



*CONFERENCE MINISTERIELLE SUR LA COOPERATION HALIEUTIQUE ENTRE LES ETATS
AFRICAINS RIVERAINS DE L'OCEAN ATLANTIQUE*

*MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON FISHERIES COOPERATION AMONG AFRICAN STATES
BORDERING THE ATLANTIC OCEAN*

10th OUR OCEAN CONFERENCE



Participation report of the Executive Secretariat

Busan, Republic of Korea

(April 28-30, 2025)

Introduction

As part of strengthening its anchoring within the high international bodies of governance of the sea and the Oceans, on the one hand, and following the recommendations of the 11th ordinary session of the Conference of Ministers of ATLAFCO, held in Abidjan on April 24, 2025 which goes in the same direction, on the other hand, the Ministerial Conference on Fisheries Cooperation among African States bordering the Atlantic Ocean (ATLAFCO) participated in the 10th Conference on Oceans, held this year in Busan, Republic of Korea, from April 28 to 30, 2025.

This participation also responds to the invitation from the government authorities responsible for fisheries, oceans and climate change of the Republic of Korea addressed to our Organization.

The Ocean Conference is a high-level annual event dedicated to ocean governance. It is a major gathering for all stakeholders in the global fisheries sector.

It aims to share experiences in this area and to propose solutions to governments facing the many current and future challenges of our Oceans with a view to ensuring sustainable development for these living spaces and global connection.

The 10th *Our Ocean* Conference chose the theme " **Our Ocean, Our Action** " to engage in dialogue and promote global actions for a sustainable Ocean.

The panelists, speakers and participants in the plenary sessions of this Conference were able to dialogue, exchange and follow the discussions around several current themes concerning the Oceans and more particularly:

- 1) Marine protected areas;
- 2) Sustainability of fisheries;
- 3) Marine pollution;
- 4) Climate change;
- 5) Maritime security;
- 6) The blue economy;
- 7) The Digital Oceans.

Similarly, several (*Side events*) took place during the Conference in relation to the themes set out above but also in view of the holding, in Nice (France), next June of the 3rd United Nations Conference on Oceans (UNOC-3) .

This 10th Conference , held under the slogan " *Our Ocean , Our Action*", was attended by high-ranking political figures, heads of government, ministers, government agencies, CEOs of multinationals, representatives of civil society, NGOs, IGOs, research institutes, academics... all showing an interest in the Oceans, the sea and activities around these main components of the terrestrial globe.

ATLAFCO member states were also represented by ministers responsible for fisheries (Ghana, Angola), senior officials including ambassadors to Korea and directors general of fisheries and aquaculture.

The opening ceremony of the Conference featured speeches by the Head of Government of the Republic of Korea, the Minister of Oceans and Fisheries of the Republic of Korea, John KERRY, 68th Secretary of State of the United States and founder of the Conference, and the UN Ambassador for the Oceans, Peter THOMPSON.

All the opening speeches focused on understanding the Oceans and the Ocean system, their sustainability, food security, climate change, decarbonization, the connection between climate and the Oceans, the challenges of the BBNJ, whose ratification status at this date is 21 countries out of the 60 required, and of course the need to act collectively by mobilizing the entire international community to save the Oceans, mitigate the effects of climate change and preserve the global economic system.

The main conclusions of each of the seven (7) plenary sessions are detailed below. The programs of these sessions and the list of panelists per session are in the appendices.

1st session: Marine-protected areas

This panel was well attended given its importance marked by the objective of protecting 30% of the world's marine space by 2030 (30 by 30).

Indeed, marine protected areas are considered by the international community as a powerful means to sustainably conserve marine ecosystems, biodiversity and of course fishing activities and the income of coastal populations, particularly those whose dependence on the sea is directly characterized (fishing, aquaculture, tourism) and of course, other ecosystems of activities which depend on the sea and the oceans (shipping, oil and energy, telecommunications/internet cables, etc.).

