africa. Their work focuses on developing blue carbon credits to fund restoration initiatives while balancing conservation and economic growth. With over 250,000 hectares of restored land, BlueForest is proving that nature-based solutions can create both environmental and commercial value.



Samuel Kalya Kipsang, Data Architect at Seamo (Kenya)

Seamo leverages AI-powered ocean intelligence and computer vision technology to monitor marine biodiversity, illegal fishing, and human activity in real-time. Their solution delivers critical data for ocean health monitoring, providing governments, conservationists, and researchers with tools to better understand and protect marine ecosystems.

Wadh-Ha Nassor, Student at State University of Zanzibar (Tanzania)

Wadh-Ha presented the Smart Ocean Monitoring System, a low-cost, IoT-driven solution that tracks ocean pollution and fish populations. Designed to be accessible for local communities, this system provides real-time data that empowers small-scale fishers and local authorities to make informed decisions supporting conservation and sustainable fishing practices.

Session Reports Cont'd

Never Mwambela Zekeya, CEO of Plant Biodefenders (Tanzania)

Plant Biodefenders develops seaweed-based biofertilizers and biostimulants, offering a sustainable alternative to chemical fertilizers. Their innovation helps reduce agricultural runoff into the ocean, protecting marine ecosystems while supporting coastal farmers with affordable and eco-friendly agricultural inputs.

Winner: Bridget Njenga, CEO of Acquaden (Kenya)

Acquaden is a women-led mariculture venture that combines crayfish and lobster farming with integrated seaweed production. Their model not only creates sustainable livelihoods for coastal women but also enhances ecosystem restoration efforts and reduces reliance on wild-caught seafood. Bridget's innovative business secured the top prize and a fast-track entry into the Monaco Ocean Protection Challenge, offering technical support and the opportunity to pitch on a global stage.

OceanHub Africa (OHA) Demo Session

Powered by: **NORAD**

In partnership with: **Katapult Ocean**

Judges:

Sam Selig, Investment Manager at Katapult Ocean

Susan Nakami, Regional Lead: Africa at Village Capital

Jonathan Naidoo, CEO of SmartXchange

Erika Montegue, CTO of Schmidt Marine Technology Partners

Patrick Nyoike, Manager: Blue Economy at Equity Bank

The OceanHub Africa (OHA) Demo Session, powered by NORAD and held in partnership with Katapult Ocean, gave the latest cohort of ocean-impact startups a powerful platform to showcase their solutions. AThe session highlighted scalable ventures tackling climate, biodiversity and community resilience, reflecting OHA's mission to accelerate Africa's blue economy through entrepreneurship.

Andrea Plos, Co-Founder of Bahari Labs

Bahari Labs is developing seaweed-based livestock feed additives that significantly reduce methane emissions from ruminants. Their solution supports both climate mitigation goals and local seaweed farming communities, creating a sustainable supply chain that benefits farmers and the environment.

Shuwena Seif Salim, CEO of Refasha

Refasha is a women-led venture producing premium seaweed-based skincare and beauty products. By creating high-value products from locally sourced seaweed, Refasha empowers coastal women economically while promoting sustainable seaweed farming as a key part of the blue economy value chain.

Daniela Lengonsira, CEO of Yarsi

Yarsi develops cold-chain storage and fishery management tools to reduce post-harvest losses in artisanal fishing communities. By improving preservation and market access, Yarsi strengthens the value chain for small-scale fishers, contributing to both livelihoods and ocean conservation.

Brett Smith, Managing Director of OceanLabs

OceanLabs provides marine monitoring services powered by AI and satellite data. Their platform delivers real-time insights for governments, NGOs, and private sector players, supporting data-driven decision-making in marine conservation and blue economy development.

Joë Sangar, Co-Founder of BlueNose Technologies

BlueNose helps shipping companies optimize fuel consumption and reduce carbon emissions through a digital platform that offers real-time route optimization and efficiency insights. Their solution tackles one of the ocean sector's largest emission challenges while cutting operational costs.

Mohamed Rammeh, Co-Founder of Wayout

Wayout designs and installs urban drainage filtration systems that prevent plastics and other pollutants from entering waterways. Their scalable model addresses urban pollution challenges while safeguarding marine ecosystems and improving city resilience.

Jemila Donty, CEO of Korai

Korai blends community-based marine restoration, ecotourism, and education to empower coastal communities as stewards of marine ecosystems. Their model creates sustainable livelihood opportunities while advancing conservation and raising environmental awareness.

Lavine Irvine, Co-Founder of Coastal Biotech

Coastal Biotech converts coastal biomass and waste into sustainable bio-based materials and packaging alternatives. Their innovation helps reduce dependence on plastics while contributing to the blue circular economy and creating green jobs in coastal regions.

Mohammed Ben Ahmed, CEO of Aquadeep

Aquadeep's smart aquaculture monitoring system offers real-time environmental and water quality data for fish farmers. Their technology helps optimize aquaculture operations, improve yields, and reduce environmental impacts, contributing to sustainable seafood production.

A standout moment was the surprise announcement of three start-ups - **Wayout**, **Coastal Biotech**, and **BlueNose** - selected to attend **UNOC3** in **Nice**, **France** later this year. It's a unique chance for them to step onto a global stage, share their work with international leaders, and open doors to new connections and opportunities far beyond the continent.

High-Level Meeting

Re-envisioning the Governance of Marine Migratory Biodiversity:
Transformations for a Sustainable and Equitable Future

Hosted by: **Migramar** & **Blue Marine Foundation**

Moderator:
Guillermo Crespo, Migramar Project Leader, Bezos Earth Fund project on ETP fisheries and biodiversity

Speakers: High-level dignitaries, TAFIRI, IUCN representatives, and key figures in the blue space.

After an extensive review of global trends - including the decline of migratory species, entrenched inequities in accessing and benefiting from these commercially important species, limited preparedness for climate change adaptation, and the narrow taxonomic mandates of Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), as well as the challenges posed by inequitable access to high seas fisheries that adversely affect coastal and island states - participants at this meeting reached a broad consensus.

