

TOS NEWS — July 12, 2017

1. Reflections on the UN Ocean Conference

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From June 5-9 the first ever [UN Ocean Conference](#) was hosted at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The event was requested by the UN General Assembly and supported by the governments of Fiji and Sweden. More than 4000 people were involved in the conference and participated in the outcome document negotiations and six days of partnership dialogues. More than 100 side events were organized by member states or mayor groups, which includes ocean science, ocean industry, and many ocean-related NGOs.

Ocean scientists, ocean activists, business leaders, and luminaries joined the diplomats and delegations from member states to highlight the importance of the ocean for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In 2015, the United Nations proclaimed a new vision for the future of people and the planet, which is articulated in 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs). The small island development states made sure that one of the goals — [SDG14](#) focuses specifically on the ocean and promotes its conservation and sustainable use. The UN Ocean Conference might have been the only topical conference of the 2030 Agenda, which shows that the ocean community is well networked in the UN system and that member states care about the global common ocean.

A recent International Council for Science study articulates the interactions between the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda and uses the ocean goal (SDG14) as one of the exemplars. The study finds that the ocean is important to many other goals of the 2030 Agenda, but not all implementation actions that are envisioned in other goals also support SDG14 implementation. There can be both synergies and conflicts. This and other contributions from science are clearly needed to inform our nations on how to best act coherently and sustainably.

One of the partnership dialogues focused on the importance of ocean science, observation, and information and technology exchange and transfer with non-OECD countries. The [Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission](#) of UNESCO suggested to the UN Ocean Conference that a decade of ocean science would be needed to provide more and relevant knowledge to implement the ambitious goals under SDG14. In addition, the member states reconfirmed their interest in more and detailed ocean observation, information, and ocean assessment.

One of the many side events was a “soft launch” of a new international ocean science activity. Future Earth, the Scientific Committee for Ocean Research, IOC-UNESCO, and the World Climate Research Programme have just jointly formed the scoping team for the [Ocean Knowledge for Action Network \(KAN\)](#). This activity will promote international collaboration and knowledge generation in support of a more sustainable interaction between humans and the ocean. The Ocean KAN will embark in stakeholder-engaged science and develop solution-oriented work flows together with academic and nonacademic actors. I see this as a potentially interesting new and exciting area for TOS to engage with.

While the diplomats and UN experts felt that the 14-point outcome document was legally soft and did not progress much beyond existing agreements, a new and untraditional element of the conference was a call

for volunteer commitments. More than 1350 actions were submitted from all ocean actors. It will be interesting to see who will sort and formally record them and implement a follow up and review mechanism. At least it documented a high level of interest and engagement.

Personally, I was very moved to see Walter Munk, who is 100 years old, speak at a side event about the importance of ocean science and ocean assessments. I was also impressed by the [leadership and commitment of Fiji and several other Pacific Small Island States](#). The final document and the discussions in the hallways made strong reference to the importance of ocean science in general but also reconfirmed the need for more engagement in climate change mitigation and ocean conservation and protection. Perhaps not surprisingly, German media coverage was significant but sparse from US media outlets.

TOS members are encouraged to engage in these important international efforts related to ocean science and the ocean-policy interface. We will post updates in TOS NEWS as this develops.

2. 2018 Ocean Sciences Meeting Abstract Submission System Opening Soon

Within the next several days, the abstract submission system for the 2018 Ocean Sciences Meeting will open. Stay tuned for an email announcement or visit the [conference website](#) for updates.

TOS is making great strides toward fulfilling its [mission](#) as we grow to represent more members of the oceanographic community worldwide. Please invite your colleagues to [join](#) by forwarding them [this link](#) to the membership page. If you would like to support TOS initiatives and programs, please consider [contributing](#) by following [this link](#).

Please contact Jenny Ramarui (jenny@tos.org), TOS Executive Director, with any questions about items in this message or your membership.