

NGOs in the Ocean Decade



# Ocean Decade Manual for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

## DRAFT DOCUMENT APRIL 2024

This draft was prepared by the  
Ocean Decade-NGO Task Group for  
the 2024 Ocean Decade Conference

The purpose of this Manual is to foster, facilitate, and support NGO participation in the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, commonly referred to as the Ocean Decade, which is being coordinated by UNESCO’s Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC/UNESCO) on behalf of the UN system. The Manual offers practical guidance, streamlining access to partners and support aimed at enhancing diverse NGO involvement.

While the primary emphasis of the Ocean Decade NGO Manual is to facilitate active involvement in the Ocean Decade, it acknowledges the wider ecosystem and identifies pertinent sources of information for stakeholders, including rightsholders from Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities. Additionally, the manual provides guidance for individuals engaging through NGO networks and covers essential aspects from understanding the purpose and objectives of the Ocean Decade to practical tips, benefits, and strategies for successful engagement.

## Table of Contents

I.	Key Takeaways.....	3
II.	Foreword: Welcome on Board the Ocean Decade! .....	4
III.	Acknowledgements.....	5
IV.	Introduction to the Ocean Decade.....	7
V.	Getting Started .....	15
VI.	Diverse Opportunities for NGOs .....	17
VII.	What’s in the Ocean Decade for my NGO?.....	25
VIII.	The Journey Ahead.....	27



## I. Key Takeaways

- ✓ The Ocean Decade aims to generate a major global momentum to strengthen ocean science and its contribution to sustainable development and ocean literacy in the broadest sense.
- ✓ A fundamental aspect of the Ocean Decade is its “whole of society” approach, which strengthens the connections between science, governments, private companies, NGOs, civil society, and all actors of sustainable development. This approach emphasizes the collaborative co-design and co-production of knowledge products and solutions.
- ✓ NGOs, representing diverse perspectives, hold a crucial position at the science-policy-society interface. They facilitate vital connections with various stakeholders, and with notably under-represented groups such as Indigenous Peoples and Community Rightsholders, as well as with youth and Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOP).
- ✓ NGOs can be central actors of the Ocean Decade and become involved in the co-design of ocean science that is accessible, actionable, and fit-for-purpose in their area of work (e.g., environmental education, conservation, community work, coordination of science or education initiatives, advocacy efforts, among many other disciplinary foci).
- ✓ All aspects of the Ocean Decade are open to NGO participation, including leadership and partnership roles in each of the Decade Challenges as well as all types of Decade Actions. NGOs, along with other stakeholders, are invited and encouraged to team-up with international partners.
- ✓ Since its launch in 2021, the Ocean Decade has established a comprehensive coordination network to address various challenges at national, regional, and international levels. These coordination structures are eager to offer information and assistance to NGOs, aiding them in identifying suitable partners to engage in mutually beneficial activities.
- ✓ Participation in the Ocean Decade offers NGOs the opportunity to increase their visibility, legitimacy, and outreach. They become part of a global movement and gain access to extensive networking opportunities within the NGO community, scientific institutions, as well as with other strategic stakeholders.
- ✓ The Ocean Decade provides NGOs with access to up-to-date knowledge products, best practices, and technical guidance, such as data collection and management expertise, to bolster their initiatives and enhance their capabilities. This access empowers NGOs to amplify their impact, serve as sources of inspiration to others, and in turn, find inspiration themselves.

## II. Foreword: Welcome on Board the Ocean Decade!

The ocean is interconnected with a wide range of activities and disciplines, influencing the environment, economy, and well-being of billions of people around the world. Recognizing the integral role of the ocean is essential for fostering sustainable practices, addressing environmental challenges, and promoting responsible stewardship of this invaluable resource. If the ocean somehow fits into your field of activity or livelihood, you're at the right place: the Ocean Decade needs you and has something for you.

It is with great enthusiasm and a shared commitment to the sustainable stewardship of our ocean that we extend a warm welcome to all NGOs embarking on the transformative journey outlined in the Ocean Decade NGO Manual. As we collectively navigate the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, our collaborative efforts become the compass guiding us toward a future where our ocean thrives and contributes to the well-being of our planet and its inhabitants.

The Ocean Decade represents a pivotal moment in our shared history, calling upon us to collaborate, innovate, and mobilize resources in service of sustainable ocean science. It also calls for an equitable and more just distribution of benefits from conservation, that recognizes the enormous inputs provided by local communities, small scale fishers and Indigenous Peoples, amongst others, to the conservation of the ocean.

NGOs, as crucial agents of change, play a vital role in shaping the trajectory of this global initiative. We are hopeful that this Manual will serve as a guide for your organization to align with the objectives of the Ocean Decade and contribute meaningfully to its success.

Within these pages, you will find a strategic framework designed to help NGOs navigate the complexities of ocean knowledge, governance, sustainable development, and collaboration. The manual encourages introspection, identifies opportunities for partnerships, and provides a structured approach to project development and implementation. It is our hope that by following the suggestions provided in the Manual, NGOs will not only contribute to the overarching goals of the Ocean Decade, but also feel the call to foster a network of synergistic collaborations that transcend geographic boundaries and cultures.

As we embark on this collective journey, let us remember that the health of our ocean is intricately linked to the health of our planet. Through our combined efforts, we have the power to shape a legacy of sustainability and maintain resilience for future generations. This manual is a testament to the belief that each contribution, no matter how small, has the potential to create a ripple effect of positive change.

We extend our sincere gratitude to all participating NGOs for their dedication to the principles of the Ocean Decade. Together, let us harness the power of equity, fair relationships, inclusion, collaboration, and innovation to ensure a legacy of a vibrant thriving ocean for generations to come. It is our hope that NGOs can actively contribute to the goals of the Ocean Decade and play a crucial role in advancing sustainable ocean science for the benefit of present and future generations. We invite you to join in fostering the global momentum inspired by the Ocean Decade and contribute to the advancement of ocean science and ocean literacy on an international scale.

We thank the Ocean Decade NGO Task Group for their invaluable contributions to this manual. Their support and expertise provided during its creation have been instrumental in shaping a

comprehensive guide that will undoubtedly steer NGOs toward impactful contributions to the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. Their commitment to the shared vision of a sustainable future for our ocean has been evident throughout this collaborative endeavor. Their thoughtful insights, strategic guidance, and tireless efforts have enriched the manual, ensuring its alignment with the ambitious goals that UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), together with its many partners, set forth for the Decade. As we collectively embark on this journey to safeguard and enhance the health of our ocean, we are profoundly grateful for their leadership and guidance.

The Ocean Decade NGO Manual stands as a recognition statement, to the power of collaboration, equity, and collective action yet to be realized through the bonds of partnership and cooperation among stakeholders committed to the sustainable development of our ocean. We invite you to join us.

**Alison Clausen**, Deputy Global Coordinator of the Ocean Decade, Intergovernmental Commission of UNESCO (IOC/UNESCO)

**Teresa Kennedy**, Vice-President of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee, focal point for IOC/UNESCO

### III. Acknowledgements

This Manual is a joint initiative of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee and the Decade Coordination Unit within the secretariat of IOC/UNESCO. It has been prepared and reviewed by the Ocean Decade-NGO Task Group, composed of NGOs either already involved in the Ocean Decade (i.e. leading or participating in Decade Actions) or in official partnership with UNESCO. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the members of the task group:

- Alliance of National and International Science Organizations for the Belt and Road Regions (ANSO)-Prof. Diao Xinyuan, Prof. Wang Youshao, Prof. Li Lei, Prof. Wang Faming, Ms. Xu Shuwen
- Aqua-Farms Organization (AFO) – Mr. Cretus Mtonga
- Associação Tatauga Dive – Mr. Alexandre Silva
- CoopeSolidar R.L. – Ms. Vivienne Solis Rivera
- Estuarine and Coastal Studies Foundation – Prof. Sourav Paul
- Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) – Mr. Johann Durand
- International Association of Universities (IAU) – Prof. Hilligje van't Land
- International Council of Associations for Science Education (ICASE) – Prof. Teresa Kennedy
- International Pharmaceutical Students' Federation (IPSF) – Ms. Yifan Zhou
- Kelp Forest Foundation (KFF) – Ms. Samantha Deane
- Mahonia Na Dari – Mr. Somei Jonda
- MigraMar – Prof. Erick Ross Salazar
- New Humanity – Ms. Thalassia Giaccone
- Ocean and Climate Platform – Ms. Sarah Palazot
- Ocean World of Sound – Mr. Raymundo Santisteban
- Students on Ice (SOI) Foundation – Ms. Tara Mascarenhas
- Sustainability Literacy Test (SULITEST) of the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI) – Ms. Kathleen Ng
- Wildlife Conservation Society (WSC) – Ms. Maria Pamela Castillo

The **NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee** (LC) serves as a vital bridge between NGOs and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Established to facilitate communication, partnership, and collaboration, the LC fosters a dynamic exchange of ideas and resources between civil society and UNESCO.

The NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee actively supports the Ocean Decade by:

1. **Facilitating Dialogue:** Providing a platform for NGOs to engage in meaningful dialogue with UNESCO, sharing perspectives, and contributing insights to shape the global ocean science agenda.
2. **Promoting Collaboration:** Encouraging collaboration between NGOs, UNESCO, and other stakeholders to enhance the impact of initiatives addressing ocean-related challenges.
3. **Advocating for Ocean Conservation:** Acting as advocates for sustainable ocean practices, the committee amplifies the voice of NGOs in global discussions, ensuring that the Ocean Decade reflects the diverse needs and perspectives of civil society.
4. **Capacity Building:** Supporting capacity-building initiatives within NGOs and other rightsholders, resulting in effective ocean stewardship and conservation efforts, and enabling them to actively participate in and contribute to the goals of the Ocean Decade.

The LC collaborates closely with all sectors of UNESCO to broaden the focus of official Ocean Decade activities and international commemorations. For example, the 13<sup>th</sup> International Forum of NGO's in Official Partnership with UNESCO united the Ocean Decade with the Decade of Indigenous Languages, leveraging the extensive network of experts, scientists, and partners associated with both initiatives and fostering global cooperation through the lens of ocean science. The LC convenes international forums centered on themes related to education, science, and culture on an annual basis, as outlined by the International Conference of NGOs (ICNGO) held every two years at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France.

13<sup>th</sup> International Forum of NGOs in Official Partnership with UNESCO

## Mobilising NGOs for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages and the Ocean Decade

21–22 November 2022

Ottawa, Canada



### **NGOs and UNESCO: A Collaborative Force for Ocean Sustainability**

The collaboration between NGOs and UNESCO, facilitated by the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee, underscores the importance of collective action in achieving the objectives of the Ocean Decade. By leveraging the strengths of civil society and the expertise of UNESCO, this partnership enhances the effectiveness of initiatives aimed at understanding, preserving, and harnessing the potential of our ocean for sustainable development.

For more information on the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee please visit <https://ngo-unesco.net/>. Together we can make a lasting impact on the health and vitality of our shared ocean.

## IV. Introduction to the Ocean Decade

The United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), the ‘Ocean Decade’, is a global initiative that calls for collaborative efforts to advance ocean science for sustainable development.

The Ocean Decade Vision is: ‘The science we need for the ocean we want’. That is a clean, healthy and resilient, safe, productive, predicted, accessible and inspiring ocean that fully contributes to the achievement of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals established by the United Nations in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Ocean Decade adopts a solutions-oriented approach and provides a convening framework to foster partnerships and develop the scientific knowledge needed to catalyze transformative ocean science solutions for sustainable development, strengthening the connection of people and the ocean.

The Ocean Decade seeks to initiate a collective societal movement that links diverse stakeholders in sustainable development with the scientific community to collaboratively design and deliver science tailored to specific needs (fit-for-purpose science). These stakeholders include:

- National, subnational, and local governments;
- Science Institutions;
- NGOs;
- Local communities and Rights Holders;
- Private companies and investors;
- Philanthropies and investors;
- Educators and other professionals;
- UN Agencies and regional organizations;
- among others...

Throughout the Ocean Decade, partners will generate the necessary data, information, and knowledge to support more robust science-informed policies and stronger science-policy-society interfaces at global, regional, national, and local levels. Additionally, they will drive transformational change to effect progress across all geographic regions, genders, sectors, academic disciplines, and age groups.

The Ocean Decade also examines the primary challenges and emphasizes the critical need to ensure an equitable and just distribution of the benefits derived from marine conservation and sustainable utilization, particularly to Indigenous Peoples and Communities Rightsholders who have historically served as custodians of our shared ocean.

***TIP: Both dimensions of the Ocean Decade – co-designing ocean science to contribute to sustainable development goals and strengthening the connection between people and the ocean – can be a good fit for NGOs.***

## 10 priority Challenges to move from the Ocean we have to the Ocean we want

To structure action and progress toward the ocean we want, 10 Ocean Decade Challenges have been identified which articulate the most immediate priorities for the Ocean Decade:

	<b>Challenge 1</b> Understand and beat marine pollution		<b>Challenge 2</b> Protect and restore ecosystems and biodiversity
	<b>Challenge 3</b> Sustainably feed the global population		<b>Challenge 4</b> Develop a sustainable and equitable ocean economy
	<b>Challenge 5</b> Unlock ocean-based solutions to climate change		<b>Challenge 6</b> Increase community resilience to ocean hazards
	<b>Challenge 7</b> Expand the Global Ocean Observing System		<b>Challenge 8</b> Create a digital representation of the ocean
	<b>Challenge 9</b> Skills, knowledge and technology for all		<b>Challenge 10</b> Change humanity's relationship with the ocean

In preparation of the 2024 Ocean Decade Conference, a comprehensive strategic planning effort known as [Vision 2030](#) has been initiated across the Decade to establish a unified framework for measuring success in addressing each of the Ocean Decade Challenges.

Ten White Papers, one dedicated to each Challenge, have been developed through several months of collaborative effort initiated in early 2023. These papers present a thorough and forward-thinking strategic vision, addressing user requirements, essential datasets, residual gaps in scientific knowledge, as well as incorporating scientific and traditional wisdom. They also outline the necessary resources, infrastructure, partnerships, capacity building initiatives, technological solutions, and infrastructure needed for each Challenge to be effectively addressed by 2030.

## Ocean Decade Actions

Central to the Ocean Decade are the Decade Actions, which encompass concrete initiatives undertaken globally throughout the Decade to realize “the science we need for the ocean we want.” These actions represent voluntary contributions from a diverse array of stakeholders, extending beyond science institutions to include NGOs, private sector entities, intergovernmental or regional organizations,



educators, local or national governments, as well as Indigenous Peoples and local communities, recognized as crucial stewards of oceanic and marine environments.

*TIP: Everybody can take part in the Ocean Decade and submit a Decade Action. Decade Actions that are co-designed by diverse and international partners are highly valuable.*

Hundreds of Decade Actions are being implemented globally today, with many more expected over the next years.

Decade Actions are categorized based on their scale. Regardless of your ambition, resources, or scope, there is an opportunity for engagement.

**Decade Activities** are standalone initiatives such as one-time events, webinars, conferences, workshops, publications, and occasionally, creative endeavors such as poster competitions and the production of commemorative postal stamps. Events typically span from 1 to 28 days, while other *Activities* may extend up to one year. Additionally, *Activities* can include published works, such as on-going publications, that do not have a specified end date.

*TIP: Utilize the [Ocean Decade Network](#) to propose an Activity idea for official endorsement at any time, integrating it into the global efforts underway aimed at shaping the ocean we envision.*

To be officially endorsed, *Activities* only need to show how they contribute to the Decade Challenges or to specific Programmes, Projects, or Contributions. Access the Guidance Note for Applicants [here](#).

Programmes, Projects, and Contributions offer the opportunity for a stronger impact in the Ocean Decade.

**Programmes** are large-scale initiatives implemented at the global or regional scale and will contribute to the achievement of one or more of the Ocean Decade Challenges. They will be long-term, multi-year, and typically interdisciplinary and multi-national. They should be comprised of component projects, which may or may not be fully or partially defined at the time of endorsement.

