

IUCN suggested actions by theme

The following key messages reflect IUCN's institutional positions across the six thematic pillars of OOC11 and the additional theme of Local Community Engagement. They are grounded in IUCN's authoritative science, the resolutions and motions, and the operational evidence generated through IUCN's programmes at global and regional level, including in Africa.

These messages are intended for delivery in plenary interventions, side events, and bilateral engagements with senior policymakers, ministers, development partners and institutional partners. They position Africa, and IUCN's presence in Africa, as an agenda-shaping force in global ocean governance and will equally be published ahead of OOC11.

General Message

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) welcomes the forward-looking agenda of the 11th Our Ocean Conference and congratulates the Republic of Kenya for its ambitious agenda-setting. IUCN welcomes the theme of the conference, "Our Ocean, Our Heritage, Our Future".

The triple planetary crisis of biodiversity loss, climate change, and pollution is critically affecting our ocean. Over 40% of coral species and a third of sharks, rays, and chimaeras are threatened with extinction, while only 2.4% of the ocean is fully or highly protected. In addition, climate change multi-stressors such as ocean warming, marine heatwaves, ocean acidification and deoxygenation, the threats of sea level rise, pollution from all sources, are directly threatening the livelihoods of billions of people.

The Western Indian Ocean region hosts globally significant mangroves, seagrass and coral reefs, and marine migratory routes that are essential for biodiversity, climate resilience, blue economies and the livelihoods of over 60 million people living in the coastal area.

1. MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

Key message: Conserve at least 30% of our ocean through an equitable and well-connected system of marine protected areas (MPAs) and Other Effective Conservation Measures (OECMs), sustainably managing all ocean resources through Sustainable Ocean Planning (SOPs) and restoring all marine and coastal ecosystems in need of restoration by 2030.

Achieving the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework's 30x30 ocean target requires the immediate, systemic deployment of well-governed, ecologically representative, and equitably managed marine protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, backed by binding multilateral commitments, adequate and dedicated finance, and genuine equity in governance architecture. Only 2.4% of the global ocean is currently fully or highly protected.

1.1 Urgently advance the 30x30 agenda in an ambitious, equitable, and science-driven manner

In line with Target 3 of the Global Biodiversity Framework, IUCN calls for the effective protection and conservation of at least 30% of the ocean, including all Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs), through effective and equitable, ecologically representative and connected systems of marine protected areas and OECMs, protection and restoration of ecologically connected marine corridors and transboundary seascapes that support migratory species, larval dispersal, climate adaptation, and ecosystem resilience. Complementary to conservation, IUCN calls for the sustainable use of 100% of ocean resources through Sustainable Ocean Planning (SOPs) as a strategic framework for ocean-related governance and to restore all marine and coastal ecosystems in need of restoration by 2030 through integrated **Large Marine Seascapes approach** and ridge-to-reef frameworks to strengthen ecosystem-based management, climate resilience, regional cooperation and sustainable blue economies

IUCN is ready to support Member States through its extensive knowledge and network of experts and members. In particular, IUCN expertise could be key in the identification of Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs), Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs), Important Shark and Ray Areas (ISRAs), Important Marine Turtle Areas (IMTAs), potential candidate World Heritage sites, and other relevant knowledge and tools that can provide valuable input into the Ecologically or Biologically Significant marine Areas (EBSA) process, in line with the CBD COP16 decision 16/16.

IUCN's Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas provides the global standard for assessing and communicating genuine conservation outcomes. Scaling Green List adoption across African MPAs would generate a credible accountability mechanism that deepens coverage metrics and ensures genuine impact and co-benefits are being delivered.

1.2 Ensure an integrated approach to marine protected areas

Some of the world's best-resourced MPAs and World Heritage sites face intensifying pressures, including the most severe global coral bleaching event on record. Effective MPA governance requires a systemic shift from coverage-focused targets toward integrated management frameworks capable of delivering measurable outcomes. The IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas provides such a framework, establishing standards for management effectiveness, equity, and ecological connectivity.

Large Marine Seascapes and ridge-to-reef frameworks should be advanced as complementary governance instruments to strengthen ecosystem-based management, climate resilience, regional cooperation, and sustainable blue economies. In the Western Indian Ocean, large-scale seascape approaches are particularly critical given the ecological interdependencies between coral reef systems, seagrass meadows, mangroves, and offshore zones that span multiple national jurisdictions. IUCN advocates for the formal recognition of Large Marine Seascapes as OECMs within the CBD framework and for the integration of ridge-to-reef approaches into national ocean spatial planning instruments and Nationally Determined Contribution implementation frameworks.

