



Brest Commitments for the Oceans

Representatives of more than 100 countries from all sea basins and representing more than half the world's exclusive economic zones, have stated their determination to preserve the oceans by contributing to the "Brest Commitments for the Oceans", alongside the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Director-General of UNESCO and the Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

These powerful commitments were made at the One Ocean Summit, held in Brest from 9 to 11 February 2022, which brought together 41 States and representatives of civil society and businesses, in a milestone of the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union which is committed to the climate and a proactive European ocean policy.

Aware that the position of the Oceans on the international political agenda is not currently commensurate with its role in climate, environmental and social balances or with the degree of threats to marine life, the leaders in Brest undertook to work together swiftly and tangibly to put a stop to the degradation of the Oceans.

They have chosen to take action to preserve biodiversity, stop overexploitation of marine resources, fight pollution and mitigate climate change.

PROTECT BIODIVERSITY AND OCEAN RESOURCES

The creation of protected areas is an essential pillar for preserving biodiversity. It is now essential to continue and amplify momentum by setting high ambitions for the coming decade.

→ More than 30 additional countries have joined the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People launched at the One Planet Summit in January 2021. Now, 84 countries aim to protect 30 % of the world's land and sea by 2030.

Two thirds of the ocean, beyond national jurisdiction, representing 45 % of the surface of our planet, cannot currently enjoy marine protected area status.

→ The 27 Member States of the European Union, joined by 16 third countries, have therefore launched the “High Ambition Coalition on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction” (BBNJ) in order to foster the conclusion this year of an effective, global agreement on the sustainable use of the high seas and the protection of their biodiversity.

Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing accounts for almost a fifth of global catches, undermines efforts to manage fish stocks sustainably and often involves very poor safety and working conditions for fishers.

→ At the One Ocean Summit, 14 participating countries committed to stepping up the fight against illegal fishing on several fronts:

- Six countries committed to ratify the IMO's Cape Town Agreement, which will then at last come into force, by the October 2022 deadline, setting safety standards for fishing boats.
- Two more countries will ratify the Food and Agriculture Organization's Agreement on Port State Measures, to better control fishing activities at ports where catches are landed.
- Several EU Member States committed to deploy their navies in overseas operations to step up surveillance of illegal fishing, in accordance with the European Regulation of 2008.

JOIN FORCES WITH THE OCEANS TO FACE CLIMATE CHANGE

The strong growth of shipping, driven by global trade, means it is essential to swiftly and substantially reduce the damage it causes.

→ 22 European ship owners have committed to the new Green Marine Europe label, which entails very tangible measures in eight fields: underwater noise, pollutant air emissions, greenhouse gas emissions, aquatic invasive species, residues, oily discharge and ship recycling.

→ 35 actors including 18 major European and global ports have committed to speeding up the supply of electricity to berthed ships to limit greenhouse gas emissions and reduce atmospheric pollution in often dense port cities.

→ In order to reduce atmospheric pollution, all Mediterranean countries, along with the European Union, have committed to ask the IMO to create a low sulphur emissions zone across the Mediterranean starting on 1 January 2025. This summer, France, Spain, Italy and Monaco will also ask the IMO to establish a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area given the presence of many cetaceans, in order to limit sailing speeds and reduce collisions.

The Oceans play a crucial role in climate change mitigation and adaptation. Some marine and coastal ecosystems (salt marshes, seagrass beds and mangroves) can absorb and store large quantities of carbon. This capacity now needs to be highlighted to speed up projects to protect and restore such ecosystems, to enable genuine “blue carbon offsetting”.

→ In Brest, France and Colombia launched a global coalition for blue carbon, which will bring together national and multilateral actors in the field to contribute to financing the restoration of coastal ecosystems, using shared and rigorous methodologies.

END PLASTIC POLLUTION OF THE OCEANS

Nine million tonnes of plastic end up in the ocean each year, of which 80 % comes from coasts and rivers. Massive investment is needed to improve sanitation and waste processing infrastructure on all continents.