**Projects** are discrete and focused undertakings. They may be regional, national, or subnational and will typically contribute to an identified Ocean Decade Programme.

Decade Actions are solicited by the Ocean Decade Coordination Unit through semi-annual Calls for Decade Actions, launched every 15 April and 15 October.

These calls usually have a thematic or regional focus, based on gaps that are identified in the Ocean Decade and priorities that are set collectively. The Calls for Decade Actions can also provide some opportunities for support.

For example, the [Call for Decade Actions No. 06/2023](#), included a new process to facilitate and support participation by teams from Africa and Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS), a distinct group of 39 States and 18 Associate Members of the United Nations regional commissions that face

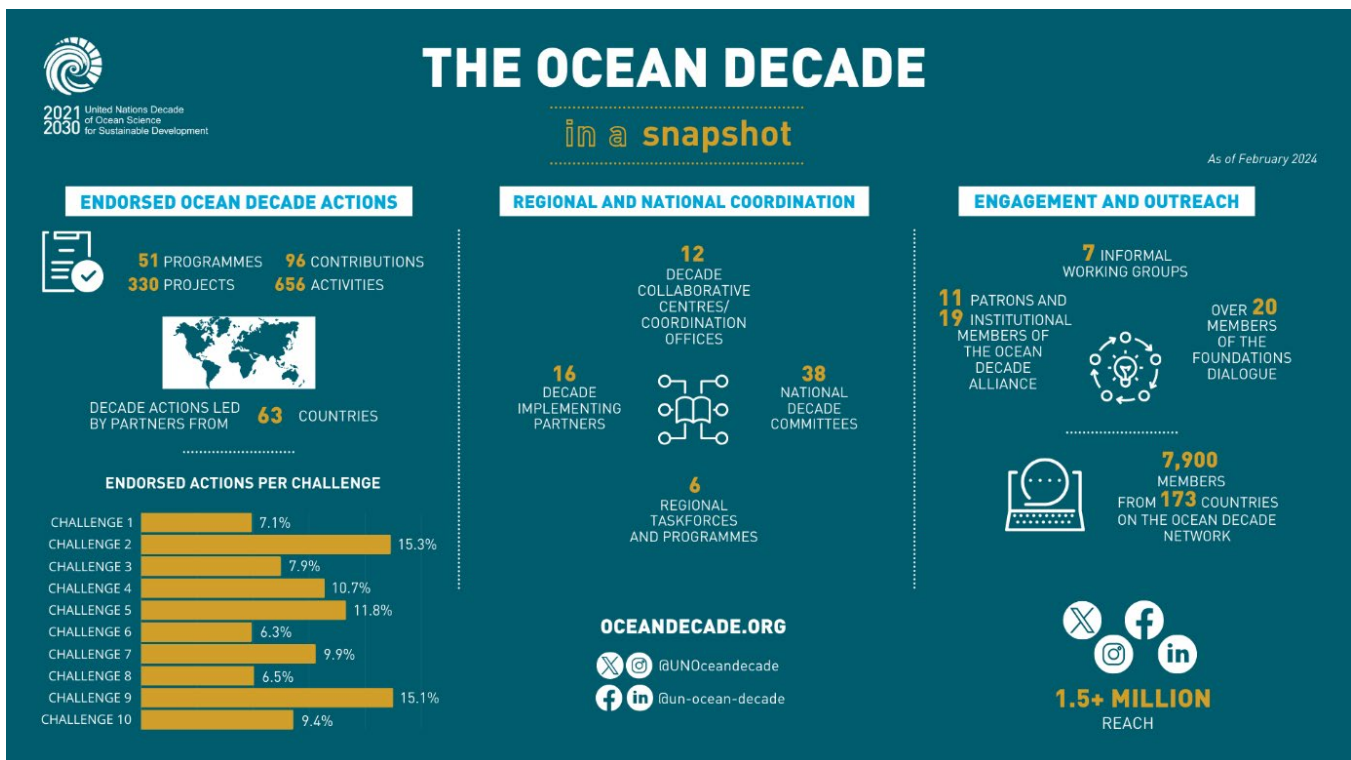
unique social, economic, and environmental vulnerabilities, with a robust idea that is well aligned with the Ocean Decade Challenges and regional priorities, although not fully structured. Teams, including NGOs, could apply for support to co-design a fully developed Decade Action. Successful applicants would be trained and accompanied to submit their developed idea for endorsement under Call for Decade Actions no. 7 in May 2024.

**TIP: Make sure you check the [Calls for Decade Actions](#) that are launched every 15 April and 15 October, to determine how your activities could fit and how your NGO could benefit from some assistance to develop a Decade Action.**

**For more information and to submit a Decade Action, please join the Ocean Decade Network and Take Action!**

**A last category, Contributions,** encompasses in-kind or financial contributions to the coordination functions of the Decade or to Decade Actions. This includes Decade Collaborative Centers or Decade Implementing Partners. Contributions are accepted on a rolling basis, at any time.

Detailed guidance on Contributions can be found [here](#).



The **endorsement criteria** for all Decade Actions represent a set of ideals that endorsed initiatives are expected to uphold and advance throughout the Ocean Decade. While not every criterion needs to be addressed, proponents are required to briefly describe how the proposed initiative aligns with the relevant criteria.

Proposed Actions should:

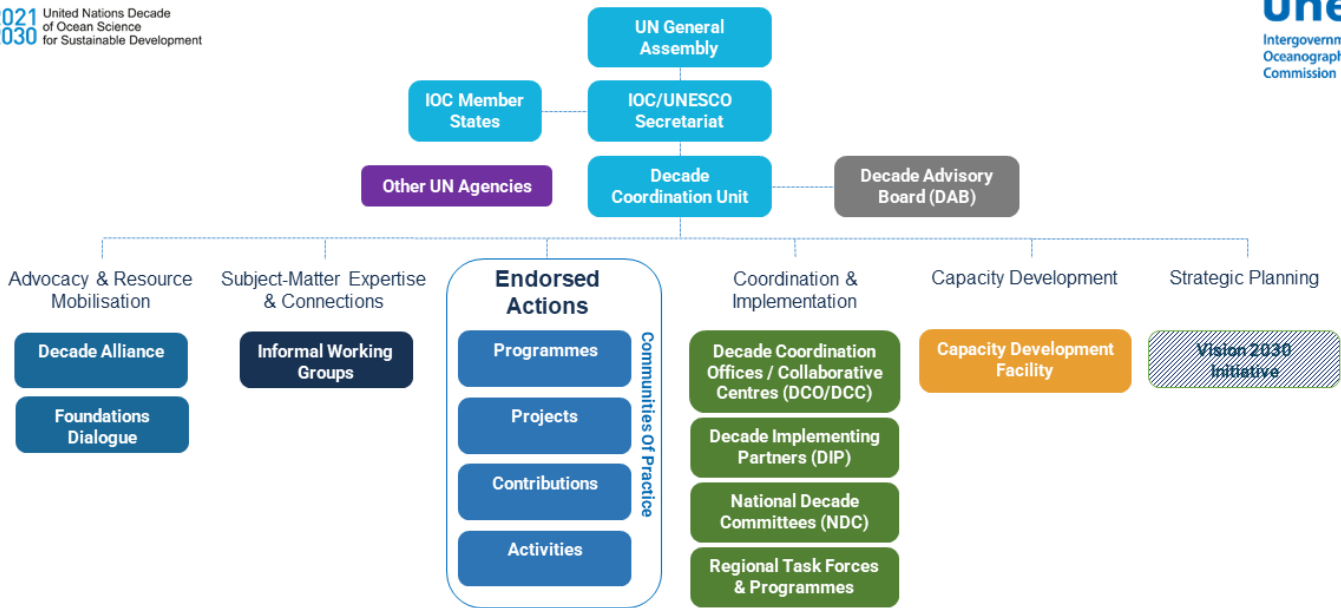
- i. Contribute to achieving one or more of the following Decade objectives: Objective 1: Identify critical ocean knowledge; Objective 2: Build capacity and generate knowledge; Objective 3: Increase the use of ocean knowledge.
- ii. Accelerate the generation or use of knowledge and understanding of the ocean, with a specific focus on knowledge that will contribute to the achievement of the SDGs and complementary policy frameworks and initiatives.
- iii. Be co-designed and/or co-delivered by knowledge generators and users, and thus facilitate the uptake of science and ocean knowledge for policy, decision-making, management and/or innovation.
- iv. Ensure that all data and resulting knowledge are provided in an open-access, shared, and discoverable manner.
- v. Strengthen existing partnerships or create new partnerships across nations and/or between diverse ocean actors, including users of ocean science.
- vi. Contribute toward capacity development, including, but not limited to, beneficiaries in Small Island Developing State (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs).
- vii. Overcome barriers to diversity and equity, including gender, generational, and geographic diversity.
- viii. Collaborate with and engage local and indigenous knowledge holders.