During this session, panelists, composed of representatives from the world of science, civil society, academia, the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity and regional fisheries management bodies, were able to share their experiences and demonstrate, through examples of successful projects, the importance of marine protected areas and the actions to be implemented to achieve the 30 by 30 objective set by the international community.

For ATLAFCO, the ideas shared, the experiences presented by the panelists and the content of the voluntary speeches delivered at the end of the session are in line with the conclusions and recommendations of the Workshop organized by the Executive Secretariat in Casablanca in October/November 2024 on "Marine Biodiversity", which indicates that the actions initiated by our Organization for the attention of its Member States in terms of sustainability of fisheries and the use of living marine resources are in perfect harmony with the orientations and course set by the international community on this subject.

2nd session: The blue economy

This plenary session held on April 29 was preceded on April 28 by a *side event* on the means of building a Blue Economy and the financing mechanisms of this concept which has been in the news for several years at the global level and more particularly at the level of the African continent.

Thus, during this second session, the panelists highlighted the need to fully understand what a "blue economy" is before embarking on projects that fall within this framework in light of current issues arising from climate change, overexploitation of the oceans (fishing, aquaculture, etc.), and marine pollution marked by the annual discharge into the sea of more than 11 million tonnes of non-degradable plastic waste and debris.

There was also talk of creating regional "blue economies" in view of the geographical and biological particularities and the varying degree of development from one part of the globe to another, particularly at the level of island countries.

Similarly, the panelists emphasized the main challenge to overcome, which is climate change and its effects on the models for building blue economies. Indeed, while it is recognized that the construction of a blue economy must first and foremost be initiated by governments, particularly in developing countries, the fact remains that the component of resilience in the face of climate change must be taken into account as a priority.

Science, research, technological development, particularly Artificial Intelligence, also play an essential role in any project to develop a blue economy beyond the aspects of financing and governance.

Indeed, it has been reported that innovation will make it possible to achieve, more generally, the objectives of ocean sustainability and a sustainable economy.

Thus, when all the components are well understood, grasped and appropriated, the premises of blue growth *can emerge* .

3rd plenary session : Climate change

Under the theme of "reducing carbon emissions in the Ocean", this session was marked by the participation of Mr. John KERRY who summarized his intervention by the need to act proactively at the level of the international community to face this global problem that is climate change and its global impacts given the connection between this phenomenon and the Ocean.

For their part, representatives of banking institutions who took part in this panel indicated their mobilization to contribute to the sustainability of the oceans and to the mitigation of the effects of climate change through so-called " *Healthy* " *programs. Oceans* . Indeed, the oceans are seriously threatened by human activities which contribute to their acidification, thus disrupting the entire marine ecosystem.

The role of the private sector was also highlighted in contributing to decarbonization, mitigating the effects of climate change and, of course, overall environmental protection. The example of maritime transport or "*Shipping*" was cited, particularly with regard to projects to develop future ships that will gradually contribute to reducing CO2 emissions by 100% by 2070 (*Green Shipping*).

In terms of maritime fishing, the panelists recommended that governments encourage the transition to so-called "Eco- *friendly*" vessels for coastal and industrial activities so that all sectors using the sea and oceans can collectively contribute to reducing the carbon footprint.

Overall, and to achieve the expected objectives from 2023, countries must strengthen their cooperation and develop convergent strategies.

4th session: Sustainability of fisheries

This session was held under the theme of "actions to be taken to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing".

It was also moderated by panelists representing RFMOs, NGOs, and European and African public fisheries and aquaculture managers. Indeed, the African continent contributed to the facilitation of this important session by **Ms. Emilia Arthur, Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture of Ghana and 1st Vice-President of ATLAFCO**.

The discussions focused broadly on the role of new technologies, Artificial Intelligence, cooperation, science and dialogue in achieving the objective of transparency in fisheries and “*Seafood supply chain and trade*”, especially since the international community had been committed to the fight against IUU activities since the FAO declared the international IPOA/IUU action plan in 2001.