1.3 Deep-sea ecosystems require binding precautionary governance ahead of further extractive pressure

Seamounts, hydrothermal vents, cold-water coral systems, and mesopelagic zones are foundational to global marine biodiversity and ocean carbon storage, yet face intensifying extractive pressures in the absence of adequate regulatory frameworks. IUCN upholds a moratorium on deep-sea mining unless and until the full scope of ecological impacts is comprehensively understood and effective, enforceable environmental protection can be guaranteed. IUCN further calls for binding protection of seamounts from all bottom-contact fishing gear and for closure of mesopelagic ecosystems to commercial extraction pending full ecological characterisation. It is essential to uphold a moratorium on deep-sea mining, unless and until a number of conditions are met, including that the impacts are comprehensively understood and the effective protection of the marine environment can be ensured. IUCN will continue to support its Members, including States, other non- and intergovernmental organisations, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and civil society alike in that direction.

1.4 Ensure and guarantee equity and a human-rights based approach in the development of MPAs, with IP&LC rights and equity constituting structural governance foundations to ocean management

The long-term integrity of any MPA framework is contingent on the rights, meaningful participation, and governance leadership of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs). IUCN applies FAIR and CARE principles in MPA design and requires Free, Prior, and Informed Consent as a non-negotiable baseline for all designation and management processes. Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs), represent a proven, community-centred model with documented evidence of conservation and livelihood co-benefits, particularly in near-shore coastal zones and are a key tool for effective Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM). The launch of the Western Indian Ocean LMMA Alliance at OOC11

institutionalises this approach at regional scale, creating a platform for shared standards and collective advocacy within the broader 30x30 accountability architecture.

1.5 Raise ambition on area-based management tools (ABMTs) including Marine Protected Areas in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction

The BBNJ Agreement opens a decisive window for Area Based Management Tools (ABMTs) in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABMTs). The BBNJ Agreement entered into force on 17 January 2026, providing the first legal framework for establishing Area-Based Management Tools (ABMTs), including MPAs, in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction, which comprise over 64% of the global ocean. With the first Conference of Parties scheduled for January 2027, intersessional preparation is urgently needed to ensure that state parties arrive at the table with actionable agendas. IUCN calls for early identification of high-integrity, ecologically representative ABMT candidacies.

The governance and long-term oversight of global ocean commons must not result in an inequitable ecological or financial burden being disproportionately shouldered by the Global South, adjacent coastal states, or countries with special circumstances as listed in the BBNJ Agreement. IUCN calls on international funding bodies and development partners to mobilise predictable, scalable resources, sustainable financing mechanisms, and technology transfer to ensure that such states are robustly supported in their capacity to establish, manage and enforce such ABMTs, transforming high seas stewardship into a shared, fully funded global effort.

IUCN calls on all applicable intergovernmental bodies to enhance cross-sectoral dialogue and elevate their conservation frameworks accordingly, eliminating institutional silos and securing robust long-term marine protection. Successful high seas conservation requires a progressive raising of ambition across all existing regional and sectoral international frameworks and bodies (IFBs)

The interpretive choices made in COP1 preparations will define the Agreement's ambition baseline for a generation. Article 5's without-prejudice clause, which preserves the mandates of existing regional and sectoral bodies, is best understood as a floor of continuity rather than a ceiling on ambition. Article 8's affirmative obligations provide the basis for advancing conservation and sustainable use beyond what existing RFMO, ISA, and IMO frameworks, taken alone, were designed to deliver. IUCN calls on parties and relevant intergovernmental bodies to give effect to this complementary reading and to formalise coordination mechanisms between BBNJ COP processes and existing sectoral bodies as the governance innovation most likely to translate progressive ambition into concrete ABMT outcomes.