### The Ocean Decade coordination framework: Succeeding together!

The UN General Assembly mandated [UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission \(IOC/UNESCO\)](#), the UN body responsible for supporting global ocean science, to coordinate the preparations and implementation of the Ocean Decade.

Within the IOC Secretariat, the Decade Coordination Unit is the central structure in charge of the development and coordination of the Ocean Decade: running Calls for Decade Actions, catalyzing decentralized coordination structures (see below) and other initiatives to support Decade Actions, facilitating connections between Decade Actions with resource providers, and coordinating communication and engagement activities for and between key stakeholder groups, reporting on the Ocean Decade and setting priorities, among other directives.

A [Decade Advisory Board](#) provides strategic advice on the implementation of the Ocean Decade. The 15 experts selected by the IOC/UNESCO for the period 2024-2025, hailing from over a dozen countries, come from government, private sector, philanthropy, civil society, as well as the scientific community.



The Ocean Decade Implementation framework.

The Decade Coordination Unit is complemented by [decentralized coordination structures](#), including those hosted by UN agencies, national governments, international or regional organizations, or other partners.

[National Decade Committees](#) (NDCs) are voluntary, inclusive, multi-agency and multi-stakeholder platforms set up to coordinate, support and increase their country’s participation in the Ocean Decade by mobilizing the whole “ocean community” at the national level (i.e., all producers and users of ocean science).

National Decade Committees strengthen the critical connection between local actors and the global Ocean Decade community. They share the invitation to participate in the Ocean Decade, support and connect the different stakeholders and initiatives, and enhance access to Decade benefits, such as data, products, science-policy advice, or capacity development opportunities. They also facilitate processes to articulate the global challenges and priorities of the Ocean Decade in the development of national policies, strategies, and priorities.

38 countries have established a National Decade Committee (as of April 2024).



**TIP:** *If your country has created a National Decade Committee, it's a great entry point to the Ocean Decade. It can provide a wealth of information on the opportunities and processes of the Ocean Decade and can also help your NGO team with national partners. Your NGO might even volunteer to join the NDC and mobilize its network to better develop your country's participation!*

**Decade Collaborative Centers (DCC) and Decade Coordination Offices (DCO)** are decentralized coordination structures hosted respectively by an international or major regional non-UN organization, or an established UN-organization. They provide technical support to the Decade Coordination Unit by catalyzing and coordinating Decade Actions at a regional or thematic level (i.e., in relation to specific Decade Challenges).

Thematic coordination

Ocean Observing IOC-GOOS	Ocean & Climate Nexus First Institute of Oceanography
Ocean Data Sharing IOC-IODE	Ocean-Climate Solutions and Innovation Ocean Visions
Ocean Prediction Mercator Ocean International	Coastal Resilience University of Bologna
Connecting people and the ocean IOC-Venice	Sustainable Ocean Economy being scoped

Regional coordination

Northeast Pacific Tula Foundation	Pacific Islands Region The Pacific Community
Western Pacific IOC-WESTPAC	Southern Ocean Region SCAR
Indian Ocean Region INCOIS	Arctic region being scoped
Africa being scoped	Caribbean being scoped

Regional DCCs and DCOs serve as valuable resources for staying informed about regional developments and identifying potential partners, particularly (but not exclusively) if a National Decade Committee is not available.

Thematic DCCs and DCOs contribute to the coordination of Decade Actions addressing a given Decade Challenge and foster new partnerships and Actions across the Decade Challenges. They develop a precise understanding of how Decade Actions combine to increase knowledge in this area and identify where the gaps are.

***TIP: DCCs and DCOs organize events, distribute a newsletter, and share information through social media. Check which ones, regional or thematic, are relevant for your NGO's work and get in touch.***

### Co-designing transformative ocean science

The Ocean Decade calls for 'transformative science' and a 'revolution in how that science is produced, used and disseminated.'

To change the current trajectory of ocean decline – 'the ocean we have' – and bring us towards a thriving and sustainable ocean – 'the ocean we want' – by 2030, transformative science, in the context of the Ocean Decade, has the following characteristics:

- It is co-designed and co-delivered in a multi-stakeholder environment to be relevant and responsive across the entire value-chain, from knowledge generation to applications and services to use of science for solutions.
- It is solutions-focused and contributes to a wide variety of potential solutions including policy, decision-making, management or governance frameworks, or technology development and innovation.
- Where needed, it is ambitious, visionary, forward-thinking, and encompasses diverse geographical regions.
- It spans across disciplines and actively incorporates both natural and social science fields.
- It embraces local and indigenous knowledge as a key knowledge source.
- It strives for generational, gender, and geographic diversity in all its manifestations.
- It is communicated in formats that are universally comprehensible and inspires enthusiasm about the ocean leading to behavioral shifts.
- It is openly shared and accessible for reuse.

***TIP: The Ocean Decade needs YOUR NGO (and your NGO probably need the Ocean Decade)!***

***Your NGO's experience in the field is invaluable in identifying the needs of communities and the various stakeholders involved and helping to co-create and implement relevant solutions.***

For more information:

- ✓ The Ocean Decade website <https://oceandecade.org/>
- ✓ The Ocean Decade Forum <https://forum.oceandecade.org>
- ✓ [Ocean Decade Implementation Plan summary](#)
- ✓ [Ocean Decade Progress Report, July 2022 - June 2023](#)
- ✓ [Co-designing the science we need for the ocean we want](#)
- ✓ [Best practice manual for National Decade Committees](#)

## V. Getting Started

### 1) *Get prepared*

- ✓ Become acquainted with the Ocean Decade by joining the [Ocean Decade Network](#) and subscribing to the [Ocean Decade Newsletter](#).
- ✓ Make contact with your [National Decade Committee](#) (if there is one), or by default the relevant regional [Decade Collaborative Centre or Decade Coordination Office](#) to learn about what's happening in your country.
- ✓ Define what your NGO would like to focus on, and learn about what's already happening in the Ocean Decade in this area by looking at the endorsed [Decade Actions](#) and discussing ideas with the relevant [Decade Collaborative Centre or Decade Coordination Office](#).
- ✓ Don't hesitate to reach out to other NGOs or existing Decade Actions in the region/sector. Discuss with endorsed Actions how your NGO could work with them or complement their work through a new Decade Action.
- ✓ Review the current opportunities available to [take action in](#) and check what category of Decade Action might be suitable for your NGO, depending on the size and resources of your NGO (Activity, Project or Programme – see section I).
  - NGOs can start small and submit a [Decade Activity](#) at any time, or
  - Identify a Decade Programme that might be interested in expanding their current initiative(s) or developing a new initiative, and discuss with this Programme how to best submit a collaborative Project in the next Call for Decade Action.

