INTEGRATING BLUE MEASURES IN NATIONAL CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY STRATEGIES

Insights and outcomes from the policy workshop

BLUE SEEDS

CHINA INSTITUTE FOR MARINE AFFAIRS

NATIONAL MARINE HAZARD MITIGATION SERVICE

OCEAN & CLIMATE PLATFORM

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ACRONYMS

AFD	French Development Agency
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBF	China Biodiversity Facility
COP	Conference of the Parties
EbA	Ecosystem-based Adaptation
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EU	European Union
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GHGi	Greenhouse Gas Inventory
MNR	Ministry of Natural Resources
NAP	National Adaptation Plans
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NMDIS	National Marine Data and Information Service
NMHMS	National Marine Hazard Mitigation Service
OCP	Ocean & Climate Platform
PES	Payment for Ecosystem Services
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNOC	United Nations Ocean Conference

KEY TERMINOLOGY

Blue carbon ecosystems refer specifically to mangroves, seagrasses and salt marshes – as they are the only coastal ecosystems with IPCC-approved guidance on how to account for their measurable contribution to a country's emission reduction efforts.

Blue carbon measures refer to specific policy action to manage, protect or restore blue carbon ecosystems. They are led by governments.

Blue carbon initiatives refer to programmes, partnerships or projects designed to enhance the management, protection or restoration of blue carbon ecosystems. They involve multiple stakeholders.

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), at the core of the Paris Agreement, outline efforts undertaken by each country individually to contribute to the collective goal of the Paris Agreement. Updated every five years, based on a global stocktake, each NDC is expected to be more ambitious than the previous one.

National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), the biodiversity counterpart to NDCs, are strategic planning documents developed by each Party to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) that outline how a country intends to meet its obligations to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Blue carbon initiatives are among the most advanced nature-based solutions in the marine environment, both in terms of guidance and operationalisation. They can deliver substantial co-benefits for climate, nature and people. By integrating blue carbon measures into their national strategies, governments can **enhance the ambition and impact of their global commitments**.

- While not a substitute for deep emissions cuts, blue carbon ecosystems can contribute to **countries' climate mitigation goals**. Countries are encouraged to use the **2013 Wetlands Supplement**[1] to estimate and report national greenhouse gas emissions and removals from mangroves, salt marshes, and seagrasses. Additionally, blue carbon ecosystems support **climate adaptation goals**, protecting coastal communities and ecosystems from climate change impacts, increasing their resilience, and providing key ecosystem services to local populations.

- To unlock this potential, governments must **create the enabling conditions**.
  - Science provides the foundation for setting **evidence-based targets** and establishing **accountability mechanisms** that ensure transparency and follow-through.
  - Policy creates the **enabling regulatory environment**. To be effective, blue carbon policies require **well-defined institutional roles and responsibilities** across government ministries and agencies, overcoming institutional silos to ensure coherent and coordinated action – for instance through inter ministerial committees. A clear and stable policy landscape also provides the long-term certainty that investors need to confidently engage in blue carbon initiatives. In this context, **NDC can serve as an unifying framework** that can align different sectors and levels of governments, and to drive forward coherent blue carbon policy.
  - **Securing sufficient investment** is critical for the success of blue carbon initiatives. In addition to public funding, innovative financial tools can support blue carbon activities.

- While not a silver bullet, carbon markets can help bridge current climate finance gaps and support NDC implementation. With Article 6 of the Paris Agreement now operational, there is growing potential for blue carbon projects to be responsibly considered in possible compliance market programmes, as well as in the voluntary carbon market projects.

- Blue carbon initiatives should follow a shared model, while remaining adaptable to each country's specific context. Achieving this balance depends on the **meaningful engagement of local actors**, whose insights help ensure a comprehensive, scalable model remains grounded in local realities. Moreover, fostering **local ownership** is a key driver of both effectiveness and lasting impact.

- **Partnership** is essential to the success of blue carbon initiatives. At the global level, key initiatives are driving this agenda and fostering international cooperation, presenting valuable engagement opportunities for countries and regional organisations including China and the European Union.
  - The **Mangrove Breakthrough** aims to secure 15 million hectares of mangroves by 2030, underpinned by $4 billion of sustainable finance. To support governments that have endorsed the initiative, a Mangrove Breakthrough NDC Task Force has been established.
  - The **International Partnership for Blue Carbon** fosters collaboration, enabling the development of blue carbon solutions informed by the global community's experience and expertise.

Blue carbon measures contribute not only to the Paris Agreement, but also to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the Sustainable Development Goals, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and other key global frameworks. **Integrating blue carbon ecosystems into national planning and reporting instruments can therefore support greater alignment and policy coherence**. In particular, such integration can strengthen synergies between the Nationally Determined Contributions and the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans.

[1] IPCC (2013). 2013 Supplement to the 2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories: Wetlands. Available here.

Introduction

When effectively and sustainably managed, blue carbon ecosystems offer **multi-purpose solutions** that deliver substantial co-benefits for climate, nature and people. As some of the most advanced nature-based solutions in the marine environment, both in terms of guidance and operationalisation, they **hold significant potential to support the Paris Agreement, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the Sustainable Development Goals and other global frameworks**. By integrating blue carbon measures into their national strategies – particularly Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs) – **governments can enhance the ambition and impact of their climate and biodiversity commitments**.

The Policy Dialogue on Blue Carbon

As part of its national climate strategy, China has committed to conserving and restoring blue carbon ecosystems. The European Union (EU), which actively supports developing countries through technical and development assistance, can play a key role in supporting China's blue carbon efforts, helping to address existing gaps and challenges to ensure delivery of global goals.

To support and strengthen this bilateral collaboration, the French Development Agency (AFD) has launched a Policy Dialogue on Blue Carbon, under China Biodiversity Facility. This initiative is carried out with BlueSeeds, National Marine Hazard Mitigation Service (NMHMS) and National Marine Data and Information Service (NMDIS) of the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) of China, and Ocean & Climate Platform (OCP).

The Policy Dialogue pursues three core objectives:

- to **develop and improve the methodologies** of carbon sink accounting, monitoring and trading in blue carbon generated from ecosystem conservation, management and restoration projects;
- to **strengthen the institutional capacity** of Chinese entities in blue carbon accounting, monitoring, and policy-making; and
- to **promote the role of blue carbon at national, regional and global levels** as effective solutions and incentives to achieve environmental and socioeconomic co-benefits.

The workshop on Integrating Blue Carbon Measures in National Climate and Biodiversity Strategies

As part of the Policy Dialogue, partners – led by the OCP – hosted a workshop titled "Integrating Blue Carbon Measures in National Climate and Biodiversity Strategies" on 20 March 2025. This event brought together China and EU policy makers, as well as scientists and experts, to exchange knowledge, share case studies and explore pathways to design and implement blue carbon strategies. Additionally, the workshop served as a platform to identify and discuss opportunities to enhance bilateral collaboration between China and the EU on blue carbon ecosystems.

This report summarises the key takeaways from the workshop, synthesising the contributions of the speakers and discussants, and providing a structured overview of the findings.

The presentations are available for download from this **link** for more detailed information.

