

INTERNATIONAL POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR BLUE CARBON ECOSYSTEMS

Jill Hamilton
Director, Blue Climate Strategy
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BLUE CARBON & INTERNATIONAL POLICY

Despite advancements in recent years, many opportunities remain to strengthen the inclusion of blue carbon ecosystems in international and national level policy processes related to climate, biodiversity, and sustainable development.



conservation.org/UNFCCC-ocean-climate-options



Options for strengthening action on the ocean and coasts under the UNFCCC

October 2022

Boats in an inlet in Indonesia. © Reid Muel

Earlier versions of this options paper have been published prior to SB 56 and COP 26. This updated version reflects the latest developments and opportunities under ongoing UNFCCC processes.

Executive Summary

The science is clear, and the findings are sobering—anthropogenic climate change is impacting the ocean, and ocean dependent communities, to an unprecedented degree. Sea levels are rising at alarming rates, ocean temperatures are the warmest since records began, marine heatwaves are becoming more frequent and intense, and increased carbon dioxide levels are absorbed by the ocean, causing acidification and harming life below water.¹

This options paper summarizes some of the key entry points within existing UNFCCC processes and ongoing negotiations where management actions concerning coastal and marine ecosystems can play a productive role in climate action. The paper identifies specific steps and recommendations for advancing ocean action under the UNFCCC, in response to the invitation for “relevant work programs and constituted bodies under the UNFCCC to consider how to integrate and strengthen ocean-based action in their existing mandates and work plans and to report on these activities within the existing reporting processes, as appropriate” (MCP.26).

The ocean holds a suite of solutions—both for mitigation and adaptation—if implemented coherently and sustainably. The relationship between ocean and climate was specifically referenced in the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Working Group II Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) published in February 2022,² which highlighted the current state of knowledge on the importance of coastal and marine

¹ IPCC (2022), “Summary for Policymakers, In: Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.” <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/working-group1/> (IPCC, AR6, WG1, SRM and

² IPCC (2022), “Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability.” <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/working-group2/>



Entry points within ongoing UNFCCC process and negotiations where countries can strengthen ocean-based action:

Mitigation

- Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), Long Term Low Emission Development Strategies (LT-LEDS)
- Work Programme to Scale up Mitigation Ambition and Implementation (Mitigation Work Programme, MWP)

Adaptation

- Glasgow–Sharm el-Sheikh work programme on the global goal on adaptation
- Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), Long Term Low Emission Development Strategies (LT-LEDS)
- National Adaptation Plans (NAPs)
- Nairobi Work Programme (NWP) and its Thematic Expert Group on Oceans
- Adaptation Committee (AC)
- Least Developed Countries Expert Group (LEG)

Loss and Damage

- Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage (WIM)

Indigenous Peoples Knowledge and Engagement

- Facilitative Working Group of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP FWG)

Finance

- New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance (NCQG)
- Standing Committee on Finance (SCF)
- Green Climate Fund (GCF)
- Global Environment Facility (GEF)
- Adaptation Fund (AF)

Science

- Research and Systematic Observation (RSO)
- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

Technology Mechanism

- Technology Executive Committee (TEC)
- Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN)

