



GBW
Great Blue Wall



11th Our Ocean Conference Key messages

16-18 June 2026

About IUCN

IUCN is a membership Union uniquely composed of both government and civil society organisations. It provides public, private and non-governmental organisations with the knowledge and tools that enable human progress, economic development and nature conservation to take place together.

Created in 1948, IUCN is now the world's largest and most diverse environmental network, harnessing the knowledge, resources and reach of more than 1,500 Member organisations and around 19,000 experts. It is a leading provider of conservation data, assessments and analysis. Its broad membership enables IUCN to fill the role of incubator and trusted repository of best practices, tools and international standards.

IUCN provides a neutral space in which diverse stakeholders including governments, NGOs, scientists, businesses, local communities, Indigenous Peoples' Organisations and others can work together to forge and implement solutions to environmental challenges and achieve sustainable development.

Working with many partners and supporters, IUCN implements a large and diverse portfolio of conservation projects worldwide. Combining the latest science with the traditional knowledge of local communities, these projects work to reverse habitat loss, restore ecosystems and improve people's well-being.

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IUCN welcomes the 11th Our Ocean Conference and congratulates the Government of Kenya for hosting the first Our Ocean Conference on the African continent. Under the theme **“Our Ocean, Our Heritage, Our Future,”** OOC11 is a defining moment to accelerate ocean conservation, climate resilience, sustainable livelihoods, equitable governance and a regenerative blue economy.

Drawing on deep scientific, policy and implementation expertise IUCN will use OOC11 to showcase people-centred, science-based and partnership-driven ocean action, including through the Great Blue Wall, locally managed marine areas, regenerative seascapes, marine restoration, BBNJ implementation, plastics circularity and ocean finance.

For the Western Indian Ocean, home to globally significant coral reefs, mangroves, seagrass meadows and marine migratory routes that support more than 60 million coastal people, OOC11 is not only a global ocean moment; it is an African leadership moment.



IUCN Key Messages

1. Deliver 30x30 through effective, equitable and connected ocean conservation

IUCN calls for urgent action to conserve at least 30% of the ocean by 2030 through effectively managed, ecologically representative and equitably governed Marine Protected Areas and Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures.

Achieving 30x30 must be about quality as well as quantity. Ocean protection must deliver measurable conservation outcomes, strengthen ecological connectivity, safeguard biodiversity hotspots and uphold the rights, knowledge and leadership of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities.

[IUCN's Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas](#) provides a globally recognised standard to support effectiveness, equity, transparency and accountability. Large Marine Seascapes, ridge-to-reef approaches, transboundary corridors and locally managed marine areas should be recognised as key pathways for delivering conservation, resilience and sustainable livelihoods at scale.

2. Advance a regenerative blue economy that restores nature and supports people

IUCN calls for a global shift [towards a regenerative blue economy](#) that places the protection, restoration and regeneration of marine and coastal ecosystems at the centre of ocean-based economic activity.

The ocean economy has enormous potential, but business-as-usual growth risks deepening ecological decline. A regenerative blue economy recognises that ocean health is the foundation of long-term prosperity, food security, jobs, resilience and investment. It moves beyond extractive models and aligns economic activity with natural capital recovery and community wellbeing.

Through initiatives such as the [Great Blue Wall](#), IUCN is demonstrating how regenerative seascapes can connect biodiversity conservation, climate resilience, livelihoods, governance and finance. At OOC11, IUCN will promote blue entrepreneurship, natural capital finance, sustainable investment and community-centred ocean economies that generate benefits for women, youth, small-scale fishers and coastal communities.



3. Close the ocean finance gap

Ocean action cannot succeed without a step change in finance. Although ocean-related investments are increasing, they remain far below what is needed to restore ocean health, support countries and communities, and transition ocean industries towards sustainability.

IUCN supports coherent, inclusive and science-based ocean finance architecture, including blended finance, blue bonds, debt-for-nature approaches, guarantees, concessional capital, insurance and other tools that can mobilise public and private investment at scale.

OOC11 should build on momentum from [UNOC3 call for engagement](#) and the Blue Economy & Finance Forum by advancing practical dialogue on a one ocean finance, including the proposed One Ocean Finance Facility. Such a facility should mobilise new and diverse financial resources, reduce over-reliance on sovereign debt, and ensure accessible finance for developing countries, Small Island Developing States, Least Developed Countries and coastal communities.