1. Integrating blue carbon ecosystems into NDCs

1.1. Strategic relevance in integrating blue carbon ecosystems into national strategies

Blue carbon refers to the carbon captured and stored in coastal and marine ecosystems[2]. Blue carbon ecosystems – namely mangroves, seagrasses and salt marshes – have the ability to **sequester and store large quantities of carbon**. Beyond their climate mitigation potential, these ecosystems provide **multiple services to local populations** such as protecting coastlines, supporting biodiversity, providing livelihoods, and ensuring ocean health (see Figure 1).

The term "blue carbon" is also increasingly being applied to other ecosystems beyond mangroves, seagrasses and salt marshes, such as macroalgae, and potential mitigation benefits that may be achieved by protection of these places. However, at this time, **only mangroves, seagrasses and salt marshes have guidance approved by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change** (IPCC) on the measurable extent to which they can contribute to a country's emission reduction efforts (i.e. the Wetlands Supplement[3]). Therefore, the focus of this report is limited to these three ecosystems.

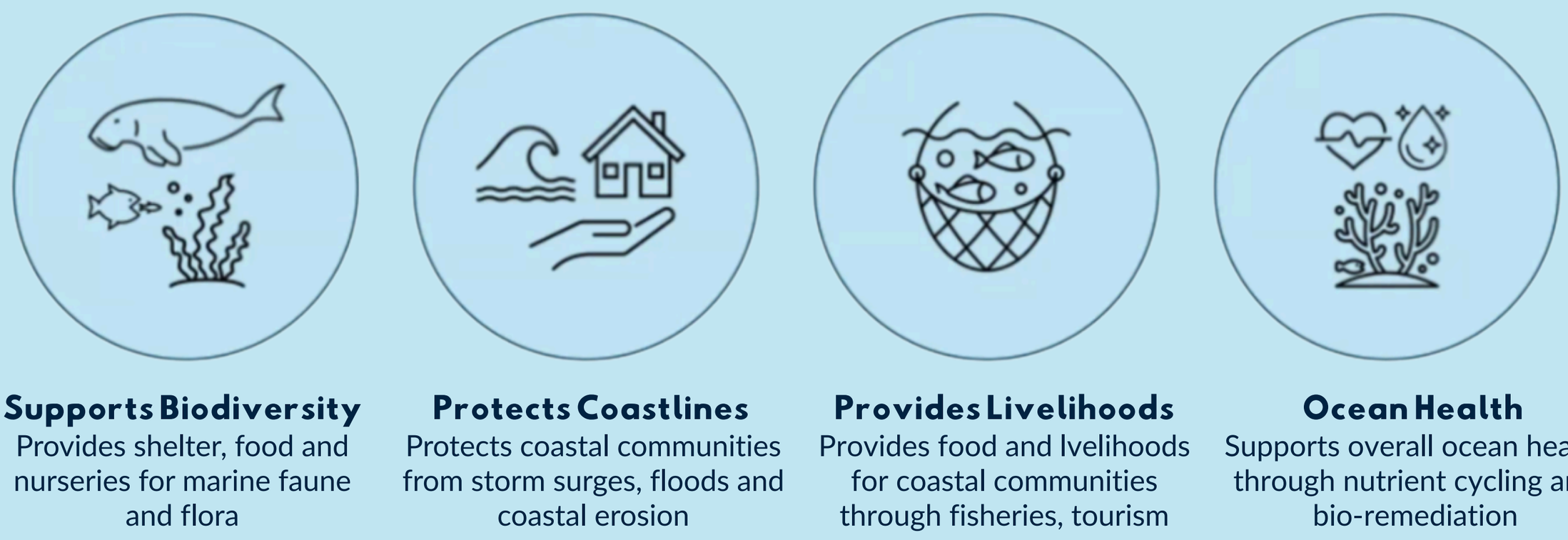

Figure 1. The benefits of blue carbon ecosystems.
Source. International Blue Carbon Institute

Blue carbon governance operates within a **complex triangle of science, policy and market mechanisms** — three interconnected pillars that collectively shape the development of effective blue carbon strategies. Science generates the foundational data and evidence to understand the benefits of blue carbon ecosystems. Policy, in turn, acts as a catalyst to mobilise investment in research, establish legal frameworks, and create financing mechanisms. Meanwhile, market-based instruments offer opportunities to scale up blue carbon initiatives and attract broader participation.

Policy plays a critical bridging role, connecting scientific insights with market incentives by creating an enabling regulatory environment, facilitating cross-sector dialogue, and promoting strategic alignment. Strong policy commitments not only stimulate private sector investment but also support research and data generation. Furthermore, **clear and stable policy frameworks** provide the long-term certainty that investors need to confidently engage in blue carbon initiatives.

Blue carbon ecosystems can play a vital role in **advancing national commitments to achieve climate, biodiversity, and socioeconomic objectives** under key international frameworks such as the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**, the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**, the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, and the **Ramsar Convention on Wetlands** (see Figure 2). There is currently a pressing need to enhance global ambition, accelerate

[2] The Blue Carbon Initiative (2023). Guidelines for Blue Carbon and Nationally Determined Contributions. Available here.
[3] IPCC (2013). 2013 Supplement to the 2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories: Wetlands. Available here.

implementation and obtain measurable outcomes. A critical step toward achieving this is the integration of blue carbon policies into national planning and reporting instruments — particularly NDCs and NBSAPs — to ensure alignment between international goals and national-level action.

