

**Submission to the Dialogue on the Ocean and Climate Change
at the 52nd Session of SBSTA from OPRI-SPF**

We welcome the outcome of the “Blue COP” held in Madrid Spain in 2019 and presided over by the Government of Chile, with specific agreement to hold the Dialogue on Ocean and Climate Change during the 52nd Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) in 2020 to consider how to strengthen mitigation and adaptation action in this context in accordance with Decision 1/CP.25 para.31.

The Ocean Policy Research Institute of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation (OPRI-SPF) is an independent non-profit think tank based in Tokyo, Japan, committed to pursuing a “harmonious relationship between mankind and the oceans” by linking scientific research and policies. OPRI-SPF is also a member of both ROCA (the Roadmap to Oceans and Climate Action), a multi-stakeholder initiative involving UNFCCC parties and non-parties to advance the oceans and climate agenda, and the Ocean Pathway established under the leadership of Fiji and Sweden.

Background:

As the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) indicates in its “Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate (SROCC)” (2019), the linkage between climate change and the ocean and cryosphere is evident, and IPCC alerts that some of the critical marine ecosystems, such as coral reefs in the tropical regions, have already passed a “tipping point,” a point of no return, meaning that we are facing a crisis of the ocean in many ways. The message here is clear, “choices made now are critical for the future of our ocean.” Climate change trends are already irreversible, even with the boldest policy actions, changes affecting the ocean will continue in the far long-term. We must raise ambitions to deliver on the Paris Agreement, that is to say, to achieve net zero global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by mid-century. In this context, every measure counts, and there is still a great potential to advance ocean-based solutions, such as ocean-based renewables, especially off-shore wind energy, nature-based solutions including blue carbon, and comprehensive adaptation and disaster measures in coastal areas. Those programmes have to be based on solid science and properly financed.

SPF-OPRI would like to recommend the following specific actions for the Dialogue.

Recommended Actions and Issues to be Discussed:

1. **Promotion of Ocean-based Solutions:** Parties to UNFCCC should be encouraged to enhance ocean-based solutions and measures in their nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and national adaptation plans (NAPs). Sharing of good practices and analysis of gaps and potential will be useful. The Dialogue should also consider how ocean-based measures are incorporated into existing UNFCCC mechanisms such as the Global Stocktake, the Nairobi Work Programme (NWP), Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM), and Research Dialogue, and how they can be strengthened. In this Dialogue, the participation of high-level policy makers and sector specialists from both ocean and non-ocean fields is crucial to ensure that a cross-sectoral approach is followed up by policy decisions.
2. **Nature-based Solution including Blue Carbon:** The latest science indicates the climate mitigation potential of blue carbon ecosystems, including macroalgal beds (seaweed). However, except regarding mangrove forests, only a limited number of Parties have referred to blue carbon ecosystems in their NDCs. The UNFCCC should provide guidance on how Parties can estimate CO₂ emissions/removal and best include blue carbon ecosystems in their national GHG inventories and NDCs. Revision of “the 2013 Supplement to the 2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories: Wetlands (Wetlands Supplement)” could be a good next step. As well as mitigation potential, co-benefits of blue carbon such as disaster risk reduction and water quality improvement should be properly assessed.
3. **Strengthening Blue Financing:** SROCC indicates that climate change has certainly impacted critical sectors and livelihoods which are highly dependent on ocean and marine ecosystem and services. The UNFCCC should thus provide a platform to ensure a significant mobilization of current global climate funds, particularly to build resilience in coastal and small island developing states, and facilitate new and innovative approaches (e.g., tailored blue bonds or insurance solutions) and public and private partnerships. In this vein, the (postponed) 2020 Standing Committee on Finance (SCF) Forum, with its focus on nature-based solutions, should provide a venue for exploring ocean-climate finance opportunities.
4. **Enhancing Research and Policy Linkage:** The UNFCCC should encourage parties to invest further in research and ocean observation for long-term and comprehensive global monitoring linking the scientific findings to policy processes. International cooperation should also be enhanced by sharing data, information and research

outcome, as well as providing appropriate capacity development programmes for human resource development and institutional building, especially targeting Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and the Global South. These efforts should also be coordinated with the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030).

- 5. Institutionalize Ocean and Climate Forum:** It is important to continue the momentum and institutionalize ocean and climate forum in the official UNFCCC process. In addition to Parties, such a forum should also include stakeholders responsible for mitigation and adaptation actions such as the business sector, local governments, and also the youth. We support the suggestion in the Because the Ocean Initiative submission to the SBSTA 52 Ocean Dialogue to organize an annual Expert Ocean Dialogue, or an appropriate recurrent Dialogue involving both experts and high-level representatives. We also recommend that a clear background document be prepared prior to the Dialogue, to inform the Parties and non-Parties of the objectives of the Dialogue, format, discussion points, outcome, and next steps. The informal summary of the Dialogue should be submitted to the SBSTA plenary and COP 26 for concrete follow-up decisions.

On behalf of

Dr. Atsushi Sunami,

President

The Ocean Policy Research Institute of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation (OPRI-SPF)

Contact:

Miko Maekawa (PhD)

Senior Research Fellow

Ocean Policy Research Institute,

Sasakawa Peace Foundation

1-15-16 Toranomon, Minato-ku, Tokyo 105-8524, Japan

Tel: 03-5157-5210

Email: oceanpolicy@spf.or.jp