

Ocean Decade Vision 2030: setting a collective strategic ambition for the Ocean Decade Challenges

Concept Note on Framework Methodology

1. Introduction

The UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development ('the Ocean Decade') is being implemented in a dynamic social, ecological and economic context. To ensure that it remains relevant over its duration, the Decade needs to adopt an evolutive approach to ensure that:

- (i) The Ocean Decade Challenges (refer Annex 1), which are at the heart of the Decade Action Framework and represent the most pressing needs and priorities to allow ocean science to contribute to sustainable development at a particular point in time, remain relevant.
- (ii) Decade Actions that are being co-designed, co-delivered and solicited via Calls for Decade Actions are tailored to fulfil the most pressing gaps in science, knowledge and solutions.

To provide the operational framework for this evolutive approach, the Decade Coordination Unit is launching the **Ocean Decade Vision 2030** process. This participatory and iterative process will set a tailored and specific strategic ambition or 'end goal', and associated milestones, for each Ocean Decade Challenge. In simple terms, the strategic ambition for each Ocean Decade Challenge will provide the answer to the question:

"What does success look like for this Challenge at the end of the Decade [or sooner]?"

The identified milestones will provide information to answer the question:

"What do we need to have achieved at different intervals during the Decade to be on the defined path to success for this Challenge?"

The Vision 2030 process will allow the DCU and partners to measure progress towards fulfillment of the Challenges on a regular basis. This will allow: (i) identification of residual gaps in science, knowledge, capacity, resources or infrastructure so that priority Decade Actions can be solicited to fill critical gaps; (ii) the Challenges to be refined, modified and eventually removed as they are fulfilled, and/or new Challenges adopted to respond to emerging issues.

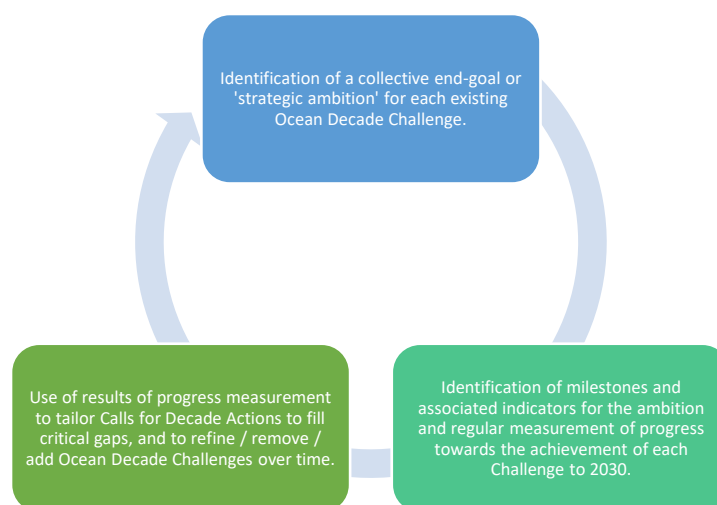


Figure 1: Setting the strategic ambition for the Ocean Decade Challenges via the Vision 2030 process

The strategic ambition for each Challenge will start from the user perspective¹ and be comprised of a mix of inter-dependent elements including the following (Figure 2):

- Priority datasets to unlock or to generate
- Knowledge to generate or to share
- Infrastructure required to generate or share data or knowledge or to build capacity and skills
- Partnerships and financial or in-kind resources to generate and ensure uptake of knowledge
- Capacity development and exchange needs
- Technology and innovation solutions including those required for uptake of knowledge

Indicators will be developed to measure progress in achieving each element of the strategic ambition.