1.6 Large marine seascapes and transboundary corridors provide strategic momentum for coverage and integrity

Ecological integrity at the scale required by 30x30 demands governance approaches that transcend individual national jurisdictions. Protection and restoration of ecologically connected marine corridors and transboundary seascapes are essential to support migratory species, larval dispersal, climate adaptation, and long-term ecosystem resilience. IUCN advocates for stakeholders and rightsholders to consider the recognition of Large Marine Seascapes as OECMs and for the acceleration of transboundary offshore MPAs, including the Gambia-Senegal-Guinea Bissau-Mauritania seascape and the expansion of Senegal's national MPA network. The developing Africa-Europe-Mediterranean MPA Network provides a model for cross-continental co-governance linking ocean resilience, blue economy activity, and community wellbeing.

1.7 Increase momentum for protection of and sustainable management in Antarctica

Antarctic marine ecosystems play a foundational role in planetary climate regulation through deep-water formation, carbon sequestration, and the regulation of global thermohaline circulation. The rate of change in the Southern Ocean, which is estimated to absorb an estimated 40% of human-generated global carbon dioxide emissions and up to 90% of the excess heat trapped by greenhouse gases, now significantly exceeds historical baselines. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and recent Marine Ecosystem Assessments confirming rapid temperature anomalies and unprecedented

sea ice decline that threaten the stability of the biological carbon pump. IUCN is committed to supporting the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) and all states toward the implementation of the roadmap for a representative system of Southern Ocean MPAs, grounded in ecosystem-based management and assessed against the IUCN Green List Standard.

2. Sustainable Blue Economy

Key Message: IUCN calls for global adoption of a Regenerative Blue Economy model, placing the protection, restoration, and regeneration of marine and coastal ecosystems at the core of all ocean-based economic activity. The structural imbalance between nature-negative and nature-positive capital flows represents a central market failure that must be corrected, and efforts must be made to empower ocean-dependent communities to fully engage within regenerative blue value chains.

2.1 Acceleration transition to and transformation towards a Regenerative Blue Economy

IUCN's 20-year strategy formally integrates the Regenerative Blue Economy as one of eight core strategic areas, establishing it as a structural institutional commitment rather than an aspirational reframing. The RBE represents a substantive departure from extractive economic models: it places the restoration and regeneration of marine and coastal ecosystems at the centre of economic activity, treating natural capital as the precondition for durable productivity rather than a resource to be consumed. Current projections indicate that ocean-based industries could double in scale by 2030, but on a business-as-usual trajectory that would intensify resource depletion and biodiversity loss. The structural shift toward a regenerative model is therefore both economically compelling and ecologically necessary. The reform of economic incentives remains one of the most powerful systemic levers for halting nature loss across the interconnected challenges of biodiversity, climate, food security, and water, and the blue economy represents a primary domain in which this reform can be advanced.

IUCN calls for the global adoption of a clear definition and founding principles for a “Regenerative” Blue Economy”, as currently there is no one widely accepted definition, nor is there a set of founding principles. To that end, IUCN has published Blue Economy mapping, representing an important first step in mapping the evolution of Blue Economy concepts, proposing a definition and founding principles for all Blue Economy-related work, through the lens of conservation and sustainable development, in all regions across the globe to embrace the development of a climate-resilient, nature-positive, and people-oriented inclusive and equitable blue economy, recognizing the essential role of women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs), and small-scale fishers as stewards of coastal and marine ecosystems..

Regional initiatives such as the Great Blue Wall demonstrate the importance of coordinated conservation, restoration and blue economy action across interconnected coastal and marine ecosystems in the Western Indian Ocean.

IUCN calls on OOC11 partners, development institutions, and member states to operationalise the RBE framework within ocean governance instruments, national development strategies, and investment portfolios. This requires the adoption of a common definition and founding principles for the RBE, as proposed in IUCN's Blue Economy Mapping, to enable policy alignment, comparable reporting, and co-investment guaranteed against regeneration of natural capital and equity at scale.

2.2 Position the Global South as a key driver the regenerative blue economy agenda

Coastal economies across the Global South have historically been organised around extractive models that generate limited sovereign value while externalising ecological costs onto the communities most directly dependent on marine ecosystems. The RBE offers a structural alternative in which the conservation of natural capital generates the enabling conditions for durable economic activity, rather than being traded off against it.

IUCN's regional initiatives, including the Great Blue Wall Initiatives, are demonstrating that regenerative seascape management, supported by fit-for-purpose finance, can deliver measurable co-benefits across biodiversity, livelihoods, and climate resilience simultaneously. Africa's engagement at OOC11 must establish Africa as a source of RBE concept and practice rather than a pilot region for externally designed frameworks.