***TIP: You can find other NGOs already involved in the Ocean Decade by using the Ocean Decade Network and looking either at the Institution directory, or at the [Member directory](#) and filtering for NGO as the stakeholder group or partner in a Decade Action.***

### 2) *Find the appropriate partners and build your proposal*

- ✓ Discuss with the NDC, DCC, DCO and/or Programme if they have heard of a group of stakeholders already planning to submit a Decade Action, or how they can support your NGO in finding relevant partners to initiate and [co-design](#) a Decade Action.
- ✓ [Search](#) the Ocean Decade Network, look for [events](#), browse the [Forum](#) or even start a new discussion, to introduce your NGO and explain clearly what you're involved in and what kind of partner or support you're looking for.
- ✓ The Ocean Decade might provide specific support for co-design. For example, the [Call for Decade Actions n°6/2023](#) introduced a new opportunity for entities based in Africa and

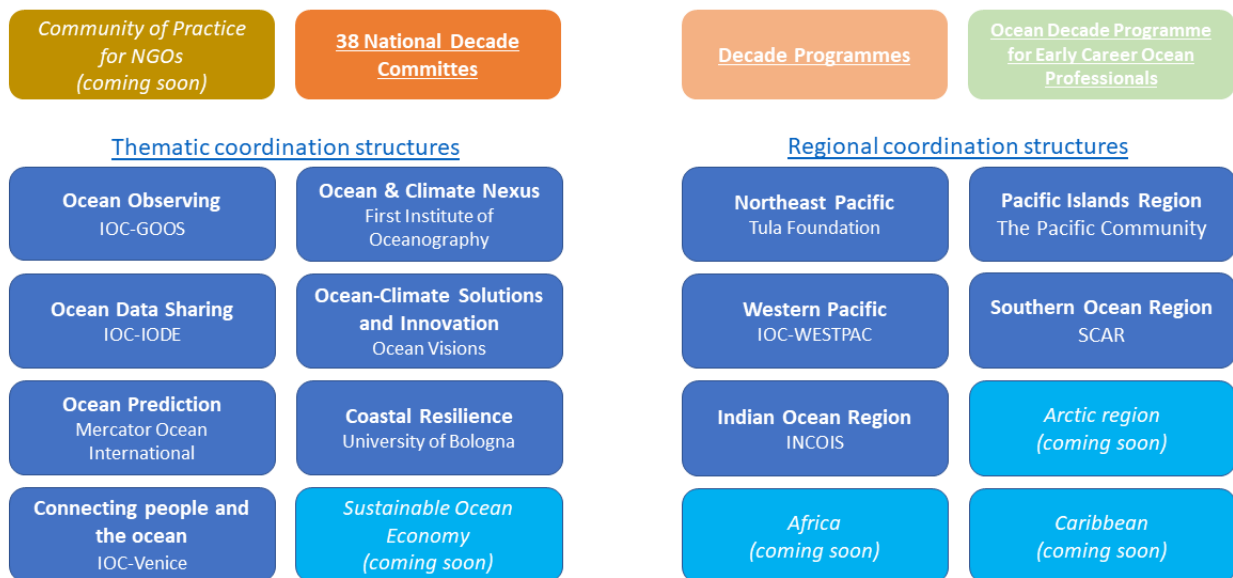
## Draft Document rev. 9 – 04/05/2024

Caribbean SIDS to submit a rough idea for a Decade Action and get training and support to co-design a precise and robust Decade Action (see page 11).

**TIP: IOC/UNESCO highly values diversity in the partners of Decade Actions, including youth organizations, Early Career Ocean Professionals, Indigenous People and Local Communities. Don't hesitate to engage as early as possible with the relevant partners to co-design your Action right from the start.**

**Join the Ocean Decade Network to connect with the Ocean Decade community**

<https://forum.oceandecade.org/>



Useful entry points in the Ocean Decade for NGOs.



## VI. Diverse Opportunities for NGOs

### All NGOs play a critical role in the Ocean Decade

The Ocean Decade Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) bring diverse experience, grassroots connections, and commitment to environmental stewardship, contributing significantly to advancing the goals of the Decade.

NGOs act as critical intermediaries, bridging the gap between scientific research and community engagement, and translating complex scientific finding into actionable strategies, ensuring that local communities, policymakers, and other stakeholders comprehend the importance of sustainable ocean practices.

As active contributors to scientific research, policy, advocacy, and community empowerment, NGO's form an integral part of the collaborative effort needed to achieve the Ocean Decade's ambitious objectives. They serve as catalysts for innovation and collaboration. Through their agility and responsiveness, NGOs leverage partnerships with academia, industry, and governments, bringing a wealth of local knowledge to the table and building a shared sense of responsibility for the health and well-being of our ocean. The Ocean Decade benefits from the inclusive and participatory nature of NGO involvement which fosters a dynamic and holistic approach to addressing issues related to marine conservation, sustainable resource management, and climate change resilience.

***TIP: Contribute to increasing the Ocean Decade's impact, serving people and communities***

There are various opportunities for NGOs to actively participate in the Ocean Decade, fostering a collective effort toward advancing sustainable ocean science and development, even beyond marine conservation, sustainable resource management, or climate resilience. The key is to identify the intersections between the work of your NGO and the objectives of the Ocean Decade.

### Wherever you start from, there's a space for you in the Ocean Decade

Whatever the size, resources, and core activities of your NGO, you will find many reasons and opportunities to engage in the Ocean Decade and strengthen connections to ocean science. These include:

- Grassroots action with local communities;
- Ocean Literacy, Science Literacy, Environmental Education;
- Advocacy at local, national, regional, or global scales;
- Youth organizations;
- Network of NGOs and organizations;
- among others...

If your NGO already has a significant focus on the Ocean, the Ocean Decade is a great opportunity to strengthen the scientific background, visibility, and legitimacy of established activities.

Access state-of-the-art knowledge from around the world, work with scientific institutions to adapt knowledge to the needs of your NGO's community and networks, co-design new knowledge products,

and develop partnerships with local scientific institutions to build a close and personal connection with Ocean Science.

If your NGO doesn't yet focus on the ocean but is contributing to sustainable development, the Ocean Decade is certainly a great opportunity to learn more about the connections between the ocean and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and devote more attention to the ocean in your activities.

Even in landlocked countries and places, the remote connection to the ocean is significant, and NGOs and other stakeholders have their place in the Ocean Decade.

Congratulations if you're already well connected with science and involved in the co-design and co-creation of knowledge, for example through citizen science or indigenous and local knowledge.

If not, then the Ocean Decade is a good opportunity to initiate or strengthen your relationship with ocean science and your grassroots connections and proximity with communities with be extremely valuable.

In particular, we welcome NGOs that are working with Indigenous Peoples and Community Rights Holders.

***TIP: Whatever the current focus of your NGO, close to or far from ocean matters or science, the Ocean Decade provides inspiration and knowledge that will support your NGO's commitment to sustainable development.***

Decade Actions are very diverse in size, nature, and resources required. Here are a few examples:

- Communications contribute to the global visibility of the Ocean Decade, ocean science and ocean literacy. Your NGO can use communications assets and outreach materials developed during the Ocean Decade and translate and tailor them to fit your specific audience(s).
- Decade Activities can be one off events, exhibitions, conferences, and/or workshops that initiate partnerships and more ambitious actions.
- Decade Projects are large, international, and multi-stakeholder endeavors. They are hosted by Decade Programmes and can benefit from their assistance, as well as from the coordination and support of the Decade coordination structures. The Ocean Decade coordination structures can facilitate access to partners that can share their know-how and products, inspire the members of your NGO and the communities you serve, as well as develop and complement skill sets.
- Decade Programmes are the largest, most ambitious actions. As they usually have many participants, you won't be alone!

***TIP: There's always an option to start small and develop your NGO's ambition and capacity over time.***

## Opportunities to get involved

The Ocean Decade welcomes collaborative research endeavors as well as community-driven initiatives. Examples include:

### ***Research Collaboration, Advocacy and Ocean Literacy***

Forging partnerships between scientific institutions, universities, and NGOs involved in ocean-related research enhances interdisciplinary linkages within ocean science and promotes the exchange of valuable data that increases scientific understanding of ocean ecosystems, marine life, and the impact of human activities on the ocean. It also contributes to environmental monitoring, biodiversity conservation, resource management, climate studies, disaster preparedness, and policy formation. These collaborations not only benefit researchers but also extend to primary and secondary school students through genuine examples and experiences that facilitate the younger generation to become well-informed citizens, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation for ocean science.