4. Accelerate BBNJ implementation and protection of the High Seas

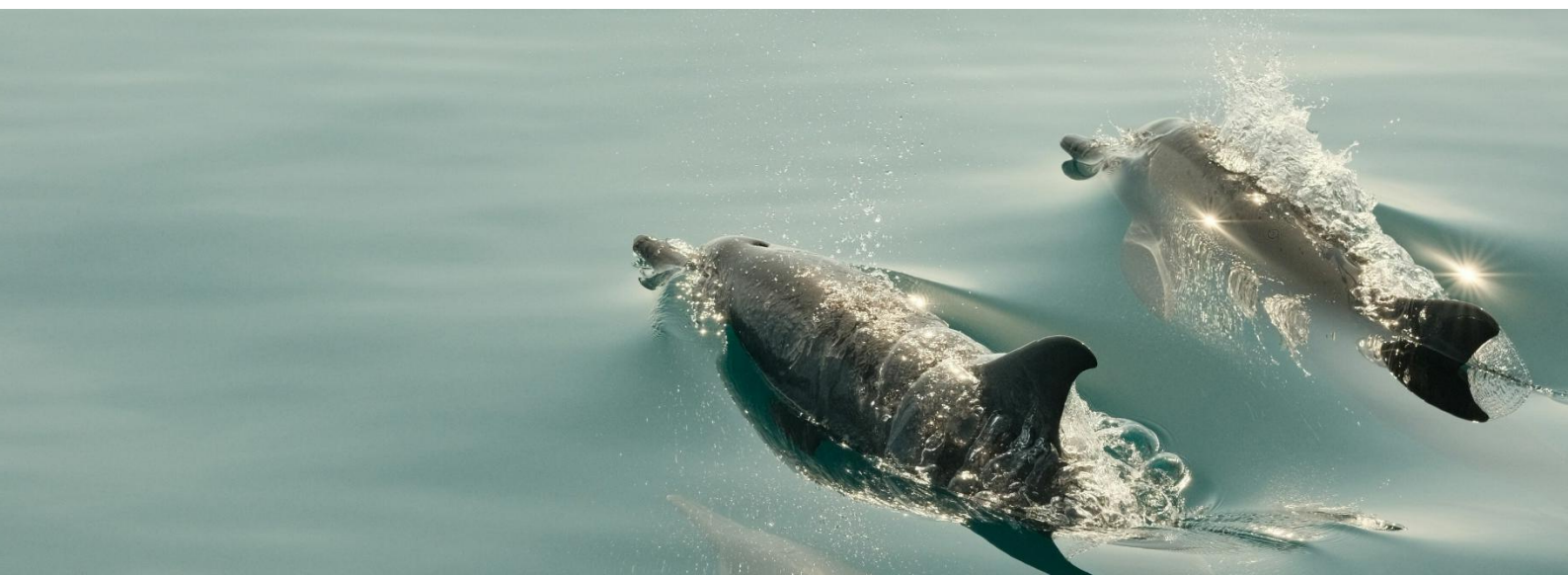
IUCN supports the early, effective, fair and equitable implementation of the BBNJ Agreement, including strong [Area-Based Management Tools \(ABMTs\)](#), [Environmental Impact Assessments \(EIAs\)](#), access and benefit sharing of [marine genetic resources \(MGRs\)](#), capacity building and transfer of marine technology (CBTMT), as well as predictable, adequate and accessible finance.

IUCN is promoting partnerships for biodiversity protection through the [Living High Seas](#) initiative to co-design and co-develop ABMTs.

With the first BBNJ Conference of the Parties approaching, OOC11 is a critical opportunity to build political momentum, strengthen regional readiness and support African and Global South leadership in high seas governance, IUCN through its "Accelerating BBNJ Ratification and Implementation in the WIO" project, is supporting regional and national capacity building while establishing pilots and partnerships for scientific and technical readiness for implementation.

IUCN calls for evidence-based, transparent and inclusive decision-making, supported by effective cooperation with existing global and regional bodies and adequate resources for developing countries. IUCN is [enhancing capacities for high seas biodiversity conservation and sustainable use through a dedicated Technical Assistance Facility](#).