2.3 Bold reversal of financial flows needed

The global economy currently allocates an estimated USD 7.3 trillion annually in nature-negative private flows, against USD 220 billion invested in nature-based solutions. Ocean economies are embedded in and reproduce this structural imbalance. IUCN calls for the phasing out of nature-negative finance flows by 2030, calling for a fundamental reorientation of blue economy finance away from instruments that incentivise extraction and toward mechanisms that reward regeneration, coastal ecosystem stewardship, and biodiversity-positive enterprise. At the systemic level, subsidy reform, blended finance architectures, and biodiversity-aligned investment mandates must be considered as leverage points to reverse the trend.

2.4 Consider nature and people as our biggest assets: Integrate natural capital and ecosystem services into policy and investment frameworks

Oceans remain largely absent from national wealth accounts, rendering ecosystem degradation invisible to fiscal, investment, and development planning decision-makers and allowing the systematic underpricing of marine ecosystem services to persist unchallenged. IUCN calls for the integration of marine natural capital into national accounting frameworks, development finance eligibility criteria, and sovereign investment strategies. The WIOCOR and ReSea Programmes in the Western Indian Ocean demonstrate the methodological feasibility of natural capital valuation at the seascape scale, providing a replicable model for connecting ecological evidence to investment and policy instruments.

2.5 Fostering blue entrepreneurship

The transition to a regenerative blue economy will not be achieved through policy frameworks alone. Market-based mechanisms, enterprise-level innovation, and scalable business models that internalise natural capital value are required to translate regenerative principles into economic activity. IUCN welcomes the launch of the 1000 Oceans Startups Africa edition, highlighting that Africa's ocean economies present a distinct opportunity: a growing innovation ecosystem, proximity to underutilised marine resources, and coastal communities with deep ecological knowledge and demonstrated governance legitimacy.

IUCN calls on development finance institutions and private capital actors to design accessible instruments for small and medium ocean enterprises, including concessional finance, technical assistance facilities, and de-risking mechanisms calibrated to the specific investment profile of blue entrepreneurship in the Global South.

3. Climate Change

Key messages: Climate change is the defining structural threat multiplier for ocean health. IUCN calls for maximum ambition in emissions reductions, mandatory integration of ocean-based Nature-based Solutions into Nationally Determined Contributions, and full operationalisation of the legally binding state obligations established by the 2025 International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea Advisory Opinion on climate change and oceans.

The IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C (2018), the IPBES Global Assessment (2019), the IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and the Cryosphere in a Changing Climate (2019), and the recent contribution of the Working Group II to the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report (2022) all forecast major negative global impacts of climate change on the ocean and coastal communities.

Member States must significantly increase their ambition in cutting greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, close the existing implementation gap, and immediately start phasing out all fossil fuels in a just, orderly

and equitable manner in order to prevent the 1.5°C temperature rise threshold from being permanently breached. Furthermore, UNFCCC parties must ensure that their new NDCs are at the level of their highest possible ambition, fully aligned with the 1.5°C goal, and anchored, where possible, within national legislation and regulatory frameworks.

IUCN calls for the upscaling of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) implementation in coastal and marine ecosystems, guided by the IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions. Furthermore, it is advisable to include concrete and quantified targets on NbS and to make these as ambitious as possible with a view to maximising the benefits for both mitigation and adaptation and for biodiversity conservation.

To integrate NbS as a core component of climate and biodiversity strategies, ensuring strong alignment between Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), and broader sustainable development priorities. This includes the adoption of ambitious, measurable, and time-bound commitments for ecosystem protection, restoration, and sustainable management that maximize co-benefits for climate mitigation, adaptation, biodiversity conservation, livelihoods, and resilience of coastal communities. Strengthening enabling environments for NbS implementation will also be essential to unlock and scale nature finance, including public, private, and blended finance mechanisms, while advancing a nature-positive and climate-resilient development pathway.

3.1 Ocean-climate science demands commensurate policy ambition

The IPCC Sixth Assessment Report and the Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere document with high confidence the compounding, and in some cases irreversible, impacts of climate change on marine systems: ocean warming, intensifying marine heatwaves, acidification, deoxygenation, and accelerating sea level rise. Africa's coastal communities, including the over 60 million people whose livelihoods depend on the Western Indian Ocean's fisheries, mangroves, seagrass meadows, and coral reef systems, are disproportionately exposed to these compound risks while contributing minimally to their causation. IUCN calls on all UNFCCC parties to ensure that updated Nationally Determined Contributions reflect the highest possible ambition, are aligned with the 1.5 degrees Celsius limit, incorporate ocean health as a core indicator, and are anchored in national legislation and ocean spatial planning frameworks.