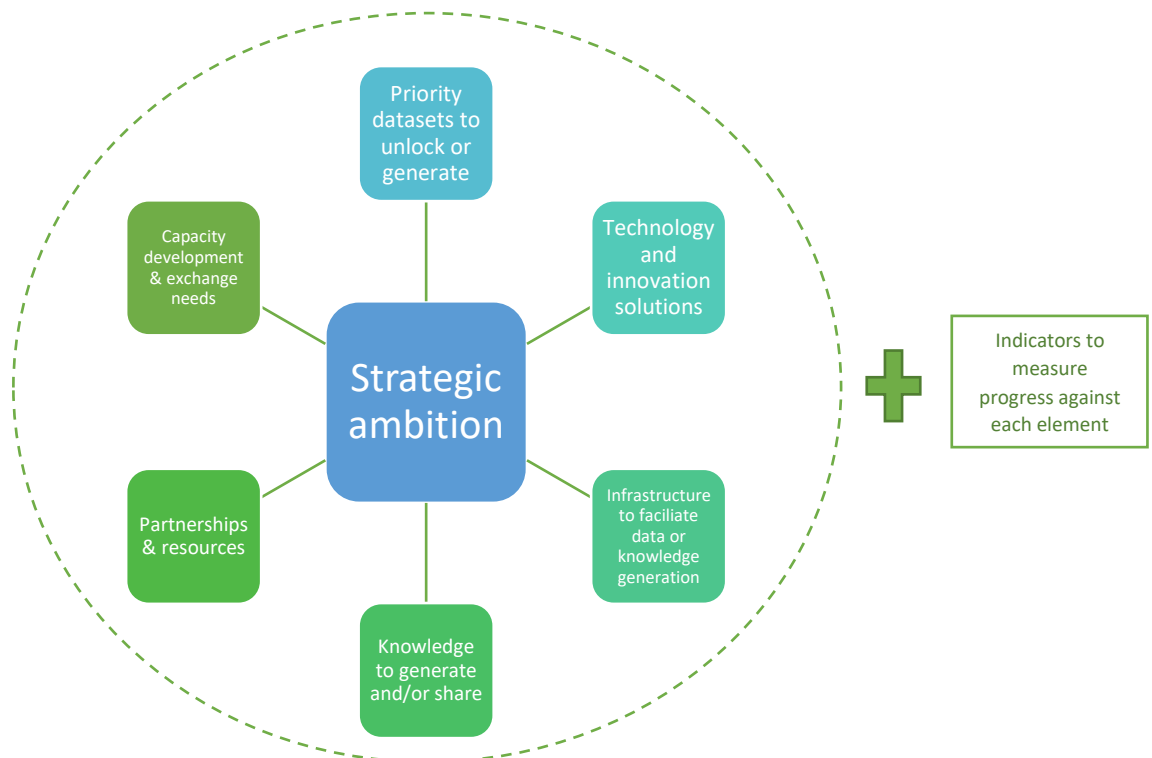


Figure 2: Elements of the strategic ambition for each Ocean Decade Challenge

Establishment of the strategic ambition for each Challenge will generate the following benefits:

- **Keeping the Challenges relevant:** Definition of quantitative and agreed milestones against which progress can be measured for each Challenge so that the question of “What does success look like for this Challenge” can be answered, and so that overall set of Challenges can continue to be relevant and appropriate.
- **Facilitating strategic dialogue between knowledge generators and knowledge holders, and the users of ocean knowledge:** Deliberate positioning of the process to focus on user needs and thus ensure a clear convergence on solutions-oriented science.
- **Aligning resources to priority needs:** Development of an adaptive framework for identifying where knowledge, capacity, infrastructure or other gaps exist in relation to each Ocean

¹ For the purposes the Ocean Decade, the term ‘user’ of ocean science or knowledge refers to any individual, institution or group in society that uses or applies ocean data, information or knowledge. It is a broad and fluidly defined group and can include, for example policy makers, resource managers, or private sector partners.

Decade Challenge, thus allowing detailed scoping of future Calls for Decade Actions and ensuring alignment with resource mobilisation to fill priority gaps.

- **Prioritising datasets:** Identification of new priority data needs to be generated and identifying priority actions to unlock existing datasets that are inaccessible.
- **Alignment of common global priorities with regional and national priorities:** Providing a global framework for priority actions for each Challenge that can be translated to regional and national priorities by regional taskforces / programmes and National Decade Committees thus allowing these decentralised structures to harmonise and contribute in a coherent way to the global effort while meeting locally relevant needs.

