



IMCC 8 Symposia & Panel Discussions

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Panel Discussions

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Ocean Science and Conservation Communication: What's New and What's Next?

ID: 20

Presenters: David Shiffman, Simon Fraser University; Andrew Lewin, Pisces Oceans Inc.; Andrew Thaler, Blackbeard Biologic; Isla Hodgson, University of Stirling/Save Our Seas Foundation; Katy Nalven, Sea & Shore Solutions

"Making marine science matter" requires taking scientific expertise out of the ivory tower and communicating it to stakeholders, the public, and decisionmakers. Science communication has been integral to IMCC since the beginning, but in recent years there have been massive changes to the public science engagement landscape. This symposium, which will feature experts from academia, the environmental sector, and government, will highlight new tools, case studies for success, and expert perspectives on the changing public science engagement landscape. It will include specific, actionable steps the IMCC community can take to more effectively communicate their science to key stakeholders and end users.

This symposium will also be tied to a focus group, which will have a goal of creating a multi-coauthor scientific paper for journal publication.

Finally, based on the enthusiastic responses this proposed symposium has received so far, we may need more than one timeslot, and I am happy to make it an open symposium that others can apply to join.

Coastal Social-Ecological Systems Coupling and Marine Biodiversity Conservation

ID: 23

Presenter: Ming Chen, Sun Yat-sen University

This session focuses on coastal zones as critical land-sea interfaces, exploring the intrinsic links between social-ecological system coupling and marine biodiversity conservation in the context of climate change and intensified human activities. As typical human-marine complexes, the multi-sphere coupling processes in coastal areas directly regulate the stability of key habitats such as coral reefs and mangroves, which are biodiversity hotspots, thereby impacting species richness and ecosystem service



provision.

Bringing together interdisciplinary researchers, the session will center on three interconnected themes: (1) the coupling mechanisms and co-evolutionary dynamics between socio-economic activities and coastal ecosystems, emphasizing feedback loops, system resilience, and regime shifts; (2) the driving mechanisms and critical tipping points of biodiversity loss during the coupling process, including the synergistic effects of multiple stressors and potential early warning signals; and (3) the practical application and social-ecological performance assessment of Nature-based Solutions (NbS), addressing trade-offs between coastal protection, carbon sequestration, and community well-being.

By discussing pathways to optimize human-ocean relationships and identify protection gaps, this session aims to foster synergies between socio-economic development and biodiversity conservation. It will contribute to the global "30x30" target by promoting a shift from area-based protection to outcome-oriented management, building ecologically coherent and socially inclusive MPA networks.

Restoring Seascapes

ID: 24

Presenters: Anna Cucknell, Zoological Society of London; Joanne Preston, University of Portsmouth; Philine zu Ermgassen, University of Edinburgh

This symposium will cover:

- Principles of seascape ecology and marine ecological connectivity
- Seascape restoration ecology
- Advances in seascape ecosystem restoration approaches
- Community-driven conservation
- Advances in monitoring the marine environment at scale
- Measuring ecological connectivity
- Source to sea approaches
- Seascape restoration planning
- Challenges of seascape restoration

Global case studies of seascape restoration projects **Towards sustainable aquafeed: should we use fish to feed fish?**

ID: 26

Presenter: Marine Cusa, Danish Technical University



Aquaculture has been suggested in the past as a solution to relieve pressure on wild fish stocks and meet nutritional demands of a growing population. Recently however, there's been growing controversy over the harvest of food grade wild fish to feed aquaculture fish. To meet the demands of expanding aquaculture, the aquafeed industry has pushed the taxonomic boundaries. Scientists are concerned about the ecological and social impacts of these new fisheries. In the last couple of years, researchers have attempted to measure trade-offs between using wild caught fish to feed aquaculture and reducing the amount of wild caught fish. Disagreements have emerged and the topic has led to heated debates within the scientific community with far reaching consequences. This session will explore the ethical, equity and environmental concerns of using wild caught fish for the purpose of aquaculture growth, bringing together researchers with a wide range of expertise (biologists, ecologists, fish stock specialists, LCA specialists, environmental social scientists, global nutrition specialists, and food system specialists). The goal of this symposium is to discuss these issues, foster discussion, identify points of disagreements, and propose solutions to the pressing demand of aquaculture and the ensuing pressure on wild fish stocks.

Powering up Potential: strengthening and sharing capacity for ocean stewardship

ID: 27



Presenters: Gail Sant, Nippon Foundation-University of Edinburgh Ocean Voices Programme; Maila Guilhon, Nippon Foundation-University of Edinburgh Ocean Voices Programme; Vatosoa Rakotondrazafy, IUCN; Mariana Caldeira, Nippon Foundation-University of Edinburgh Ocean Voices Programme; GERLIE TROPICO GEDORIA, Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park & World Heritage Site/Tubbataha Management Office; Vanessa Lopes, University of Edinburgh Ocean Voices Programme

The symposium will reimagine capacity sharing by shifting to equitable approaches that power up and sustain existing potential across people and institutions. Framed through an opening reflection on capacity as connection, confidence, and collaboration, the session will draw on research, practice, and lived experiences of interdisciplinary ocean practitioners, using global examples to showcase effective approaches to support human-centric capacity. Expert speakers will share knowledge on shifting hegemonic capacity development initiatives to strengthen ocean conservation and governance, drawing on themes such as:

1. The value of intergenerational knowledge transfer through conservation practice in remote islands;
2. Establishing Locally Managed Marine Areas throughout Africa to share best practices;
3. The importance of self-confidence for ocean professionals from historically marginalised backgrounds;
4. Diverse voices in ocean conservation with reference to a) Small Island Developing States in the Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement and b) Global-South Traditional Knowledge holders.

By creating a space for discussion on novel approaches to capacity sharing, we aim to influence the way that capacity development is planned, implemented and monitored across ocean-focused policy and conservation initiatives. We showcase that human-centred approaches are an integral part of the process and fundamental to achieving a healthy ocean.

From local to global: The role of environmental leadership in ocean conservation across scales, geographies, and sectors.



