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## Climate change – regional and UNFCCC COP29 update

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## UNFCCC COP29 outcomes on ocean and climate change

1. The 2024 June Ocean dialogue report was groundbreaking in its comprehensiveness and the useful recommendations that were highlighted. It was not clear how the Presidency would treat the report, and only a side event was scheduled to formally receive it after being just noted in the Plenary. Fiji on behalf of PSIDS and AOSIS presented on agreed issues, including making the report recommendations more binding, and that they should be included in a COP decision (sometimes called a cover decision for the COP). Presidency was reluctant to have a cover decision, and thematic areas that could have taken on board dialogue recommendations had progressed too far.
2. Decision was taken by Friends of Ocean and Climate (an informal cross-regional grouping) to issue a closing plenary joint statement. That closing plenary statement was supported 54 Members of the African Group, 39 Members of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), Australia, Canada, Chile, 27 Members of the European Union (EU), Indonesia, Monaco, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
3. It highlighted the scientific background to the dialogue, that IPCC 6AR is unequivocal in relation to ocean and climate change, that widespread and rapid changes in the atmosphere, ocean, cryosphere and biosphere have occurred, and that every increment of warming will intensify multiple and concurrent hazards.
4. It notes with grave concern the adverse and widespread impacts of the global climate crisis on the ocean and its ecosystems, reaffirms commitment to promoting the ocean-climate nexus, and importance and the urgency of finance for mitigation and adaptation.
5. Despite some progress, COP29 failed to deliver transformative outcomes for ocean-climate solutions. Efforts to align climate and biodiversity frameworks faltered, leaving ocean governance fragmented and underfunded.

## Other COP29 outcomes of relevance

6. New Collective Quantified Goal on finance was agreed, increasing the USD 100 billion per annum to 300 billion per annum by 2035. This was less than PSIDS advocated for, and far less than global needs estimates. It will not be all government grants, but from all sources and in all modalities (loans). Recognition of SIDS, but no special concessions.
7. Ambition on mitigation was low, with no mention of COP28 energy package, nor on adjusting nationally determined contributions (NDCs) to be 1.5 degrees Celsius compatible. Renewable energy technologies or cooperation were not included.
8. On science and observation systems, increasing marine and ocean observations financing has not been included.

## Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) COP 16 outcomes of relevance

9. COP15 (2022) marked a significant step forward for biodiversity, with the adoption of the "Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)" with 23 targets, included targets to halt marine biodiversity loss and enhance conservation efforts. Notably, target 3 "30x30" target was established, committing to protect globally 30% of areas by 2030. It is a crucial initiative for the Pacific, which relies heavily on healthy marine ecosystems for food security, livelihoods, and cultural heritage. It is not legally binding, it is a requirement to create exclusion areas containing a minimum of 30% of countries ocean jurisdiction or land space. The GBF promotes area-based management for effective conservation and management of areas of "particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions". But there are effective alternatives to area-based management approaches for protecting biodiversity, especially when considering highly migratory species or marine genetic resources. Stock, or species, based protections can offer adequate alternative forms of protection to area-based restrictions.
10. The GBF also recognised the importance of sustainable fisheries management, addressing overfishing, illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and ensuring fisheries policies align with biodiversity conservation. COP 15 highlighted the need for ecosystem-based approaches to fisheries, aiming to protect marine ecosystems while allowing for sustainable human use. For SIDS, the conference emphasised the need for financial resources, technology, and capacity-building to manage and conserve marine environments effectively, with a call for stronger global cooperation to combat IUU fishing and support sustainable fisheries practices in these vulnerable regions
11. COP16 (2024) called for the integration of fisheries management into national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) and highlighted the need for more robust data collection and sharing mechanisms, including data on how fisheries, including small-scale and artisanal fisheries, can contribute to both biodiversity conservation and local community well-being.
12. COP16 also emphasised the need for enhanced scientific research and monitoring of marine biodiversity, especially concerning the impacts of climate change and human activities on marine ecosystems.
13. COP16 underscored the importance of international collaboration, related to BBNJ (governance of high seas fisheries, enforcement of conservation measures in global waters) and UNFCCC.
14. Work on EBSAs (Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas) is a central area of ocean-related work. The modalities for the modification of descriptions of EBSAs and the description of new areas have been adopted at COP16, ensuring that the cataloguing of information of these areas can support planning and management with the most advanced science and knowledge available. Over eight years in the making and touching upon delicate political matters relating to the law of the sea, the modalities are expected to make a crucial contribution to the implementation not only of CBD but also of the BBNJ Agreement.
15. On the coastal and marine programme of work, it has been mentioned the need to improve understanding of marine biodiversity across mesopelagic, deep-sea, and benthic ecosystems, to enhance the use of nature-based solutions and to map, monitor, restore, and effectively manage marine and coastal ecosystems that contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

16. On island biodiversity, agreement on the need to enhance the use of ocean accounting and marine spatial planning has been agreed. PSIDS called for the establishment of a standalone agenda item on island biodiversity and the development of a dedicated decision on island biodiversity and its programme of work at future meetings of the COP.
17. In summary, both COP15 and COP16 advanced the agenda of preserving marine biodiversity, with a focus on sustainable fisheries, marine protected areas, and integrated ocean governance, setting the stage for more robust global action in the coming years.