→ At the One Ocean Summit, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) joined the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the development banks of France (AFD), Germany (KfW), Italy (CDP) and Spain (ICO), which have joined forces in the most important initiative for the reduction of plastic pollution at sea, the Clean Oceans Initiative. Together, they have doubled their efforts in this sector, committing to provide €4 billion of finance by 2025.

The best way to ensure waste does not reach the Oceans is to stop producing it in the first place. The New Plastics Economy Global Commitment, led by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and the United Nations Environment Programme, brings together national and local governments, businesses and NGOs to speed up the transition to a circular economy with the aim of 100 % reuse or recycling of plastics and an end to all single-use products.

→ At the One Ocean Summit, Greece, Italy, Colombia, the Republic of Korea, the City of Paris and Central Greece joined the New Plastics Economy Global Commitment and 500 signatories worldwide, including 250 companies.

→ At the One Ocean Summit, India and France together launched an initiative on the elimination of single-use plastic pollution, which aims to be multilateral.

PLACE THE OCEAN AT THE TOP OF THE GLOBAL POLITICAL AGENDA

The work of the One Ocean Summit is the starting point of a series of international meetings where the Oceans will be central, including the UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon, in June, and COP27 in Egypt, in autumn.

→ To confirm this momentum and build an ambitious international ocean agenda, France and Costa Rica have proposed to jointly organize the next UN Ocean Conference in 2024.

To decide, one must first understand. The digital revolution is an opportunity to build an integrated model of the oceans, covering physics, chemistry, marine life and human activities. This "Digital Twin" initiative will inform political decisions and track their effects, enable the marine economy to develop with respect for ecosystems and fuel dialogue with stakeholders and the public.

→ The European Union has pledged to produce a "Digital Twin of the Ocean" to gather knowledge and test scenarios for action, supporting European blue growth and global governance.

→ UNESCO has pledged to ensure at least 80 % of the sea bed is mapped by 2030.

IN ADDITION TO ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE COLLECTIVE COMMITMENTS ANNOUNCED AT THE ONE OCEAN SUMMIT, FRANCE IS ACTIVE IN ITS NATIONAL CAPACITY AND INTENDS TO LEAD BY EXAMPLE AS HOST COUNTRY

It is contributing to raising collective ambition to preserve marine biodiversity:

→ France has announced that it has now achieved and exceeded the goal of classifying 30 % of the land and marine spaces under its jurisdiction as protected areas, with the extension of the national nature reserve of the French Southern Lands which is now the second largest marine protected area worldwide, covering more than 1.5 million km².

→ To take things further, French Polynesia has committed to creating a network of marine protected areas of at least 500,000 km² within its exclusive economic zone.

→ France also presented an update on the implementation of the action plan adopted to address accidental catches of small cetaceans in the Bay of Biscay.

France announced commitments to further combat pollution of the oceans:

→ It has committed to process abandoned rubbish tips on its coastlines that risk release into the sea of waste, including plastics. Three of them, where the situation is particularly urgent, will be processed this year: those of Dollemard, in Seine-Maritime Department, Fouras in Charente-Maritime Department, and Anse Charpentier in Martinique Department.

→ The anti-waste act for circular economy is putting France on track to eliminate single-use plastic packaging by 2040.

Lastly, France has committed to improving knowledge of the effects of climate change on sea level rises:

→ France will soon publish its first national polar strategy and will launch a scientific programme to measure the contribution of the Eastern Antarctic to sea level rises.

A total of 41 countries answered the invitation and contributed to the One Ocean Summit at a very high level: Barbados, Canada, China, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Gabon, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Iceland, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Madagascar, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Morocco, Namibia, Norway, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of the Congo, Senegal, Seychelles, Spain, Tanzania, Tonga, Tunisia, the United Kingdom and the United States