Presenters: Lucy Mead, University of Edinburgh; Mustapha Manneh, Consultancy Green Gambia; Yolanda Snchez, RELATO / OCEAN Grant Programme; Alifa Bintha Haque, University of Dhaka; Bruno Monteferri, Conservation International; Meriwether Wilson, University of Edinburgh

Restoring and conserving the health of the world's oceans demands creative and empowered leadership, both individually and collectively, and across sectors and geographies. This symposium will bring together several exceptional ocean professionals from the Edinburgh Ocean Leaders programme (<https://oceanleaders.org/>), an assembly of globally distributed individuals who have made significant positive change for the ocean, and the people that depend on it. These Ocean Leaders have highly diverse backgrounds and expertise, working in sectors that span science and research, front-line field conservation, journalism and storytelling, community-led action, global policy and governance, and more. In presenting their own work, speakers will provide case studies from Europe, Asia, Latin America and elsewhere, covering marine conservation challenges ranging in both scale and scope. Speakers will also explore what leadership means to each of them and the role it can play in vastly different contexts and locations. During a panel-style conversation, participants will collectively consider how the development of leadership skills and qualities can support, scale and accelerate positive impact.

Cumulative and synergetic stressors to marine megafauna

ID: 31

Presenters: Mariana M. P. B. Fuentes, Florida State University; Camila Domit,



Universidade Federal do Paraná

This symposium will explore how multiple anthropogenic stressors interact to affect marine megafauna, including marine turtles, sharks, and marine mammals. Although these species are exposed to numerous threats across their life cycles—such as fisheries interactions, vessel traffic, coastal development, pollution, diseases and climate change—most threat assessments still evaluate stressors independently. This session will focus on advancing our understanding of how stressors interact in additive, synergistic, or antagonistic ways across spatial, temporal, and biological scales.

Talks will highlight recent empirical studies, conceptual frameworks, and modeling approaches that examine cumulative impacts on marine megafauna across different habitats and life stages. Presentations may include research on synchronous and asynchronous stressors, methods to quantify interactive effects, and approaches that integrate ecological, physiological, health, and spatial data. We aim to include perspectives from multiple taxa and regions to illustrate how cumulative stressors influence individual fitness, behavior, well-being and population dynamics.

The symposium will also provide a platform to discuss key knowledge gaps, methodological challenges and new technologies, and opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration. By bringing together diverse approaches and case studies, this session seeks to advance more holistic assessments of cumulative threats and inform conservation and management strategies for marine megafauna in increasingly human-impacted oceans.

Emerging tools for resilient tropical fishing communities

ID: 32



Presenters: Anastasia Quintana, Duke University; Ana Spalding, Oregon State University; Frdrique Fardin, Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute; Amber L Carter, Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute; Lily Zhao, Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute

Fishing is inherently uncertain, shaped by shifting weather, oceanographic variability, changing ecosystems, and volatile markets. For the millions of people who depend on fisheries, resilience is not an abstract concept—it is a daily necessity. Strengthening the resilience of fishing communities is therefore fundamental to the success of marine conservation, particularly in the tropical majority where small-scale fisheries employ one in twelve people on the planet and are essential for food security and nutrition. This symposium brings together five social scientists from the Resilience Center at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute to examine emerging tools for understanding and supporting resilience in tropical small-scale fishing communities. Across a set of contextually grounded case studies, the speakers evaluate resilience both as an analytical concept and as a practical objective defined with fishing communities and conservation practitioners. What unites the presented research are three essential characteristics: being (1) use-inspired, (2) transdisciplinary, and (3) focused on adaptation as a pathway toward resilience. Together, the talks highlight new approaches for studying and supporting resilience in the social-ecological systems where marine conservation and human livelihoods are most closely linked.

Financing Community-Led Marine Conservation: Insights from the OCEAN Grants Programme

ID: 33



Organizer: Yolanda Snchez, RELATO / OCEAN Grant Programme; Nichola Plowman, Defra/Niras; Sara De Giorgio, Defra/Niras; Sophie De Pauw, The Zoological Society of London

Launched in 2024, the Ocean Community Empowerment and Nature (OCEAN) Grants Programme supports locally led marine conservation initiatives in ODA-eligible countries. The programme is built on a central premise: sustainable ocean protection cannot be achieved without addressing poverty, strengthening local governance systems, and empowering coastal communities as central actors in marine stewardship.

This symposium will bring together programme administrators and funded practitioners to examine how community-centred conservation is designed, implemented, and evaluated in practice. Rather than focusing solely on project outcomes, the session will explore the architecture behind the programme: its theory of change, funding model, monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) framework, and the integration of inclusive approaches such as Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI).

Speakers will include representatives involved in programme design and oversight, while funded grantees present implementation cases. These perspectives will illustrate how priorities such as sustainable fisheries management, marine protected area governance, plastic pollution prevention, youth leadership, and livelihood diversification are translated from funding strategy into locally grounded action.

The symposium will feature four short talks followed by a moderated discussion reflecting on enabling conditions, implementation challenges, and transferable lessons for conservation funders, practitioners, and policymakers.

The Baltic Sea as a living lab for marine protection

ID: 35

Presenters: Jannica Haldin, HELCOM Secretariat; Aino Ahvo, HELCOM Secretariat; Lois Watt, HELCOM Secretariat; Luke Dodd, HELCOM Secretariat



This symposium explores how the Baltic Sea—one of the world’s most impacted, yet data-rich and institutionally integrated marine regions—is serving as a living laboratory for transformative marine protection.

Under the Regional Sea Convention, the nine Baltic Sea countries have launched the largest project in the Convention’s 50-year history: a coordinated effort to transform marine protection across the entire governance-planning-designation-management lifecycle, and unlock its full potential across an entire eco-region.

Central to this transition is the development of the broad knowledge base and infrastructure required to operationalize an ecologically relevant network perspective on marine protection.

The session will present concrete examples of how knowledge across ecological, socio-ecological, management, and governance systems has been strengthened and integrated into policy-relevant decision-making at national and international levels.

Speakers will share perspectives on building cohesive, intersectional, and transboundary scientific collaboration, as well as developing multidirectional methodologies and infrastructures that support effective marine protection across jurisdictions.

Facilitated discussion identifying key lessons and transferable elements that can inform marine protection efforts in other regional seas and global ocean governance processes.

