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INTEGRATING THE OCEAN: OPTIONS FOR THE CMA 5 DECISION ON THE GLOBAL STOCKTAKE

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Integrating the ocean in the CMA 5 Decision on the Global Stocktake

Key messages

- The ocean and its coasts are some of our **strongest allies in the fight against climate change**, as they hold significant mitigation and adaptation potential in addition to multiple co-benefits.
- Yet, at this stage, they are **largely absent from the Global Stocktake** (GST), since none of the key messages emerging from the technical dialogues explicitly mention the ocean and coastal zones.
- The political outcome of the GST – i.e., the CMA 5 Decision and any supporting documents – should provide Parties with the **requested guidance necessary to increase their ambition** and **strengthen ocean and climate action**, especially in the context of their national strategies.
- Building on the Synthesis Report on Views on Elements for Consideration of Outputs Phase, this paper highlights some **options to consider and integrate the ocean and coasts in the CMA 5 Decision**.
- Among these options, Parties could decide that **future Ocean and Climate Change Dialogues**, from 2024, could work towards informing national climate goals and implementation of these goals in accordance with Decisions 1/CP.26 and 1/CP.27, as well as the Global Stocktake.
- Parties could support the **implementation of the Ocean Breakthroughs** (i.e., aquatic food, marine conservation, ocean renewable energy, ocean-based transport and coastal tourism), which act as a roadmap to catalyse action and investments to harness the full potential of the ocean.

The ocean in UNFCCC mandates

1992 UNFCCC

- *Recognises the role of marine ecosystems as carbon sinks and reservoirs both explicitly (**Preamble**) and implictly (**Art. 4d**)*
- *Targets the protection of the climate system (**Art. 2**) whose definition covers the ocean and its ecosystems (**Art. 1**)*

2015 PARIS AGREEMENT

- *Notes the importance of ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems, including the ocean (**Preamble**)*
- *Recognises both the mitigation (**Art.5.1**) and adaptation (**Art. 7.5**) potential of all ecosystems*

2019 COP 25 DECISION

- *Shared appreciation and gratitude to the IPCC 2019 Special Reports, which includes the Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere (**Para. 6**)*
- *Stresses the importance of protecting and ensuring the intgrity of the ocean (**Para. 30**)*
- *Requests the SBSTA to convene a dialogue on the ocean and climate change (**Para. 31**)*
- *Establishment of the Nairobi Work Programme Thematic Expert Group on Ocean & Coastal Zones (**SBSTA 50**) and convening of the 13th Focal Point Forum on the topic of the ocean (**COP 25**)*

2021 COP 26 DECISION

- *Reaffirms the importance of ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems, including the ocean and the cryosphere (**Preamble**)*
- *Emphasises the importance of protecting and restoring marine ecosystems and their services (**Para. 50**), including to achieve the goals of the Convention (**Para. 21**)*
- *Welcomes the summary report on the Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue (**Para. 58**) and makes it annual (**Para. 61**)*
- *Invites work programmes and bodies to integrate ocean-based action in their mandates (**Para. 60**)*

2022 COP 27 DECISION

- *Notes the importance of ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems, including the ocean and the cryosphere (**Preamble**)*
- *Clarifies the modalities of the Ocean and Climate Change dialogues, appointing two co- facilitators (**Para. 45**)*
- *Encourages Parties to consider ocean action in their national climate strategies (**Para. 46**)*

Introduction

The ocean and its coasts are some of our strongest allies in the fight against climate change. Both a powerful carbon sink and heat reservoir, the ocean plays a vital role in regulating our global climate system. [1] The ocean is also central to the adaptation and resilience of communities with its ecosystems acting as buffers against climate impacts. [2] It is home to an unparalleled diversity of ecosystems which sustain marine life and the coastal communities who rely on its resources. [3] Essential in assuring the food security and nutrition of more than 3 billion people [4], the ocean further generates multiple socioeconomic benefits to coastal communities, such as sustainable employment, livelihoods and Indigenous practices.