For her part, Ms. ARTHUR recalled the conclusions of the FAO report presented at the last session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI, July 2024) that IUU fishing represents 20% of catches on the African continent and causes Africa to lose US\$11 billion per year, which constitutes a significant part of the GDP of several coastal countries.

Speaking on the contribution of importing countries of fishery products in the fight against IUU activities, the representative of the European Union pointed out the commitment of market states (*Market State engagement*) to prevent the introduction of fishery products from these illegal and unregulated activities on the European market.

In this regard, it has been reported that from 2026, the traceability systems and devices put in place by the EU authorities will be strengthened by the deployment of a new, more robust system, but also offering more flexible functionalities and a more flexible process for both the exporter and the European importer.

As for voluntary interventions, the presentation by the representative of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) drew the attention of the participants who were able to take note of the main results and recommendations of the latest report published by this Organisation on April 29, 2025 on fisheries (*OECD- Review of fisheries 2025*). *This report is available in English and French on the internet portal of this Organization and ATLAFCO.*

5th session: Marine pollution

Marine pollution, particularly plastic waste, continues to be a major concern for the international community. As such, the international community is currently working to establish a binding legal instrument to combat all forms of pollution caused by materials made from plastic.

This intergovernmental process, which began five years ago, has taken important steps which should enable this instrument to be made available at the international level in the short term.

Under the theme of “fighting against plastic pollution of the Oceans”, this session allowed panelists representing the Government of the Republic of Korea, NGOs, international alliances, etc. to share experiences, illustrate the dangers and effects of this pollution on the future of the seas and oceans, the impacts on marine fauna and flora, the impacts on the economies of island countries, etc.

Through the discussions, the participants recognized that the fight against this global phenomenon must involve strengthening cooperation, education, popularization and dialogue with all users of the sea to fundamentally change their relationship with the Oceans.

The role of governments, local authorities, industry, civil society and sea users was crucial in implementing global and coordinated actions to stem this very worrying phenomenon at all levels, through a global plastic treaty *and / or* robust and strengthened legislation.

Indeed, this phenomenon is characterized by the dumping of more than 11 million tons of plastic waste into the sea per year, not to mention the significant number of fishing gear lost or abandoned at sea " *Ghost gears* ".

At the industry level, it was reported that manufacturers of plastic products and materials should invest in research and development to identify less harmful chemicals that can be used in the manufacture of these products.

The issue of financing national, regional and local programmes and projects to reduce this phenomenon was also raised, with the emphasis being placed on determining how "the money allocated to this" would be used.

As for the voluntary interventions, they all focused on the same alarming observation on the highly harmful effects of marine pollution and more particularly that of plastic materials and the need to:

- 1) lead to the commitment of the entire international community;
- 2) have a binding and robust international legal instrument;
- 3) ensure transparency in the process undertaken to combat all forms of marine pollution.

These voluntary interventions, numbering eight (8), during this session were marked by the speeches given on this subject by five (5) ministers representing the governments of Japan, Ireland, Romania, Slovenia and Portugal.

6th session : Maritime security

Under the theme of "Actions for a Stable Maritime Order," this session was led by civil and military government officials, legal experts (DOALOS/UN), and other maritime security experts.

The discussions were rather focused on the South Asia and Pacific region.

Furthermore, participants were able to note the importance of the Oceans in terms of communication and connectivity between countries because 99% of electronic communications are carried out through "marine cables" through the " **Submarine cable Convention**" **dating from 1884; and also note that 41% of damaged cables were caused by fishing vessels (trawlers).**

Also, the panelists' interventions focused on the impacts of piracy and similar acts on the marine environment and air pollution because these dangerous actions lead ships to " *rerouting* " marked by changes of itinerary or the selection of longer maritime routes, which contributes to the increase in energy consumption.