Capacity Building

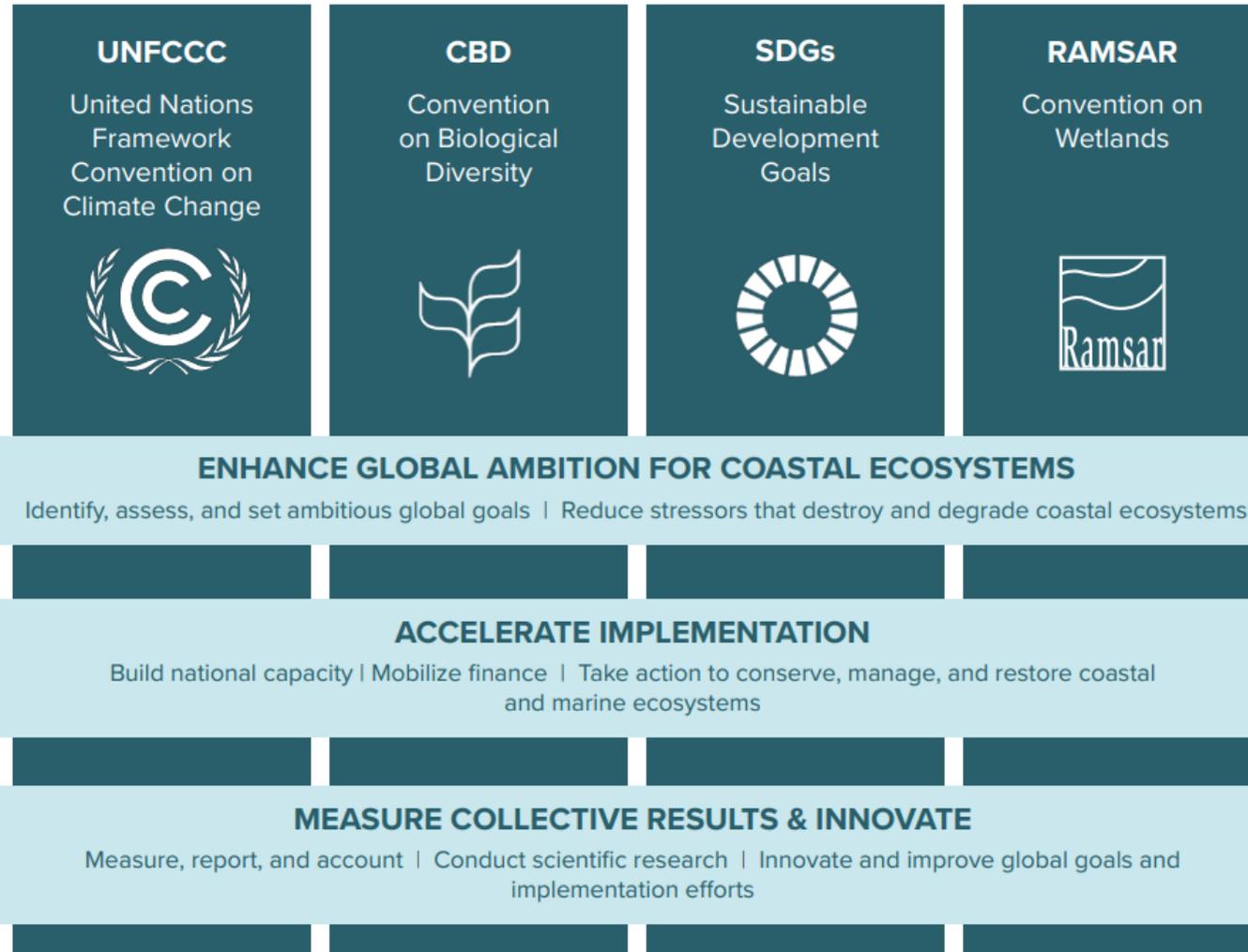
- Paris Committee on Capacity-building (PCCB)

Transparency and the Global Stocktake

- Consultative Group of Experts (CGE)
- Biennial transparency reporting (BTR)
- Technical Expert Review (TER)
- Global Stocktake (GST) including the Technical Dialogue (TD) and Joint Contact Group (JCG) items



THE CARBON POLICY FRAMEWORK



ENHANCING AMBITION VIA ALIGNED INTERNATIONAL POLICIES

To enhance global ambition for blue carbon conservation and restoration, countries can:

1. Work to ensure that blue carbon conservation and restoration actions are **recognized as important solutions to achieving globally agreed-to climate, biodiversity and sustainable development goals.**
2. Call for strengthened inclusion of blue carbon ecosystems in **conversations related to scaling ambition.**
3. Include blue carbon ecosystems **in new and updated NDCs, NBSAPs, and other relevant commitments**, and align commitments across policy processes, to the extent possible



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ENTRY POINTS FOR ACTION ON BLUE CARBON

Table 1. Entry points for identifying, assessing and setting ambitious global goals for coastal ecosystems (non-exhaustive list).

UNFCCC United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change	CBD Convention on Biological Diversity	SDGs Sustainable Development Goals	Ramsar Convention on Wetlands
ENHANCING AMBITION			
<p>Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs): Set ambitious, quantifiable targets for blue carbon ecosystem restoration and conservation as part of mitigation and adaptation goals.</p> <p>Submit a NAP as part of NDCs to maximize cross-cutting climate solutions that deliver mitigation and adaptation benefits.</p> <p>Long-term strategies: Include ambitious blue carbon mitigation and adaptation goals in long-term national climate mitigation strategies.</p>	<p>Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) goals and targets (under negotiation): Ensure that goals, targets and the monitoring framework account for marine and coastal conservation, restoration and sustainable use including the provision of adequate means of implementation.</p> <p>National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs): Include marine and coastal biodiversity in the national targets as part of updated NBSAPs.</p> <p>Coastal and Marine Programme of Work: Design the new programme of work so that it supports the implementation of the post-2020 GBF.</p>	<p>National frameworks and strategies for achieving SDGs: Include blue carbon ecosystem restoration and conservation actions within national strategies for achieving the SDGs, including, but not limited to SDG-1 (No Poverty), SDG-5 (Gender Equality), SDG-13 (Climate Action) and SDG-14 (Life Below Water).</p> <p>Reference and account for SDG contributions in national blue carbon project planning and implementation.</p> <p>2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Incorporate blue carbon and climate change related targets into national development plans, blue carbon policies, wetland management and project design and implementation.</p>	<p>Designating and managing wetlands of importance: Recognize and consider the climate mitigation and adaptation potential of blue carbon ecosystems in current and future Ramsar sites.</p> <p>Wise-use of wetlands: Develop ambitious national goals to conserve and restore blue carbon ecosystems and integrate the socioeconomic needs and circumstances in national planning.</p> <p>International cooperation on transboundary issues: Identify transboundary blue carbon ecosystems and urge neighboring nations to cooperate to conserve and restore these ecosystems.</p>



