

## THE 2025 UNITED NATIONS OCEAN CONFERENCE:

# Accelerating action and mobilizing all actors to conserve and sustainably use the ocean

*The third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3) was held in Nice, France, from June 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025. Co-hosted by France and Costa Rica, the conference aimed to “accelerate action and mobilize all actors to conserve and sustainably use the ocean”. It focused on supporting the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14) related to marine life with three main priorities, to produce an ambitious Nice Ocean Action Plan: Working towards completion of multilateral processes linked to the ocean; Mobilizing finance resources for the SDG14 and supporting the development of a sustainable blue economy; strengthen and better disseminate knowledge linked to marine sciences to enhance policy-making.*



*Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh delivered a keynote speech at the 2<sup>nd</sup> plenary session of the 3<sup>rd</sup> United Nations Ocean Conference in Nice, France, on June 9<sup>th</sup>*

The third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3) was held in Nice, France, from June 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025. Co-hosted by France and Costa Rica, the conference aimed to “accelerate action and mobilize all actors to conserve and sustainably use the ocean”. It focused on supporting the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14) related to marine life with three main priorities, to produce an ambitious Nice Ocean Action Plan: Working towards completion of multilateral processes linked to the ocean; Mobilizing finance resources for the SDG14 and supporting the development of a sustainable blue economy; strengthen and better disseminate knowledge linked to marine sciences to enhance policy-making.

The Conference involved all relevant stakeholders, bringing together Governments, the United Nations system, intergovernmental organizations, international financial institutions, other interested international bodies, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, academic institutions, the scientific community, the private sector, philanthropic organizations, indigenous peoples and local communities and other actors to assess challenges and opportunities

relating to, as well as actions taken towards, the implementation of Goal 14.

This year’s agenda at UN Ocean Conference will cover a range of topics related to ocean action from cooperation to sustainable fisheries to preventing and reducing marine pollution.

## SOME OF THE KEY ISSUES TO WATCH

*Implementing the high seas treaty and protecting biodiversity*

The High Seas are some of the most biologically diverse and globally unique areas essential to life on Earth. These areas are beyond national jurisdiction cover an area equivalent to 50% of the Earth’s surface and 64% of the ocean. Countries are now working to ratify the High Seas Treaty (BBNJ Agreement) to protect these critical ecosystems, while addressing the impacts of human activity, like the global shipping industry, to help mitigate its impact on marine biodiversity.

The Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement) was adopted on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2023 by the Intergovernmental Conference on Marine Biodiversity of Areas



Delegates pose for a group photo at the event

Beyond National Jurisdiction convened under the auspices of the United Nations. The BBNJ Agreement became the third implementing agreement to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Under the overall objective of the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, for the present and in the long-term, through effective implementation of the relevant provisions of the Convention and further international cooperation and coordination, the Agreement addresses four main issues: Marine genetic resources, including the fair and equitable sharing of benefits; Measures such as area-based management tools, including marine protected areas; Environmental impact assessments; and Capacity-building and the transfer of marine technology. The Agreement also addressed a number of “cross-cutting issues”, establishes a funding mechanism and sets up institutional arrangements, including a Conference of the Parties and various subsidiary bodies, a Clearing-House Mechanism and a secretariat. The Agreement is open for signature by all States and regional economic integration organizations from 20<sup>th</sup> September 2023 to 20<sup>th</sup> September 2025, and will enter into force 120 days after the date of deposit of the sixtieth instrument of ratification, approval, acceptance or accession.

*Reducing emissions from the shipping industry*

The shipping sector has a central role to play in enhancing ocean health, tackling climate change, halting biodiversity loss, strengthening resilience, and advancing global equity. More than 80% of global trade

is transported by sea, and the global shipping industry is responsible for 3% of all global greenhouse gas emissions making green shipping a vital component of the global effort to protect the ocean from pollution and the impacts of climate change. Discover the innovative technologies and transformative approaches shaping the future of sustainable shipping.

*Combating ocean acidification*

Ocean acidification refers to a reduction in the pH of the ocean, which occurs when the ocean absorbs carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) from the atmosphere. Ocean acidification is exacerbated by pollution and climate change and directly threatens marine biodiversity and by extension, all those who rely on life below water for their food, livelihood, and cultural traditions. Reducing emissions is essential for combating ocean acidification, while regional science helps us find the best local response strategies.

The ocean and climate are intrinsically linked. Members of the International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification (OA Alliance) are leading discussions across climate and ocean policy platforms, ensuring that commitments, policies and communications accurately reflect their interdependence. Global problems like ocean acidification have local impacts and require unique actions. Through the development of Ocean Acidification Action Plans, OA Alliance members are proactively responding to the impacts of ocean acidification and promoting solutions that advance knowledge into policy action. OA must become a cross cutting issue embedded across climate, ocean

and marine science priorities, opportunities, and actions. Advancing domestic OA action will inform better decision making for achieving mitigation, adaptation, and resilience goals. By joining the OA Alliance and endorsing the Call to Action, members commit to creating a unique OA Action Plan. An OA Action Plan encompasses the actions that OA Alliance members will take (or are taking) to better understand OA in their region and accelerate OA mitigation, adaptation, and resilience nearshore.