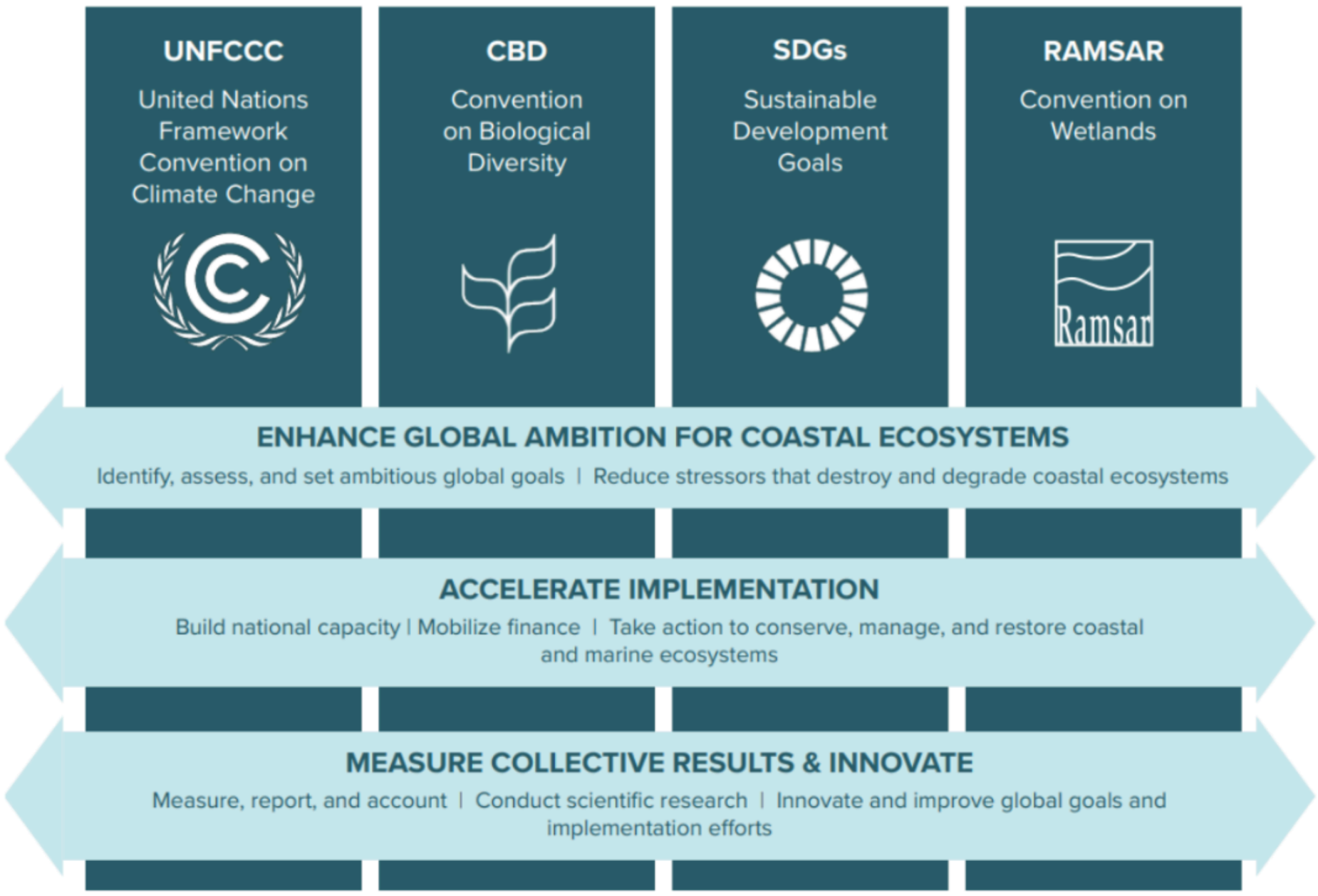

Figure 2. The international policy framework for blue carbon ecosystems.
Source. International Policy Framework for Blue Carbon Ecosystems[4]

By embedding blue carbon strategies into NDCs, Parties can set clear and strong targets, mobilise resources accordingly and drive comprehensive and coordinated efforts amongst stakeholders (see Figure 3). Significant changes are expected: higher adaptation and mitigation targets are reached, the access to finance increases, stronger regulations and monitoring of coastal ecosystems are developed, all positively impacting coastal communities. **NDCs serve as an unifying framing body that can align different sectors and governments, and push for blue carbon policies**. However, such strategies require a structured approach around policy, research, technical and finance pillars.

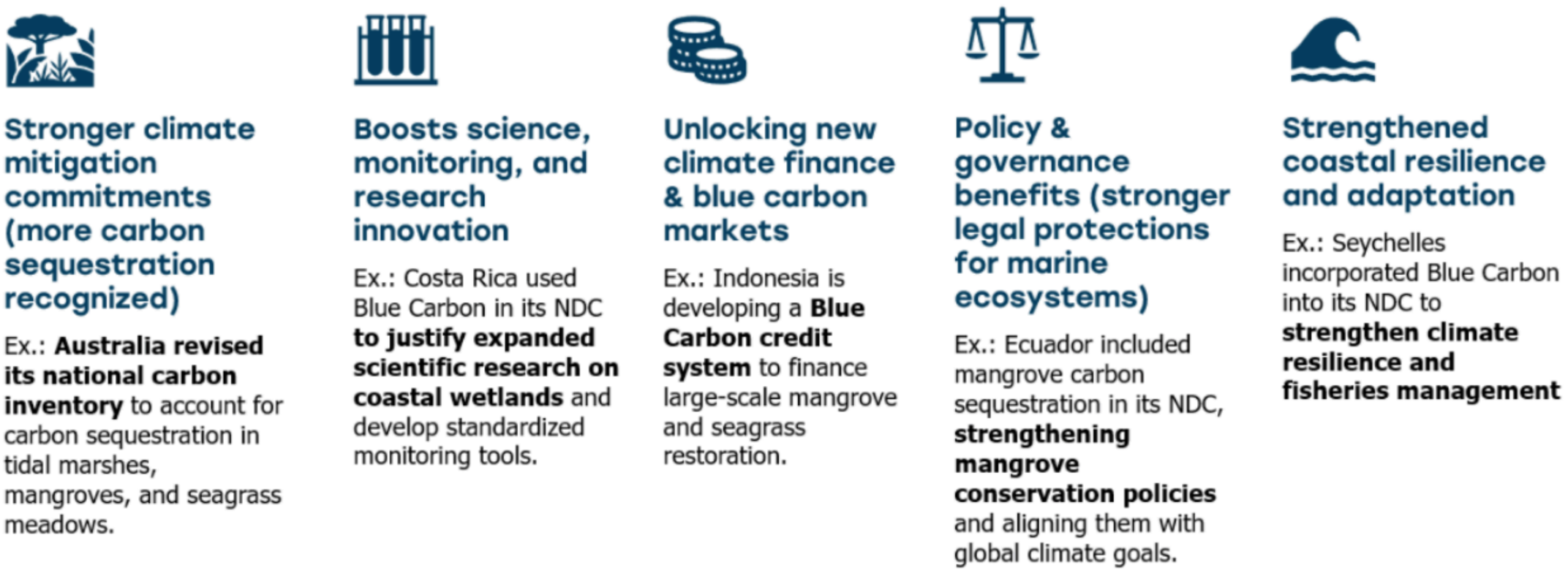

Figure 3. Exploring the Outcomes of blue Carbon Integration in NDCs.
Source. BlueSeeds

[4] IUCN & Conservation International (2023). International policy framework for blue carbon ecosystems: Recommendations to align actions across international policy processes for the conservation and restoration of coastal blue carbon ecosystems. Available here.

1.2. Blue carbon ecosystems as a mitigation measure

While blue carbon measures should **not replace the drastic reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, they can contribute to countries' climate mitigation strategies**[5]. This includes actions to formulate mitigation targets and measures **specific to improving the management of blue carbon ecosystem** (e.g., coastal management and coastal zone planning policies), **setting substantial conservation objectives** (e.g., a target for slowing or even halting degradation of mangroves within five years), and **establishing achievable restoration targets** (e.g., reforestation of X hectares of mangroves)[6].

By including such targets, countries must ensure that **comprehensive data management and tracking infrastructure** is in place to monitor, measure and manage those fluxes in GHG emissions and carbon stocks from human-caused sources. This is crucial for effectively monitoring the impact of evidence-based climate mitigation policies (including NDCs), regulations and voluntary actions, while helping to prioritise future action across sectors.