Yet, **the ocean's ability to regulate the climate system and provide critical ecosystem services is at risk** due to increasing greenhouse gas (GHG), especially carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions, combined with multiple stressors. [5] These current and projected impacts threaten our capacity to deliver on the goals of the Paris Agreement, as the ocean is nearing the limit of heat and CO2 it can absorb without suffering ecosystem-wide catastrophic impacts. The only way forward to successfully meet the goals of the Paris Agreement is to ensure climate action is biodiversity-positive, and guided by the best available science.

Considerable milestones have been achieved since COP21 and the adoption of the Paris Agreement to consider and integrate the ocean into the UNFCCC. Parties increasingly recognise the ocean as a powerful source of solutions. More countries are including ocean-based climate actions (i.e., marine conservation, aquatic food, ocean renewable energy, ocean-based transport and coastal tourism) in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for mitigation or adaptation, with over 70% of new or updated NDCs including at least one. [6] [7] In addition, Parties established an annual dialogue on the ocean and climate change, held under the aegis of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice, thus creating a space to discuss how to strengthen ocean-based mitigation and adaptation.

Some challenges still exist in translating Parties' interest and commitments into concrete action, as highlighted by the request from Parties during the 2023 Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue to **receive guidance on how to better integrate ocean-based climate action into their climate strategies**. [8]

At the heart of the ratcheting mechanism, the **Global Stocktake** (GST) represents a key opportunity to assess progress made to date and, where necessary, correct course. The GST acts as an important global checkpoint to assess the world's collective progress towards achieving the long term goals of the Paris Agreement. As such, it plays an essential role in **informing the next round of NDCs**.

As stated by Simon Stiell, UNFCCC Executive Secretary, when noting the importance of the GST process, "it is the **global response** to [the GST] that will make all the difference." Its final and ongoing phase, known as the consideration of outputs or the political component, is specifically intended to discuss the implications of the findings of the technical assessment.

The GST will summarise "**opportunities and challenges** for enhancing action and support in the light of equity and the best available science, as well as **lessons learned and good practices**" as per paragraph 13 of Decision 19/CMA1. In doing so, it can provide **viable and critical options**, including ocean-based actions, for Parties to enhance their contribution to the Paris Agreement. [9]

Yet, at this stage, the **ocean is still largely missing from the GST**. Elements focusing on the implementation of ocean-based climate measures are **lost in an overwhelming flow of information** on the overall implementation of the Paris Agreement (1600+ documents and 170,000+ pages) – as are several other areas of action. Similarly, the ocean and related measures were mostly absent from the GST technical dialogue discussions [10], where Parties built a shared understanding of the collective, including by identifying gaps and opportunities. This failure to capitalise on the growing momentum around ocean action is reflected in the emerging key messages of the dialogue, none of which explicitly mention the ocean.

Given the major role of the ocean in the climate system, and its potential in mitigating and adapting to climate change, **the first GST cannot overlook the intrinsic relationship between ocean and climate**. The political outcome of the GST – i.e., the CMA 5 Decision and any supporting documents – should **provide Parties with the requested guidance necessary to increase their ambition and strengthen ocean-based climate measures,** especially in the context of their national strategies. To that end, and building on the suggestions made in the Synthesis Report on Views on Elements for Consideration of Outputs Phase, **we recommend that Parties to the UNFCCC consider including the following elements in the CMA 5 Decision:**

Preamble

- Recalling Article 2 (a) of the Paris Agreement, *urging* Parties to undertake urgent and deep reductions in GHG emissions in this critical decade with the aim of keeping the 1.5ºC target within reach and avoid overshoot and further irreversible impacts;
- *Recognising* the vital role that ocean and coastal ecosystems play in the global climate system, and the current and projected impacts of climate change on ocean and coastal biodiversity, habitats and communities, as evidenced by the IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere;
- Recalling Article 2 of the Convention and Decision 1/CP.27, *recognising* the fundamental priority of safeguarding food security and ending hunger, and emphasising that climate change adaptation and mitigation, including ocean-based climate action, need to be carried out in context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty, in a manner that does not threaten food production;
- Recalling paragraph 13 of the Preamble of the Paris Agreement and Decision 1/CP.26, *reaffirming* the importance of ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems, including the ocean and cryosphere, when taking action to address climate change and other related global targets, in particular under the Sustainable Development Goals and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework;