OA Action Plan help governments: take inventory; prioritize needs and make recommendations; and align policies and investments in the face of climate-ocean change. This is especially important for achieving climate resilient fisheries and aquaculture, climate smart conservation, coastal resilience and habitat restoration, effective upgrades of infrastructure, and evaluation of marine carbon dioxide removal strategies.

OA Action Plans call forth renewed ambition to realize mitigation and adaptation targets in place across UNFCCC and deliver on Sustainable Development Goal 14.3, “to minimize and address ocean acidification.” Additionally, OA Action Plans help prioritize science, policy, and funding needs across the UN SDG 14 and the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainability.

#### *Science for management action and effective policies*

Science is essential to safeguarding the health of the ocean, and is fundamental to effective policies that drive climate action forward. In the lead up to the 2025 UN Ocean Conference, the One Ocean Science Congress will convene leading scientists, policymakers, and thought leaders around the world to explore how science can guide meaningful action and shape a sustainable future for the ocean. Science forms the core of our understanding of the rapidly unfolding climate crisis, as well as the foundation upon which the world can and must build solutions.

The ocean is fundamental to life on our planet and to our future. The ocean is an important source of the planet’s biodiversity



*PM Pham Minh Chinh (right) and Deputy PM and Minister of Foreign Affairs Bui Thanh Son at the opening session of the third UN Ocean Conference in Nice, France*

and plays a vital role in the climate system and water cycle. The ocean provides a range of ecosystem services, supplies us with oxygen to breathe, contributes to food security, nutrition and decent jobs and livelihoods, acts as a sink and reservoir of greenhouse gases and protects biodiversity, provides a means for maritime transportation, including for global trade, forms an important part of our natural and cultural heritage and plays an essential role in sustainable development, a sustainable ocean-based economy and poverty eradication.

#### **VIETNAM ATTENDS UNITED NATIONS OCEAN CONFERENCE 2025**

Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh joined other world leaders at the opening ceremony of the third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC 3) in Nice, France, on June 9<sup>th</sup> morning under the theme Scaling up Ocean Action Based on Science and Innovation for the Implementation of Goal 14: Stocktaking, Partnerships and Solutions. The conference sought to address marine and ocean challenges through finance and science & technology; and accelerate the ratification of the 2023 High Seas Treaty, which requires 60 ratifications to take effect by the deadline of September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025. So far, only 32 countries ratified the document.

It aimed to end harmful subsidies to the global fisheries industry, which is considered a main cause of resource depletion. It is also expected to promote innovative ocean finance solutions, such as blue bonds and green loans to close the funding gap for marine conservation, one of the least-funded SDGs.

On the first day, the Prime Minister of Vietnam scheduled to deliver an important speech at the plenary session. He also co-chaired a summit on delta regions alongside the President of Iraq, and witnessed the official handover of Vietnam’s



ratification document for the High Seas Treaty. The overarching theme of the Conference was “Accelerating action and mobilizing all actors to conserve and sustainably use the ocean”. The Conference aimed to support further and urgent action to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development and identify further ways and means to support the implementation of SDG 14. It built on existing instruments to form successful partnerships towards the swift conclusion and effective implementation of ongoing processes that contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean.

The Plenary Session 4 aimed to mobilize large-scale financial resources to restore ocean health and accelerated the transition to a sustainable, regenerative blue economy. Representatives from Norway, Chile, Germany and others pledged to mobilize both public and private investment for this goal, laying the groundwork for a future that connects human progress with environmental preservation.

The Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh stressed that the ocean is not only a source of resources but also the origin of life and a vital connection between people and nature across all countries. For Vietnam, its more than 3,000 kilometers of coastline is not just a geographic reality, it is part of the nation’s cultural identity and spirit. Developing the marine economy in a sustainable and effective way is a strategic choice and an essential requirement for Vietnam to chart its future and realize its vision of becoming a strong maritime nation and a high-income country by 2045. PM Chinh noted that while oceans cover 70% of the earth’s surface, sustainable use and conservation receive the lowest level of investment among the UN’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals. He called this a paradox and a serious warning. Now more than ever, he said, countries must work together through inclusive, comprehensive and global cooperation.

Advocating fairness, equality, inclusion and sustainability, he outlined the following proposals: Step up investment in marine science research and applications; promote technology transfer, joint research and experience sharing; and build a comprehensive ocean data system. Increase resource mobilization and ensure efficient, sustainable investment in the blue economy. Let governments take the lead, businesses drive innovation, and people join hands. International organizations should play a catalytic role, and developed countries should offer support to shape a green ocean finance ecosystem.

Vietnam is ready to pilot this model. Enhance connectivity across continents, regions, and nations, and strengthen global ocean governance. The United Nations should take a central role, international law should serve as the foundation, and cooperation should be the key driver.