Reference: *IUCN Ocean Acidification Initiative. IUCN Western Indian Ocean Seagrass and Mangrove Assessment. IUCN Red List Climate Change Vulnerability Assessments.*

3.2 Ocean-based Nature-based Solutions must be operationalised, not aspirationalised

Coastal and marine ecosystems, including mangroves, seagrass beds, and tidal marshes, provide measurable mitigation and adaptation co-benefits at scale. IUCN's Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions, second edition (2024), provides the methodology to design, evaluate, and credit NbS interventions with scientific rigour and social verifiability. IUCN calls for the mandatory inclusion of coastal and marine NbS in national climate strategies with concrete, quantified targets and dedicated budget lines, and for the integration of blue carbon into Article 6 carbon market frameworks under the Paris Agreement in a manner that is biodiversity-aligned, community-equitable, and governed according to the IUCN NbS Standard.

3.3 The ITLOS Advisory Opinion establishes binding legal obligations that states must now operationalise

The 2025 Advisory Opinion of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea established that anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions from any source constitute marine pollution under UNCLOS, and that State Parties carry a binding obligation under Article 192 to protect and preserve the marine environment from the impacts of climate change, including through effective adaptation measures. This opinion is not persuasive guidance: it fundamentally reshapes the legal architecture of ocean governance and creates a justiciable basis for climate accountability at sea. IUCN calls on OOC11 to formally acknowledge its implications and for states to operationalise these obligations within domestic

legal frameworks, national ocean spatial planning instruments, and climate finance allocation decisions. IUCN welcomes the [UN General Assembly's affirmation of States' obligations to protect the climate system](#), as well as the historic [International Court of Justice's historic Advisory Opinion on climate change](#), and calls upon the 11th Our Ocean Conference to give effect to its recommendations.

3.4 Antarctic and Southern Ocean systems require dedicated, science-grounded protection

In line with the [IUCN Strategy, Policy and Programme on Antarctica and the Southern Ocean](#), IUCN calls for accelerated science and protection for these fragile systems. Antarctic marine ecosystems play a systemic role in planetary climate regulation through deep-water formation, carbon sequestration, and the regulation of global thermohaline circulation. The rate of change in the Southern Ocean now significantly exceeds historical baselines. IUCN supports full implementation of the CCAMLR roadmap for a representative system of Southern Ocean MPAs grounded in ecosystem-based management and assessed against the IUCN Green List Standard. Advancing the East Antarctic and Weddell Sea MPAs constitutes a concrete and scientifically defensible contribution to both the 30x30 agenda and to global climate system stability.

4. Maritime Security

Key message: IUCN calls for the full integration of conservation science and governance tools into maritime security planning at national and regional levels.

4.1 IUU fishing constitutes a simultaneous ecological, economic, and maritime security crisis

Illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing presents a systemic threat to global security and marine biodiversity, draining up to USD 23.5 billion annually from the global economy and compromising the food security of over 3.3 billion people who depend on marine protein. Recent satellite tracking by Global Fishing Watch reveals that roughly 75% of the world's industrial fishing vessels operate as "dark fleets," deliberately disabling tracking systems to exploit governance vacuums, distort scientific stock assessments, and facilitate broader transnational maritime crime. To safeguard marine ecosystems and protect coastal economies, flag states and Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) must immediately shift from isolated enforcement tactics to an integrated maritime security approach. IUCN calls upon renewed ambition to tackle IUUF, and urges the universal ratification and strict enforcement of the FAO Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA), the mandate of continuous Automatic Identification System (AIS) broadcasting, and the institutionalisation of real-time, cross-border intelligence sharing to close the global surveillance gap.

