

Make the 3rd *United Nations Ocean Conference* a decisive step for the *protection of the Ocean*

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The third United Nations Conference on the Ocean, known as 'UNOC3', co-organised by France and Costa Rica in Nice from 9 to 13 June 2025, is intended to awaken the international community to the need to protect the ocean. After two previous conferences with mixed results and few concrete commitments, UNOC3 aims to make progress on major international issues for better ocean conservation; an opportunity to build true 'blue governance'.

What form of governance for the Ocean?

Initiated with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982, the governance of the Ocean establishes a legal framework for maritime areas by delimiting what falls under the sovereignty of States and what falls under the high seas. Today, this international governance is fragmented and complex, with a large number of organisations and regional conventions that do not allow for a global approach.

The ESEC identifies several conditions for success for good ocean governance, such as: better coordination of scientific research, an evaluation of all international conventions and a single forum for discussions and commitments between States on the protection of the Ocean.

An opportunity to advance major texts for the protection of the Ocean

This conference is a catalyst for the conclusion, ratification and entry into force of international texts currently in preparation. Several texts, particularly on the high seas, the seabed, fishing and plastic pollution, represent an opportunity to overcome political divisions and send a clear message: the Ocean is a common good.

Beyond the texts, the ESEC is calling for a paradigm shift in the uses of the Ocean. In particular, it points out the lack of consideration by the UNOC3 of the working conditions and support for people who work at sea. Social issues must be included on the agendas of future Ocean conferences.

With its 21 recommendations, the ESEC calls for the strengthening of scientific cooperation, organising human activities in a sustainable way and having adequate funding.



71%

of the planet's surface: that is what the ocean represents. It is the biggest sink for carbon emissions on Earth.



Taking action for true blue governance

1 Effective protection of marine protected areas (MPAs)

The objective is clear: to achieve 30% of 'protected' maritime areas worldwide by 2030. In France, only 1.7% of MPAs benefit from high and high protection. In most French MPAs, trawling is therefore authorised.

→ How?

By establishing a common definition of marine protected areas at the global level, excluding the minimum and light levels of protection, which do not include a sufficient protective dimension for biodiversity and ecosystems.

2 Support the moratorium on deep-sea mining

The deep seabed covers the marine soil and subsoil of international waters beyond the established national jurisdictions of exclusive economic zones. More than three quarters of the ocean floor belongs to the deep-sea area, yet less than 20% of the seabed has been mapped and less than 20% of species have been discovered.

→ How?

By supporting the moratorium on deep sea mining and by emphasising the absolute priority given to scientific exploration, which should enable a better shared knowledge of the Ocean.

3 Stop subsidies for illegal fishing and overfishing

Worldwide, one in five fish caught is the result of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and overfishing (IUU). These harmful fishing methods receive two-thirds of public financial support

→ How?

By rallying a sufficient number of States to implement the WTO Agreement on the cessation of subsidies for illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and overfishing.

4 Contributing to the decarbonization of maritime transport

Today, 90% of world trade transits by sea, with traffic increasing sharply. It accounted for 2.89% of total global anthropogenic CO₂ emissions in 2018. The use of pragmatic decisions that can be applied quickly and easily at low cost is to be preferred.

→ How?

The ESEC would like UNOC 3 to propose rapid operational implementation measures to contribute to the decarbonisation of maritime transport, such as, for example, reducing ship speeds.

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