To facilitate this process, countries are encouraged to adopt the **2013 IPCC Wetlands Supplement**[7], which provides detailed guidance on estimating and reporting national greenhouse gas emissions and removals from mangroves, tidal marshes, and seagrasses. Currently, only 18 countries (see Table 1) include blue carbon ecosystems in their inventories, despite 151 having at least one of three types.[8]

Country	BCE	Reporting detail
Australia	Mangroves, seagrass	Mangrove report under 'forest' not 'wetland'
France	Mangroves, tidal marsh	In oversea territories, mangrove report under 'forest' not 'wetland'
Japan	Mangroves; Seagrass and seaweed (since 2024)	National model for calculation of seagrass and seaweed sequestration
Malta	Tidal marsh	Report on rewetting activity
New Zealand	Mangrove	Tidal marsh and mangrove reported as 'vegetated coastland'
United Kingdom	Mangroves	In oversea territories, reported under 'forest' not 'wetland'
USA	Mangroves, tidal marsh	Tidal marsh reported as 'vegetated' coastland

Table 1. Example of countries including blue carbon ecosystems in greenhouse gas inventories.
Source. Norwegian Institute for Water Research

1.3. Blue carbon ecosystems as an adaptation measure

Adaptation targets present a valuable opportunity to integrate blue carbon ecosystems into NDCs. Adaptation commitments may offer **greater flexibility in their formulation** compared to mitigation targets, which often include quantification of emissions reductions. This is particularly useful for countries that have not yet quantified the carbon value of their coastal wetlands.

5 Lecerf, M., et al. (2023). Coastal and marine ecosystems as Nature-based Solutions in new or updated Nationally Determined Contributions, Ocean & Climate Platform, Conservation International, IUCN, Rare, The Nature Conservancy, Wetlands International and WWF. Available here.
6 The Blue Carbon Initiative (2023). Guidelines for Blue Carbon and Nationally Determined Contributions. Available here.
7 IPCC (2013). 2013 Supplement to the 2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories: Wetlands. Available here.
8 Lecerf, M., et al. (2023). Coastal and marine ecosystems as Nature-based Solutions in new or updated Nationally Determined Contributions, Ocean & Climate Platform, Conservation International, IUCN, Rare, The Nature Conservancy, Wetlands International and WWF. Available here.

The **Blue Carbon Initiative developed policy guidelines**[9] to support countries in integrating coastal wetlands in their NDCs for both mitigation and adaptation. These guidelines include a detailed overview, complete with case studies, on how adaptation commitments for blue carbon habitats can be structured in an NDC. Case studies include examples from Belize and Seychelles, along with other countries, which have successfully incorporated blue carbon adaptation targets within their NDCs.

Another innovative approach to enhance coastal resilience, which can also be incorporated into adaptation commitments, is green-gray infrastructure. This hybrid approach combines natural and engineered infrastructure solutions to enhance coastal resilience and protect against storm surges and sea-level rise. This method integrates:

- **Nature-based solutions**, where coastal wetlands or coral reefs act as natural barriers, absorbing wave energy and reducing coastal erosion,
- **Traditional "gray" infrastructure**, such as sea walls or breakwaters that provide additional structural support against storms and other climate effects.

Hybrid systems include living shorelines with reef, sand barriers or mangroves planted alongside sea walls. By integrating green and gray elements, countries can also support sustainable development, improve water quality and protect marine habitats. Conservation International and partners have developed a **guidance document on integrating coastal Green-Gray Infrastructure solutions into NDCs** [10] to showcase how national policies and commitments can facilitate the uptake of nature-based infrastructure solutions.

1.4. Supporting blue carbon measures through robust financing strategies

Coastal nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based adaptation are all embedded in efforts to support climate action, biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. Yet, despite the potential of ocean-based climate solutions, **SDG 14 "Life Below Water" remains the most underfunded** of the development goals. Only $10 billion have been allocated to SDG 14 between 2015 and 2019, compared to the $175 billion needed annually to reach the 2030 target[11]. Likewise, the total finance flow for nature-based solutions in 2022 amounted to $200 billion[12] – a third of the investment needed to meet Rio Conventions' targets – and **9% of that goes to marine ecosystems**[13].

NDC targets can utilise the flexibility integrated in Paris Agreement rules to include both conditional (goals achievable with international support) and unconditional (goals achievable with domestic resources) finance targets. The focus on conditional targets, which allows flexibility for countries to make commitments while indicating national priorities and financial needs, is key for scaling national efforts, including integrating blue carbon measures or policies for adaptation or mitigation. However, **current efforts to integrate blue carbon habitats into NDCs are not always accompanied by sufficient funding**. In fact, only one third of over 1,000 nature-related policies in NDCs have a dedicated budget, highlighting the need for stronger integration of national financing into climate strategies to fully unlock the potential of blue carbon ecosystems.

Numerous large-scale funds (e.g., Green Climate Fund, Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage, Adaptation Fund) support adaptation and loss and damage solutions, highlighting ecosystem-based

[9] The Blue Carbon Initiative (2023). Guidelines for Blue Carbon and Nationally Determined Contributions. Available here.
[10] Conservation International, Global Green-Gray Community of Practice, FEBA, IUCN (2021). Guidance for including coastal Green-Gray Infrastructure in NDCs. Available here.
[11] Friends of Ocean Action, World Economic Forum (2022). SDG14 Financing Landscape Scan: Tracking Funds to Realize Sustainable Outcomes for the Ocean. Available here.
[12] UNEP, Global Canopy, ELD (2023). State of Finance for Nature. Available here.
[13] UNEP, ELD (2022). State of Finance for Nature. Available here.

adaptation (EbA). This approach is referenced in the Technical guidelines for National Adaptation Plans (NAPs)[14] and underscores its importance in NAPs and NDCs to direct financial flows effectively.

Additional financial approaches can support blue carbon actions beyond UN-backed mechanisms and can be integrated into NDC implementation and financing plans, including:

- P**arametric or indemnity insurance**, which supports loss and damage measures as well as ecosystem-based adaptation efforts – such as a RARE project in the Philippines compensating fishers pausing their activities after an extreme storm event[15].
- **Green-Gray Infrastructure**, which can be integrated into other financial approaches, such as taxes or result-based payments.
- **Global EbA Fund**, which finances catalytic projects, many of which focus on coastal ecosystems.
- **Global Shield against Climate Risks**, designed to provide enhanced financial protection and reliable disaster preparedness and responses

These practices incentivise investment toward blue carbon ecosystems due to their contribution to national adaptation efforts and their role in the protection of coastal communities and livelihoods.

Non-carbon market approaches are alternative vehicles to include blue carbon ecosystems into national strategies. These tools, among others, could be integrated into NDCs targets for either mitigation or adaptation actions[16]:

- **Ecosystem valued-based approaches**: Payments for Ecosystem Services, which compensates organisations or communities for providing essential ecosystem services, and Biodiversity/ Resilience credits which provide an economic incentives for biodiversity conservation by valuing and trading nature-based assets on markets
- **Capital market-based approaches**: encompassing green or blue bonds, debt-for-nature swaps, where part of a country's public debt is forgiven in exchange for funding nature conservation or restoration projects.
- **Outcome-based approaches**: mechanisms such as impact bonds and REDD+ which incentivise countries to reduce forest degradation and support forest carbon stocks instead through financial rewards for measurable results.
- **Enterprise-based approaches**: supply chain interventions, where companies integrate sustainability practices into their production and supply chain processes to support conservation and restoration efforts.
- **Public funds-based approaches**: Conservation Trust Funds, set to provide long term financing for conservation projects through strategic investments, ensuring sustainable funding for ongoing projects.
- **Compensation-based approaches**: extractive royalties or offsetting mechanisms, where industries contribute to conservation efforts as compensation for their environmental impact.