They recognized the urgent need to build an international coalition of state and non-state champions led by African stakeholders to lead a transformative overhaul of migratory species governance and management, to establish catch and bycatch limits for all migratory species thereby reforming the current inequitable approach to quota allocation across RFMOs, and to call for the closure of the global high seas to fishing to mitigate transboundary impacts

Session Reports Cont'd

Stakeholder Engagement Meeting: *Exploring Collaboration with Mozambique-Based Initiatives*

Hosted by: **IUCN ESARO & BIOFUND Mozambique**

Moderator: Sean Nazerali, Director **of Innovative Finance at BIOFUND Mozambique**

This focused networking and engagement session brought together select delegates interested in exploring commercial and collaborative opportunities in Mozambique's blue economy space. Hosted on Day 3 of the summit, the meeting served as a springboard for identifying synergies between regional stakeholders, particularly those present in Tanzania who are considering expansion into Mozambique.

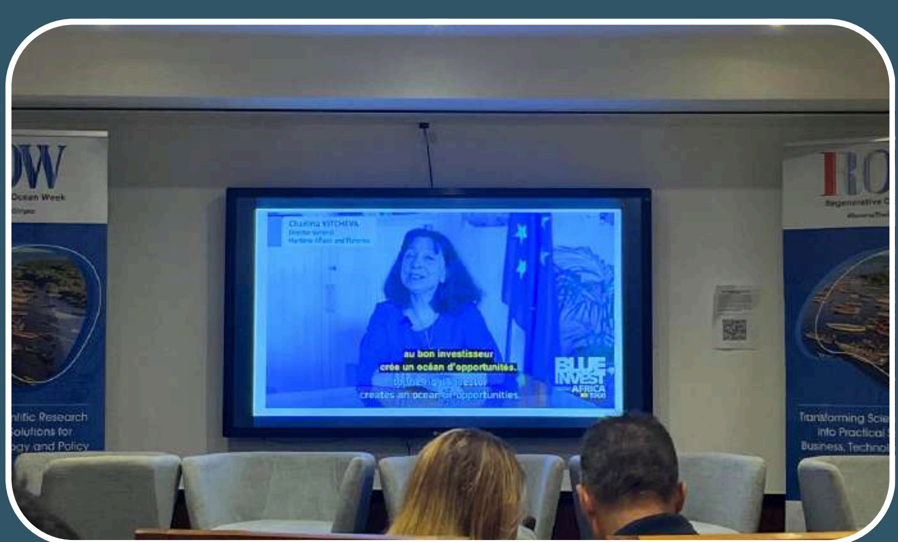
Participants exchanged contacts, discussed shared interests, and outlined potential partnerships across marine conservation, investment, and sustainable development. The session laid the groundwork for a series of follow-up meetings aimed at building strategic collaborations aligned with Mozambique's ocean and coastal priorities.

1000 Ocean Startups Breakfast Meeting

Facilitated by: Ronald Tardiff, Lighthouse Lead at 1000 Ocean Start-Ups

In alignment with its mission to accelerate ocean innovation globally, 1000 Ocean Startups hosted a breakfast meeting during ROW. The session brought together investors, accelerators, and ecosystem builders to explore collaborative opportunities that support early-stage ocean entrepreneurs across Africa.

Participants discussed shared challenges, regional gaps and partnership models to strengthen the pipeline of science-driven, investment-ready ventures. The meeting reinforced the importance of building a more connected blue innovation ecosystem - from local incubation to global investment.



Session Reports Cont'd

Workshop Sessions: Day 1

Enabling Science to Business for a Regenerative Blue Economy

Hosts: **IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) & GIZ SPARK**

Facilitators:
Imogen Napper, Regional Blue Science & Business Innovation Manager at IUCN (ESARO)
Claire Jowell, Chief Outcomes Officer, Viridian

Main Discussion Points:

This workshop explored the challenges and opportunities in bridging the gap between scientific research and commercial business ventures in the blue economy. Participants highlighted the need for mechanisms that translate academic and research outputs into commercially viable solutions, fostering partnerships between scientists, entrepreneurs, and investors. They emphasized the importance of aligning incentives, protecting intellectual property, and creating innovation ecosystems that support blue economy startups.

- Lack of clear pathways and incentives to translate scientific research into commercially viable products, limiting the development of ocean innovations.
- Intellectual property risks, competition, and restrictive data-sharing policies create barriers to collaboration between research institutions and private sector players.
- Entrepreneurs and start-ups lack the necessary business development support, including access to funding, mentorship, and technical assistance, to bring science-based solutions to market.
- Balancing the interests of researchers, who prioritize scientific integrity, with investors seeking financial returns, remains a persistent challenge.
- Building trust and aligning incentives among scientists, investors, and entrepreneurs is critical for successful partnerships and long-term collaboration.

Outcome:

The session called for the creation of innovation ecosystems that foster trust, protect IP, and incentivize product development, while supporting researchers to commercialize their work. Participants recommended establishing structured pathways and funding mechanisms that guide ocean science innovations into viable businesses, ensuring the long-term success of regenerative blue economy ventures.

Accelerating Nature-Based Solutions and Blue Carbon Action in the WIO Region

Host: **IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature)**

Facilitator:
Tara Pelembe, Coastal & Ocean Resilience Programme Manager at IUCN (ESARO)

Main Discussion Points:

This session examined the untapped potential of nature-based solutions (NbS) such as mangroves, seagrass, and seaweed ecosystems to serve as climate mitigation and livelihood strategies. Participants discussed how existing challenges such as inconsistent data, knowledge gaps, and limited investment deter scalability. They stressed the need for comprehensive research, robust policies, and investment-ready blue carbon projects to unlock financing and implementation at scale.