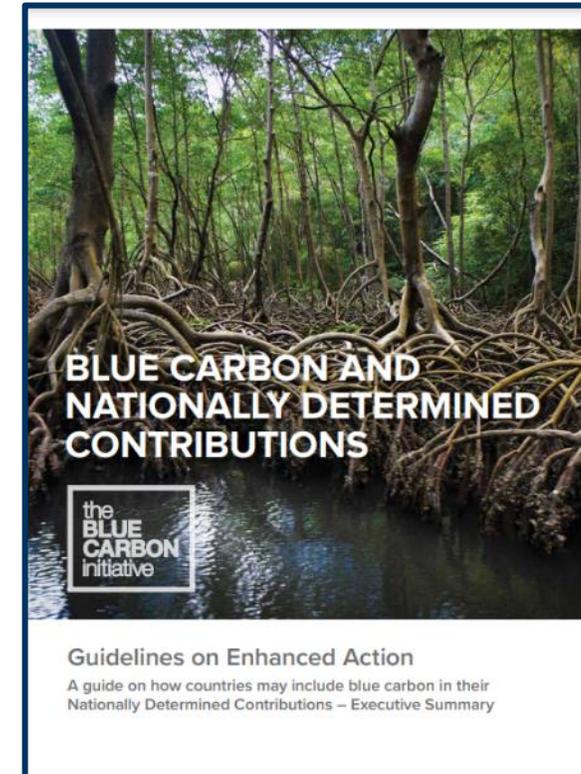
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GUIDELINES FOR INCLUDING BLUE CARBON IN NDCS

Technical guidance on the multiple avenues for including these ecosystems within NDCs

- Options for including blue carbon in NDCs
- Readiness assessment
- Adaptation: Blue Carbon in the Adaptation Component of an NDC
- Mitigation: Blue Carbon and Mitigation Targets
- Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reporting and Inventories for Blue Carbon
- Guidelines for Implementation: Delivering on Blue Carbon NDCs



Updated version will be published in summer 2023.

Co-authors: Conservation International, the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Blue Carbon Initiative, IPBC, IUCN, IOC-UNESCO, the NDC Partnership, Silvestrum Climate Associates, and TNC



ACCELERATING IMPLEMENTATION

To accelerate and align implementation of blue carbon commitments, countries can:

1. **Align national blue carbon implementation efforts across policy processes** (including NDC implementation, NBSAP implementation and implementation of national frameworks and strategies for achieving the SDGs) to the extent possible, to maximize available capacity and streamline reporting efforts.
2. Call for and provide **increased financing for blue carbon projects** across policy processes, and for guidance on new potential sources of funding
3. Ensure that **capacity building efforts complement and build upon existing efforts across policy processes** —including from the IPCC Wetlands Supplement and the Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel Handbooks.



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MEASURING COLLECTIVE RESULTS & INNOVATING

TABLE 3. Key entry points to measure, report and account for progress, conduct scientific research and innovate and improve global goals and implementation efforts for blue carbon ecosystems within existing international policy processes (non-exhaustive list).

UNFCCC United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change	CBD Convention on Biological Diversity	SDGs Sustainable Development Goals	The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance
MEASURING, REPORTING AND ACCOUNTING			
When measuring, reporting and accounting for blue carbon outcomes across policy processes, use the same datasets and methodologies where possible.			
Global Stocktake National GHG inventories Biennial Transparency reports National Communications Glasgow-Sharm el-Sheikh Work Programme on the Global Goal on Adaptation	Biodiversity Stocktake (future) and review mechanisms National Reports Global Biodiversity Outlook Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI)	Sustainable Development Goal Report Voluntary National Reviews	Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) National Report on Implementation of the Convention on Wetlands National Wetland Inventories Global Wetland Outlook Ramsar Sites Information
SCIENCE AND INNOVATION			
Call for continued support to advance blue carbon science and innovation across policy processes and ensure that efforts complement and build upon existing guidance to avoid duplication of efforts.			
IPCC Assessments	IPBES Assessments Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical, and Technological Advice (SBSTTA)	Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs (STI Forum)	Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)



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THANK YOU

Jill Hamilton
Director, Blue Climate Strategy
jhamilton@conservation.org

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