2. Overall Approach to the Vision 2030 Process

The process will be participatory, progressive and iterative and will engage multiple stakeholders. It is based on an understanding that the Decade cannot do everything and that an important part of the dialogue will be to generate consensus on priorities for each Challenge. The process will also integrate mechanisms to ensure that synergies across Challenges are identified and optimized, while avoiding duplication and redundancy.

The starting point for the establishment of the strategic ambition will be a comprehensive analysis of user needs for sustainable development solutions. On this basis the process will generate a sound understanding of the current state of data, knowledge and solutions to meet identified priority user needs, and thus the residual gaps in datasets, science, capacity, and knowledge that need to be filled (Figure 3).

The participation of a diverse range of stakeholders, ranging from the scientific community, industry, policy makers, governments to indigenous and local knowledge holders, NGOs and local communities, will be essential to achieve this. The strategic ambition will also identify, as relevant, essential elements of the enabling environment that are pre-requisites for the identified priority actions and solutions (e.g. capacity development, resources, access to technology and innovation, partnerships). It will do this by exploring the conditions that are needed to create pathways along the ocean science value chain from the generation to use of knowledge for each Challenge.



Figure 3: Overview of process to set strategic ambition for Ocean Decade Challenges

The process will initially focus on setting a global level ambition. However, inclusion of regional and national stakeholders in the Working Groups will allow specific regional and national issues to be identified and noted. Following the outcomes of the global process, guidance and support will be provided to regional and national coordination structures and partners, including DCO/DCCs and regional taskforces, to adapt and translate global ambitions to their specific context.

The process is an integral part of the overall monitoring and evaluation approach for the Decade. While the current monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework for the Decade allows for measurement of the volume and type of knowledge and solutions generated for each Challenge, it does not allow tracking of progress towards commonly defined end-goals or an assessment of the collective success in fulfilling each of the Challenges. The Vision 2030 process will identify indicators to be integrated into future iterations of the M&E Framework to measure progress against the different elements of the strategic ambition for each Challenge. Measurement of the achievement of the strategic ambition for each Challenge will focus on tracking progress of the actions and solutions that are directly attributable to the Decade and that are contributing in tangible ways to achieving the desired state of the ocean, as characterised by the Decade Outcomes. The measurement of progress towards the strategic ambition for each Challenge will be complemented by analyses of trends in the state of the ocean that will be reported in the annual State of the Ocean Report produced by IOC-UNESCO.

3. Framework Methodology

3.1 Preparation Phase (January – February 2023)

The preparation phase will involve the establishment of the organizational structure to implement the process and the mobilisation of resources to support the work of the different entities. The preparation phase will be led by the Decade Coordination Unit (DCU).

The process will be implemented by a network of ten expert Working Groups, one for each of the Decade Challenges. Each Working Group will be led by a Chair and Co-Chair, and will be supported by the DCU, and where possible a Lead Partner Organisation, to implement a common framework methodology (refer Figure 4).

