

United Nations Declares Decade of Ocean Science



The United Nations has announced the '*Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development*' (2021-2030) to mobilise the scientific community, policymakers, business and civil society around a programme of joint research and technological innovation. The announcement of this decade consolidates efforts by UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) to boost international cooperation in ocean sciences. It will enable better coordination of research programmes, observation systems, capacity development, maritime space planning and the reduction of maritime risks to improve the management of ocean and coastal zone resources.

UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay welcomed the announcement and called on all stakeholders to join the scientific cooperation effort of the Organization. The ocean is a

new frontier. It covers 71% of the globe and we have explored less than 5%. The Decade will ensure greater coordination of research. UNESCO's IOC is proud to be at the forefront of this effort, she said.

The impact of climate change

Nearly 3 billion people depend on marine and coastal biodiversity to meet their needs. It absorbs around a third of the CO₂ produced by humans and reduces the impact of climate change. However, science has not yet managed to fully evaluate the cumulative effects of human activities on the ocean, including the impact of pollution, warming and acidification, which threaten this environment, which is vital for our survival. According to the IOC's [Global Ocean Science Report](#), national spending on ocean sciences accounts for between 0.04 - 4% of the total invested in research and development.

Underwater robots

Surveying the ocean requires costly ships and equipment, satellite imaging, underwater robots and remotely controlled vehicles that need significant investment. It also involves thousands of scientists collecting and analysing the data, either in laboratories or in marine environments. One of the priorities of the Decade will be to strengthen and diversify financial sources, particularly for Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries.

By providing natural, yet innovative solutions for the major challenges facing the planet - from climate change to poverty eradication – the ocean is essential for ensuring our social, economic and environmental balance. This Decade, will provide a framework for international coordination and partnership to reinforce research capacities in marine sciences and the transfer of technology.

The Decade of Ocean Science will help accelerate progress towards achieving [Sustainable Development Goal 14](#) for the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean, seas and marine resources. This announcement affirms the UN Member States' support for the IOC-UNESCO initiative expressed during the UN Ocean Conference (New York, 5-9 June) and by the Ministerial Declaration on Oceans and Human Health (Lisbon, 8 September).