In addition to non-market incentives, the **carbon market** plays an important role in supporting the implementation of the NDCs, along with other climate and biodiversity goals. More importantly, while not a silver bullet, it provides a **pathway to bridge current financial gaps**. Article 6 of the Paris Agreement – now operational – enables **international cooperation** through emissions accounting, carbon credits trading and non-market-based approaches, and represents a clear signal for both governments and investors to advance collaboration on carbon markets. As nature can be part of the carbon mechanism, **new opportunities for blue carbon markets should be responsibly considered in possible compliance market programmes (i.e., Article 6) as well as in the Voluntary Carbon Market projects (e.g., Verra)**. However, blue carbon projects to-date remain relatively small-scale, accounting for only 1% of carbon credit transactions on the voluntary market[17].

14 UNFCCC, LDC Expert Group (2012). National Adaptation Plans: Technical guidelines for the national adaptation plan process. Available here.

15 Rare (2025). Weather index-based parametric insurance for small-scale fishers in the Philippines. Available here.

16 Conservation International, Rare, International Blue Carbon Institute (2024). Beyond carbon credits: Non-market carbon approaches for conserving and restoring blue carbon habitats. Available here.

17 Ecosystem Marketplace, The Katoomba Group (2024). State of the Blue Carbon Market. Available here.

2. Case studies of national blue carbon strategies

2.1. The power of partnerships to advance coastal wetlands conservation

The Pew Charitable Trusts started its **country engagement effort** in 2019, alongside several partners, to support the integration of mangrove and seagrass ecosystems in NDCs, including national greenhouse gas inventories. They design **tailored projects**, starting with local initiatives that can be scaled up in line with regional and national circumstances (see Table 2).

Phase 1: 2019-2022		
Seychelles	**Belize**	**Costa Rica**
Partners SeyCCAT, University of Oxford, University of Seychelles	Partners Smithsonian Center, WWF, University of Belize	Partners Conservation International, Catie
Research EEZ wide seagrass mapping and carbon stock assessment; Capacity strengthening/training program.	Research National mangrove mapping and carbon stock assessment; Capacity strengthening/training program.	Research National mangrove habitat and carbon data synthesis; Defining scope of mangrove restoration.
Policy/ Technical Marine Spatial Planning Framework; Blue carbon value in GHG-baseline.	Policy/ Technical Land tenure analysis; Blue carbon value in GHGi.	Policy/ Technical Land tenure analysis; Blue carbon value in GHGi.
Outreach/Engagement Fishers/schools/communities; Institute of Seychellois Creole.	Outreach/Engagement Community led mangrove restoration/management protocols.	Outreach/Engagement Blue carbon community management model; Community led restoration protocols.
Finance Blue Carbon Tourism Levy	Finance Blue carbon Private lands	Finance Marine PES scheme; Blue Carbon in Article 6
Commitments in 2020/2021 NDCs		
• Map full extent of seagrass ecosystems across 1.3m km2 EEZ. • 50% of mangroves and seagrasses protected by 2025; 100% by 2030. • Develop national monitoring protocol for seagrasses. • Blue carbon in GHGi.	• 6000 new hectares mangrove protections by 2025; 6000 more in 2030. • 2000 hectares restored by 2025; 2000 more in 2030. • National Seagrass Policy. • Blue carbon in GHGi.	• Protect 100% wetlands in National Inventory by 2025. • Development of Marine PES. • National restoration targets. • Community-led management and protection. • Blue carbon in GHGi.
Phase 2: 2022 and beyond		
• Implement and finance • Expand and Diversify • Scale and regional engagement		

Table 2. Tailored projects in support of NDC commitments.
Source. The Pew Charitable Trusts

Despite challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, these projects resulted in **measurable blue carbon commitments**. Nevertheless, the limited sample size was not sufficient to establish a robust model. Since 2022, new country partnerships have been created to develop a **more replicable and representative NDCs framing body**, with ongoing efforts to integrate these tailored approaches into regional agreements (e.g., Cartagena Convention, Nairobi Convention).

Pew has drawn several key lessons from these experiences:

- **Evidence-based targets and sufficient capacities** are essential for the successful implementation of blue carbon commitments in NDCs. These commitments must be backed by robust **accountability** mechanisms to ensure transparency and follow-through.
- Given the urgency of climate change and biodiversity loss, these initiatives should follow a shared model while remaining country-specific. They should be **locally owned** and **involve local communities** to ensure effectiveness and lasting impact.
- Measuring **blue carbon additionality** remains a major challenge due to data limitations. However, they are necessary to situate blue carbon's benefits within the context of national emission reduction strategies and to establish a credible concept of equivalence.
- Scaling up these strategies effectively require careful consideration to ensure that regional engagement is both substantive and well thought out.

2.2. A European and Chinese collaboration: the C-Blues project

C-Blues[18] is a **cooperation project between Europe and China**. It aims to significantly advance knowledge and understanding of blue carbon to secure and promote blue carbon ecosystems and fill key gaps in reporting of greenhouse gas inventories. In particular, it is articulated around 3 priorities:

- Reducing scientific uncertainty and promote reporting of blue carbon under the UNFCCC,
- Increasing confidence in the inclusion of coastal wetlands in national greenhouse gas inventories,
- Raising awareness and promoting the role of blue carbon for delivering global climate policy commitments in collaboration with Chinese and other international partners.

C-Blues conducts **experimental and case-study research** across several European countries, such as Greece, France and Sweden, with the support of 13 local partners. Projects are twinned with pilot sites in China. In the long term, the objective is to expand its focus beyond seagrass, mangroves, and salt marshes to include ecosystems such as micro algae or seaweed farmed ecosystems – if their carbon sequestration potential proves sufficiently effective to support national climate goals.

Gathering the necessary data is a challenging and rigorous task. Measuring the potential of blue carbon habitats within national climate and biodiversity strategies requires a clear understanding of the aerial and volume distribution of these ecosystems. To address this need, C-Blues is currently **developing drone monitoring capabilities to assess the health of the species**. In parallel, on-sight experimentations are strengthening data collection, with **diving sessions in the short term** and **chamber work in the long term**. These activities provide critical insights into the functioning of these ecosystems, which is essential for reporting of the adaptation efforts of the NDCs.

As these ecosystems face increasing threats from heatwaves, pollution, and temperature fluctuations, the **implications for policy are substantial**. For instance, when a heatwave occurs, all reporting data for the following year is lost. To address this, data management and reporting processes must be improved to get a better understanding of biological pathways, compensate for data gaps, and prepare effective policies. C-Blues is currently updating scientific knowledge on changes in carbon stock and greenhouse gas emissions from management activities. This will provide information on the impacts of current and past human activities on deterioration and restoration of blue carbon ecosystems.

18 Find out more about the C-BLUES project here.

To build trust in national reporting systems, it is essential to work closely with national reporting bodies to provide governments with reliable data—this is the mission C-Blues is undertaking. In parallel, promising collaborations, such as the recently established Norway-China Ocean Dialogue, are driving progress toward sustainable ocean management, and opportunities to integrate blue carbon ecosystems of mutual interest could be explored under this collaborative initiative.