From Innovation to Impact: Advancing Marine Ecosystem Restoration in Asia

ID: 36

Presenters: Kayla Ripple, Pew Fellows in Marine Conservation; Jillian Ooi, Universiti Malaya; Tries Blandine Razak, General Organization for Conservation of Coral Reefs



and Turtles in The Red Sea; Aileen Maypa, Silliman University

Asia is home to some of the world's most successful marine ecosystem restoration efforts, offering valuable lessons for global conservation. Yet despite notable successes, many restoration projects across the region continue to face low success rates, and poorly implemented efforts can sometimes cause unintended harm—either by damaging ecosystems directly or by drawing resources away from efforts to conserve existing biodiversity.

This symposium brings together case studies of marine rewilding and restoration from across Asia—spanning corals, seagrass, and oyster reefs—to highlight innovative practices that can help shape more effective and responsible restoration approaches. Presenters will share insights into what's working, what isn't, and how practitioners can better design inclusive projects that deliver lasting ecological benefits.

Speakers will also dig into common challenges that restoration practitioners encounter throughout the region. These include establishing long-term monitoring and maintenance programs, defining clear and achievable restoration goals, and navigating the policy and legal frameworks needed to support cross-border collaboration and financing.



Evaluation and Assessment for Marine Protected Areas

ID: 37

Presenters: Tim Stojanovic, University of St Andrews; Tammy Noble-James, Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science, UK

With the global expansion of marine protected areas, there has been a proliferation of assessment and evaluation tools, from those that are well established across the terrestrial and marine domain such as the Integrated Management and Effectiveness Tool (IMET), to those that are specific to the oceans, such as the MPA Guide. On one hand, these tools are important to create cycles of adaptive learning, and improve the quality of marine protected area management. On the other hand, these tools come with their own limitations and pitfalls, including: unclear terminologies, conflicting approaches, and the pressure to demonstrate results. This session will review these issues. We welcome papers which report on evaluations of MPAs, including: (1) experiences of applying evaluation tools in different contexts; (2) challenges of demonstrating cause-effect relationships, and prioritising response measures, and; (3) inclusion of social, economic and/or cultural benefits in assessments. The session will consolidate lessons learned, and progress approaches for adaptive management of MPAs



Human Dimensions of Large-Scale Marine Protected Areas: Lessons for BBNJ Implementation

ID: 38

Presenters: Juan Carlos Villaseor-Derbez, University of Miami; Rebecca Gruby, University of Miami; Noella Gray, University of Guelph; Jenna Sullivan-Stack, Oregon State University; Beth Pike, Marine Conservation Institute

Large-scale marine protected areas (LSMPAs) have rapidly expanded within national jurisdictions, generating a growing evidence base on their social processes and outcomes. The new BBNJ Agreement is poised to extend area-based management further into areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ), where the institutional, political, and stakeholder landscapes are fundamentally different from those observed within nation's Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs). This symposium will take stock of what we have learned from LSMPAs in EEZs and ask what human-dimension insights are likely to transfer to ABNJ, what is uncertain, and what will predictably differ.

Talks will be organized around an “Inputs and Outcomes” logic. Examples of inputs include governance and design choices (rules, zoning, decision-making architecture), financing and capacity (monitoring, enforcement, sustained funding), and procedural/representational equity (who participates, legitimacy-building, accountability). Outcomes may include effectiveness and benefit realization, unintended consequences such as displacement and activity-shifting leakage, and distributional impacts across fleets, nations, and communities. We welcome abstract submissions for empirical case studies, comparative syntheses, and practitioner perspectives from policy implementation, compliance, and international negotiation settings to translate evidence into actionable questions for BBNJ.



UK MPAs: success stories in science, stakeholders and governance over 17 years of change: What have we learned?

ID: 39

Presenters: Jean-Luc Solandt, Blue Marine Foundation; Bryce Donald Stewart, Marine Biological Association; Sian Rees, University of Plymouth

It's been a transformational 16 years for coastal governance, law and even jurisdictional change in application of MPAs in domestic UK seas. Here we aim to reflect on best practice, case studies, and gaps in the current application and opportunities provided by the UK MPA network. Drawing from experts in social science, regulation, fisheries, ecological science & community groups, our contributors will provide an inter-disciplinary perspective of different approaches to the ongoing MPA management paradigm.



Selfies, Science, and Sustainability: The Changing Face of Marine Wildlife Tourism

ID: 40

Presenter: Gonzalo Araujo, Marine Research and Conservation Foundation

Marine wildlife tourism is rapidly expanding worldwide, offering opportunities for conservation awareness, research, and economic benefits for coastal communities. However, changing technologies, social dynamics, and public expectations are reshaping how people interact with marine wildlife and raising new conservation challenges.

This symposium will explore the evolving relationship between tourism, technology, and ethics in marine wildlife encounters. Talks will examine the sustainability of wildlife tourism and its impacts on marine species and ecosystems, as well as the potential for tourism to support conservation outcomes. We will also explore how social media is influencing human–wildlife interactions, including the rise of the “selfie culture” and its implications for how people experience and value nature.

Speakers will highlight emerging tools such as drones, AI-assisted monitoring, and citizen science platforms that are transforming how scientists and managers monitor tourism activities and wildlife responses. Finally, the symposium will address shifting ethical baselines in wildlife tourism, questioning what constitutes responsible and acceptable interactions with marine wildlife.

By bringing together researchers, conservation practitioners, and tourism stakeholders, this session aims to identify pathways to ensure marine wildlife tourism remains both ethical and beneficial for conservation in a rapidly changing world.



The role of diverse knowledge systems and values in ocean conservation

ID: 41

Presenter: Marjo Kristiina Vierros, Ocean Voices Programme

The ocean is not only an ecological space but also a cultural one, connecting communities to the ocean and to each other. Coastal communities are connected to the ocean through multiple pathways and hold a diversity of knowledge and lived experiences that can improve ocean governance and make it more equitable **by enriching the diversity of available approaches, worldviews, and solutions.**

Community knowledge is embedded in values that are as diverse as people are, but for many communities the ocean is not simply a provider of goods and services. It is also a place that holds meanings that go beyond transaction to include respect and reciprocity. The potential contribution of cultural knowledge and multiple values to ocean governance has not been fully realised in the same way that economic values have. These values can become powerful agents of change for ocean conservation.

