

REGIONAL FORUM

ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FOR THE UNECE REGION

2-3 APRIL 2025 | PALAIS DES NATIONS | GENEVA



14 LIFE
BELLOW WATER



Peer learning round table on SDG 14

From Policy to Practice: Strengthening Marine and Coastal Ecosystem Management under SDG 14

Wednesday 2 April, 15:00 – 18:00

Palais des Nations, Room VII

Languages: English, French and Russian

Background

The round table on SDG 14 will address key challenges and opportunities for the sustainable management of marine and coastal ecosystems in the European region. The proposed topics include marine pollution prevention, sustainable fisheries management, climate resilience, blue economy development, regional collaboration, and ocean literacy. These issues are critical as European basins, like the global ocean itself, face mounting pressures from pollution, habitat destruction, overexploitation of resources, and climate change. For example, nearly 60% of European marine habitats are not meeting the GES standard implied in the MSFD, highlighting the need for urgent action. A key component of climate resilience and biodiversity conservation is the protection and restoration of blue carbon ecosystems—such as seagrasses, salt marshes, and mangroves—which not only sequester carbon but also support marine biodiversity. Integrating nature-based solutions into marine management can enhance ecosystem services while mitigating climate change impacts. Additionally, the growing field of ocean observation within the blue economy offers new opportunities for sustainability, providing essential data to monitor ecosystem health, assess human impacts, and improve early warning systems for climate-induced changes. The expansion of oceanographic data collection can directly inform policy-making, ensuring that regulations and management strategies are based on real-time scientific evidence. By fostering cross-sectoral collaboration, enhancing marine monitoring, and leveraging innovative technologies, the round table share knowledge and best practices to accelerate progress on SDG 14, promoting effective governance and resilient marine ecosystems that sustain both biodiversity and coastal communities.

Guiding Questions:

How can policies help grow ocean observation as part of the blue economy, making sure science and data support the protection of the ocean and climate resilience?

What policies can include blue carbon ecosystems in climate and nature plans, and how can ocean education help protect and use them sustainably?

How can ocean data help improve marine planning, fishing practices, and climate policies, and how can governments encourage its use in different sectors?

How does ocean literacy help build support for ocean policies, and how can research and citizen science improve how we take care of the sea and coasts?

How can governments create rules that support teamwork, new technology, and investment in ocean monitoring, so that ocean data is used in real decisions?

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Programme

15.00 - 15.10	Welcoming remarks by Magdalena Landry	
15.10 - 15.15	Ambassador Van de Voorde 	Opening remarks from MS Belgium
15.15 - 15.20	Ambassador João Mira Gomes 	Opening remarks from MS Portugal
Setting the scene:		
15.20 - 15.40	Dr. Babatunde Ahonsi 	‘From Policy to Practice: Strengthening Marine and Coastal Ecosystem Management – the Türkiye Example

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Block 1: Regional Collaboration and Ocean Literacy

15.40 - 15.50	Magdalena Landry UNESCO Regional Director (moderator) 	Introduction on Ocean Literacy initiatives within UNESCO
15.50 - 16.10	Rada Pandeva Founder of Thalassophile project (youth representative) 	Presentation of the Thalassophile project, champion of inclusive and accessible ocean education. Mention to Blue Thread initiative as virtuous example of stakeholder engagement and collaboration.
16.10 - 16.30	Ms Anne-Catherine LESCRAUWAET , Director of International Relations at the VLIZ 	Presentation of Sea Level Station Monitoring Facility (SLSMF)
16.30 - 16.45	Q&A session from the floor	

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Block 2: Climate Resilience and Blue Economy Development

16.45 - 16.55	Arnold Kreilhuber (moderator) 	Introduction on Climate Resilience and Blue Economy
16.55 - 17.10	Ms Anne-Catherine LESCRAUWAET, Director of International Relations at the VLIZ 	Economics of Open Data and Societal Value Chains from Public Marine Data Repositories: the OECD Case study in Flanders-Belgium'
17.10 - 17.25	Ms. Minna Epps, IUCN Director of Global Ocean Policy 	Blue Economy in promoting sustainable marine and coastal ecosystem management. IUCN's experience in integrating nature-based solutions, protecting blue carbon ecosystems, and promoting policies for resilient ocean economies rooted in conservation and climate adaptation.
17.25 - 17.35	Ms. Touba Esfahani, Youth Representative 	Perspective of young ocean advocates, youth engagement, ocean literacy, and intergenerational collaboration in driving policy and practice on SDG 14.
17.35 - 17.45	Q&A session from the floor	
17.45 - 18.00	Closing remarks by Arnold Kreilhuber	