

Healthy Planet Needs Ocean Action™ from Asian and Pacific Countries



As the [Second Global Ocean Conference opened in Lisbon](#), governments in Asia and the Pacific must seize the opportunity to enhance cooperation and solidarity to address a host of challenges that endanger what is a [lifeline for millions of people](#) in the region.

If done right, ocean action will also be climate action, but this will require working in concert on a few fronts.

First, we must invest in and support science and technology to produce key solutions. Strengthening science-policy interfaces to link practitioners and policymakers contributes to a sound understanding of ocean-climate synergies, thereby enabling better policy design, an important priority of the Indonesian Presidency of the [G20](#) process.

Additionally, [policy support tools](#) can assist governments in identifying and prioritizing actions through policy and SDG tracking and scenarios development.

Making the Invisible Visible

We must also make the invisible visible through ocean data: just three of ten targets for the goal on life below water are measurable in Asia and the Pacific. Better data is the foundation of better policies and collective action. The [Global Ocean Accounts Partnership \(GOAP\)](#) is an innovative multi-stakeholder collective that has been established to enable countries and other stakeholders to go [beyond GDP](#) and to measure and manage progress towards ocean sustainable development.

Solutions for low-carbon maritime transport are also a key part of the transition to decarbonization by the middle of the century. Countries in Asia and the Pacific recognized this when adopting a new [Regional Action Programme](#) last December, putting more emphasis on such concrete steps as innovative shipping technologies, cooperation on green shipping corridors and more efficient use of existing port infrastructure and facilities to make this ambition a reality.

Finally, [aligning finance with our ocean, climate and broader SDG aspirations](#) provides a crucial foundation for all of our action. Blue bonds are an attractive instrument both for governments interested in raising funds for ocean conservation and for investors interested in contributing to sustainable development in addition to obtaining a return on their investment.

Oceans and Coasts as Vital Allies Against Climate Change

These actions and others are steps towards ensuring the viability of several of the region's key ocean-based economic sectors, such as seaborne trade, tourism and fisheries. An estimated 50 to 80% of all life on Earth is found under the ocean surface. Seven of every ten fish caught around the globe comes from Pacific waters. And we know that the oceans and coasts are also vital allies in the fight against climate change, with coastal systems such as mangroves, salt marshes and seagrass meadows at the frontline of climate change, absorbing carbon at rates of up to 50 times that of the same area of tropical forest.

But the health of the oceans in Asia and the Pacific is in serious decline: [rampant pollution](#), destructive and illegal fishing practices, inadequate marine governance and [continued urbanization along coastlines](#) have destroyed 40% of the coral reefs and approximately 60% of the coastal mangroves, while fish stocks continue to decline and consumption patterns remain unsustainable.

These and other pressures [exacerbate climate-induced ocean acidification and warming](#) and weaken the capacity of oceans to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Global climate change is also contributing to sea-level rise, which affects coastal and island communities severely, [resulting in greater disaster risk](#), internal displacement and international migration.

To promote concerted action, ESCAP, in collaboration with partner UN agencies, provides a regional platform in support of SDG14, aligned within the framework of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030). Through four editions so far of the [Asia-Pacific Day for the Ocean](#), we also support countries in identifying and putting in place solutions and accelerated actions through regional dialogue and cooperation.

It is abundantly clear that there can be no healthy planet without a healthy ocean. Our leaders meeting in Lisbon must step up efforts to protect the ocean and its precious resources and to build sustainable blue economies.