- Persistent knowledge gaps, inconsistent research methodologies, and unreliable data collection on blue carbon ecosystems limit the region's ability to attract investment.
- Weak legal and policy frameworks undermine investor confidence and make it difficult to establish clear ownership, carbon rights, and benefit-sharing mechanisms.
- High upfront costs, complex permitting processes, and uncertainty in global carbon markets act as significant deterrents for large-scale investment in nature-based solutions.
- Difficulties in guaranteeing permanence of carbon sequestration and lack of standardized monitoring methodologies further hinder project scalability.
- Seaweed's blue carbon potential is under-researched, yet presents a promising opportunity to diversify blue carbon markets and deliver climate and livelihood benefits.

Outcome:

The workshop concluded that robust research, standardized methodologies, and innovative financing are critical to scaling nature-based solutions. Participants recommended prioritizing policy reforms and incentives to de-risk investment, while unlocking seaweed's potential as a scalable solution to boost climate mitigation efforts and improve coastal livelihoods.

Investing in IPLCs for Ocean Stewardship: Strengthening Rights, Finance, and Livelihoods

Host: **IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature)**
With kind contribution from: **WIOMSA**

Facilitator:
Vatosoa Rakotondrazafy, Regional Coastal & Ocean Governance Manager at IUCN (ESARO)

Main Discussion Points:

This workshop focused on ensuring Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) are central to ocean stewardship by securing legal recognition, financing, and meaningful participation. Participants examined barriers such as lack of LMMA recognition, weak governance frameworks, and limited access to conservation finance. They called for elevating traditional knowledge, integrating IPLC rights into national policies, and creating financing tools that empower communities.

- LMMAs (Locally Managed Marine Areas) lack formal legal recognition, leaving IPLCs vulnerable to exclusion from decision-making and access to marine resources.
- IPLCs face limited access to conservation funding, sustainable financing models, and capacity to engage in blue economy opportunities.
- There is a critical need for institutional support, training, and leadership development within IPLC structures to improve governance and management of marine areas.
- Integrating traditional knowledge into research, policy-making, and ocean conservation strategies is vital for ensuring locally relevant and effective solutions.
- Proposals included creating LMMA youth fellowships, fostering multi-stakeholder coordination, recognizing small-scale fisheries skills, and conducting socio-cultural assessments to strengthen IPLC participation.

Outcome:

The session called for formalizing LMMA recognition, creating sustainable funding pathways, and embedding IPLC rights into marine policy frameworks. Participants highlighted the need for youth programs, capacity building, and inclusive governance to empower IPLCs as key actors in ocean stewardship and conservation success.

Session Reports Cont'd

Workshop Sessions: Day 2

Building on the WIO LMMA Forum: Strengthening Strategy and Amplifying Impact

Host: **WIOMSA (Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association)**

Facilitator: **Vatosoa Rakotondrazafy**, Regional Coastal & Ocean Governance Manager at IUCN (ESARO)

Main Discussion Points:

This workshop focused on strengthening the Western Indian Ocean LMMA Forum strategy to scale up the impact of community-led marine management across Kenya, Tanzania, Madagascar, and Mozambique. Participants shared insights on the fragmented governance structures, legal uncertainties, and inconsistent recognition of LMMAs, which limit their potential to secure community rights and sustain marine resources. The session emphasized that simplifying legal frameworks, improving policy alignment, and strengthening regional cooperation are key to amplifying the impact of LMMAs.

- Fragmented governance structures and unclear legal recognition hinder the scalability of LMMAs.
- National laws empower local communities but often lack clarity on long-term tenure and resource rights.
- Capacity building, government support, and sustainable financing models are critical for scaling community-led marine conservation.
- There's a need to simplify OECM criteria and improve communication with local communities about LMMA benefits.
- Regional collaboration is essential to align national policies and share best practices for LMMA recognition.

Outcome:

The session recommended developing a regional policy framework for LMMAs, supported by a toolkit documenting success stories and best practices. Priority actions include simplifying OECM criteria, strengthening legal recognition, and mobilizing resources to scale LMMAs and secure long-term community rights and benefits. Strengthening the LMMA Forum was identified as a critical step for driving future collaboration, knowledge sharing, and influencing national and regional policies.

Session Reports Cont'd

Scaling Aquatic Food Systems Solutions for an Inclusive and Sustainable Blue Economy

Host: **WorldFish**

Facilitator:
Sally Mallari, Project Coordinator at WorldFish

Main Discussion Points:

This workshop addressed the urgent need to reimagine aquatic food systems as engines of inclusive growth, nutrition, and climate resilience. Participants explored practical innovations to reduce post-harvest losses, improve value addition, and support women and youth-led enterprises within aquatic food systems. The session stressed the importance of strategic partnerships, cross-sector collaboration, and enabling policy environments to scale inclusive solutions that improve food security and livelihoods.

- Significant post-harvest losses in aquatic food systems present both challenges and opportunities for technological innovation.
- Inclusive innovations such as solar-powered processing technologies can reduce losses and empower local producers.
- Adaptive management is necessary to balance ecological, economic, and social needs within aquatic food systems.
- Strategic partnerships and interdisciplinary collaboration are key to scaling solutions.
- The launch of the African Food Innovation Challenge, offering $20,000 grants, aims to catalyze innovation across Tanzania, Kenya, Nigeria, and Mozambique.

Outcome:

The session called for collaborative platforms and partnerships to drive scalable aquatic food innovations. The Innovation Challenge will serve as a launchpad for practical, community-driven solutions that reduce losses, improve sustainability, and create blue economy jobs. Participants agreed that the future of aquatic food systems lies in empowering local actors, leveraging science, and ensuring inclusive access to technologies and markets.

Making Ocean Technology Accessible for Coastal Community Resilience

Host: **Synchro, CMCC & CoastPredict**
With kind contribution from: **Schmidt Marine Technology Partners**

Facilitator:
Amy West, Synchro Programme Manager, Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute (MBARI)

Main Discussion Points:

This workshop explored how affordable and community-driven ocean technology (AOT) can strengthen the resilience of coastal communities. Participants highlighted the barriers to accessing data and technology for small-scale fishers and coastal communities, who often operate without the information needed for sustainable resource management. The discussion centered on building local capacity, integrating indigenous knowledge, and ensuring technologies are practical, cost-effective, and beneficial to users.

