



Ocean

A CALL TO ACTION FOR HEALTH AND EQUITY OF THE OCEAN

Given the critical but long neglected ocean-climate nexus under the UNFCCC and delays in implementing substantial ocean related obligations under the Convention, COP25 must be the COP where the ocean becomes a priority and integral theme of the climate negotiations.

Background

The ocean is a part of the global life support system. It produces half of the annual oxygen, regulates the global climate, provides food and many other goods and services which are vital to all life on Earth and important to people and societies all over the world. A healthy ocean is key for achieving international environment and development goals.

Although precious, the ocean is not protected and continues to be degraded as a result of numerous anthropogenic pressures. Climate change has become an increasing threat to the ocean while multiple impacts (warming and marine heat waves, acidification, stratification, oxygen loss, changes in ultra-violet radiation, sea level rise, altered currents, extreme storms and cyclones) often occur at the same time and place. The ocean is getting hotter, higher, more acidic and lower in oxygen. It is also becoming less diverse.

The IPBES Global Assessment and IPCC's special reports on global warming on 1.5°C and on the ocean and cryosphere (SROCC) show that the predicted impacts are coming much earlier than expected and at rates unprecedented in human history while warming from anthropogenic emissions will cause further long-term changes in the climate system and irreversible sea level rise and biodiversity loss.

The current emission pathway and related impacts of climate change on the marine environment threaten our planetary survival and human well-being all over the world. But these impacts are distributed unevenly around the globe affecting high and low latitude regions the most. They entail specific threats to coastal areas and populations, especially in low-lying small island developing states (SIDS) and archipelagic countries.

Although 1.5°C scenario suggests less loss and damage in comparison to 2°C, the loss of marine biodiversity is considerably and particularly high in lower latitudes where communities and economies depend on their marine and coastal ecosystems. Most of all, warm water corals cannot survive. They are already at high risk under current 1.0 warming. The majority (70–90%) of tropical coral reefs that exist today is expected to disappear even if global warming is constrained to 1.5°C, with losses being even greater (99%) at 2°C. Declined to 30 or 10 percent, coral reefs will no longer be able to provide vital functions and services to more than 500 million people and economies who depend on coral reefs for food, income, revenue, coastal protection, and other risk reduction benefits.

Moreover, the carbon capture potential of marine biodiversity, including fisheries, is expected to decrease considerably at 1.5°C and is constrained to the limits of a 2°C world. With every bit of warming and increasing loss of marine biodiversity, human-kind is losing its greatest allies to combat climate change.

Gender Perspectives

The ocean crisis demonstrates a deeper crisis of the human-nature relationship which is the result of societal divisions of labour and relationships of power and domination in the private and public sphere. The dominant economic system and its paradigm of economic growth are based on inequality, injustice, violence, monetarization, commodification and privatization of common goods and a rampant extraction of resources. It encourages overexploitation, destruction and pollution of the ocean, as on land. Thus, we need to set an agenda that guarantees that small scale fishing (SSF), coastal communities and indigenous peoples livelihoods will be taken care of, especially recognising that the majority of people this impacts on are women and girls. All ocean conservation actions should promote the recognition of the value and inclusion of local community inputs towards the conservation of the ocean based on experience and traditional knowledge, including ensuring the full and meaningful participation of women and girls in all their diversities.

It is estimated that 98% of all fishers and fish farmers live in developing countries, in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Together, they produce more than half of the world's annual marine fish and supply most of the fish consumed in the developing world (Berkes et al, 2001 in FAO, 2017). Out of this, women make up an estimated 47 percent of workers, accounting for around 56 million jobs along the fisheries supply chain, primarily in post-harvest activities like processing and trading (World Bank, 2012 in FAO,2017)

Within fishing communities, we must recognize and value the role of fisherwomen in a strong and new chapter for rural development and marine conservation. For us it is clear that women and especially fisherwomen and their rights, need to be included to promote efficient and knowledgeable decisions for the future of our planet and in this case, our ocean.

Women in the fishing sector are not homogenous, they have diverse capacities and inputs towards the different fishing value chains. Some can own a boat and gather mollusks, however, the majority of women experience inequities in terms of access and control of their productive resources. They are involved in domestic work, pre-harvest work (including tasks such as collecting and preparing bait and boats, mending nets, preparing food for the fishing trips, arranging the lines, and maintaining books and accounts of fisher organizations, and post-harvest work (such as cleaning the fish and other fishing products, sorting, weighing and in some cases processing and selling the fish).

Fishing women are underrepresented in the implementation of ocean conservation actions, women's fishing work is underpaid and undervalued, they are underrepresented in the official data since there is no sex differentiated statistics and they are underrepresented in policy making, especially evident in those policies related to ocean conservation and sustainable use of the sea resources.

Demands

Therefore, the WGC highlights the following key asks at #COP25:

- Reduce climate change related impacts on oceans and implement the substantial obligations under Art. 4.1 (d) and (e) of UNFCCC that directly refer to the conservation and enhancement of GHG sinks and reservoirs in marine and coastal ecosystems;
- Raise ambition to keep the global temperature rise this century well BELOW 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, slow down the rate of change, and become carbon negative well BEFORE 2050 in order to save coral reefs, promote biodiversity integrity and protect and enhance marine sinks and reservoirs;
- Address and reduce all maritime sources of GHG, end fossil fuel subsidies in maritime transport and fisheries that contribute to overfishing, destructive fishing and IUU fishing, end bottom trawling and other activities disturbing carbon and methane stored in the seafloor, no energy and traffic turn in the north at the expense of marine biodiversity and food security in the south: **Stop seabed mining!**;

- Recognize the specific risks, knowledge, commitment and rights of women, indigenous people, small-scale fishers and associated poor communities from coastal areas, especially in tropical and Arctic regions at the frontline of the ocean-climate-biodiversity emergency, and institutionalize the special consideration and meaningful participation of coastal communities, fisherwomen and fishermen side by side with farmers and agriculture under the UNFCCC framework;
- Exhaust all means available to help fragile marine systems and vulnerable coastal communities to adapt to irreversible climate change;
- Recognize and compensate for loss of coral reefs and marine biodiversity and the foregone goods and services to associated coastal communities;
- Further explore the role of coastal and oceanic blue carbon in climate regulation and protect and enhance marine ecosystems and species great potential in carbon sequestration which comes along with benefits for food security and other SDGs;
- Trigger the integration of climate change issues in all relevant ocean regimes, especially the currently negotiated BBNJ instrument under UNCLOS and the Post 2020 Framework of CBD, and in any ocean policy from the local to the global level in a coherent manner;
- Protect and restore marine biodiversity and strengthen ocean resilience through ecosystem-based management, area-based management, including marine protected areas and reserves, ocean-climate-biodiversity-responsive environmental impact assessment and integrative governance across sectors, areas and jurisdictions;
- Promote integration and coherence among regular processes for global reporting and assessment of the state of the climate change, ocean and marine and coastal biodiversity while balancing environmental, socio-economic and cultural aspects.