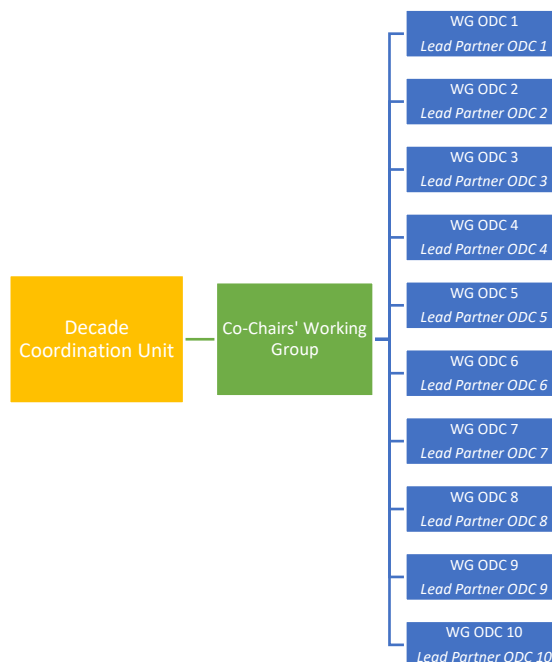


Figure 4: Organisational structure for implementation of Vision 2030 Process

Each of the ten **Expert Working Groups** will focus on one Ocean Decade Challenge. The Expert Working Groups will comprise approximately 15 volunteer expert members including a balanced group of users of ocean science, subject matter experts, and representatives of relevant DCO/DCCs, Decade Actions and regional and national structures (e.g. regional taskforces, National Decade Committees). Ocean Decade partners and members of governance and coordination structures (e.g. Decade Advisory Board, Foundations Dialogue, and Informal Working Group members) will be included in the Working Groups. Expert Working Group members will be nominated by the Co-Chairs in consultation with the Decade Coordination Unit, relevant DCO/DCCs, Decade Actions, and the final decision on membership will be made by the Executive Secretary of IOC-UNESCO.

Each Expert Working Group will be led by a Chair, supported by a Co-Chair, both of whom will be volunteers and whom will be appointed by the IOC Executive Secretary. The **Working Group Chair and Co-Chair** will be responsible for developing and leading implementation of the detailed workplan for the Working Group based on the framework methodology for the process. The Chairs and Co-Chairs will meet regularly via a **Co-Chairs Working Group**. This Working Group will be the main point of contact with the DCU and will be a platform for the exchange and sharing of information, as well as a means of ensuring that synergies are optimized across the Ocean Decade Challenges and that redundancies and duplications are avoided.

The **role of the DCU** will be to oversee the process. It will identify the Co-Chairs for the Working Groups and provide advice on membership, provide guidance and support on the implementation of the framework methodology, provide logistical support for organization of Co-Chairs meetings, provide advice on organisations and partners to consult, and organize the public review processes and consultation with the Decade Advisory Board. The DCU will also lead the preparation of the synthesis report summarising and consolidating the work of the Working Groups.

Lead Partner Organisations, including DCOs/DCCs, Decade Actions, UN entities, IOC-UNESCO institutional partners, or existing working groups or networks, will work to support the DCU in the convening and coordination of individual Working Groups that are relevant to their mandates.

All groups will be established taking into account gender, generational and geographical diversity.

3.2 Technical Work of Working Groups (March 2023 – April 2024)

The Expert Working Groups will work over a period of 12 months under the leadership of their Chair and Co-Chairs and with the support of the DCU and where possible, a Lead Partner Organisation. The ultimate outcome of each Working Group will be a draft white paper on the strategic ambition for their Ocean Decade Challenge. The draft white paper will be based on the results of literature review, expert knowledge of the working group members, targeted consultations with Decade and non-Decade partners (including Decade Actions, national and regional structures, Informal Working Groups etc.), and feedback from the Decade Advisory Board and IOC-UNESCO Governing Bodies. The draft white papers will be subject to a broad technical review process prior to their publication. The series of draft white papers, together with a synthesis report, will be presented to and discussed at the Second International Ocean Decade Conference to be held in April 2024 in Barcelona, Spain. The results of the discussions at the 2024 Conference will inform the finalisation of the white papers and the development of an operational plan for the implementation and operationalisation of the strategic ambition for each Challenge, including tracking of progress as part of the overall Ocean Decade Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

Each Working Group will follow the main steps in the framework methodology illustrated below but will develop a tailored and detailed workplan and mode of operation. The framework methodology that will be followed comprises six steps that are illustrated in Figure 5 and described below, with milestones shown in Figure 6.

- **Step 1:** Starting from the perspective of priority user needs, each WG will identify a long-list of potential options to frame the strategic ambition for the Ocean Decade Challenge. Working

Groups will use their expert knowledge, literature review and targeted consultations with Decade and non-Decade partners (including Decade Actions, national and regional structures, Informal Working Groups etc.) to brainstorm and identify this long-list of options. For each of the identified options, Working Groups may also start to identify initial thoughts on the elements of the strategic ambition to meet the identified options for user needs (e.g. datasets, knowledge, solutions and innovation, enabling environment – refer Figure 2).