- Limited access to low-cost technology hampers coastal communities' ability to monitor ocean conditions and manage risks.
- Initiatives like the Moana Project in New Zealand and the Coast Credit project in Kenya highlight the potential of using local fishing vessels as ocean observation platforms.
- Data collection must be paired with community training, local knowledge integration, and data utilization strategies.
- Technologies need to be cost-effective, easy to maintain, and directly beneficial to the fishing communities.
- Regional resource mapping and early warning systems for disaster risk reduction are urgently needed.

Outcome:

The session emphasized scaling community-led ocean monitoring systems and developing a network around Affordable Ocean Technology (AOT). It recommended building local capacity for data collection and use, ensuring coastal resilience and improved decision-making at the community level. Participants concluded that strengthening regional collaborations and financing for AOT innovations is essential to empower coastal communities in adapting to climate and environmental changes.

Session Reports Cont'd

From Growth to Regeneration: Unlocking the Full Potential of African Seaweed

Host: **C-Weed Mwani**

Facilitator:
Virginie Le Masson, Social Sustainability Consultant to C-Weed Mwani

Main Discussion Points:

This session addressed the challenges and opportunities in diversifying seaweed species and expanding value addition to build climate resilience and economic growth in coastal communities. Participants recognized that over-reliance on a few seaweed species threatens farmer incomes, particularly as climate change impacts production. The session stressed the need for policy support, investment in processing infrastructure, and stronger partnerships to unlock the full potential of seaweed farming.

- Climate change impacts threaten the supply of traditional red seaweed species, requiring diversification.
- Developing processing plants within coastal communities could create jobs and reduce dependency on exporting raw materials.
- Supportive policies, such as reduced taxes and longer license validity, are essential for scaling the seaweed industry.
- Collaboration between government, private sector, and farmers is critical to drive innovation and investment.
- Capacity building programs are needed to empower farmers and support product diversification and resilience strategies.

Outcome:

The session recommended developing climate-resilient seaweed farming strategies, investing in local processing infrastructure, and strengthening public-private partnerships. Government incentives and research funding were identified as crucial to unlocking the full potential of the seaweed value chain. Participants emphasized that sustainable seaweed development is a critical pathway to enhance coastal resilience, support women-led enterprises, and drive value addition in the blue economy.

Session Reports Cont'd

Workshop Session: Day 3

Unlocking the Potential of Blue-Tech Investments

Host: **GIZ SPARK & 1000 Ocean Start Ups**

Facilitators:
David Saunders, Director of Strategy & Growth at Briter
Anthony William Catt, Director of Ventures54

Main Discussion Points:

This workshop explored strategies to scale up investment in Africa's emerging blue-tech sector, emphasizing the need for early-stage financing, policy support, and local innovation. Participants reflected on how blue-tech, despite its critical role in solving ocean challenges, remains underfunded and underdeveloped across the continent. The discussion highlighted the need to connect science-based innovations to markets, strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem, and ensure alignment between local realities and global investment frameworks to unlock scalable solutions.

- Blue-tech remains underfunded, receiving less than 5% of climate tech funding in Africa.
- Lack of science-based founders and commercialized talent limits the development of bankable ventures.
- Gaps exist between global investment models and local blue-tech realities, creating barriers to scaling.
- Social enterprises and early-stage startups face significant funding challenges and limited access to catalytic capital.
- Policies and regulatory frameworks are critical to unlocking private sector investment and enabling innovation.

Outcome:

The session called for diversifying funding instruments, including fellowships, grants, and blended finance, to support blue-tech startups. Participants also recommended fostering science-driven entrepreneurship and advocating for policy reforms to create an enabling environment for blue-tech growth in Africa. Building strong public-private partnerships and regional networks was emphasized as crucial to developing investor-ready blue-tech ventures capable of scaling their impact across African coastal communities.

Session Reports Cont’d

Rethinking Plastics: Innovations in Management & Community Impact

Host: **C-Weed Mwani**

Facilitator:
Yanga Gceya, Partnerships Manager at Captain Fanplastic

Main Discussion Points:

This session focused on innovative, community-driven solutions to tackle plastic pollution, with an emphasis on behavior change, policy reform, and economic opportunities. Discussions revealed that coastal and island communities face disproportionate impacts from plastic waste, often becoming dumping grounds for local and international pollution. Speakers stressed that tackling this crisis requires addressing systemic challenges, promoting circular economy models, and driving community-led innovations that create both environmental and economic value.

- Plastic waste remains a critical challenge, especially in small island states and coastal communities.
- Storytelling, experiential education, and community engagement are powerful tools for behavior change.
- Successful models like the Flip Flop Project demonstrate how recycled plastics can create economic value.
- There’s a growing need for harmonized regional policies on plastic management and waste reduction.
- Engaging youth and schools is vital to build long-term community resilience and environmental stewardship.

Outcome:

The session recommended developing regional plastic legislation, incentivizing recycling innovations, and creating behavior change programs rooted in storytelling. Participants called for stronger government involvement and private sector accountability in addressing plastic waste. Creating local economic opportunities through upcycling initiatives and community-led enterprises was highlighted as a way to drive impact while reducing the plastic burden on vulnerable ecosystems.

Session Reports Cont'd

Revolutionizing Blue Finance for Regenerative Seascapes

Host: **ODISEA**

Facilitator:
Tom Sparke, Head of Impact at ODISEA

Main Discussion Points:

This combined session tackled the challenges and opportunities in structuring blue finance models that balance economic returns with environmental and community benefits. Speakers noted that traditional finance structures often fail to account for the long-term nature and social dimensions of marine restoration projects. Discussions explored how innovative tools like Conservation REITs, blue bonds, and biodiversity credits could unlock capital while ensuring fair benefit-sharing with local communities and Indigenous Peoples.