### ***People and the Ocean***

***TIP: The Ocean Decade aims to support the implementation of numerous SDGs. NGOs can play a role in leveraging ocean knowledge to promote equity and a human rights-based approach to ocean conservation and sustainable development.***

NGOs naturally play a vital role in fostering an integrated/holistic approach to the ocean and its interaction with people by connecting ocean knowledge and activities with the coast and land. For example, inspired by Ridge-to-reef or “whole of islands” approaches, centering social justice and equity in ocean science and activities promotes under-represented and vulnerable groups and supports just transitions (e.g. of fishermen and aquaculture, communities harvesting mangroves, coastal relocation, etc.).

Recognizing and acknowledging the significant contribution made by Indigenous peoples, local communities, small scale fishers, and others to the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean, it is imperative to advance the implementation of a human rights-based approach for marine conservation. For instance, the implementation of initiatives such as the Voluntary Guidelines for the Sustainability of Small-Scale Fisheries in the context of food security and poverty eradication exemplifies this commitment.

Promoting ocean literacy through advocacy and education raises community awareness about the interconnectedness of the ocean with broader societal challenges.

- NGOs focused on diverse causes such as human rights-based approaches in conservation, poverty alleviation, and health can include ocean-related issues into their activities by adopting an integrated and sustainable approach to address climate change impacts, sustainable livelihoods, contribute to public health, enhance overall disaster resilience, and highlight the intricate linkages between social, economic, and environmental well-being.
- NGOs involved in community development or social issues can engage local communities in activities such as workshops, seminars, and community events that educate residents and

promote ocean literacy and sustainable practices. This engagement fosters a sense of responsibility and connection to local marine environments resulting in a culture that is more likely to adopt sustainable practices and contribute to the conservation of marine ecosystems.

- NGOs involved in language learning, storytelling, and local knowledge sharing integrate local wisdom into conservation efforts strengthening community bonds and enriching environmental understanding inside as well as outside of their local communities.
- NGOs involved in artistic and cultural activities can highlight the significance of the ocean, fostering community pride and connection since artistic expression can be a powerful tool for instilling a sense of appreciation and stewardship.
- NGOs involved in eco-friendly tourism or responsible outdoor enterprises such as wildlife observation, fishing, and community clean-up initiatives can provide tours that emphasize the importance of ocean ecosystems, marine biodiversity, and the impact of human activities. Educated tourists are more likely to appreciate and actively support conservation efforts through positive educational experiences as well as become ambassadors for ocean conservation.
- NGOs involved in community gardens and coastal restoration activities involve residents in environmental conservation and provide hands-on involvement in fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility for the local environment.

These advocacy efforts build awareness and knowledge about ocean health through the lens of both social and environmental dimensions which often lead to policy development. By integrating ocean-related issues into their activities, NGOs can contribute to the achievement of broader sustainable development goals and create a more resilient and interconnected approach to addressing global challenges. By enhancing understanding and fostering a sense of stewardship toward the ocean, NGOs contribute to the creation of resilient, informed, and engaged communities that actively promote and participate in the sustainable management of their local environment. This in turn, ensures the long-term health and vitality of marine ecosystems and benefits both the communities themselves as well as the broader global environment.

***TIP: The Ocean Decade is not limited to what’s happening in the Ocean. In fact, the long-term health of the Ocean and of the Planet is inseparable from broader societal challenges.***

Co-design plays a pivotal role within the Ocean Decade framework, emphasizing collaborative approaches to problem-solving and initiative development. In this regard, NGOs hold significant potential to contribute substantially. The 2021 IOC publication entitled “[Co-designing the Science We Need for the Ocean We Want: Guidance and Recommendations for Collaborative Approaches to Decade Actions](#)” stands as a cornerstone resource in this endeavour. Compiled from insights gleaned during a series of global and regional webinars convened in late 2020, this publication offers comprehensive recommendations tailored for stakeholders and NGOs alike, along with other community members. By adhering to these recommendations, stakeholders and NGOs can effectively engage in the co-design process, thereby advancing the Ocean Decade’s overarching vision.

Additional examples of potential NGO involvement are outlined below.

- Research and innovation:
  - Research projects, including conservation research.

- Leading or supporting innovative ocean-based activities (e.g. kelp forest aquaculture)
- Networks of experimental science, pilot testing and experience sharing
- Multi-disciplinary projects (better inclusion of social and human sciences, working with behavioral sciences and psychology, historical knowledge and memory, etc.)
- Contributing to diversity and inclusivity:
  - Promoting the principles of [Open Science](#)
  - Connection with local communities (e.g. small scale fishers)
  - Indigenous and Local Knowledge
  - Implementing principles such as [Free, prior and informed consent \(FPIC\)](#)
  - Citizen science
  - Working with ECOPs and youth (including youth-led initiatives)
- Uptake of ocean science
  - Facilitating appropriation of knowledge and solutions by individuals, communities, and decision makers
  - Improving the “Connection with the Ocean” and catalyzing behavioral change
  - Ocean Literacy, including formal education and informal outreach activities
  - Blending indigenous and local knowledge with science
  - Innovation in communication and information tools (e.g. virtual reality, serious games, etc.)
  - Science-based advocacy activities
  - Expanding International networks
  - Showcase local projects and collaborations within regional and international networks

In addition to providing guidance and recommendations for collaborative approaches of engagement, the Ocean Decade offers numerous opportunities for NGOs to actively participate in established initiatives and contribute to the Decade’s objectives. Below are some examples highlighting how NGOs can become involved, demonstrating diverse ways in which they can play a vital role in advancing ocean conservation and sustainable development efforts.

### **Example 1: Promoting Policy Development**

Led by the Ocean & Climate Platform, [Sea’ties](#) is a Decade Project aimed at facilitating the development of public policies and the implementation of adaptation solutions to support coastal cities threatened by sea level rise. Its activities are structured around 3 main objectives:

- 1) Collect and disseminate knowledge on coastal cities’ adaptation;
- 2) Sharing experiences among scientists, elected officials, urban planners and all stakeholders involved in coastal adaptation;
- 3) Support political action in favour of adaptation at local, national, and international scales.

In line with this, Sea'ties organises regional workshops in Northern Europe, the Mediterranean, the U.S. West Coast, West Africa and the Pacific, bringing together a diversity of stakeholders to identify local issues, share experiences and reflect on recommendations to better prepare coastal cities for adaptation.

Drawing upon the expertise of more than 230 practitioners convened during these workshops, and backed by the support of 80 organisations globally, Sea'ties has published a comprehensive series of [“Policy Recommendations to Coastal Cities for Adapting to Sea Level Rise.”](#) These recommendations, centred around Solutions, Social Justice, Knowledge, and Finance, are intended for local, national,

regional, and international decision-makers. In addition, their White Paper, entitled “[Investment Protocol: Unlocking Financial Flows for Coastal Adaptation to Climate Change and Resilience Building](#)” provides a summary of funding and financing options and mechanisms, as well as a mapping of the key stakeholders to involve. Sea’ties Regional Reports summarize challenges and share recommendations and leading practices.

Sea’ties, as part of the Ocean Decade Programme Global Ecosystem for Ocean Solutions (GEOS), has gained prominence within the expert community. The initiative has successfully leveraged its association with the Decade Programme to connect with leading scientists, organisations, and projects globally. This collaboration has been instrumental in shaping Sea’ties' activities and policy recommendations, ensuring a robust and informed approach to coastal adaptation.

Sea’ties strives to resolve difficulties that exist in connecting with certain knowledge systems (e.g., ILK), geographies, and types of actors (e.g., under-served communities and minorities, Indigenous Communities) due to multiple barriers (lack of resources, information, visibility) that impede access to this global network. To facilitate trans-disciplinary work across existing silos, Sea’ties hopes that NGOs and organizations (e.g., women’s associations), social science (e.g., behavioral sciences), and stakeholders (e.g., architects, businesses) not directly involved in ocean issues will become increasingly involved in the Ocean Decade.

### Example 2: Transforming Lives, Transforming the Sea



TransforMAR, an endorsed Decade Project conceived by Tatauga Dive Association and supported by the Sustainable Ocean Alliance, is an innovative approach to environmental education. It provides education about marine environments to young people from disadvantaged communities through scuba diving.