## What are the key priorities for PSIDS as we head towards UNFCCC COP30

18. UNFCCC Dialogues have to date covered important thematic areas, such as marine biodiversity, coastal adaptation, relevant technologies, strategies and planning approaches, as well as financing for such efforts.
19. The previous dialogues have highlighted a vast array of best practices, appropriate technologies, innovative financing and cross-cutting issues with other processes. The emerging view is that these themes need to be united in a discussion around the means of implementation.
20. The dialogue should not be simply about the quantum of finance needed. It should look at qualitative approaches that could assist SIDS with appropriate technologies, targeted capacity building that recognises SIDS challenges and constraints. It should also consider how means of implementation can be applied to existing SIDS strategies and plans, and thereby elevate the status of the ocean and climate change dialogue.
21. Friends of Ocean and Climate Change have indicated support for this approach but needs to be firmed up.
22. The 2025 co-facilitators have issued a paper describing their “vision for the 2025 dialogue is to transform ambition into concrete action, making the ocean our central ally in addressing the climate crisis in this decade of implementation. Our key mission will be to deepen the work of the dialogue, increasing its impact on a few selected priority areas and elevating the political profile of the ocean and climate nexus at COP30”. “As dialogue co-facilitators, our vision is clear: accelerating sustainable ocean-based climate action by driving implementation. This would mean:
  - Translating ambition into action by developing and implementing sustainable ocean-based measures in NDCs;
  - Enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience, and reducing vulnerability to climate change, by advancing ocean-based adaptation measures; and,
  - Strengthening synergies across the climate, biodiversity, and ocean nexus.”
23. Based on this vision for the dialogue there is a clear opportunity for the Pacific to pursue more innovative financing for climate change and fisheries, maritime transport as well as for ocean-based energy systems that would benefit the region.

## Role of Fiji as co-facilitator in 2026

24. Co-facilitators will be Belgium (2025-26), Brazil (2025) and Fiji (2026). It is still unclear how Fiji will be engaged in the process in 2025.
25. Fiji will lead on requesting submissions of themes for the 2026 dialogue, and their selection.
26. Fiji will draft an agenda for 2026 dialogue, will conduct the dialogue, draft and approve the report, with the UNFCCC secretariat, which will be presented to COP31

## Links between ocean, biodiversity and climate change and national planning processes

27. The Pacific needs to follow-up to ocean mitigation technologies presented in 2024 by the Technology Expert Committee, as there is a great potential in a number of technologies, but also lots of uncertainty on costs, technological specifications, and how SIDS might be able to secure interest from innovators, as well as finance for trials and pilot projects.
28. Some ocean mitigation proposals involves geo-engineering and technological “fixes” that may have highly detrimental impacts on ecosystems and on the ocean. CBD Cop 16 agreed that further efforts are needed to: “improve the understanding of the impacts of geoengineering activities on marine and coastal biodiversity in line with the precautionary approach”.
29. There are opportunities for climate change financing for fisheries, but climate change rationale must be clear for AF and GCF. For GEF it could be multi-threat response.
30. On target 3 of CBD, there are currently huge discussion in the Pacific regarding designating strictly protected marine protected areas (MPAs, no-take) versus adopting other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). There is uncertainty on OECMs allowing or not for industrial fishing”. Species-based management, like the one in place for tuna, counts as an Alternative Effective Management approach, which is stated as a « complement » to OECM but not included in, it is still unsure whether that could count as toward “30x30”. It’s also unclear in the definition if area-based measures can include a depth zoning, which is crucial as in the Pacific one specific idea gaining attention is vertical zonations. It means that countries will allows sustainable fishing activities in the upper 500 m water column, particularly targeting migratory species such as tuna, while maintaining protection of deeper ecosystems. The rationale is that tuna fisheries are already effectively managed through robust regional management frameworks, and strict spatial restrictions may thus be unnecessary. Vertical zonation has to consider that key biodiversity features (as seamounts) do not get affected. PICTs need to discuss and come up to the CBD secretariat with a consolidated proposal regarding the implementation of this target at the regional level, to be able to achieve it in the Pacific region. During the Pacific Ocean Alliance Meeting (10 - 11 of April), one objective is to finalise PICTs’ input to the UNOC and to confirm regional voluntary commitments, including 30 x 30.
31. A continued engagement with the Pacific Meteorological Council will enhance support for marine and ocean observations.