- Models like Conservation REITs (CREITs) and blue bonds offer new approaches to fund marine conservation.
- Land rights, carbon rights, and governance frameworks remain major barriers to scaling regenerative finance.
- There's a need for blended finance models combining public, private, and philanthropic capital.
- Impact measurement beyond carbon and biodiversity is essential to ensure social outcomes.
- Women's equity and community ownership must be prioritized to avoid perpetuating inequity.

Outcome:

The session concluded that a holistic, regenerative finance model is needed—one that balances profit, community benefit, and ecological restoration. Recommendations included building local capacity, promoting women's participation, and developing biodiversity credits to unlock blue finance for seascapes. Participants stressed that developing these innovative financial tools must go hand-in-hand with strong governance structures and safeguards to ensure that blue finance truly delivers equitable benefits for communities on the frontlines of conservation.

Session Reports Cont'd

Nature-Positive Shipping

Host: **WIOMSA & MARCOSIO**

Facilitator:
Obakeng Molelu, Science To Policy Programme Manager at WIOMSA

Main Discussion Points:

This session explored how the maritime sector can evolve from sustainability to regeneration, positioning the shipping industry as a key player in restoring ocean health. The conversation spanned innovative solutions such as green port infrastructure, carbon dioxide removal technologies, and biodiversity-positive shipping practices.

- Leapfrogging from sustainable to regenerative shipping, focusing on climate resilience and ecological restoration.
- Advancing green port infrastructure and carbon removal technologies that reduce emissions and enhance marine biodiversity.
- Strengthening marine and maritime safety through improved ship traffic monitoring and ocean science contributions.
- Exploring the role of shipping in supporting fishing regulation and ocean data collection for better marine governance.
- Emphasizing collaboration between industry, policymakers, and conservation actors to shape enabling policies and investment pathways.

Outcome:

The workshop marked a pivotal step toward redefining shipping's role in the blue economy — from minimizing harm to actively contributing to ocean regeneration. Delegates called for stronger regional governance, demonstration projects, and collaborative frameworks that align decarbonization with ecosystem restoration and community benefit.

Session Reports Cont'd

An Ocean of Possibilities

Host: Ocean & Climate Platform (OCP)

Facilitator:
Loreley Picourt, Executive Director of OCP

Main Discussion Points

This forward-looking workshop brought together over 40 global experts for a collaborative visioning exercise, focused on shaping a regenerative ocean future. Using a structured methodology, participants worked in breakout groups to imagine desirable futures for the ocean and identify practical pathways to achieve them. The session emphasized the power of collective imagination as a tool for transformation, rooted in equity, ocean protection, and shared values. Central to the dialogue was the role of civil society in mobilizing for action ahead of the third UN Ocean Conference (UNOC3), with the outcomes from this session set to be presented there in the form of a civil society manifesto.

- Multiple desirable ocean futures are possible, shaped by governance, innovation, equity, and cultural values.
- Stronger ocean protection, decarbonization, subsidy reform, and ocean literacy are key levers for change.
- Both radical shifts and incremental steps are needed—everyone has a role in building the future.
- Social justice, Indigenous and local knowledge, and deep passion for the ocean are foundational to progress.
- The ocean community can drive multilateralism, climate action, sustainable food systems, and well-being.

Outcome:

The workshop laid the groundwork for a global manifesto for a regenerative ocean, reflecting the visions and values of civil society. This document will be presented at UNOC3 to inspire transformative change and elevate the voice of civil society in shaping global ocean agendas. The session reinforced the importance of uniting around shared values and using visioning as a strategic tool for inclusive, long-term impact.

Session Reports Cont'd

Showcasing Francophone Blue Economy Innovators from SIDS

Host: **Afroclimate & The Organisation internationale de la Francophonie**

Facilitator: **Nassima Sadar-Gravier**, CEO of Afroclimate

Main Discussion Points:

This special session spotlighted blue economy entrepreneurs from Francophone Small Island Developing States (SIDS), providing a platform for four start-ups to pitch their ocean-impact solutions. The session emphasized the importance of elevating Francophone voices from island nations and promoting their innovations aimed at ocean sustainability and community resilience.

- Shawiri Scoops (Comoros) by Abidate Abdourahmane – Ice cream business using local products and sustainable practices.
- Mena Tsook (Madagascar) by Sarobidy Rakotonjatovo – Promoting women's leadership in marine conservation.
- SeySeaPro (Seychelles) by Mia Bonne – Empowering coastal communities through sustainable fishing practices.
- IREO (Comoros) by Safina Ali – Seaweed value addition enterprise supporting coastal livelihoods.

Outcome:

The session created vital exposure for Francophone entrepreneurs driving blue economy solutions in their regions. Delegates were encouraged to connect with the start-ups for potential collaboration, investment, and mentorship opportunities, strengthening ties between Francophone innovators and the wider African blue economy ecosystem.