High seas stewardship must be a shared, well-financed global responsibility. IUCN is therefore calling for more States to join the [BBNJ High Ambition Coalition](#) to galvanise political mobilisation ahead of COP1.



5. Put communities and local knowledge at the centre of ocean governance

IUCN calls for ocean governance that recognises the rights, knowledge and leadership of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, small-scale fishers, women and youth.

Community-led marine conservation is already delivering measurable results across the Western Indian Ocean. Locally Managed Marine Areas strengthen stewardship, improve compliance, support livelihoods and connect conservation with local development priorities.

At OOC11, IUCN will help advance the Western Indian Ocean LMMA Alliance and elevate the People of the Ocean agenda as a platform for fair, inclusive and locally led ocean action. Ocean commitments must be designed with communities, not merely for them.

6. Scale ocean-climate action through Nature-based Solutions

Climate change is one of the greatest threats to ocean health, coastal communities and island states. IUCN calls for greater ambition in emissions reductions and for coastal and marine Nature-based Solutions to be fully integrated into national climate and biodiversity strategies.

Mangroves, seagrasses, coral reefs and other coastal ecosystems provide essential benefits for adaptation, mitigation, biodiversity and livelihoods. These solutions must be designed and implemented with scientific integrity, social safeguards and measurable outcomes, guided by the [IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions](#).

OOC11 should help build momentum towards COP31 by strengthening ocean-climate action, blue carbon, coastal resilience and ecosystem restoration.

7. Address marine pollution and accelerate circular economy solutions

IUCN calls for urgent action to prevent, reduce and eliminate marine pollution, including through a strong global [plastics treaty that conserves nature](#) and addresses the full lifecycle of plastics.

Plastic pollution is a transboundary threat to biodiversity, climate resilience, human health and coastal livelihoods. Solutions must move beyond waste management alone and address production, design, consumption, circularity, accountability and just transition.

In the Western Indian Ocean, IUCN will showcase regional [action to advance plastics circularity](#), island waste solutions and data-driven approaches that support accountability and decision-making across the plastics value chain.



Relevant IUCN Resolutions from the 2025 World Conservation Congress

- 8.028 [Strengthening the knowledge and protection of oceanic mesophotic ecosystems](#)
- 8.030 [Definition and principles of the regenerative Blue Economy](#)
- 8.032 [Protecting seamounts and vulnerable marine ecosystems from destructive practices](#)
- 8.033 [Port State measures regarding illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing](#)
- 8.037 [Fourth global coral bleaching event: urgent action to reduce the risk of catastrophic loss of the world's coral reefs](#)
- 8.038 [Harnessing IUCN's power: Driving synergy for a net zero, nature positive and just energy transition](#)
- 8.041 [Developing a policy on geoengineering](#)
- 8.054 [Recognition of the rights of Antarctica](#)
- 8.055 [Advancing an ethical human-ocean relationship](#)
- 8.058 [Advancing actions to end plastic pollution to protect human health, biodiversity and the environment](#)
- 8.059 [Nature conservation diplomacy: integrating conservation, peace and security through international cooperation](#)
- 8.070 [Calling for a United Nations Decade of Island Resilience](#)
- 8.133 [Recognition of the International Marine Protected Areas Congress as the global marine protected area community for effective marine biodiversity conservation](#)
- 8.138 [Welcoming the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion on climate change](#)
- 8.142 [Reaffirming IUCN's commitment to multilateralism and global cooperation](#)

Call for Engagement

The Our Ocean Conference is a commitments platform. IUCN calls on governments, development partners, philanthropy, financial institutions, the private sector, civil society and community leaders to use OOC11 to announce practical, measurable and adequately financed commitments for ocean action.

As the first Our Ocean Conference hosted in Africa, OOC11 should mark a step change in support for African-led and Global South-led ocean solutions. This includes investment in regenerative seascapes, community-led conservation, blue entrepreneurship, marine restoration, BBNJ readiness, sustainable fisheries, plastics circularity, science and monitoring, and inclusive ocean governance.

IUCN stands ready to work with Members, partners and governments to turn commitments into implementation, from local action to global ocean governance and for an ocean that sustains nature, people and prosperity for generations to come.

For more information about events please visit our [dedicated event page](#) or contact: Ghaamid.Hatibu@iucn.org and Matt.Croucher@iucn.org