In this session, we will hear a variety of stories and case studies, particularly from the local level, about how different knowledge systems and values can work together to co-create solutions to pressing ocean problems. We will also explore how these local experiences can inform global policies, with the aim to explore new pathways towards transformative change.



The Marine OECM Guide: Advancing effective conservation in community- and country-led marine OECMs

ID: 42

Presenters: Bani Maini, Oregon State University; Ana Sofia Barrera, Oregon State University; - Estradivari, Leibniz Centre for Tropical Marine Research (ZMT); Kimberly Samson, Talanoa Consulting; Sue Wells, IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas

Progress is underway globally to operationalize and adapt global guidelines to support the recognition and reporting of marine OECMs. Yet there is a lack of understanding about how to assess whether sites meet OECM criteria. This symposium will bring together experts from diverse backgrounds and geographic contexts to share the opportunities and challenges that countries and communities, including in Mexico, Indonesia, Fiji, and the Mediterranean, are finding in their attempts to identify and report marine OECMs. Speakers will share their perspectives on the role that a new tool, *The Marine OECM Guide*, can play in conversations about understanding and strengthening OECMs. This tool was co-created by a large working group to help evaluate the expected biodiversity conservation outcomes from potential marine OECMs using existing guidance and science, including traditional knowledge and wisdom. The symposium will leave time for a robust discussion among speakers and participants, to consider biodiversity alongside human rights and wellbeing in the context of marine OECMs.



From Reflection to Action: Advancing Equity, Participation, and Impact in Marine Conservation and Science

ID: 43

Presenters: Jason Landrum, Lenfest Ocean Program; Angelo Villagomez, Center for American Progress; Alia Hidayat, Center for American Progress

The symposium will explore how the future of ocean conservation can more fully integrate equity, participation, and actionable science. Building on reflections from IMCC7 in Cape Town, where participants underscored the need for more inclusive, people-centered approaches, this symposium will examine how marine conservation and science can better serve both biodiversity and the communities most connected to the ocean. Topics will span community-led and participatory conservation models, co-design and co-production of research, and the vital role of Indigenous and local knowledge in shaping durable solutions. Contributors will probe how governance, decision-making, and leadership structures can become more equitable; how funding and partnerships can shift toward long-term, trust-based models; and how conservation success can be measured in ways that reflect both ecological outcomes and human dimensions such as well-being, livelihoods, procedural justice, and stewardship. By convening diverse perspectives from science, policy, practice, philanthropy, and community leadership, the symposium will create space to reflect on where the field is headed and what changes are needed to translate evidence into lasting, grounded action. Ultimately, the session aims to catalyze a more connected, just, and effective global marine conservation community.



Turning Tides: Behavior Change and Conservation Marketing Strategies for Marine Contexts

ID: 44

Presenters: Katie Abrams, Colorado State University; Lucy Chalgren, Colorado State University; Emma McKinley, Cardiff University and Marine Social Sciences Network

This symposium organized by SCB's Conservation Marketing and Engagement Working Group brings together researchers and practitioners applying conservation marketing and behavior change science to marine conservation challenges. We seek presentations spanning four broad categories: 1) theory-building and empirical research advancing behavior change models, social marketing frameworks, and environmental psychology concepts in marine contexts; 2) methodological studies developing or refining tools for stakeholder research, audience segmentation, or behavior change detection; 3) empirical research with robust evaluations of behavior change approaches in marine contexts; and 4) applied case studies demonstrating conservation marketing strategies in practice. Topics may include campaign development and evaluation, message framing, social norms interventions, community-based stewardship approaches, and audience research with coastal communities, marine-based recreationists, fisheries stakeholders, and the broader public related to marine issues. Perspectives from both academic researchers and conservation practitioners are welcome, with an emphasis on work that explicitly targets measurable shifts in intentions or behaviors related to ocean health.



Place-Based Law and the Future of Marine Conservation: Indigenous Governance in the Great Bear Sea

ID: 45

Presenters: Courtney Halvorson, Gitxaaa Territorial Management Agency; Julia Harper, Gitxaala Territorial Management Agency; Jacinthe Amyot, Gitxaala Territorial Management Agency

Grounded in the Nluut'iksgm Laxyuubm Gitxaala (sacred Gitxaala Territory) in northern British Columbia, Canada, this session will explore how Gitxaala Nation's Ayaawx (law), Adaawx (histories), and Gugwilx'ya'ansk (practices and inherited responsibilities) structure marine decision-making, spatial planning, monitoring, and stewardship.

In this session, conservation is framed not as managing decline toward minimum viable thresholds or maximum sustainable yield, but as managing for abundance by maintaining ecosystem productivity at levels that balance cultural continuity, food security, and reciprocal relationships with the ecosystem.

The speakers will situate this work within the broader context of the Great Bear Sea, where an interconnected network of co-governed marine protected areas is advancing through collaboration between 17 First Nations and Crown governments.

This session will examine areas of alignment between Indigenous legal orders and federal and provincial regulatory protection tools, including Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA) designations and shared governance mechanisms contributing to Canada's 30x30 conservation commitments.

Case studies will offer examples of co-governance in the Marine Protected Area Network of the Northern Shelf Bioregion and Gitxaala's governance-centered model for marine conservation, including a rebuilding and management plan for local Pacific herring populations and Gitxaala's marine protected area risk assessment methodology.



Citizen (Participatory) Science for Marine and Coastal Conservation

ID: 46

Presenter: John Cigliano, Cedar Crest College / Schoodic Institute / Marine Citizen Science Institute

In 2014, at the 3rd IMCC in Glasgow, Scotland, we held a combined symposium+focus group on marine citizen science. While the number of citizen science projects had been increasing, citizen science for marine conservation was lagging behind its use for terrestrial and freshwater conservation. The purpose of that session was to provide evidence that citizen science is an effective and rigorous method for advancing marine conservation and to generate guiding principles to assist in developing marine citizen science projects. One output of that session was a series of “toolkits” to help guide new and existing citizen science projects (Cigliano et al. 2015). Another was the first book published on marine and coastal citizen science (Cigliano and Ballard 2017). Citizen science for marine conservation has advanced since then, including the formation of the Participatory and Citizen Science Working Group (PaCS), so it's a good time to revisit this topic, especially since IMCC is back in Scotland. The purpose of this seminar is to showcase citizen science projects that have successfully fulfilled their conservation goals to provide guidance and inspiration for current and future marine citizen science projects.