Closing Statement

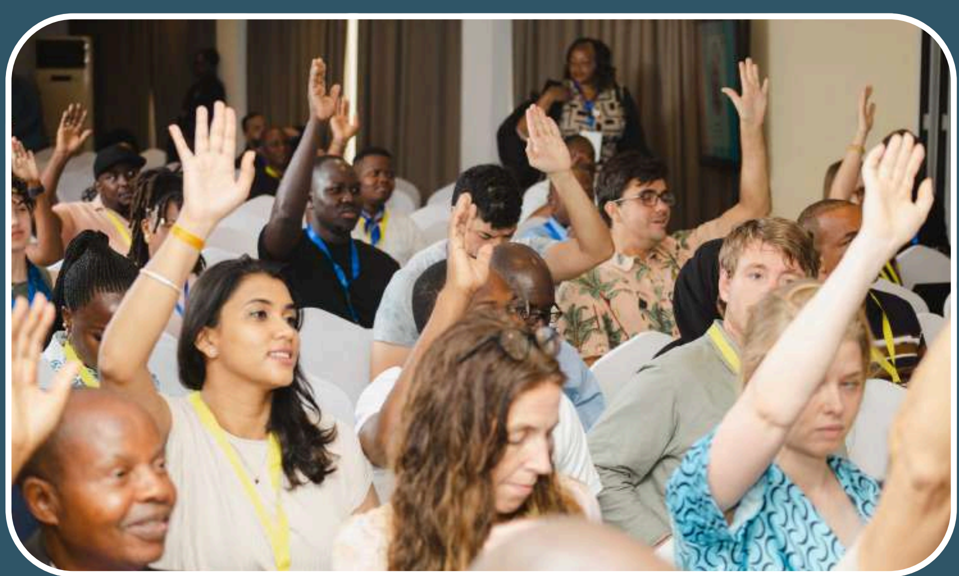
The summit concluded with a powerful joint closing statement from **Alexis Grosskopf**, CEO of OceanHub Africa, **Thomas Sberna**, Regional Head of Coastal & Ocean Resilience at IUCN, and **Loreley Picourt**, Executive Director of the Ocean & Climate Platform - the three visionary leaders behind the creation of Regenerative Ocean Week (ROW). Together, they reflected on the summit's success as a pioneering collaborative effort, uniting diverse organizations to create a platform for ocean-positive action and impact.

They highlighted the importance of partnerships, knowledge sharing, and collective leadership in accelerating the regenerative blue economy across Africa and beyond. The closing remarks reinforced ROW's mission to bridge science, business, and policy, while fostering an ecosystem that empowers innovators, indigenous peoples, local communities, and youth

Session Reports Cont'd

As part of the closing, Alexis Grosskopf proudly announced the three OceanHub Africa cohort start-ups selected to attend UNOC in Nice, France later this year. The chosen ventures - Wayout, Coastal Biotech, and BlueNose — will represent African ocean innovation on the global stage, marking a significant milestone for the growing blue economy ecosystem.

Also offering closing reflections was **Prof. Riziki Silas Shemdoe**, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries of the United Republic of Tanzania. While some of his views did not reflect those of the organizers or many in the room, his participation highlighted the very reason ROW exists — to bring diverse voices together, open space for dialogue, and find common ground. Through mutual understanding and collaboration, we can shape a more unified path forward for the regenerative ocean movement.



Networking Events

Throughout the week, ROW created multiple spaces for informal networking and casual conversations that allowed delegates to unwind, connect, and build relationships beyond the conference sessions.

Day 1: Welcome Cocktail – Sponsored by IUCN

The summit officially commenced with a Welcome Cocktail hosted by IUCN at the outdoor entertainment area of the Ramada Resort. This informal gathering established a warm and engaging tone for the week, offering delegates their first opportunity to connect, exchange ideas, and ease into the upcoming sessions within a scenic oceanfront setting.

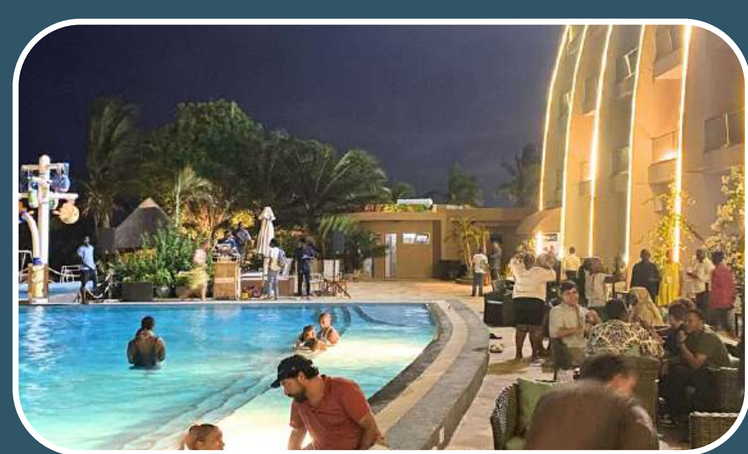
Networking Events

Day 2: Sky Bar Cocktail – Sponsored by Our Blue Future (OBF)

Day 2 closed with a Cocktail Networking Evening at the Ramada Sky Bar, hosted by Our Blue Future (OBF). The event opened with remarks from the EU Commission representative - Lamine Diallo - who emphasized the European Union's strong commitment to advancing Africa's blue economy. What followed was a vibrant evening of meaningful conversation, sparked by the day's sessions and carried into the night with ocean views, a live band, and, as the energy rose, an impromptu karaoke session that brought delegates together in laughter and camaraderie.

Day 3: Pool Party – Sponsored by Ocean Innovation Africa (OIA)

To keep the energy high, Ocean Innovation Africa hosted a Pool Party on the evening of Day 3 at the Ramada Resort Pool Area. A lively DJ set the tone for the evening, creating a vibrant atmosphere as delegates danced, mingled and cooled off in the pool. The event was a perfect mix of fun and networking, offering everyone a chance to let loose, connect, and enjoy the relaxed coastal setting together.



Day 4: VIP Dinner – Sponsored by Ocean Innovation Africa (OIA) & Our Blue Future (OBF)

The summit's final evening featured a VIP Dinner at Jetty 2 of the Giraffe Beach Hotel, right on the beach. Ocean Innovation Africa & Our Blue Future hosted this exclusive gathering, bringing together invited guests and partners for a special closing celebration with the serene sound of the ocean as the backdrop.

Each of these gatherings was the perfect way to break from the formal sessions - good food, drinks, and plenty of space for delegates to connect and soak up the coastal atmosphere all in ROW style.

Networking Events Cont'd

Build-Up Events

In the lead-up to OIA2025-ROW, a series of build-up events helped shape the conversations and create momentum for the summit. These sessions brought together scientists, entrepreneurs, investors, and ecosystem players to explore science-to-business collaboration and strengthen connections ahead of the main event.

Blue Economy Innovation & Investment Summit

Mombasa, Kenya | 2 – 4 October 2024

Hosted by: SoteHub | blueeconomysummit.co.ke

As part of the summit, OceanHub Africa and GIZ SPARK ran the "**Technology Driven Solutions for Ocean Conservation and Sustainability**" Science-to-Business Co-Design Workshop, sponsored by BMZ through GIZ SPARK.