Context and cross-cutting considerations

- *Welcome* the outcomes and key messages from the Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue in 2023, including information on the identified opportunities to fill gaps, build capacity and strengthen ocean-based climate action under the Convention;
- *Welcome* the growing recognition from Parties of the essential role of ocean-based climate measures in ambitious mitigation and adaptation action, and resulting efforts to include these measures in their national climate strategies, including Nationally Determined Contributions, National Adaptation Plans, and Long-Term Low-Emission Development strategies;
- *Support* the recommendations from the IPCC 6th Assessment Report to secure the conservation of 30% to 50% of Earth's land, freshwater and ocean areas, to protect biodiversity, build ecosystem resilience and ensure essential ecosystem services, and meet the goals of the Paris Agreement and the Kunming- Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework;
- *Recognise* the integral role of holistic and comprehensive approaches that recognise human rights, biodiversity protection, ocean management, food security, sustainable energy generation, gender equality, synergies with sustainable development and poverty eradication efforts and just transition;
- *Recognise* the important role of non-Party stakeholders in delivering the goals of the Paris Agreement, including the role that Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women and youth play in successful, locally led nature-based climate action, especially for avoiding maladaptation;

Mitigation

- *Invite* Parties to scale ocean-based mitigation action as part of their national climate strategies to conserve ocean and coastal ecosystems, promote decarbonisation along aquatic food value chains and across maritime sectors, and deploy ocean renewable energy at scale;
- Recalling Decision 1/CP.26, *invite* Parties to protect, conserve and restore ecosystems, including ocean and coastal, to achieve the long-term global goal of the Convention by acting as sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases and protecting biodiversity, while ensuring social and environmental safeguards;
- *Accelerate* efforts to reach net zero emissions from shipping on a timeline consistent with the long term temperature goal set out in Article 2 of the Paris Agreement, including efforts to meet the levels of ambition and indicative checkpoints in the 2023 International Maritime Organisation Greenhouse Gas Strategy;
- *Scale-up* responsible deployment of ocean-based renewable energy generation, that has net-positive impact on biodiversity and contributes to closing the projected emissions gap by 2050;
- *Consider* ocean-based mitigation options in the Mitigation Work Programme, including by looking at the role of ecosystems as sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases as stressed in Decision 1/CP.26, and opportunities to include these ecosystems in national greenhouse gas inventories;
- *Adopt* a precautionary and inclusive approach to carbon dioxide removal discussions, including ocean-based projects, to ensure that these technologies are sufficiently researched and can show benefits to the climate, have a net-positive outcome for biodiversity and respect the rights of ocean-dependent people, while significant science and governance gaps are still being addressed;

Adaptation

- *Invite* Parties to deploy ocean-based adaptation and resilience measures, favouring ecosystem-based approaches that can benefit and protect coastal communities;
- *Encourage* Parties to mainstream ocean and coastal adaptation into sectoral and cross-sector plans, budgets, legislation, policies and strategies, and integrate climate and disaster risks into the design and implementation of food, infrastructure, energy, ocean- and other nature-based solutions;
- *Note* the cross border and transboundary risks posed by climate change on the ocean, including distributional and productivity changes of transboundary or shared fishery resources, and recognise the importance of strengthening responses to these changes including through leveraging the role of regional fisheries management organisations and regional fisheries advisory bodies;
- Welcome the establishment of the Global Goal on Adaptation framework, and support its implementation to track and assess the effectiveness and efficiency of adaptation actions, taking into account the different themes, including the Ocean and Coastal Systems;
- Request support and guidance from the Ocean Experts Group of the Nairobi Work Programme on how to strengthen ocean-based adaptation and resilience measures, especially in the context of Nationally Determined Contributions and National Adaptation Plans;

Means of implementation

- *Increase* funding and support for ocean and coastal science and research, with an emphasis on responding to the impacts of climate change on fisheries, aquaculture, marine habitats and ecosystems;