2.3. Blue carbon policy framework and implementation in China

As part of the carbon peaking and neutrality targets, the government of China has committed to conserving and restoring blue carbon ecosystems. This is reflected in **both its NDC and NBSAP**, and further supported by strong national policies such as the Action Plan for carbon dioxide peaking before 2030.

China's implementation framework for blue carbon is also structured through a sectoral approach within government agencies to support national efforts. Several ministries, such as the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Science and Technology, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural affairs, endorsed their distinct **implementation plans and opinions** on emission reduction and carbon sequestration. In 2023, the Ministry for Natural Resources and other governing bodies committed to **more transversal strategies**, with the announcement of the Implementation Plan for Consolidating and Enhancing Ecosystem Carbon Sink Capacity. The plan is a continuation of China's previous commitments, as it includes the stabilisation of the sequestration functions of the ecosystems, and the scaling ecosystem carbon sinks. The enhanced collaboration between China's government agencies depicts large-scale ambitions in terms of emission reduction.

The blue carbon policies are **supported by scientific research and technological innovation**. The Ministry for Natural Resources has issued a series of technical standards for monitoring and accounting blue carbon stock and sink capacities. The collection of reliable data has been a priority to better integrate blue carbon into national strategies and amplify their impact. Nearly 40 assessment pilot projects were conducted to assess the area distribution and the carbon parameters of the ecosystems. The outcome enabled China to have an **extensive baseline of its national carbon stocks**. In terms of coastal restoration, China has launched a Work Plan for the Coastal Zone Protection and Restoration, with an effective guide on marine and coastal preservation and restoration. Additionally, two other series of technical standards have been issued on Ecosystems status surveys and assessments and on Ecosystem-based Hazard Mitigation and Restoration.

The government of China has successfully **translated its blue carbon commitments into action**. Over the past five years, 31 priority areas have been identified for salt marsh and seagrass restoration; 19 areas have been classified as conservation priorities as well. These efforts have rehabilitated 1,100km of coastline and 28 hectares of coastal wetlands. **China's progress highlights its intention to fully leverage the key role blue carbon ecosystems can play in NDCs and NBSAPs, supporting countries in global action**. Moving forward, China aims to establish a measurement and monitoring system for maritime carbon sequestration, support diversified investment sources to promote the realisation of marine carbon sink value, and deepen international climate cooperation.

2.3. Blue carbon ecosystems in the Australian NDC

Australia was **among the first countries to integrate blue carbon ecosystems** into its NDC national GHG inventory – as early as 2015. To increase ambition, Australia endorsed strong market-based approaches and developed a domestic carbon market based on a 2011 Carbon Farming Act, called the Australian Carbon Credit Unit scheme, administered by the Clean Energy Regulator.

In 2022, a ***Tidal restoration and blue carbon ecosystems methodology*** was introduced, enabling projects that restore tidal flows to landscapes previously altered by agriculture. This approach facilitates the generation of carbon credits for the restoration of vegetation that contributed to greenhouse gas mitigation. The methodology applies to the diverse mosaic of coastal wetland ecosystems — including seagrasses, mangroves, saltmarshes, and supratidal forests — reflecting the complexity of Australia's coastal environments. Two projects have been registered under this initiative. Initially backed by federal government funding, these initiatives have since attracted growing private investment, while also integrating Indigenous Peoples and broader stakeholder engagement.

Australia passed the **Nature Repair Act** in 2023, establishing a domestic biodiversity market. Administered by the Clean Energy Regulator, this scheme will **grant biodiversity certificates** for restoration and conservation. Early implementation, such as the approved woodland restoration method, shows encouraging progress. The parallel administration of carbon and biodiversity markets presents promising synergies for landowners who could achieve both climate and biodiversity benefits.

In 2024, the Australian government began **environmental asset accounting**, supporting integrated reporting and decision making across environment and the economy[19]. In addition to assessments at the national level, the Australian government has also invested in project-level reporting, using the UN system of environmental economic accounting on project basis[20].

Meanwhile, the Australian government engages with a wide range of actors to advance blue carbon efforts globally, including through **support of international partnerships and initiatives** such as International Partnership for Blue Carbon and the Pacific Blue Carbon Program. Similarly, the Australian government also works closely with scientists, including through supporting IPCC's efforts to develop guidance for blue carbon ecosystems, e.g. for the 2013 IPCC Wetlands Supplement[21] and the recent IPCC scoping meeting for a methodology report on carbon dioxide removal technologies.

2.5. Seychelles' blue carbon policy framework

The government of Seychelles has taken great interest in blue carbon ecosystems – not only for their carbon sequestration potential but also for coastal resilience and food security. As a result, blue carbon ecosystems have been incorporated into **Seychelles' NDCs in 2021**[22], including the national greenhouse gas inventory, and a working group has been established to develop blue carbon policies.

To go further, the President of the Seychelles committed at COP27 to further enhance ocean-based mitigation action by protecting 100% of seagrass meadows and mangroves by 2030 – beyond the existing 32% of ocean protection. In support of this effort, **Seychelles has been mapping, quantifying and modelling blue carbon habitats**, developing detailed and reliable data to inform policies.

19 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2025). National Ecosystem Accounts, experimental estimates. Available here.
20 Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (2022). Measuring and accounting for the benefits of restoring coastal blue carbon ecosystems. Australian Government. Available here.
21 IPCC (2013). 2013 Supplement to the 2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories: Wetlands. Available here.
22 Seychelles (2021). Updated Nationally Determined Contribution. Available here.

Seychelles has collaborated on policy development with SeyCCAT, Thuso, and the Commonwealth Secretariat under the Climate Finance Access Hub. The Seychelles Blue Carbon Policy aims to establish a comprehensive framework for protecting and managing the country's blue carbon ecosystems (mangroves and seagrass meadows) while creating an enabling environment for sustainable economic development and carbon offsetting. The intention of the policy is that the Seychelles' blue carbon resources should primarily contribute to the country's own NDC commitments, with any surplus being potentially available for carbon markets. This policy will fall under a broader carbon strategy currently being developed by the Ministry of Finance.

The policy outlines several priorities, with the primary one being the goal of 100% protection. To support this, other priorities are set to preserve the value of these ecosystems. These include:

- Position blue carbon ecosystems as a valuable tool for offsetting carbon emissions
- Create mechanisms to ensure conservation efforts are financially viable
- Support sustainable economic activities that benefit from and protect blue carbon ecosystems

Institutional responsibilities are defined across various ministries, with the Ministry of Agriculture, Climate Change and Environment serving as the lead agency. Besides, Seychelles followed a **bottom-up, stakeholder-driven approach**. In addition to reviewing best practices on the international stage (especially focusing on other island states), it conducted consultations with local actors, mobilising more than 200 stakeholders in total.

The **consultation was a success, as it resulted in significant engagement** from key ministries and stakeholders, and **led to agreements on policy priorities and relevant responsibilities**. It highlighted key barriers and opportunities – including concerns about the limited understanding of blue carbon habitats among key government agencies, scepticism toward carbon markets, and the lack of information exchange between government bodies regarding their respective blue carbon agendas.