Centering multiple ways of knowing in the design and implementation of the Great Bear Sea MPA Network

ID: 47

Presenter: Fiona Beaty, Coastal First Nations-Great Bear Initiative

The Great Bear Sea MPA Network initiative ('the Network') is implementing the first network of marine protected areas (MPAs) in Canada and the only MPA network in the world that is collaboratively governed by Indigenous and non-Indigenous governments. This large-scale marine conservation initiative is collaboratively governed by a partnership of seventeen First Nations, the Province of British Columbia, and Government of Canada. The Network includes existing and proposed new MPAs that span 30% of the Great Bear Sea – a region that comprises approximately 102,000 km² along the Pacific coast of Canada. Network planning commenced in 2014, building upon First Nation-led marine planning that began in the early 2000s. As of 2024, proposed new MPAs are being established by the governing partners throughout the Great Bear Sea.

During this symposium, governing partners and stakeholders will discuss how Indigenous, western scientific, and local knowledge systems shaped the design and guide the ongoing implementation of the Great Bear Sea MPA Network. Speakers will discuss the Partner-led approach to identify ecological conservation priorities, the Indigenous-led approach to identify cultural conservation priorities, how systematic conservation planning principles informed the identification of Network goals and design strategies, stakeholder and community engagement in the iterative development of Network design scenarios, and the development of a Network monitoring program.



Ocean equity, fairness and justice

ID: 48

Presenters: Melissa Hampton-Smith, James Cook University; Nathan Bennett, University of British Columbia; Josheena Naggea; Sangeeta Mangubhai, Talanoa Consulting; Jacqueline Lau, James Cook University; Yoshitaka Ota, University of Washington; Silvia Gomez, AUTONOMOUS UNIVERSITY OF BARCELONA; Ingrid Kelling, Heriot-Watt University; Farah Sevilla, University of Technology Sydney; Shreya Yadav, Conservation International

This symposium explores the interconnected themes of equity, fairness, and justice in marine conservation. As global efforts to protect marine ecosystems accelerate, questions arise about who benefits from conservation, who bears its costs, and whose voices are prioritized in decision-making. Equitable conservation not only meets an innate human preference for fairness but can also promote positive outcomes for coastal ecosystems and the people who depend on them. Contributions in this session will explore empirical advances in understanding procedural justice, new, adaptable and cohesive tools for assessing equity in marine conservation across a range of scales, equity and food security, equity implications of the Blue Economy, equity intersectionality in conservation including gender, and case studies from a range of geographies. We discuss how to move from robust theoretical frameworks to practical implementation at the local conservation level. Our speakers will bring their range of perspectives as conservation practitioners, scholars, policymakers, and ECRs to explore understandings of equity for practice and in practice.



From By-catch to Management: Assessing the Status of Regional Elasmobranch catches in South Asia.

ID: 49

Presenter: Sourav Chattopadhyay, Annamalai University

Elasmobranchs are non selectively caught in trawls and small scale fisheries in major South Asian nations , hence most species are threatened due to intense fishing pressures threatening regional extinction. The problem is exacerbated due to poor fisheries management and lack of data to protect sensitive habitats. Another major cause of concern is that the economy and livelihood of many people (fisher's , vendors) especially from the coastal areas depend on these catches. Therefore, a complete ban on elasmobranch fishing may result in the loss of livelihood for millions. Any modification in fishing gear will minimize the overall quantity of catches resulting in decreased revenue. Only methodical approaches including (but not restricted to) the identification of sensitive habitats, spatio-temporal closures, modification of fishing gears, live release of individuals together with the help of informed policy makers can help in the timely management of these species. A synergistic effort from policy makers, law enforcers, fishers, vendors and youth are actively required to tackle the scenario and management of these species. Conservation initiatives like temporary closures of sensitive habitats, identification of Important Shark and Ray Areas and enforcement of no take MPA's can also be very effective in management and conservation.



Novel approaches to advancing small pelagic fisheries science and management

ID: 50

Presenter: David Costalago, Oceana

Small pelagic fisheries face major scientific and management challenges driven by high environmental variability, intensive exploitation, and the movement of stocks across national and jurisdictional boundaries. This symposium will explore novel approaches to understanding and managing transboundary, data-poor, and multi-knowledge-system small pelagic fisheries. We hope to bring together case studies and perspectives from regions where ecological, social, and governance complexity intersect.

Talks should highlight innovations in baselines for data-poor coastal fisheries, the design of collaborative and climate-adaptive assessments, and emerging methods for integrating diverse knowledge systems—including Indigenous Knowledge Systems—to inform ecosystem-based management. By convening scientists, managers, Indigenous leaders, NGOs, and policy practitioners, this symposium aims to identify pathways for improving the science and governance of small pelagics in an era of rapid change and increasing cross-jurisdictional pressures.

During a follow-up Focus Group, we will build directly on the symposium presentations to further discuss novel policy approaches to transboundary, data-poor, and multi-knowledge-system small pelagic fisheries management.



The intersection of marine knowledge and the BBNJ Agreement to advance novel policy and practice

ID: 53

Presenter: Lucy Woodall, University of Exeter; Christine Gaebel, University of Edinburgh; Maria Baker, University of Southampton

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 in June 2023 and came into force on 17 January 2026. This treaty marks a transformational moment in ocean governance and an unprecedented opportunity for scientific discovery and knowledge sharing to support policy innovation and practical conservation.

Areas beyond national jurisdiction primarily encompass deep-sea ecosystems, the vastest part of our planet and home to a high diversity of life, but remains under-explored and under-considered. Talks in this symposium will present current knowledge on deep sea and other ecosystems covered by the BBNJ Agreement, with a focus on the four themes of the agreement: 1. Marine genetic resources, 2. Area-based management tools, including marine protected areas, 3. Environmental impact assessments and 4. Capacity-building and the transfer of marine technology. Talks will also share knowledge gaps on scientific, training, policy, and governance themes and explore opportunities for innovative solutions to managing and monitoring ocean sustainability within the BBNJ Agreement.