To talk about maritime security in the true sense and to fight against all its forms, the speakers pointed out that in order to achieve a more global security framework (*For a secure global trade*) it was necessary to:

- 1) build and implement a regional alliance system or model " *Capacity alliance building model* "

- 2) develop cybersecurity at sea
- 3) strengthen the capacities of States to support the establishment of an “international maritime order”, particularly for developing countries;
- 4) support these measures with voluntary funding “ *Voluntary trust fund* ”
- 5) strengthen collaboration between countries through information sharing and joint patrols as this is the central axis to stem this phenomenon.

7th session: Digital Ocean

This important session featured high-level public and private panelists. Themed "Actions for a Sustainable Ocean through Digital Technology," the session highlighted technological advances in shipbuilding and maritime navigation to ensure the future of sustainable, clean, and safe vessels.

It was also an opportunity to explore how digital technology serving the Ocean could contribute to its sustainability.

Similarly, it was reported that the innovation projects currently being launched by several countries in partnership with specialized multinational companies would contribute to achieving the *30 by 30 objective*.

It was also noted that taking into account innovation and digital development (*Digital tools*) in national sustainable development strategies is now essential in the current context and will also enable countries whose economy is heavily impacted by sectors dependent on the sea (fishing, aquaculture, tourism, trade & maritime transport, etc.) to better build their blue economy model.

Digital technology is also a powerful ally for the development of sustainable aquaculture. Indeed, thanks to the new instruments and tools developed, ATLAFCO member states have everything to gain by deploying these instruments in aquaculture projects because their advantages are multiple (reducing production costs through good management of the feed of farmed species, growth management, typical stereo cameras for counting individuals, remote weight measurement, etc.).

Conclusions:

The 10th Ocean Conference was a resounding success on all levels.

At the level of the Organization, all the conditions for participation in this Conference were facilitated by the Authorities of the Republic of Korea.

The richness and diversity of the sessions, their content and the intellectual level of the panelists left no participant indifferent.

Also, the " side-events " organized during this Conference were marked by their intellectual richness.

For ATLAFCO, its participation was reassuring insofar as the subjects addressed during the seven (7) sessions and the themes discussed were all integrated into its strategic action plan for the period 2025-2027 which was adopted a few days earlier, in Abidjan, on April 24.

This denotes in more than one way that the actions and projects that are and will be undertaken by the Executive Secretariat during the implementation of this three-year action plan for the benefit of its member states are in perfect harmony with the roadmap embodied by the international community in terms of ocean sustainability and are consistent with the principle of the sustainable use of living marine resources supported by ATLAFCO.

Thus, the topics discussed and all the information shared by the panelists during this 10th High Level International Conference will make it possible to identify themes and enrich the content of the actions that ATLAFCO intends to organize during the period 2025-2027 for the benefit of its member states for the sustainable use of living marine resources, the strengthening of regional cooperation and the sustainable development of the maritime fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

At the end of writing this report, the Executive Secretariat would like to express its sincere thanks to the authorities of the Republic of Korea for the invitation extended to ATLAFCO to participate in this very high-level event, and express its congratulations for the very high quality of organization of this 10th Conference and its success at all levels.

PROGRAM AND PHOTOGRAPHIC REPORT



Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

Actions for 30 by 30

April 29 (Tue) 11:00-12:30 | BEXCO Auditorium (3F)

Session

MPAs are powerful tools for the conservation and sustainable use of marine ecosystems. The international community has set the goal of protecting 30% of the world's oceans by 2030, known as the "30 by 30" target. It is important to focus on both achieving this goal through collaboration among various stakeholders and effectively managing the MPAs by establishing monitoring and evaluation systems. The 10th OOC will serve as a platform for participants to consolidate their knowledge and experience and announce effective actions to accelerate the achievement of the "30 by 30" target.