- **Step 2:** The Co-Chairs of all Working Groups will meet to report on initial findings and start to explore synergies, inter-dependencies, redundancies and overlap between the initial set of options identified for each Challenge. Co-Chairs will discuss and prepare the key messages to report to the IOC-UNESCO Governing Bodies and Decade Advisory Board on progress to date in the process.

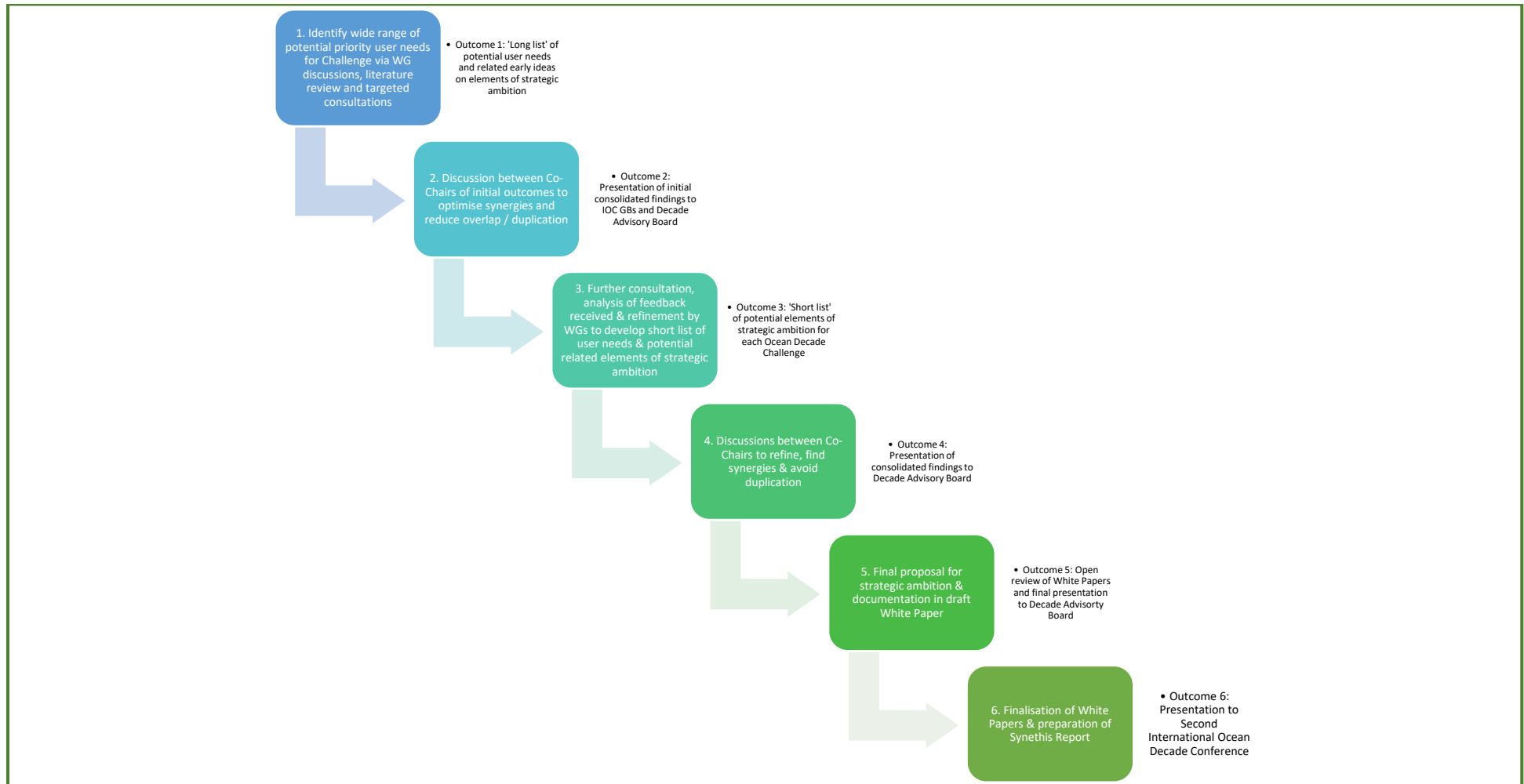


Figure 5: Framework Methodology for Ocean Decade Vision 2030 Process

- **Step 3:** Based on the Co-Chairs' discussions and the feedback from the presentation to the IOC-UNESCO Governing Bodies and Decade Advisory Board, the Working Groups will continue their scientific and technical work, and their consultations with relevant partners to refine the long list of user driven options for the strategic ambition to a manageable number of options for more detailed analysis and consultation. For each of the short-listed options, the initial potential elements of the strategic ambition will be identified, along with high-level suggestions for milestones and indicators.
- **Step 4:** The Co-Chairs of all Working Groups will meet to report on progress since the last discussions, and report recent findings and analyses with the aim of exploring synergies, inter-dependencies and duplication in more detail. Co-chairs will discuss key messages to report to the Decade Advisory Board.
- **Step 5:** Based on the discussions in the Co-Chair Working Group and additional feedback from the Decade Advisory Board, Working Groups will develop the final proposal for the strategic ambition for their Ocean Decade Challenge and document the results in a succinct 7 – 10 page white paper. The series of 10 white papers, which will each be developed using a standard structure to be developed by the DCU, will then be distributed for open peer review by Decade and non-Decade partners. A meeting of the Co-Chairs Working Group will be organised during this part of the process if required to align messaging and final elements of the white papers.
- **Step 6:** The Working Groups will be provided with an analysis of the key comments from the open peer review process and will work to finalise the white papers for a final presentation to the Decade Advisory Board before publication. The DCU will prepare a synthesis report to summarise findings across the white papers and the series of documents will be presented to participants at the Ocean Decade Conference for discussion and validation.

4. Required Resources