4.2 Conservation, security, and development must be governed as an integrated system

To achieve true global sustainability, conservation, security, and economic development must be governed as an interconnected system rather than isolated sectors. Marine protected areas (MPAs), including future area-based management tools (ABMTs) under the UN High Seas (BBNJ) Agreement, cannot succeed without robust, global Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (MCS) architectures to combat the multi-billion dollar threats of illegal fishing, trafficking, and labour exploitation. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) calls upon states and regional bodies to advance this systemic approach by leveraging the [IUCN-UNODC partnership](#) to target nature crimes, operationalising the BBNJ Agreement's mandatory capacity-building and marine technology transfer mechanisms, and utilising advanced satellite monitoring platforms—such as the [Skylight project](#) developed by the Allen Institute for AI (AI2)—to close enforcement gaps, safeguard global blue economies, and protect high-seas biodiversity.

5. Sustainable Fisheries

Key message: IUCN calls for fisheries management frameworks that are fully compatible with the conservation of threatened marine species, the protection of vulnerable marine habitats, and the sustainable livelihoods of coastal fishing communities. The entry into force of the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies on 15 September 2025 represents the most consequential structural policy shift in fisheries governance in over two decades. It must now be operationalised with urgency, and states must engage strategically to shape its implementation trajectory in ways that serve ecosystem-based management, artisanal fishers, and long-term food security.

5.1 Global fisheries sustainability is deteriorating at documented and measurable rates

Overexploitation of natural resources is one of the key drivers of biodiversity loss, but recent studies show how the sustainability of global fishery resources declined to 62.35% (in 2021). In this regard, IUCN urges states to ensure that all fisheries management, is compatible with conservation of threatened marine species (across entire ranges), vulnerable habitats and human well-being.

Furthermore, it is key to work with regional fisheries management organisations to ensure a more sustainable use of marine resources and to establish mitigation measures to achieve a substantial reduction in bycatches, the main cause of the non-natural mortality of megafauna and other endangered species.

The proportion of global fish stocks fished within biologically sustainable levels declined to 62.35% in 2021 per the UN SDG Report 2024, meaning that more than one third of global fisheries are overexploited or at collapse risk. This trajectory is structurally incompatible with food security objectives, GBF biodiversity targets, and blue economy growth ambitions of coastal states. IUCN urges all states to ensure that fisheries management regimes are fully compatible with the conservation of threatened species across their entire migratory ranges, with particular urgency for sharks, rays, marine turtles, and marine mammals, one third of which are currently threatened with extinction per the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

5.2 States must accede to and implement the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, as one of the key structural policy levers

The WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies entered into force on 15 September 2025, representing the first multilateral trade agreement to directly target a primary driver of biodiversity loss. Of an estimated USD 35 billion in annual global fisheries subsidies, approximately USD 22 billion are classified as harmful, incentivising overcapacity and overfishing. IUCN calls for full, transparent, and verifiable implementation and for ongoing WTO negotiations on additional disciplines addressing overcapacity and overfishing to be concluded expeditiously. African states, which historically receive disproportionately low subsidy allocations while bearing high IUU fishing impacts, must engage proactively to ensure that the Agreement's implementation architecture supports artisanal fishing communities and ecosystem-based management rather than consolidating structural inequities in the global fisheries economy.

5.3 Binding bycatch reduction targets and ecosystem-based management are operational, not aspirational, imperatives

Non-selective fishing practices remain the primary driver of non-natural mortality for marine megafauna and numerous threatened species, constituting a direct and largely unaddressed conflict between current fisheries practice and biodiversity conservation obligations. IUCN calls on Regional Fisheries Management Organisations and coastal states to establish binding, quantified bycatch mitigation measures, with particular urgency for longline, trawl, and drift net fisheries. Ecosystem-based management, integrating best available science on stock dynamics, trophic relationships, and habitat dependencies, must become the operational standard for fisheries management in national and international waters. IUCN is prepared to support states through expertise in KBA identification, IMMA and ISRA mapping, and Red List assessments of commercially and ecologically significant species.

Reference: *WCC-2025-Res-134. IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group. IUCN Marine Mammal Action Plan. IUCN Seabird Bycatch Programme.*

5.4 Ocean science capacity in Africa must be invested in as a strategic public good

Effective fisheries governance is contingent on robust, locally generated marine science. Africa faces a significant ocean science capacity deficit that constrains stock assessment quality, limits participation in international scientific bodies, and weakens African states' negotiating positions in RFMO fora. IUCN supports the development of BBNJ Centres of Excellence as regional platforms for sustained ocean science investment and calls for Article 22 capacity-building and marine technology transfer provisions of the BBNJ Agreement to be operationalised with adequate, predictable, and timely resourcing from developed country parties, delivered on terms that build sovereign scientific capability rather than dependency.