Moderator



Johnny Briggs
Director,
Pew Bertarelli Ocean Legacy

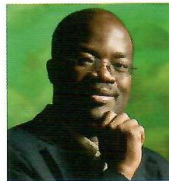
Speakers



Evan T. Bloom
Marine Protected Area
Advisor,
Antarctic and Southern
Ocean Coalition



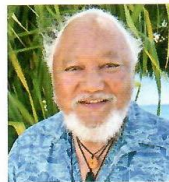
Astrid Schomaker
ASG and Executive
Secretary, Convention on
Biological Diversity



Rashid Ussif Sumaila
Professor,
University of
British Columbia



Arnaldo André Tinoco
Minister of Foreign Affairs
and Worship, Republic of
Costa Rica



Solomon Pili
Kaho'ohalahala
Native Hawaiian Elder

Blue Economy

Actions toward Creating an Innovative Framework for the Blue Economy

April 29 (Tue) 14:40-16:10 | BEXCO Auditorium (3F)

Session

The Blue Economy represents a new paradigm that fosters innovative business models and economic growth through the sustainable use of the ocean. Many countries worldwide are striving to utilize the Blue Economy as a new engine for national development. Some nations are already showcasing successful Blue Economy frameworks built on advanced knowledge, technology, and governance. The 10th OOC will offer a platform to share knowledge and experiences related to these innovative Blue Economy frameworks that have become a reality.

Moderator



Charles Goddard
Editorial Director, Economist Impact

Speakers



Sang-Hyup Kim
Director General, Global
Green Growth Institute
(GGGI)



Barkha Mossae
Regional Regenerative
Blue Economy Manager,
IUCN Eastern and Southern
Africa Office



Dionysia-Theodora
Avgerinopoulou
Greek Prime Minister's
Envoy for the Ocean,
The Hellenic Republic



Thor Sigfusson
Founder and Chairman,
Iceland Ocean Cluster



Jonas R. Leones
Undersecretary for Policy,
Planning and International
Affairs, Republic of the
Philippines

Climate Change

Actions for Carbon Reduction in Our Ocean

April 29 (Tue) 16:30-18:00 | BEXCO Auditorium (3F)

Session

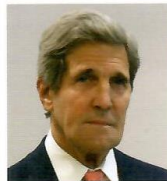
Climate change poses a profound threat to the ocean's ability to regulate the global climate, with consequences such as rising sea temperatures, sea level rise, and ocean acidification, which in turn trigger numerous ripple effects in our ocean. The need to go beyond carbon neutrality and achieve carbon negativity is being recognized as a fundamental solution to address these climate change challenges. The 10th OOC will focus on ways to reduce and absorb carbon in the ocean. Key discussions will include decarbonizing international shipping, transitioning to eco-friendly vessels for coastal and fishing fleets, expanding blue carbon initiatives such as carbon sinks, and fostering international cooperation on marine carbon reduction. Participants will share practical examples and discuss strategies for spreading successful initiatives.

Moderator



Hyoeun Jenny Kim
Chief Executive Officer, Global Industry Hub

Speakers



John Kerry
68th
U.S. Secretary of State



Toru Kubo
Senior Director, Climate
Change and Sustainable
Development Dept, ADB



Julio Cordano
Ambassador and Head of
Environment, Climate Change
and Oceans Division, Ministry
of Foreign Affairs, Chile



Yoonsik Hwang
Head of Energy Solution R&D
Center (SVP), Hanwha Ocean

Sustainable Fisheries

Actions to Eliminate IUU Fishing

April 30 (Wed) 09:00-10:30 | BEXCO Auditorium (3F)

Session

Global efforts to conserve oceans living resources that were once far more abundant have been ongoing through resource management and regulated fishing activities. Responsible fishing is key to achieving sustainable fisheries, and the international community has made significant progress by developing concrete guidelines and agreements. These international efforts have improved control measures for every stage of seafood production and distribution, from catching at sea to unloading at ports and distribution in markets. Moreover, Official Development Assistance (ODA) projects and training programs aimed at strengthening the fisheries management capacities of developing countries have steadily expanded for broader global participation and collective action. Against this backdrop, the 10th OOC will provide a great opportunity for every participant to announce their commitment and explore ways to promote unified international actions to achieve sustainable fisheries.