Further work is now required to fully implement NDC targets, while updating the current document. Additional frameworks are necessary to support these efforts, and to embed blue carbon policy within the legislative and funding processes. For instance, the Ministry of Fisheries and the Ministry of the Environment have endorsed the policy and engaged in collaboration, including capacity building efforts around the notion of blue carbon. Moreover, an inter-institutional framework has been developed to strengthen the transverse nature of the blue carbon policy across ministries.

3. Aligning NDCs with National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans

NDCs and their biodiversity counterpart, the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), are currently **addressed as separate policy processes**. Despite their overlapping and complementary nature, they are developed in silos, addressing either climate or biodiversity goals, without systematically considering the interconnections between the two.

This separation risks inconsistencies in the vision and strategies, undermining effective on-the-ground action and, in some cases, even leading to counterproductive policies. It may also increase competition for already limited resources, and send contradictory messages to non-state actors about national intentions and priorities – rather than providing them with the necessary direction to mobilise and engage. Instead, integrated approaches can help address this separation, without overstepping the scope of each Convention, to **build policy coherence at the national level**.[23]

Ocean-based solutions have the potential to deliver on both the Paris Agreement and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, acting as a connector across the national climate and biodiversity strategies. The Ocean Panel advocates that full implementation of these solutions could reduce the emissions gap by up to 35% on a 1.5°C pathway in 2050, while advancing climate change adaptation and resilience, biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, and supporting a thriving economy.[24]

Specifically, **blue carbon measures offer a great example of integrated ocean-based solutions** to connect across climate and biodiversity goals. For instance, marine protected areas can boost climate mitigation and adaptation, in addition to traditional conservation benefits by integrating climate change considerations into their design and management. This includes selecting sites based on their potential to serve as climate refuges and protect carbon-rich ecosystems, such as blue carbon.

This year's agenda presents a unique opportunity for further alignment and coordination, given that, for the first time, the two submissions overlap. With the upcoming NDC submission, there is a chance to ensure their coherence with commitments made as part of the Global Biodiversity Framework.

[23] Lecerf, M., Millington-Drake, M., and Picourt, L., (2024), Blue Thread: Aligning National Climate and Biodiversity Strategies, p1-13. Ocean & Climate Platform, Blue Marine Foundation. Available here.
[24] Hoegh-Guldberg, O., Northrop, E. et al. (2023). The ocean as a solution to climate change: Updated opportunities for action. Special Report. Washington, DC: World Resources Institute. Available here.

4. Opportunities to engage with the blue carbon community

4.1. The Mangrove Breakthrough

The Mangrove Breakthrough was launched at COP27 by the Global Mangrove Alliance, with the support of the UN High Level Climate Champions. The objective is to mobilise stakeholders toward a collaborative action for mangroves management, preservation, and restoration. It aims to **secure 15 million hectares of mangroves by 2030, underpinned by $4 billion of sustainable finance**.

The Mangrove Breakthrough is structured around **four goals**: halting mangrove loss, restoring half of recent losses, doubling the area under protection, and securing long term financing for mangroves globally. Among these, sustainable finance is particularly critical, as it remains one of the main barriers to achieving lasting outcomes for mangroves[25]. To address this, a **financial roadmap was developed**[26], providing an in-depth analysis of financial gaps as well as recommendations to mobilise private, public and philanthropic capital in support of mangrove conservation and restoration.

To support governments that have endorsed the Mangrove Breakthrough, the initiative has established an **NDC Task Force** in partnership with The Pew Charitable Trusts. This Task Force offers **technical guidance** to help countries integrate mangrove ecosystems into their NDC commitments. In the longer term, the policy intention is to build a global coalition for mangrove protection, strengthen support for countries advancing mangrove-positive policies, and develop a robust portfolio of aligned actions – supported by sustained funding.

The Global Mangrove Alliance[27] already has existing tools to support the Mangrove Breakthrough :

- The **Global Mangrove Watch**, the most comprehensive global mangrove map, provides near real-time data on mangrove extent and change for every country. It serves as a foundational resource for developing national strategies and investment plans.
- The **Best Practice Mangrove Restoration Guidelines**[28] offer science-based recommendations to ensure effective and sustainable restoration. These guidelines will inform the design and implementation of projects contributing to the Mangrove Breakthrough.
- The **Mangrove Restoration Tracker Tool**, a globally recognised standard for reporting, monitors mangrove restoration projects and tracks the outcomes of projects under the Breakthrough.

More than a hundred stakeholders (NGOs, financial entities, scientific institutions, etc.) take part in the initiative, and **36 countries and several subnational governments have endorsed it**[29].

The Mangrove Breakthrough has seen significant growth, structuring the coalition throughout 2024, including **finalising its work plan for 2025 and vision for 2027**. The initiative has also established a strong **presence in international discussions**. Engaging with these efforts presents an excellent opportunity for countries or organisations to leverage this expanding collaboration and secure support for integrating blue carbon ecosystems into national climate and biodiversity strategies.

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[25] Jacquemont, J., et al. (2022). Ocean conservation boosts climate change mitigation and adaptation. One Earth. Volume 5. Issue 10, pp. 1126-1138. October 21, 2022. Available here.

[26] Global Mangrove Alliance, UN High Level Climate Champions, Systemic (2023). The Mangrove Breakthrough. Financial Roadmap. Available here.

[27] Global Mangrove Alliance (2022). The Mangrove Breakthrough. Tools by the Global Mangrove Alliance to support successful mangrove action Available here.

[28] Beeston, M., et al. (2023). Best practice guidelines for mangrove restoration. Available here.

[29] Australia, Belgium, Burundi, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Gambia, Germany, Guinea-Bissau, Jamaica, Liberia, Mexico, Mozambique, Norway, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Philippines, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Korea, Spain, United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom.

4.2. The International Partnership for Blue Carbon

The International Partnership for Blue Carbon (IPBC) was launched at COP21 in 2015, by Australia and 9 founding partners. Its objective is to provide a space to connect, share and collaborate to **build solutions and benefit from the experience and expertise of the global community**, with a joint vision to protect, restore and manage sustainably blue carbon ecosystems for a wide array of benefits, including climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity, ocean economies and livelihoods of coastal communities.

The IPBC follows three high-level strategic goals, namely:

- Increase international commitments to protect blue ecosystems,
- Improve national policies to protect coastal blue carbon ecosystems,
- Accelerate on-the-ground implementation of blue carbon protection and restoration activities.

Currently, more than **60 stakeholders** participate in the partnership, representing a diverse range of entities and their respective projects, comprising **18 countries**, NGOs[30], intergovernmental organisations, research institutes. It is coordinated by Australia with the support of IOC-UNESCO.

The Partnership engages in numerous activities to support its members:

- An **annual partners dialogue** to support engagement and collaboration,
- A **strong presence at global events** including through collaboration on side events and messages,
- **Experience sharing and knowledge** dissemination (webinars, workshops and communications),
- Activities, such as the **Blue Carbon Accelerator Fund** and the **High-Level Ambition Group**.

