



A call for a dedicated Ocean financial platform

Ocean conservation remains vastly underfunded, yet the ocean is vital to the world's economy. **Trillions of dollars of goods and services are provided by the ocean annually.** Multiple industries including shipping, pharmaceuticals, submarine cables, aquaculture, and hospitality rely heavily on the ocean for their revenue. Yet allocations of funding towards the ocean — whose economic value is projected to reach **\$3T USD by 2030** — is woefully behind.

In a context in which humans have significantly altered two-thirds of the ocean, marine ecosystems are collapsing, and it is projected that the ocean will carry more plastic than fish in our lifetime; action to protect our ocean is more critical now more than ever.

Fortunately, in recent years we have seen a wave of mounting momentum of ocean-positive initiatives. Since the first two UN Ocean Conferences (UNOCs), more than 2,000 pledges and billions of dollars in commitments were amassed. The adoption of the UN Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction Treaty (BBNJ) and the Global Biodiversity Framework 30x30 target signal commitment to the ocean is accelerating.

With the Sustainable Development Goals reaching the final stretch of their mandate, there is ample evidence to underscore that **UNOC 2025 is the optimal time for an ambitious and innovative global leap forward on ocean finance.**

Voluntary financial mechanisms

Even with the increased pledges and initiatives, there is a significant gap in funding for *Life Below Water* and, without a concerted effort, that gap only stands to grow. Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding is mercurial at best and as the ocean economy grows exponentially it is important to keep growth sustainable.

Building off the efforts that many initiatives, including the Global Fund for Coral Reefs (GFCR), have made to forge new sources of public and private funding for ocean-positive solutions — **the diversification of ocean conservation resource streams is key to ensuring a baseline of predictable and reliable funding.** Successful cases in the health sector such as the Global Fund, UNITAID, and GAVI have shown the efficacy of voluntary financial mechanisms in raising funds towards a common goal. We have seen traction over the years and even successful cases

such as in Costa Rica in favor of payment for ecosystem services (PES). **So, the question remains: why not try to implement this within the ocean space?**

Waking a leviathan

The blue economy is a sleeping giant waiting to be awakened. With the amount industries and livelihoods reliant on the ocean, it is in the best interests of all stakeholders to contribute to its long-term viability and sustainability in one way or another. Tapping into these economic flows dependent upon ocean services hold tremendous, unutilized potential. Possible PES models include:

- **Submarine cables:** One of the most important pieces of infrastructure in the world responsible for nearly all data being transferred; including over \$10T USD in financial transactions per day. An industry whose annual growth rate is projected to more than double in the next decade could contribute \$1.2B USD a year via OOF based on a single cent levy per terabit or \$1.15B USD with a .07 USD levy per transaction.
- **Marine Shipping Industry:** An industry already with momentum—the IMO has already laid the groundwork on their GHG strategy for shipping related levy and a portion of revenue earmarked for ocean conservation initiatives would be effective in diversifying revenue. Alternatively, charging a \$7 USD payment for an *ocean service levy* per TEU (i.e., shipping containers) could unlock \$1.1B USD within a small coalition of interested countries.
- **Marine Biotechnology and Pharmaceuticals:** The use of marine-based genetic resources has increased in prominence; with \$3.52B USD in annual imports. Examples range from horseshoe crab blood, cone snail venom, sea sponge compounds, and algae and seaweed who are all derived from ocean services.

When industry and states meet the challenge, how to build a credible conduit?

Through a global platform to finance transformative action and science-based solutions. The platform is proposed as an international non-profit organization designed with diverse revenue streams. it aims to offer a lean, global node financing a multitude of ocean conservation and blue economy efforts led by existing initiative and actors, including the private sector. Its global mandate — spanning every ocean state, including non-ODA recipient countries — but with priority to SIDs and LDCs, will cover the breadth of ocean priorities set during the UNOCs, UNFCCC COPs, and CBD COPs. This One Ocean Finance platform relies on its polyilateral model of willing motivated states and industry leaders to stay agile; building on the aforementioned momentum in the ocean space with the flexibility to assist non-profits, governments, and UN agencies as well as investment funds and enterprises through a menu of funding modalities.

The One Ocean Finance concept is currently under development by the GFCR UN Global Team and a convening of leading ocean stakeholders, and gathering input from key NGOs,

IGOs, industry influencers, and state representatives. A full development proposal and plan along with a key stakeholder working group, will be established by early Q3 2024.