Protecting The Far Corners of the World. – Conservation in Action Across the UK Overseas Territories.

ID: 54

Presenter: Simeon Philip Archer-Rand, Cefas

The UK Overseas Territories are responsible for over 5.7 million square kilometres of ocean stretching from the freezing Southern Ocean to tropical climates of the Caribbean. For the past ten years, the UKOTs, supported by the UK Government's Blue Belt Programme, have been working to protect and restore some of the world's most ecologically significant marine environments.

This symposium will explore how the Blue Belt Programme is supporting the protection and sustainable management of marine environments across the UKOTs. Speakers from participating Territories will share on-the-ground perspectives on the challenges and opportunities of delivering effective large-scale marine conservation in geographically isolated settings.

Topics will include developing and implementing marine management plans, strengthening compliance and enforcement in vast Exclusive Economic Zones, advancing marine science and monitoring in data-poor environments, and integrating local knowledge into decision-making. Presentations will highlight case studies demonstrating innovation in surveillance technologies, capacity building, community engagement, and ecosystem-based management.

The session will bring together scientists, managers, policymakers, and practitioners to illustrate how collaborative partnerships are translating ambition into action. Contributions will showcase how the Blue Belt Programme is helping Territories safeguard globally significant ecosystems while supporting sustainable economic opportunities for local communities.



From Detection to Enforcement: Interdisciplinary Solutions to Reduce IUU Fishing

ID: 57

Presenter: Shaili Johri, Hopkins Marine Station, Stanford University

This symposium aims to bring together global experts to explore innovations and strategies for addressing Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, a major threat to marine biodiversity, sustainable fisheries, and global food security. The session will highlight advances in monitoring fishing effort through artificial intelligence–based tools, satellite and AIS technologies, genomics, and other emerging approaches that enable near–real-time detection of illegal activity. Experts working on these and related technologies for identifying non-compliant behavior and improving fisheries enforcement are encouraged to contribute.

Presentations may also examine financial mechanisms and the socio economic drivers of IUU fishing, as well as methods for monitoring and addressing maritime crime. Contributions exploring interdisciplinary approaches, including the use of international trade regulations and compliance frameworks to prevent illegal harvest of threatened species, are particularly welcome. The session will further address current challenges and opportunities in global fisheries governance, including enforcement and collaborative initiatives. In addition, genetic monitoring tools will be discussed as a means to identify species and trace source populations, providing a scientific basis for enforcement and conservation.

By integrating technological innovations, policy, and finance mechanisms the symposium will highlight interdisciplinary solutions, showcase case studies, and provide actionable strategies to reduce IUU fishing.



AI for Oceans: Innovations, Tools and Strategies for Marine Conservation

ID: 58

Presenter: Shaili Johri, Hopkins Marine Station, Stanford University; Dhir DeRay, Georgia Institute of Technology

This symposium will bring together researchers and practitioners to showcase cutting-edge artificial intelligence (AI) innovations and tools transforming marine conservation, with a strong emphasis on completed, large-scale studies and applied case studies. Presentations will highlight advances in computer vision for species identification from underwater imagery, fisheries landings, and remote camera systems; machine learning approaches for detecting illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing using satellite and vessel tracking data; and predictive models for mapping species distributions, habitat use, and climate-driven shifts in marine ecosystems. The session will also explore the integration of AI with emerging technologies, including autonomous underwater vehicles, drones, and acoustic sensors, enabling scalable and cost-effective monitoring across diverse marine environments. Speakers are encouraged to present fully developed applications and operational systems, demonstrating how AI tools have been implemented at scale for biodiversity assessment, ecosystem monitoring, and fisheries management. Case studies highlighting real-world deployment, measurable outcomes, and lessons learned will be prioritized. The symposium will also address key challenges, including data limitations, model bias, interpretability, and the ethical use of AI in conservation contexts. By bringing together interdisciplinary perspectives, the session will emphasize practical tools, workflows, and collaborative approaches that move AI beyond proof-of-concept toward sustained, real-world impact.



Panel Discussions

Working Towards Transformative Collaboration: Integrating Social Sciences into Marine Conservation Research and Practice

ID: 25

Presenters: Quinn Mitsuko Parker, Stanford University; Stephanie Caddell, Stanford University; Catherine Lee Hing, Stanford University; Maggie Poulos, Stanford University; Marina Dewinara Luccioni, Stanford University

Conservation challenges are as much a consequence of social, political, and economic causes as ecological ones. As a result, many marine conservation scientists and practitioners are increasingly recognizing that effective and equitable conservation requires meaningful engagement with social scientists. Yet, integrating social science approaches into conservation research and practice remains challenging.

This session addresses these gaps and challenges by creating a space for conservationists, practitioners, and social scientists to reflect on interdisciplinary training and collaboration, and share practical strategies for working across disciplinary boundaries. The panel will bring together early-career scholars working across marine biology and conservation alongside social scientists—including political ecologists, social ecologists, and behavioral scientists—who have experience navigating both academic and practitioner spaces. Drawing on these perspectives, panelists will reflect on where interdisciplinary collaborations succeed, where they struggle, and how stronger connections can be built.

Following a brief panel discussion, the session will prioritize interactive dialogue with the audience, enabling participants to reflect on their own experiences and collaboratively identify pathways for improving interdisciplinary collaboration. Attendees will leave with practical strategies for navigating interdisciplinary conservation projects and research teams, strengthening the social foundations of marine conservation initiatives for more meaningful and productive partnerships across disciplines.



Building transdisciplinary long-term biodiversity monitoring for effective marine conservation

ID: 34

Presenter: Eric Pante, CNRS

Marine conservation increasingly depends on biodiversity monitoring systems capable of detecting ecological change across large spatial and temporal scales. Yet many monitoring initiatives remain fragmented, short-term, or limited to species inventories, constraining their capacity to reveal the mechanisms driving biodiversity responses to global change.

This panel will introduce the emerging BIODIVERSITY III initiative of the Belmont Forum, an international partnership of funding agencies, international scientific councils, and regional consortia dedicated to promoting transdisciplinary and transnational research to help understand, mitigate, and adapt to global environmental change. Belmont Forum funding opportunities—known as Collaborative Research Actions (CRAs)—are co-designed with the global research community and societal actors to identify research priorities addressing major sustainability challenges.