The session brought together entrepreneurs, scientists, and key stakeholders to unpack the challenges and opportunities in bridging science and business within the blue economy. Facilitated by Thando Mazomba (OceanHub Africa) and the GIZ SPARK team, the workshop focused on three pillars - investment, innovation, and business - setting the tone for deeper discussions at ROW.

Through empathy mapping, co-design exercises and value proposition work, participants unpacked the different lenses through which each stakeholder group approaches their role in the Blue Economy. The workshop set a solid foundation for identifying gaps in understanding, making it easier to co-design collaborative pathways with greater accuracy and alignment. This foundation directly informed the conversations and outcomes at the main summit in Dar es Salaam.

Build-Up Events Cont'd

Pan-African Blue Innovation Showcase & Science-to-Business Cocktail

Cape Town, South Africa | 18 October 2024

Hosted by: OceanHub Africa

Held at the Nedbank Auditorium at the V&A Waterfront, this showcase gave OceanHub Africa's latest start-up cohort the opportunity to pitch their ocean-impact innovations to investors and blue economy ecosystem players.

Alongside the pitches, Olaf Seidel from GIZ SPARK presented the program's Science-to-Business objectives, opening the floor to engaging conversations on how to better align scientific research with entrepreneurial and investment pathways.

This session concluded with a Blue Ecosystem Mixer, offering a relaxed space for start-ups, investors, and partners to connect and continue the discussions. Recognizing the low likelihood of scientists and technical profiles engaging directly with industry actors in such settings, the mixer created a soft landing for those connections to happen - sparking valuable conversations beyond the pitch stage.

Later that evening, OceanHub Africa and GIZ SPARK hosted a Science-to-Business Cocktail, bringing together scientists from the IMCC7 Conference and other relevant stakeholders. Building on the outcomes of the Mombasa Co-Design Workshop, the event focused on identifying barriers to collaboration and co-creating actionable next steps. Presentations, Q&As, and interactive ice-breakers helped foster deeper connections and kept the energy building toward ROW.

Build-Up Events Cont'd

World Café on Science2Innovation2Business for Green and Blue Resilience Innovation

Cape Town, South Africa | 6 November 2024

Part of: Afrilabs Annual Gathering 2024

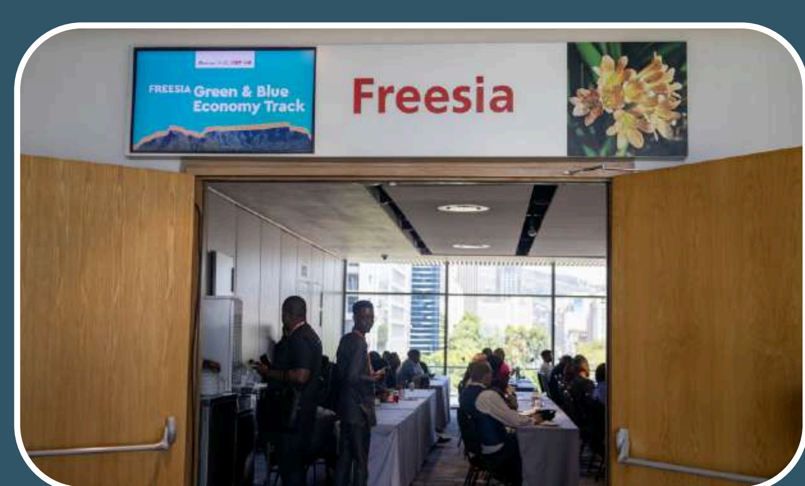
Track Lead: OceanHub Africa (Green & Blue Economy Track)

Hosted at the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC), this Co-Creation Workshop brought together entrepreneurs, researchers, and ecosystem players to dive deeper into science-to-business collaboration.

Facilitated by Thando Mazomba (OceanHub Africa), Susan Wanjiku (GIZ SPARK), and Manuel Moritz (Helmut-Schmidt University), the session created space for open, honest conversations around the three core pillars - investment, innovation, and business.

The workshop built on the earlier events in Mombasa and Cape Town, surfacing concrete ideas and actions to strengthen collaboration between scientists and entrepreneurs. There was a genuine sense of momentum in the room, with participants expressing excitement about the process and a strong interest in continuing the dialogue. Many voiced the need for ecosystem support organizations (ESOs) like OceanHub Africa to play a central role in guiding and nurturing these connections.

The outcomes from the session added valuable insights to the lead-up to OIA2025-ROW in Dar es Salaam, reinforcing the importance of co-creation and cross-sector collaboration.



Outcomes - Summary

- The **Dar es Salaam Declaration** was presented as a shared call to strengthen cooperation, science-based policies, and inclusive ocean governance across the region.
- The **Bahari Accelerator** was launched to support ocean entrepreneurs in developing regenerative, science-based solutions that align with environmental, social, and economic priorities.
- The **OIA2025 Pitch Competition** and the **OHA Demo Session** showcased Africa's ocean innovators, with three startups - Wayout, Coastal Biotech, and BlueNose - selected to represent the region at UNOC3 in Nice, France. These ventures will gain access to global networks, investors, and decision-makers to scale their impact.
- The **Visioning Session**, led by the Ocean & Climate Platform (OCP), laid the groundwork for Africa's coordinated presence at UNOC3, aligning key messages, priorities, and partners to influence international policy and advocacy platforms.
- The GIZ SPARK **Innovation Fund Facility** was introduced as part of the AEDIB 2.0 program — a bold step toward supporting innovators across Africa and Europe through direct funding, ecosystem strengthening, and digital transformation for ocean-climate solutions.
- A **White Paper**, co-drafted by IUCN and ROW partners, is in development and will be presented at the upcoming World Conservation Congress (WCC). It will reflect the summit's key messages and priorities, contributing to global ocean and climate conversations.
- Dedicated **sessions** and **workshops** enabled knowledge exchange between scientists, investors, policymakers, and entrepreneurs - building bridges between research and business applications in the blue economy.
- Regional dialogues on **Nature-based Solutions (NbS)** and **Blue Carbon** reinforced the importance of investing in seaweed, seagrass, and mangrove initiatives for climate mitigation, livelihoods, and biodiversity conservation.
- The summit amplified the role of **Indigenous Peoples** and **Local Communities (IPLCs)**, identifying scalable governance models and sustainable financing to support community-led marine conservation.
- Momentum grew around the formation of a **Women** in the Blue Economy platform, highlighting the need for gender equity, leadership, and financial inclusion in marine sectors.
- **Investment** conversations focused on unlocking capital for blue economy enterprises, with recommendations to develop regional investment pipelines and strengthen access to catalytic capital.
- Initiatives to scale **Affordable Ocean Technology (AOT)** were explored, with partnerships forming to support low-cost monitoring tools and data systems for coastal community resilience.
- **Youth** and **Early-Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs)** were given a platform to share perspectives, reinforcing the importance of intergenerational leadership and innovation.