Reference: *BBNJ Agreement Article 22 on Capacity-Building and Marine Technology Transfer. IUCN BBNJ Centre of Excellence Programme. IUCN Ocean Science Capacity Programme for Africa.*

6. Marine pollution

Key message: IUCN calls for a strong future Plastics Treaty that must be science-based and address all phases of the plastics lifecycle, including production, and not only downstream and waste management. Furthermore, we support inclusion of strong provisions for biodiversity, circular economic models, improved waste management, and just transition and social inclusion.

Plastic pollution affects all freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems. It is a transboundary issue that has severe repercussions on planetary and human health. IUCN supports the development of an ambitious international, legally binding instrument on plastics pollution, including in the marine environment, aligned converging with related Multilateral Environmental Agreements. For that reason, IUCN has been advocating for a dedicated article on biodiversity in the text with concrete textual proposal.

When it comes to pollution, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea's Advisory Opinion on climate change is historic, especially for our ocean. In fact, the Tribunal established that anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions from any source constitute pollution in the context of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. This means that State Parties must take all necessary measures to prevent, reduce and control such pollution. Moreover, the opinion states that Parties have the legal obligation under Art. 192 to protect and preserve the marine environment against the detrimental impacts of climate change, including through effective adaptation measures. IUCN calls on UNOC3 to fully take into account the implications of this advisory opinion and to take the necessary measures for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Key message: IUCN calls for an ambitious, legally binding global instrument on plastic pollution that addresses the full plastics lifecycle from production to end-of-life, integrates dedicated and enforceable biodiversity protection provisions, and provides enabling conditions for a just transition for the states and communities most affected. The instrument must be fully coherent with the BBNJ Agreement, the Kunming-Montreal GBF, and the expanded state obligations on marine pollution established by the 2025 ITLOS Advisory Opinion.

6.1 Plastic pollution demands a production-phase response, not a downstream waste management fix

Plastic pollution permeates all freshwater, coastal, and marine ecosystems and constitutes a direct and escalating threat to marine biodiversity, human health, and ecosystem function. A Plastics Treaty that focuses exclusively on downstream waste management will fail structurally: it treats the symptom while leaving intact the structural driver, which is the unconstrained expansion of plastic production. Consistent with IUCN's position throughout the INC process, IUCN calls for a science-based treaty mandating full lifecycle coverage from raw material extraction through production, use, reuse, recycling, waste management, and end-of-life. The IslandPlas project, showcased at OOC11, provides an

actionable model for accelerating circular plastics transition in island and coastal contexts in the Western Indian Ocean.

Reference: *WCC-2025 Resolutions on stopping the global plastic pollution crisis in marine environments and eliminating plastic pollution in protected areas. UNEA Resolution 5/14. IUCN submission to the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastics.*

6.2 The treaty must include a dedicated, enforceable biodiversity protection article

IUCN has consistently called for a dedicated article on biodiversity protection in the plastics treaty text, with concrete provisions safeguarding marine and coastal ecosystems from both the chemical and physical impacts of plastic pollution. A third of all sharks, rays, and chimaeras are threatened with extinction per the IUCN Red List, and plastic ingestion and entanglement are among the documented stressors on these and numerous other species. The treaty must operationalise regime coherence with the CBD, the BBNJ Agreement, and the Ramsar Convention to maximise biodiversity co-benefits and close the regulatory gaps that currently allow plastic pollution to flow between governance frameworks without adequate accountability.

Reference: *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (sharks, rays, and marine megafauna assessments). IUCN Global Marine and Polar Programme on Plastic Pollution. IUCN INC Process Submissions.*

6.3 The ITLOS Advisory Opinion extends state obligations beyond climate to all sources of marine pollution

The 2025 ITLOS Advisory Opinion established that greenhouse gas emissions from any source constitute marine pollution under UNCLOS, and that states carry binding obligations under Articles 192 and 194 to prevent, reduce, and control such pollution. The logical extension of this reasoning to other persistent marine pollutants, including plastic, has not been adequately explored at the political level. IUCN calls on OOC11 to acknowledge and operationalise the implications of this opinion, which expand the legal architecture of state responsibility for marine pollution well beyond traditional point-source frameworks and provide a powerful basis for integrating climate, pollution, and biodiversity governance under a common legal regime.