The goal of this session is to ensure that the marine conservation community is heard in shaping the scientific priorities of the BIODIVERSITY III CRA. Panelists and participants will discuss key needs for biodiversity monitoring in marine ecosystems, including long-term observations, integration across biological levels of organization, emerging technologies (eDNA, omics, automated monitoring), and connections between biodiversity science, policy, and societal action.

Insights from this discussion will help inform the co-design of future international research initiatives supporting biodiversity conservation.



Data-Driven Decisions for Marine Conservation: The Role of Transparency

ID: 38

Presenter: Charles Kilgour, Global Fishing Watch

This panel will examine how transparency can strengthen ocean governance and improve outcomes for marine conservation. Many of the most pressing ocean challenges including overfishing, bycatch, habitat degradation and illegal fishing occur across vast areas that are difficult to monitor. Limited visibility of human activity at sea often constrains science, weakens management and undermines enforcement.

Recent advances in satellite monitoring, vessel tracking and open data are changing this. Transparent information on fishing and other ocean uses allows scientists, managers and policy makers to better understand pressures on marine ecosystems and respond more effectively.

Panelists will discuss how transparency supports a range of conservation objectives. These include improving fisheries management, reducing bycatch, strengthening monitoring and enforcement, informing the design and management of marine protected areas and supporting global initiatives such as the 30x30 target and implementation of the BBNJ Agreement.

The session will highlight practical examples where open data and technology are helping translate scientific evidence into management action. It will also explore how transparency can be embedded in governance frameworks so that conservation measures are monitorable, enforceable and accountable in practice.



Pitfalls vs. promises of 30X30: Exploring the true potential of science and good governance in driving effective and equitable area-based conservation measures

ID: 39

Presenters: Kirsten Grorud-Colvert, Oregon State University; Fabrice Stephenson, Newcastle University; Gabby Ahmadi, WWF; Joachim Claudet, CNRS-CRIOBE; Olan Leimomi Fisher, Kua'āina Ulu 'Auamo (KUA)

With 2030 four years away and fast approaching, many are reflecting on Target 3 of the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), which calls for conserving at least 30% of the ocean in effective MPAs and OECMs, recognizing Indigenous and traditional territories. It is clear that using the best available science, including traditional knowledge, and good governance and management practices is crucial for ensuring protected and conserved areas are more than just a race to meet a number. The goal is for these areas to achieve effective conservation outcomes for both biodiversity and people. Tools such as The MPA Guide and The Marine OECM Guide exist to support policy decisions at regional, national and global scales. The speakers on this panel represent academic scientists, practitioners, and Indigenous and community leaders, who will share their perspective on using available knowledge and data to evaluate biodiversity conservation effectiveness in different contexts and geographies. They will reflect on national and community-led approaches to MPAs and OECMs, centering effective and equitable outcomes for nature and people that are rooted in robust knowledge and just practices.



Tools for marine social-ecological resilience: what works, where, and for whom?

ID: 44

Presenters: Frdrique Fardin, Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute; Anastasia Quintana, University of California, Santa Barbara; Ana Spalding, Oregon State University; Lily Zhao, Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute; Amber L Carter, Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute; Annika Bush, Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute; Carolina Chong-Montenegro, Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute

Resilience is widely used in marine conservation science and policy, particularly in efforts to address climate change, biodiversity loss, and pressures on coastal communities. However, the concept is often applied inconsistently across disciplines. This panel is organized by the [Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute Community-based Resilience Solutions Initiative](#) around three guiding questions:

1. What does “resilience” mean in marine social–ecological systems?
2. How is resilience operationalized in practice?
3. When and for whom do these tools work

Panelists will compare how different approaches, including MPAs, fisheries development, technology (e.g., decision-support), equity-based measures, and finance, define resilience. The panel will include representatives from academia and research institutions, alongside a fisher and/or a coastal community representative to ground the discussion in lived experience and challenges.

The aim is to understand what makes resilience tools work in some places and not others by sharing experiences, identifying enabling conditions, and identifying synergies between tools.

Expected outputs:

1. Initial development of a cross-sector “Conditions for Success” Framework: panel discussion will introduce concept and develop initial thoughts and may invite participants to join an online working group to develop the framework further
2. Blog-style key takeaways from the panel discussion (non-technical)



From Policy to Practice: The Reality of Marine Conservation in Low-Income Countries

ID: 45

Presenter: Pilar Blanco, Florida Gulf Coast University

This panel will examine the gap between marine conservation policies and their implementation in low-income countries. While many nations have established marine protected areas and conservation regulations, limited financial resources, governance challenges, and competing socioeconomic priorities often hinder effective enforcement and management.

Panelists will discuss the structural barriers that prevent conservation measures from moving beyond policy documents, including limited institutional capacity, lack of monitoring and enforcement, and insufficient community engagement. The discussion will also highlight case studies illustrating both challenges and successful strategies for improving conservation outcomes.

By bringing together researchers, practitioners, and policymakers, the panel aims to explore practical solutions to strengthen marine conservation implementation and promote more equitable and effective management of marine ecosystems in low-income countries.



Beyond Consultation: Rethinking Community Roles in Marine Conservation

ID: 46

Presenter: Elizabeth Lacey, Heriot-Watt University

Marine conservation is increasingly recognising that long-term ecosystem protection and recovery depend on meaningful partnerships with coastal communities. Yet in practice, community involvement often remains limited to consultation rather than genuine collaboration in conservation design and delivery.

This panel will explore how marine conservation initiatives can move beyond consultation toward more inclusive, community-engaged approaches that support both ecosystem protection and recovery. Bringing together perspectives from scientists, community leaders, NGOs, and policy practitioners, the panel will draw on applied experiences from conservation initiatives involving habitats such as seagrass, shellfish reefs, and other coastal ecosystems. The discussion will examine how communities can participate in conservation planning, monitoring, stewardship, and decision-making.

Panelists will share lessons from practice, including how trust and long-term partnerships are built, how local knowledge can complement scientific research, and how conservation initiatives can balance ecological objectives with social and economic realities in coastal regions. The conversation will also address barriers such as governance structures, funding models, and institutional constraints that can limit meaningful participation.