Moderator



Steve Trent
CEO & Founder,
Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF)

Speakers



Jung-re Riley Kim
Chair,
South Pacific Regional
Fisheries Management
Organization (SPRFMO)



Beth Lowell
Vice President, United States,
OCEANA



Emelia Arthur
Minister for Fisheries and
Aquaculture,
Republic of Ghana



Charlina Vitcheva
Director General for Maritime
Affairs and Fisheries,
European Commission



Yemi Oloruntuyi
Head, Social Policy,
Marine Stewardship Council



Marine Pollution

Actions to Tackle Marine Plastic Pollution

April 30 (Wed) 10:50-12:20 | BEXCO Auditorium (3F)

Session

Growing concerns about marine plastic pollution continue to draw global attention. In response, the international community is working on a global treaty toward ending plastic pollution. Countries are improving waste management, companies are developing new recycling technologies, and civil society is tackling the problem through campaigns and volunteer efforts. At the 10th OOC, discussions will focus on bringing together the efforts of governments, local authorities, businesses, and citizens to address marine waste, with a special focus on plastic pollution, and to encourage coordinated global action.

Moderator



Mahesh Pradhan
Coordinator, UNEP COBSEA

Speakers



Janis Searles Jones
Chief Executive Officer,
Ocean Conservancy



Jacob Duer
President & CEO,
Alliance to End Plastic Waste



Zoë Prinsloo
Founder & CEO,
Save a Fishie NPC



Keeyoung Chung
Ambassador and Deputy
Minister for Climate Change,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Republic of Korea



Richard Thompson
Director of Marine Institute,
University of Plymouth

Maritime Security

Actions for Stable International Maritime Order

April 30 (Wed), 14:30-15:40 | BEXCO Auditorium (3F)

Session

The ocean connects the world and has long been a vital space for international exchange and cooperation in areas such as transportation, logistics, and the use of marine resources. Around 80% of global trade is conducted by sea, making the ocean the backbone of the global supply chain. However, this supply chain on the ocean is increasingly threatened by conflicts such as war and illegal activities such as piracy, which cause significant economic disruptions worldwide. Strong cooperation among nations is crucial to maintaining a stable and predictable maritime order. At the 10th OOC, the international community will work on developing cooperative measures to establish a stable maritime order and strengthen international maritime security governance.

Moderator



James Kraska
Charles H. Stockton Professor of International
Maritime Law, Stockton Center for
International Law, U.S. Naval War College

Speakers



Ho Sub Jung
Visiting Professor,
International Relations/
Social Science Dept,
Ulsan University



Stuart Kaye
Director,
Australian National Centre
for Ocean Resources
and Security (ANCORS),
University of Wollongong



Vladimir Jares
Director,
Division for Ocean Affairs
and the Law of the Sea,
Office of Legal Affairs,
United Nations



Seul Gu
Marine Pilot,
Port of Busan

Digital Oceans

Actions for Advancing Sustainable Ocean through Digital Technology

April 30 (Wed) 16:00-17:30 | BEXCO Auditorium (3F)

Session

The international community is actively using digital technology to tackle major challenges in our ocean. Smart technology is also being applied to aquaculture to boost growth in the fisheries industry, and efforts are underway to enhance logistics efficiency and reduce ship greenhouse gas emissions through autonomous vessels and digital maritime traffic management. The 10th OOC will explore how digital ocean technology is driving new ocean actions and discuss international cooperation to accelerate these advancements.

Moderator



Jong Deog Kim
President,
Korea Fisheries Resources Agency

Speakers



Dohyeong Lim
CEO,
Avikus (HD Hyundai)



Sa'aga Talu Teafa
Minister of Natural Resources
Development, Tuvalu



Antha Williams
Program Lead,
Environment Team,
Bloomberg Philanthropies



Fangli Qiao
Deputy Director General,
First Institute of Oceanography,
Ministry of Natural Resources,
China



Lidia Bulcão
Vice Minister of Maritime Affairs,
Portuguese Republic