Feedback

Sean Nazerali, Director of Innovation, BIOFUND Mozambique

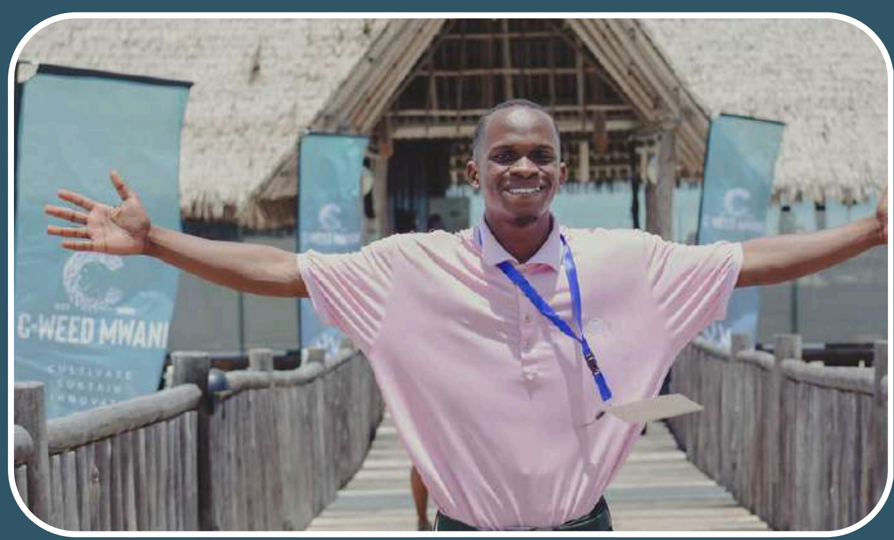
"I think these meetings can be critical to serve as a showpiece for what is possible, as well as to highlight some of the key challenges we all need to work on in the region. It's inspiring to see what can be done when really great people get the support they need."

Paul Mutuku Kaluki, Executive Director of Keane International

"ROW was a remarkable blue world conference for me. First experience for me yet it felt like a sea of hope, action and resilience, bringing together key players from communities, farmers, businesses and civil society towards regenerative ocean governance across Afrika. Let us honour our blue mother, the Ocean, and be part of her conservation & wise use for posterity.

Omar Yusuf, Marine Program Manager at REEFolution Kenya

"Participating in Regenerative Ocean Week was an incredible experience that provided a unique platform to connect with like-minded ocean leaders, exchange knowledge, and explore innovative solutions for a regenerative blue economy. The opportunity to network and build meaningful partnerships with other delegates was invaluable, fostering collaborations that will extend beyond the event. The learning experience was truly enriching, from engaging discussions to inspiring presentations that deepened my understanding of ocean conservation and sustainability. Beyond the sessions, I thoroughly enjoyed experiencing the vibrant culture of Dar es Salaam, which added another layer of appreciation to this unforgettable week. I'm excited for what ROW 2026 will bring!"



Partners

Regenerative Ocean Week was made possible through the collaboration, support, and partnership of leading organizations dedicated to advancing ocean sustainability, regenerative economies, and climate resilience. We are grateful to our partners and sponsors for their invaluable contributions to the summit's success.

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Communication & Reach

The OIA media channels have a combined following of over 3000, with pre-event communications generating over 4,500 engagements across platforms.
Our email newsletters were distributed to a curated network of over 5200 sector-specific contacts, keeping the broader blue economy community engaged and informed before, during, and after the summit.

Conclusion

Regenerative Ocean Week (ROW) demonstrated the power of collective action to advance a regenerative, inclusive and science-based blue economy across Africa and the Western Indian Ocean.

The summit's workshops and plenary sessions resulted in concrete commitments and collaborative milestones. These included the launch of the **Bahari Accelerator**, designed to support high-impact ocean entrepreneurs in Tanzania; the **WE4D Blue Economy Program**, empowering women-led blue ventures; and the **SPARK Innovation Fund**, which will provide catalytic funding for science-to-business innovation across Africa and Europe. Additionally, the Ocean & Climate Platform's **visioning session** produced the foundations of a manifesto to be presented at UNOC3, while IUCN's **Dar es Salaam Declaration** laid out shared priorities for regional cooperation and inclusive governance.

Civil society organizations, research institutions and local actors pledged to continue driving momentum toward scaling seaweed value chains and empowering IPLC-led marine conservation, to strengthening regional investment pipelines and supporting nature-positive shipping.

As ROW looks ahead to the next edition and the upcoming UN Ocean Conference (UNOC3), these outcomes serve as a call to stay engaged. The summit strengthened the ecosystem of actors working toward a thriving ocean economy and reaffirmed that meaningful change happens when science, policy, business and community voices move forward together.

We leave Dar es Salaam with renewed energy, deeper partnerships and a shared commitment to co-designing a future where the ocean and its people can thrive.