Being recognized as a project aligned with the Ocean Decade, TransforMAR gains additional credibility, becoming a powerful tool to raise awareness about the importance of ocean preservation. Through this organization, Tatauga Dive Association has established significant strategic alliances, such as collaboration with ICMBio Alcatrazes, a Brazilian governmental agency, which enabled joint work with coastal communities and traditional communities to strengthen awareness of marine conservation. Through educational initiatives and preservation practices, TransforMAR Project and ICMBio Alcatrazes have contributed to the restoration of vital marine ecosystems, such as coral reefs, with the primary goal of empowering Traditional Peoples with a "sense of ownership" over a protected marine area so that the local population becomes the main ally in managing the marine protected area.

The Ocean Decade provides an enabling environment for networking and collaboration among NGOs and researchers worldwide, notably through the Ocean Decade Network. Tatauga Dive Association has greatly benefited from and contributed to this global contact, establishing partnerships with other organizations from various parts of the planet. Today, the TransforMAR Project can generate and share data with researchers and NGOs worldwide, in addition to sharing experiences so that we can learn more, enrich preservation initiatives, and expand its impact. Tatauga Dive Association's expertise in diving and frequent contact with the sea can now be used in partnership by researchers and NGOs to produce a low-cost, globally sourced knowledge base. Only through cooperation among NGOs,

research institutions, researchers, local communities, and Traditional Peoples can we move towards building "the science we need for the ocean we want."

Finally, the recognition and media coverage associated with the Ocean Decade have increased the visibility of the TransforMAR project's initiatives, helping to raise awareness and mobilize support for its causes. Therefore, by actively participating in the Ocean Decade, non-governmental organizations can not only strengthen their preservation efforts but also significantly contribute to broader goals of marine conservation globally. For more information, see [Tatauga | Educação Ambiental | Brasil \(tataugadive.com.br\)](http://tataugadive.com.br)

### **Example 3: International Collaborations building Blue Carbon Ecosystems**

The Alliance of National and International Science Organizations for the Belt and Road Regions (ANSO) has initiated and supported several collaborative research projects addressing Ocean Decade challenges. One of their collaborative research projects brings together stakeholders in China, Nigeria, and Sri Lanka to focus on the conservation and restoration of blue carbon ecosystems as a nature-based climate solution, including mangrove ecology, geospatial techniques, social and economic science, mangrove restoration, training workshops, and community activities.

ANSO, in collaboration with the Institute of Oceanology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (IOCAS), also co-sponsored a joint scientific survey in the West Pacific Ocean that led to the endorsed Decade Project *Health of Ocean under Multiple Ecosystem Stressors (HOMES): Sustainability of the Maritime Continent*.

ANSO has promoted cooperation among its member countries on marine microplastic pollution, the threat it poses to ecosystems and biodiversity and its impact on health. For example, the Institute of Oceanology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the Marine Research Center of the Indonesian Academy of Sciences, the University of the Philippines, the University of Papua New Guinea, and other scientific research institutions, carried out a joint scientific expedition entitled "Coral Triangle" to systematically investigate the current distribution status and types of Marine microplastic pollution in the region to reveal the potential impact of microplastics on the biosafety of Marine fish and shellfish and provide a theoretical basis for ensuring food and biosafety in neighbouring countries. Microorganisms that effectively degrade common plastics are screened to obtain "enzyme weapons" with high degradation activity to reduce plastic and provide technical support and countermeasures for the prevention and control of microplastic pollution in the "Coral Triangle." These projects serve as examples of potentially replicable initiatives that NGOs could become involved in to address similar issues in other regions around the world.

Of particular importance, following UNESCO's Recommendation on Open Science, ANSO encourages and supports data sharing under the ANSO platform. The ocean data collected under the support of ANSO is shared on the ANSO database supported by IOCAS (<http://english.casodc.com/>).

### **Example 4: Advancing International Oceanographic Research and Data Sharing**

The Global Ocean Ship-based Hydrographic Investigations Program (GO-SHIP) is an international program investigating long-term (decadal) changes in ocean heat content, carbon uptake, acidification, circulation, and other parameters throughout the global ocean. Ten nations contribute ship time to this effort, and 15 nations are represented on the scientific committee. [GO-SHIP Evolve](#),

an endorsed initiative of the Ocean Decade, enhances the collection of biological and ecosystem data revealing trends and variability in crucial indicators of ocean health.

GO-SHIP is a part of the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) sponsored by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment), and the International Science Council (ISC), and is a major contributor to the World Climate Research Program's (WCRP) Climate Variability and Predictability Experiment (CLIVAR) and the International Ocean Carbon Coordination Project. Addressing Ocean Decade Challenges 7 (*Expand the Global Ocean Observing System*) and 8 (*Create a digital representation of the ocean*), GO-SHIP contributes to global monitoring, mapping, and identification of observational gaps throughout the global ocean by conducting comprehensive water column measurements along designated hydrographic transects across the world's ocean to investigate temporal changes in physical and hydrographic conditions. GO-SHIP cruises routinely provide training and capacity building opportunities for oceanography students and early career ocean professionals (ECOPs), uniting scientists, organizations, and projects globally.

NGOs benefit from access to valuable data, opportunities for collaboration and capacity building, and the ability to contribute to global efforts to understand and address ocean-related challenges. Through advocacy and outreach, expertise and capacity building, and data utilization and innovation, NGOs can contribute to ocean literacy on a global scale, while leveraging diverse expertise, resources, and networks, fostering collaborative solutions, and maximizing impact on pressing global challenges.

- **Advocacy and Outreach:** By aligning with GO-SHIP, NGOs can amplify the program's message and promote the importance of long-term ocean monitoring efforts. This advocacy can help secure public and political support for continued funding and expansion of GO-SHIP partnerships as well as similar programs around the world.
- **Expertise and Capacity Building:** Many NGOs have expertise in specific areas relevant to ocean research, such as marine conservation, climate policy, or community engagement. By collaborating with GO-SHIP, NGOs can contribute their knowledge and skills to enhance the program's impact. NGOs can also support capacity building efforts by providing training opportunities that include GO-SHIP data and research summaries for scientists, technicians, and students from diverse backgrounds.
- **Data Utilization and Innovation:** NGOs often work on projects that require access to high-quality data and scientific expertise. Through GO-SHIP, NGOs gain access to valuable oceanographic data collected during cruises. These data can support NGOs' research, modeling efforts, and policy advocacy initiatives. Additionally, NGOs can help identify innovative ways to use and visualize GO-SHIP data to communicate scientific findings to a broader audience, expanding global priorities related to developing ocean literacy in primary, secondary and tertiary educational environments, as well as across all sectors of civil society.

For example, the International Council of Associations for Science Education (ICASE), supports GO-SHIP Evolve's capacity-building efforts by linking their international network along coastal communities near GO-SHIP research expeditions and enhancing educational efforts in secondary and tertiary schools through GO-SHIP data and research summaries.

NGOs can play a crucial role in supporting and advancing the goals of programs like GO-SHIP Evolve, ANSO HOMES, Tatauga Dive Association's TransforMAR, and the Ocean & Climate Platform's Sea'ties project through their resources, expertise, advocacy, and outreach efforts. In return, NGOs can benefit from access to valuable data, opportunities for collaboration and capacity building, and the ability to contribute to global efforts to understand and address ocean-related challenges. By leveraging existing networks, engaging with local stakeholders, and supporting capacity building efforts, NGOs can enhance their outreach and educational activities, contribute to policy development at local,



regional, and international scales, and promote ocean literacy through broad efforts to understand and protect the ocean.

## VII. What's in the Ocean Decade for my NGO?

### 1) *Opportunities for collaboration*

The Ocean Decade creates a space for connections, sharing of experience, developing partnerships, at national, regional, and global scale. Much of its added value is based on the dense network of entities capable of coordinating and supporting existing Decade Actions as well as new participants through [National Decade Committees](#), [Decade Collaborative Centres](#), and [Decade Coordination Offices](#). Additionally, Ocean Decade communities of practice bring together diverse stakeholders working on similar themes. NGOs are welcome to connect to these bodies and contribute to communities of practice. (See section II).