- *Encourage* relevant constituted bodies to outline regional priority gaps in data and information, alongside an inventory of technological and institutional capacity needs for measuring coastal impacts of climate change, including ocean warming and acidification, sea level rise, and extreme weather events;
- *Improve* the monitoring of high-carbon coastal ecosystem sinks through ecosystem mapping, and the measurement of above- and below-ground carbon stocks, historical fluxes from loss and degradation of these ecosystems, and associated emissions;
- *Channel* more funds towards ocean-based climate solutions, particularly public and private sector financing, while ensuring equitable benefit-sharing in which funding reaches local communities;
- *Recognise* the urgent need to increase finance dedicated to support vulnerable communities, including small-scale food producers, to adapt to the impacts of climate change, and emphasise the importance of empowering these communities with the know-how to access funds effectively, while enhancing awareness and capacity of funding institutions, including the Global Environment Facility and Green Climate Fund, to better facilitate access to climate finance for related ocean and coastal priorities;

Loss & Damage

- *Improve* understanding of risks related to ocean-related loss and damage and costs associated, including through increased scientific cooperation;
- **[***Welcome***/***Support***]** the operationalisation of the Santiago Network on Loss and Damage, and technical support to developing countries on assessing, minimising and addressing ocean-related loss and damage;
- *Ensure* that adequate and prompt new financial support is provided to affected coastal communities, especially in Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries, for the loss and damage of ocean and coastal ecosystems and sea level rise through the Loss and Damage Fund;

International cooperation

- *Welcome* the engagement of non-Party stakeholders, including through the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action, and expressing appreciation on the leadership of the UN Climate Change High-level Champions;
- *Welcome* the adoption by Parties of the 2030 Breakthroughs and the Sharm el Sheikh Adaptation Agenda and the importance of terrestrial, freshwater, coastal, and marine solutions to deliver on these pathways;
- *Welcome* the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework under the Convention on Biological Diversity, and especially recognising target 8 to minimise the impact of climate change and ocean acidification on biodiversity and increase its resilience through mitigation, adaptation, and disaster risk reduction actions, including through nature-based solutions and/or ecosystem-based approaches, while minimising negative and fostering positive impacts of climate action on biodiversity;
- *Invite* and *engage* with stakeholders from all levels of society (including private sector, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, youth) to further align their actions and initiatives with the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement and conclusions of the first Global Stocktake in their work;
- *Enhance* international cooperation across multilateral environmental conventions and agreements to take advantage of synergies (e.g., the Convention Biological Diversity, the World Trade Organisation, the International Maritime Organisation), as well as align their national climate strategies with other relevant global targets (e.g., the Sustainable Development Goals, National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans) for increased consistency and impact;

Guidance and ways forward

- Recalling the invitation of Decision 1/CP.26 (paragraph 60) to integrate and strengthen ocean-based action in the existing mandates of UNFCCC work programmes and constituted bodies, and Decision 1/CP.27 (paragraph 83) encouraging parties to consider, as appropriate, ocean-based action in their national climate goals and in the implementation of these goals: [the Parties] decide that future Ocean and Climate Change Dialogues, from 2024, will work towards informing national climate goals and implementation of those goals, as well as the Global Stocktake;

- Inviting the Chair of Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice to compile lessons learned and good practices presented during subsequent Ocean and Climate Change Dialogues to inform national climate goals and implementation of those goals, as well as the Global Stocktake, in accordance with Decision 1/CP.26 (paragraph 60) and Decision 1/CP.27 (Paragraph 83)

- *Request* the UNFCCC Secretariat to organise a series of technical workshops to provide Parties with an opportunity to exchange lessons learnt and best practices, including on ocean-based climate action, for enhancing and developing next Nationally Determined Contributions in a manner informed by the findings of the first Global Stocktake;

- *Mobilise* the necessary finance and create the enabling environments to support the implementation of the Ocean Breakthroughs to deliver up to 21 percent greenhouse emissions reductions and contribute to a resilient, nature-positive and net zero world by 2050;

- *Invite* Parties and non-Party stakeholders to use the Ocean Breakthroughs as pathways to accelerate ocean-based climate action in response to the Global Stocktake, including as tools to track progress made on actions and commitments;

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