Reference: *ITLOS Advisory Opinion on Climate Change and International Law (2025). UNCLOS Articles 192 and 194. IUCN Ocean Law and Policy Programme.*

6.4 Finance and just transition provisions must be structurally integrated into the treaty design

The Plastics Treaty, the GBF, and the BBNJ Agreement collectively function as catalysts for convergent biodiversity and climate finance. For African states, which generate a fraction of global plastic production but bear significant pollution impacts and have limited waste management infrastructure, treaty design must ensure that binding obligations are matched by adequate, predictable, and accessible financial and technical support. IUCN calls for dedicated capacity-building provisions, technology transfer mechanisms, and a just transition framework that protects coastal livelihoods dependent on fisheries and marine tourism while accelerating the structural shift to circular economic models.

Reference: *IUCN IslandPlas Project. GBF Resource Mobilisation Framework. BBNJ Agreement Capacity-Building Provisions. IUCN Circular Blue Economy Programme.*

7. LOCAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND IPLC RIGHTS

Key message: Effective ocean governance is structurally dependent on the leadership, rights, and knowledge systems of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities. IUCN calls for IPLCs to be recognised as rights-holders with substantive decision-making authority in all ocean governance processes, not as stakeholders to be consulted, with full, adequately resourced, and institutionally protected participation guaranteed from community-level resource management through to multilateral negotiations.

7.1 Rights-based governance is a structural prerequisite for conservation legitimacy and long-term durability

Conservation interventions that exclude or marginalise coastal communities have a documented record of failure and, in some cases, of direct harm to the communities they nominally serve. IUCN's policy framework applies FAIR and CARE principles and requires Free, Prior, and Informed Consent as a non-negotiable baseline for all MPA designation and management processes. WCC-2025 Motion 056, on the rights of the ocean and the recognition of Indigenous peoples' rights in marine governance, reinforces the institutional alignment of conservation science with human rights frameworks. In Africa, where the majority of coastal populations depend directly on marine ecosystems for nutrition and livelihood, community-centred governance is not an ethical preference but an operational necessity for conservation outcomes that are measurable, durable, and able to withstand political transition.

Reference: WCC-2025 Motion 056: Rights of the Ocean and recognition of Indigenous peoples' rights and knowledge in marine governance. IUCN Policy on Gender Mainstreaming in Conservation. IUCN Programme on Indigenous Peoples and Conservation. IUCN Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas Registry.

7.2 Locally Managed Marine Areas represent a proven and regionally scalable governance model

LMMA offer a community-based governance model in which resource users take primary responsibility for marine ecosystem management. Evidence from the Pacific and increasingly from the Western Indian Ocean demonstrates that well-supported LMMAs generate measurable improvements in fish biomass, habitat condition, and community wellbeing, at lower per-unit cost than centralised management approaches. The launch of the Western Indian Ocean LMMA Alliance at OOC11 marks a regional institutionalisation of this model, creating a platform for shared standards, learning exchange, and collective advocacy for the financial and legal recognition of community-led conservation within national and international governance frameworks.

Reference: WCC-2025 Motion 056. IUCN Locally Managed Marine Area (LMMA) Programme. Western Indian Ocean LMMA Alliance (OOO11 launch). IUCN WCPA Best Practice Guidelines on Community-Based Protected Area Governance.

7.3 Financing for locally led conservation must be unlocked and structured at scale

Community-based conservation initiatives remain systematically underfinanced, structured to access neither large-scale capital markets nor mainstream multilateral climate and biodiversity funds, both of which are calibrated for institutional recipients. IUCN calls for the development of fit-for-purpose financing instruments for locally led marine conservation, including accessible grant facilities, blue finance blending mechanisms, and ecosystem service payment frameworks that can be governed and managed at community level without creating structural dependency on external intermediaries. The People of the Ocean Breakthrough, developed by IUCN and partners for OOC11, provides a platform for connecting IPLC-led ocean solutions to the political and financial systems that must be mobilised if community-centred governance is to achieve meaningful and durable scale.

Reference: IUCN People of the Ocean Breakthrough (OOO11). IUCN IPLC Joint Programme. IUCN Community Conservation Finance Initiative. IUCN Gender and Ocean Programme.