Through interdisciplinary dialogue and audience engagement, the session will identify lessons learned, practical strategies for strengthening community partnerships, and advancing more inclusive and effective marine conservation.



Learning from our global community: conversations with small grant programs and conservation practitioners

ID: 47

Presenters: Elizabeth Stephenson, New England Aquarium; Emily Duwan, New England Aquarium

Small grant programs are often closely connected with marine conservationists working at the local level through grant-making and the relationships they build over time. These connections create opportunities not only to conserve ocean biodiversity but also to listen to and learn alongside local coastal leaders and organizations. Insights from these relationships help guide how small grant programs support conservation efforts over time. This panel, hosted by the New England Aquarium's Marine Conservation Action Fund (MCAF) and the Rufford Foundation, brings together small grant funders and practitioners to listen, learn, and better understand the experiences that shape ocean conservation efforts. Staff from MCAF and the Rufford Foundation, together with project leaders from their global conservation communities, will briefly introduce their programs and reflect on lessons learned through their work with conservation practitioners and local communities. Through a facilitated discussion, participants will explore questions together, including: What does success in conservation look like? How can it be communicated meaningfully? How can initiatives learn from challenges and successes? What forms of support or connection help sustain projects after a grant period ends? Insights from the discussion will be shared with participants and other funders to help inform approaches to best support this global community.



Curbing Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing through Monitoring, Governance, and Innovation

ID: 48

Presenter: Shaili Johri, Hopkins Marine Station, Stanford University

This panel brings together global experts to explore strategies for addressing Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, a key threat to marine biodiversity, sustainable fisheries, and global food security. Panelists will include Global Fishing Watch, presenting advances in monitoring fishing effort through satellite and AIS technologies, enabling near-real-time detection of illegal activity. Experts in telemetry and vessel tracking will highlight the latest approaches for detecting illegal activity and improving compliance. Dyhia Belhabib will discuss financial mechanisms, economic drivers of IUU fishing, and methods for monitoring maritime crime to support enforcement. A representative from CITES will highlight how international trade regulations and internal frameworks can strengthen compliance and prevent illegal harvest of threatened species. FAO will outline current challenges and opportunities in global fisheries management, including governance, enforcement, and collaborative initiatives. The session will also explore the use of genetic monitoring tools to identify species and trace source populations, providing a scientific basis for enforcement and conservation. By integrating technology, policy, finance, telemetry, and genetics, the symposium showcases interdisciplinary solutions, highlights case studies, and provides actionable guidance for improving global fisheries governance. Participants will leave with practical strategies and pathways to reduce IUU fishing through collaboration across research, policy, and enforcement.



Indigenous and non-Indigenous governments chart a path of collaborative governance and long-term sustainable funding to implement the Great Bear Sea MPA Network

ID: 49

Presenter: Fiona Beaty, Coastal First Nations-Great Bear Initiative

The Great Bear Sea MPA Network initiative ('the Network') is implementing the first network of marine protected areas (MPAs) in Canada and the only MPA network in the world that is collaboratively governed by Indigenous and non-Indigenous governments. This large-scale marine conservation initiative is collaboratively governed by a partnership of seventeen First Nations, the Province of British Columbia, and Government of Canada. The Network includes existing and proposed new MPAs that span 30% of the Great Bear Sea – a region that comprises approximately 102,000 km² along the Pacific coast of Canada. Network planning commenced in 2014, building upon First Nation-led marine planning that began in the early 2000s. As of 2024, proposed new MPAs are being established by the governing partners throughout the Great Bear Sea.

During this panel, speakers from the Network's Governing Partners (First Nations, Federal, and Provincial governments) will discuss lessons learned from designing and implementing this multi-decadal collaborative and large-scale marine conservation initiative. Specific discussion topics include the development of unprecedented legally binding collaborative governance agreements and long-term sustainable funding structures, the value of designing and implementing MPAs within a network framework, and the ways that the Partners have overcome roadblocks while collaboratively implementing this globally important network of MPAs.



How do we know if marine conservation is working

ID: 50

Presenter: Divya Karnad, Ashoka University; Hollie Booth, University of Oxford

How do we know if marine conservation is actually working and for whom? Despite growing investment in ocean protection, rigorous impact evaluation remains rare. Counterfactual thinking, i.e. asking what would have happened without an intervention, is underused, poorly understood, and often seen as the preserve of academic researchers rather than practitioners and funders. This panel brings together a diverse group of academics, NGO leaders, and conservation entrepreneurs from across the Global South to challenge that assumption. Drawing on experience from the Global North and South, panelists will explore how interdisciplinary, mixed-methods evaluation frameworks can generate robust evidence without sacrificing equity or local relevance. Discussions will span social, economic, and ecological indicators; theory-based to experimental counterfactual approaches; and the practical question of how conservation projects can be better designed from the outset to enable meaningful impact assessment. The panel will involve funders (Shark Conservation Fund, Save Our Seas Foundation etc.), social entrepreneurs (Innovations for Poverty Action etc.) academics and practitioners (Dr. Hollie Booth, Dr. Divya Karnad etc.), and impact evaluators (SCB Impact Evaluation working group, IIED etc.)



What Matters Most for Our Oceans Today

ID: 62

Presenter: Shaili Johri, Hopkins Marine Station, Stanford University

This plenary session will be at closing and will bring together reflections from across IMCC8 to explore how the marine conservation community is responding to today's most urgent challenges and where we need to go next. Drawing on insights, discussions, and emerging themes from across disciplines and sessions throughout the Congress, the session will synthesize key successes, persistent gaps, and priorities for future action.

The discussion will highlight issues including marine biodiversity protection, overfishing, habitat restoration, climate resilience, sustainable fisheries management, governance, and equity, while examining the diverse approaches being used to address them. Reflections will consider the roles of science, policy, community engagement, advocacy, markets, and collaboration in translating knowledge into meaningful conservation outcomes.

The plenary will also ask **what is working, what is not, and what needs to change** as ocean pressures intensify. By bringing together perspectives from across the Congress, the session will identify shared priorities, emerging opportunities, and areas where greater collaboration is needed.

The reflections will help capture the collective learning of IMCC8 and look beyond the Congress toward **concrete priorities and opportunities for action in the years ahead**.