The DCU will work with partners to mobilise resources to support travel and meeting costs for the Co-Chairs, miscellaneous costs to support the Working Group operation, as well as design, publication and translation costs for the white papers and synthesis report. **It is estimated that between USD 100,000 and USD 120,000 will be needed to support the full process.** However, use of online meetings instead of in-person meetings will significantly reduce costs. Membership and leadership of the Working Groups will be on a voluntary and non-remunerated basis.



Figure 6: Milestones for Ocean Decade Vision 2030 Process

Annex 1: Ocean Decade Challenges

Knowledge and Solutions Challenges

- Challenge 1: Understand and map land- and sea-based sources of pollutants and contaminants and their potential impacts on human health and ocean ecosystems, and develop solutions to remove or mitigate them.
- Challenge 2: Understand the effects of multiple stressors on ocean ecosystems and develop solutions to monitor, protect, manage and restore ecosystems and their biodiversity under changing environmental, social and climate conditions.
- Challenge 3: Generate knowledge, support innovation and develop solutions to optimize the role of the ocean in sustainably feeding the world's population under changing environmental, social and climate conditions.
- Challenge 4: Generate knowledge, support innovation and develop solutions for equitable and sustainable development of the ocean economy under changing environmental, social and climate conditions.
- Challenge 5: Enhance understanding of the ocean-climate nexus and generate knowledge and solutions to mitigate, adapt and build resilience to the effects of climate change across all geographies and at all scales, and to improve services including predictions for the ocean, climate and weather.

Essential Infrastructure Challenges

- Challenge 6: Enhance multi-hazard early warning services for all geophysical, ecological, biological, weather-, climate- and anthropogenic-related ocean and coastal hazards, and mainstream community preparedness and resilience.
- Challenge 7: Ensure a sustainable ocean observing system across all ocean basins that delivers accessible, timely and actionable data and information to all users.
- Challenge 8: Through multi-stakeholder collaboration, develop a comprehensive digital representation of the ocean, including a dynamic ocean map, which provides free and open access for exploring, discovering and visualizing past, current and future ocean conditions in a manner relevant to diverse stakeholders.

Foundational Challenges

- Challenge 9: Ensure comprehensive capacity development and equitable access to data, information, knowledge and technology across all aspects of ocean science and for all stakeholders.
- Challenge 10: Ensure that the multiple values and services of the ocean for human well-being, culture and sustainable development are widely understood, and identify and overcome barriers to behaviour change required for a step change in humanity's relationship with the ocean.