***TIP: The Ocean Decade is a great opportunity to benefit from a supportive environment, become inspired, develop your capacity, and find partners to complement your talents.***

In particular, the new DCO for "[Connecting People and Ocean](#)" will create synergies among the very diverse stakeholders involved in ocean literacy.

NGOs are welcome to engage in existing coordination mechanisms as well as consider the creation of new NGO-specific collaboration and networking mechanisms at multiple levels (nationally, regionally, and internationally) that can complement their existing networks.

The Ocean Decade coordination framework not only facilitates the connection among NGOs, but also creates new multi-stakeholder collaborations, with the end-goal of increasing the [co-design of Decade Actions](#), at national and international levels with as many stakeholders as possible, including research programmes, universities, decision-makers, and broader civil society.

By participating in the Ocean Decade, NGOs gain support from these various stakeholders and influence their agenda, enhancing and challenging science objectives with diverse perspectives and needs. Depending on their capacity and reach, NGOs can either initiate and lead Decade Actions or participate in Decade Actions led by scientific or academic institutions or other stakeholders.

***TIP: As soon as your Decade Actions is endorsed, make sure to identify and join a relevant [Community of Practice](#) to share experience and extend your NGO's network.***

Communities of Practice are voluntary groups of endorsed Decade Actions that work on similar themes (e.g., Ocean Decade Challenges or more specific focuses) or in similar geographies (e.g., major ocean basins). They allow Decade Actions to connect, collaborate, and exchange ideas to collectively fulfil the objectives of the Ocean Decade. The Communities of Practice are led by Decade Actions and supported by the corresponding DCC or DCO when it exists.

### ***Capacity development***

NGOs will also have the opportunity to benefit from the capacity development initiatives that take place throughout the Ocean Decade.

Launched in 2023, the [Ocean Decade Capacity Development Facility](#) engages in a matchmaking role to assess the needs of the various participants and facilitate the creation of products and trainings to meet these needs. NGOs participating in the Ocean Decade are welcome to share their expertise as well as their needs with this Facility and through NDCs and DCCs.

Also, if your NGO is offering capacity development products and activities, please reach out so that we can see how these can be disseminated to more broadly benefit the Ocean Decade community.

### ***2) Recognition and influence***

Being involved in an endorsed Decade Action can contribute to the visibility and legitimacy of your NGO and to strengthening the connection between your NGO, the ocean science community, as well as policy decision-makers.

We invite you to get in touch as soon as possible with your [National Decade Committee](#) to fully benefit from this opportunity to influence national and international agendas for the Ocean Decade.

### ***3) Support with data and knowledge management and sharing***

The Ocean Decade identified early on the critical importance of strengthening the management and sharing of ocean data and knowledge to support efficient science as well as to contribute to ocean literacy and inform policy and dialogue among the various stakeholders and with the public.

An [Ocean Decade Data & Information Strategy](#) has been developed, which vision is to “develop by 2030 a trusted, inclusive and interconnected ocean data and information system that is actively used for decision-making to support sustainable management and that also allows for new data sources, information networks and solutions to be integrated as the Ocean Decade needs evolve.” The Ocean Decade supports the FAIR and CARE principles to make ocean data more accessible.

This vision is supported by the Decade Coordination Offices for [Data Sharing](#) and [Ocean Observing](#). These DCOs provide guidance to all Decade Actions and can support participating NGOs willing to share data and information with the Ocean Decade community and the stakeholders they’re working with. They can help find the right repositories to share or obtain raw and processed data and establish guidelines and minimal standards to ensure that data can be comparable between NGOs/regions. Specific examples of data sharing were provided earlier on pages 21-24. Additionally, ideas for areas in need of development have been provided by NGO’s in terms of data generation and sharing. These include:

- Downscaled global datasets and projections, combined with on-site data, are needed to understand dynamics at a finer scale.
- Interdisciplinary analyses are needed to better assess vulnerabilities and the feasibility of solutions (e.g. social acceptability, financial feasibility, etc.).
- Grey literature, as well as Indigenous and local knowledge, is needed to provide crucial information and perspectives which are not readily accessible.

- Data sharing tools and open data platforms are needed to ensure these data are circulated and widely available.
- Ensure information is understandable and usable by non-scientists; translating data into easily understandable content/tools (e.g. maps, serious games, virtual reality) would better foster knowledge appropriation.

## VIII. The Journey Ahead

Having a Decade Action endorsed and joining the Ocean Decade community is the starting point of a new journey. It's time to consider the lasting impact the Ocean Decade can have, with your NGO's contribution, on ocean science, its interface with policy and society, and its contribution to the broad sustainable development agenda.

### Seizing the opportunities for collaboration

We invite you to participate in Communities of Practice, work with National Decade Committees and Decade Collaborative Centres to find support, develop capacity, and connect to new partners. We are hopeful that the Ocean Decade will help your NGO develop strategic activities and become involved in the co-design of new Decade Actions to realize “the science we need for the ocean we want.”

### Strengthening the visibility and voice of NGOs in the Decade

Let's work together to rethink the allocation of space for NGOs and civil society in the Ocean Decade.

First and foremost, we invite you to contribute to the momentum. Invite, inspire and empower other NGOs by sharing your Ocean Decade experiences within your network.

Please reach out to the Decade Coordination Unit, National Decade Committees and Decentralized Coordination Structures to share your experience and achievements and develop communications assets. This will promote your NGO, and also increase the visibility of NGOs at large within the Ocean Decade.

For example, we invite you to work with your NDC to organize national online webinars for local/national NGOs interested in teaming up nationally and/or internationally.

The annual Ocean Decade Progress Report will, with your contribution(s), include a special focus on NGOs. Please share your information with the NGO UNESCO Liaison Committee and look for calls to contribute to Ocean Decade reports. Help us identify NGOs that may be underrepresented in the Ocean Decade and share the reasons for this; help us create a space for them.

As part of the legacy of the Ocean Decade, we would like to create a permanent space for exchange between NGOs and the global ocean science community, as this can have a lasting impact on the development of sustainable ocean science.

## Identifying priorities for NGOs

Working with NDCs and DCCs will also be a good opportunity to help define the direction of the Decade, building on your specific needs.

Help us connect the Ocean Decade with communities and consider their needs. For example, the Ocean Decade welcomes the contribution of NGOs working at the territorial level with Indigenous Peoples, small scale fishers, and local communities.

In addition to the global ambition for each Decade Challenge that will emerge from the United Nation's Vision 2030, a new annual or regular discussion with NGOs could outline thematic priorities and targets, facilitating NGOs to identify areas they can contribute to the Ocean Decade. The framework of the Ocean Decade can be used to catalyze collaborations between NGOs around these issues, where NGOs can contribute and develop their ideas for action.

NGOs can help develop synergies and cross-promotion between the Ocean Decade and various global agendas (UNOC, Climate, Biodiversity, Cities, etc.) where they are active.

Thematic priorities could reference the priority topics identified by civil society as part of the "Call to All the Voices" consultation in the run up of UNOC2025 which also echo SDGs (e.g. Sustainable fisheries and food security; Science; Marine Protected Areas; Pollution, and other topics including the High Seas, the Deep Sea, synergies between conventions; finance; shipping; -human rights-based approaches to conservation and development, etc.). For more information see: [https://ocean-climate.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Executive-Summary\\_CS0-global-consultation-in-preparation-of-UNOC-2025\\_VDEF.pdf](https://ocean-climate.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Executive-Summary_CS0-global-consultation-in-preparation-of-UNOC-2025_VDEF.pdf)

## Walking the talk of the Ocean Decade

Ocean science that is inclusive contributes to equity and gender balance.

Working with organizations and movements sharing knowledge of Indigenous People and local communities, and acknowledging their traditional knowledge as a relevant and valuable source of guidance and inputs to ocean conservation.

Contributing to human rights. The Ocean Decade is an opportunity to invite all voices to the table and create a new space to welcome Rights Holders and increase the visibility of the NGOs that work with the Rights Holders.