Formally joining the Partnership provides a promising pathway for countries seeking to integrate blue carbon ecosystems into their NDCs (and greenhouse gas inventory) and NBSAPs.

5. Discussion among EU and Chinese experts

- Establishing a strong blue carbon policy **requires clarity in the competencies across the government bodies**. In the case of China, both the Ministry of Ecology and Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources are competent. To ensure the effective implementation of blue carbon policy, coordination and **cooperation must be enhanced. Designating a lead agency or establishing inter-ministerial cooperation**, as practiced in Seychelles, could be helpful.

- In China's 2021 updated NDCs[31], blue carbon ecosystems are integrated without a quantified target. **Exploring effective ways to integrate measurable objectives for blue carbon protection and restoration – thereby expanding the scope of action – would be an important step forward.**

- **Mobilising large-scale investment is critical for the success of blue carbon initiatives**. While countries like Indonesia have focused on developing blue carbon credits to attract investment, international efforts tend to prioritise direct emission reductions within sectors rather than relying on offset mechanisms. **A strong business model is therefore needed to scale blue carbon projects** and align them with both national and global climate goals.

[30] Australia, Costa Rica, Fiji, France, Indonesia, Japan, Madagascar, Monaco, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Portugal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Korea, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and the United States of America.

[31] China (2021). China's Achievements, New Goals and New Measures for Nationally Determined Contributions. Available here.

- China and the EU could both benefit from enhanced carbon policy exchanges and mutual learning. This could take the form of a national or **ministry-level, bilateral memorandum of understanding on blue carbon cooperation or of regular meetings on mechanisms between competent governments agencies and stakeholders**. Publishing a joined blue paper on blue carbon policy development, comprising technical standards, could also be considered.

- Strengthening the **scientific, technological, and management aspects** of blue carbon cooperation is key, and facilitating scientific research could support this. Practical initiatives, potentially organised through the **French Development Agency**, could further enhance collective action.

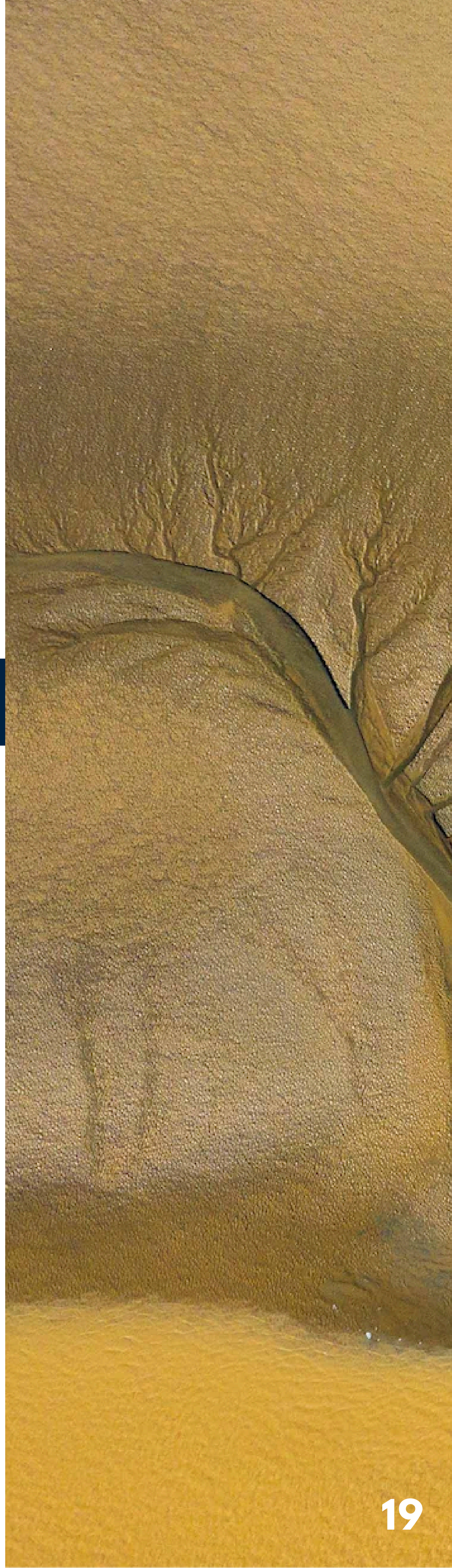
As China is currently drafting its next five-year Social and Economic Development Plan, both the EU and China have an opportunity to strengthen **blue carbon cooperation and integrate the blue carbon markets in China's efforts to support national marine economic demonstration zones**.

Ways forward

Looking ahead, there is significant potential to deepen collaboration between China and the EU on blue carbon measures. Alongside bilateral efforts, these two global players could amplify their impact through active participation in and strengthening of regional and global partnerships. Enhanced dialogue would accelerate national progress and reinforce regional and international cooperation at a time when political tensions are growing and multilateralism is being increasingly challenged.

The year 2025, with its robust ocean agenda, presents several key milestones to move this collaboration forward. The third UN Ocean Conference (9-13 June) – focused on mobilising stakeholders in support of SDG 14 – offers a platform to showcase progress of the Policy Dialogue and explore ways to deepen engagement. Shortly after, the UNFCCC Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue (17-18 June) will provide a forum to share insights on blue carbon measures in NDC development and implementation. Finally, UNFCCC COP30 (10-21 November) is expected to feature a strong mangroves agenda, creating yet another opportunity to advance blue carbon cooperation.

Seizing these opportunities can help transform shared ambition into tangible progress, positioning blue carbon not only as a cornerstone of effective climate and biodiversity action, but also as a catalyst for deeper cooperation between China, the EU, and the international community.



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Disclaimer:

The views, content and recommendations presented in this report are solely those of the contributors as the outcome of a collaborative process, and do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the organisations or governments involved.

ANNEX
AGENDA OF THE POLICY WORKSHOP (20 MARCH 2025)

Moderated by Marine Lecerf, Head of International Policy, Ocean & Climate Platform

Setting the scene

Marie-Aude Sévin, Chief Operating Officer, BlueSeeds

Integrating blue carbon ecosystems into Nationally Determined Contributions

- Thomas Hickey, Project Director for Coastal Wetlands, The Pew Charitable Trusts
- Dr. Siti Maryam Yaakub, Senior Director for the International Blue Carbon Institute
- Lisa Schindler Murray, Director for Natural Climate Solutions, Blue Carbon, Rare

Case studies of national blue carbon strategies

- Prof. Richard Bellerby, Chief Scientist Climate and Oceans, Norwegian Institute for Water Research (NIVA)
- Dr. Yuxing Wang, Director of Marine Ecosystem Conservation and Restoration, National Marine Hazard Mitigation Service, China
- Prof. Catherine Lovelock, Professor, School of Biological Science, University of Queensland, Australia
- Dr Ameer Ebrahim, National Blue Carbon Expert, Seychelles

Open discussion between Chinese and EU experts

Opportunities to engage with the blue carbon community

- Luz Gil, Climate and Ocean Advisor, The Nature Conservancy
- Elisabetta Bonotto, Project Coordinator for the International Partnership for Blue Carbon, IOC-UNESCO

Wrap-up and closing

Marine Lecerf, Head of International Policy, Ocean & Climate Platform