To build blue growth hubs and link key economic centers, PM Chinh said Vietnam is ready to participate and make positive contributions to the development of this network in the East Sea, a strategic sea area of the world. Although countries differ in political systems, development levels and cultural traditions, we share a common mission-to preserve the ocean as a vital space for life and sustainable development for today and for future generations. As a maritime nation, Vietnam pledges to be a reliable partner in global ocean protection. We pledge to join efforts in leading green and sustainable marine cooperation, and we stand ready to contribute to fair and sustainable blue finance initiatives.

#### **VIETNAM AFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO GLOBAL OCEAN PROTECTION EFFORTS**

Within France’s third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC-3) framework, Vietnam was among the first countries to approve the Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (also known as the High Seas Treaty). At UNOC-3, Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh announced that Vietnam had registered 15 voluntary ocean and marine governance commitments.

Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh and the high-level Vietnamese delegation’s participation in significant activities related to the High Seas Treaty demonstrates the Vietnamese Government’s determination and concrete actions in the global effort to build a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainably developed ocean.

The High Seas Treaty is a historic milestone in the international community’s efforts to protect the marine environment within the context of implementing the 2030 Agenda, especially Sustainable Development Goal 14 on the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas, and marine resources. This is the third Agreement negotiated and signed under the framework of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The treaty takes effect 120 days after 60 countries have deposited their instruments of ratification or approval.

On June 9<sup>th</sup>, at the UNOC-3 plenary session, Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh delivered a keynote



address representing the 10 ASEAN countries and shared Vietnam's perspectives on the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas, and marine resources. In his remarks, Prime Minister Chinh shared four priority orientations of ASEAN countries, including safeguarding the seas and oceans as spaces of peace, cooperation, development, and shared responsibility; promoting the integration of a consistent global approach and regional efforts in ocean and marine governance; recognizing seas and oceans as a core driver of prosperous development; and calling for accelerated global ocean governance based on cooperation instead of competition to expedite the implementation of SDG 14.

Prime Minister Chinh also emphasized the need to focus resources on three areas. First, investment in research, development, and application of marine science should be increased, including technology transfer, research cooperation, experience sharing, and building a global ocean data system. Second, boosting mobilization and efficient use of resources for sustainable blue economic development, with the spirit of "The State leads - Enterprises pioneer - People accompany - International organizations facilitate and support," creating a blue ocean finance ecosystem in which Vietnam is ready to pioneer a pilot model. Third, intercontinental, interregional, and international connectivity and global blue ocean governance should be strengthened under the "UN-centered - International law-based - International cooperation-led" principle to form "blue growth hubs" that link global marine economic centers. Vietnam is ready to actively participate in and contribute to developing this network in the East Sea (South China Sea), a strategic maritime area worldwide.

Previously, Vietnam was listed among the world's top ocean plastic polluters. In response and to demonstrate its responsibility to humanity, Vietnam has launched initiatives to raise public awareness and encourage businesses to reduce their dependence on single-use plastics. In addition, Vietnam has implemented a strong legal framework to address marine protection, with specific strategies such as the National Environmental Protection Strategy for 2030 emphasizing pollution control and marine ecosystem conservation.

In his speech at the conference, the Prime Minister called on the international community to act faster, stronger, and more decisively and for nations, regions,

and the world to join hands in the conservation and sustainable use of the blue ocean. He called for faster and more drastic actions with the collective efforts of nations, regions and the entire world to conserve and use blue ocean in a more sustainable manner. To achieve that, the Vietnamese leader suggested the need for a scientific approach that is inclusive, people-centered, and comprehensive. From that perspective, the Vietnamese PM put forward six key directions:

*First*, policy making should be rooted in scientific evidence combined with traditional knowledge. It is necessary to deepen our understanding of marine ecosystem to fully access economic, social and environmental impact and leverage indigenous knowledge. This would ensure harmony between marine economic development and conservation of marine biodiversity as well as preservation of people's lifestyles, cultural traditions, and identities.

*Second*, it is essential to promote science and technology, innovation and digital transformation as a new driver for sustainable marine economic development.

*Third*, the international community should utilize resources for developing the marine economy. The State plays a facilitating role, businesses take the lead, the people actively participate and benefit from this process, international partners and financial institutions provide support. Public-private partnerships should be actively promoted.

*Fourth*, an integrated cross sector approach to ocean and marine governance should be adopted.

*Fifth*, it is vital to foster inter-regional, cross-border and transcontinental connectivity, establishing a network of blue marine economic hubs.

*Sixth*, it is essential to uphold international solidarity and cooperation in conservation and sustainable development of the oceans and seas.

The United Nations should play a central coordinating role in initiatives and cooperation programs. International law should serve as a coordinated action among nations based on fairness, equality and mutual benefits.

With the consistent policy of being a friend, an active and responsible member of the international community, Vietnam has been working closely with partners to take comprehensive and strong actions at various levels to realize the goal of conserving and sustainably using the marine environment, noted the PM ■

NHÂM HIỀN