

Asia-Pacific Day for the Ocean

20 November 2018, United Nations Conference Centre, Bangkok

Tentative programme

Asia-Pacific is home to the most biologically diverse and productive marine ecosystems. From fisheries to marine-based tourism, our ocean is a vital source of livelihood, employment, nutrition and economic growth and is essential in balancing our climate. Marine and coastal ecosystems are the first line of defence from storms and saltwater inundation and are among the richest sources of biodiversity on our blue planet. Yet, rampant marine pollution, ocean acidification and warming, destructive fishing practices, unsustainable trade and transport, unplanned urbanization, and inadequate coastal and marine governance threaten the health of our ocean and its capacity to nurture sustainable development. Countries in Asia-Pacific are both major sources of ocean degradation and highly vulnerable to its impacts, exacerbated by climate change.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the importance of protecting the ocean and its critical role for sustainable development. In 2017, the Ocean Conference redirected the focus to Sustainable Development Goal 14 on “Life below Water” and called for collective and urgent action¹ to halt and reverse the decline in the health and productivity of our ocean and its ecosystems and to protect and restore its resilience and ecological integrity. In response, a multitude of actors and stakeholders across Asia-Pacific committed to accelerating action for a healthy ocean, with over 600 Voluntary Commitments registered in the Pacific and Indian Ocean basins alone². The United Nations have launched multi-stakeholder Communities of Ocean Action to follow up on implementation, to catalyse new initiatives, and to facilitate collaboration and networking in support of SDG 14, inclusive of science, business and civil society.

At the halfway mark between the 2017 Ocean Conference and the next global meeting in 2020, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), in close cooperation with custodian agencies of the Communities of Ocean Action, the UN Special Envoy for the Ocean and the hosts of the 2017 Ocean Conference, are organizing the first Asia-Pacific Day for the Ocean. The event invites member States, UN agencies, civil society and other ocean stakeholders to take stock of progress made on Voluntary Commitments in the region, to share lessons learned from ongoing efforts, expand the Communities, and catalyse new commitments for a healthy ocean in our region. Review of activities and Commitments will take place in the form of interactive discussions and presentations, exhibits and side events, along the themes of the Communities of Ocean Action³ and SDG 14 targets, in line with regional priorities. All stakeholders currently implementing Voluntary Commitments in the region, or interested in making new Commitments, are invited to register as presenters and participants by 25 October through the event website: www.unescap.org/events/asia-pacific-day-ocean

¹ In the declaration "Our ocean, our future: call for action", member States agreed on the follow-up to The Ocean Conference. Find the Call for Action at: <https://oceanconference.un.org/callforaction>

² Find the registry of Voluntary Commitments under the Ocean Conference website at: <https://oceanconference.un.org/commitments/>

³ The nine Communities of Ocean Action are: Coral reefs, Implementation of international law as reflected in United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Mangroves, Marine and coastal ecosystems management, Marine pollution, Ocean acidification, Scientific knowledge, research capacity development and transfer of marine technology, Sustainable blue economy, Sustainable fisheries. Find more information at: <https://oceanconference.un.org/coa>

Tentative programme

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| 08:00-09:00 | Registration of participants | |
| Opening: Our region – Our Ocean (in plenary) | | |
| 09:00 – 09:45 | <p>Welcome remarks: the role of regional platforms and cooperation for a healthy ocean</p> <p>Setting the scene for a healthy ocean for sustainable development in Asia-Pacific: The Communities of Ocean Action, tracking progress of Voluntary Commitments and catalysing action for a healthy ocean in the region</p> <p>Progress made since the 2017 Ocean Conference and the way ahead</p> | <p>ESCAP Executive Secretary Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana</p> <p>Special Envoy for the Ocean Ambassador Peter Thomson</p> <p>Representatives of Fiji and Sweden (tbc)</p> |
| 09:45 – 10:00 | An Ocean Accounts Partnership: ESCAP's voluntary commitment | ESCAP Deputy Executive Secretary Hongjoo Harm |
| 10:00 – 10:15 | Coffee break and photo | |
| Taking stock of ocean action in Asia-Pacific (parallel sessions) | | |
| 10:15 – 12:15 | Session A: Marine and coastal ecosystems management, coral reefs and mangroves | UN Environment, ICRI, IUCN |
| 10:15 – 12:15 | Session B: Marine pollution and closing the loop on plastic waste | Ocean Conservancy, ESCAP |
| 12:15 – 13:15 | Lunch, side events and exhibits | |
| 12:15 – 13:15 | Lunch side event: Promoting scientific knowledge, research capacity development and transfer of marine technology – the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) | IOC-UNESCO |
| 12:15 – 13:15 | Walk of ideas – exhibits of posters, videos, case studies of Voluntary Commitments | Multi-stakeholder, including business, civils society, youth |
| Taking stock of ocean action in Asia-Pacific (parallel events, cont'd) | | |
| 13:15 – 15:15 | Session C: Ocean acidification and warming, climate change and blue carbon | GOA-ON, IAEA |
| 13:15 – 15:15 | Session D: Sustainable blue economy and sustainable fisheries | UNDP, FAO |
| 15:15 – 15:30 | Coffee break | |

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| 15:30 – 16:45 | Outcomes of parallel sessions (in plenary): Tracking progress on Voluntary Commitments in the region & growing the Communities | Communities of Ocean Action |
| 16:45 – 17:30 | Closing: Accelerating action in the region | |
| 16:45 – 17:30 | Call for action for a healthy ocean: review of Voluntary Commitments at the regional level and new Voluntary Commitments in the region From 2017 to 2020 and the way ahead: progress since the Ocean Conference Closing remarks: leading the way in Asia-Pacific | Special Envoy for the Ocean Ambassador Thomson Representatives of Fiji & Sweden, Portugal & Kenya (tbc) ESCAP ES |
| 17:30 | Networking cocktail reception | |