

UK escalates support for global marine environment at UN Ocean Conference

The UK Government has joined other world leaders at the UN Ocean Conference to announce new initiatives to protect the global marine environment, marking a significant step forward in our mission to protect at least 30% of the global ocean by 2030.

The government's ambitious £500 million Blue Planet Fund, launched at the G7 Leader's Summit last year, is already supporting developing countries and vulnerable coastal communities around the world adapt to climate change and build sustainable, prosperous coastal economies.

In the latest instalment of the Fund announced today, a record £150 million will be invested in a new global programme, known as COAST, to protect and restore valuable coastal and marine habitats such as corals, mangroves and seagrasses, improve the sustainability and productivity of small-scale fisheries, and help developing countries unlock aquaculture's potential.

Up to £100 million of Blue Planet funding will also be used to support the implementation, management and enforcement of Marine Protected Areas, which are created to limit potentially damaging activity at sea and support the recovery of key habitats and marine species, and other effective conservation measures in developing countries.

Building on this momentum, the UK has announced it will join the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy, a global initiative which brings together governments, businesses, financial institutions, the science community and civil society to drive the transition to a sustainable ocean economy.

Lord Zac Goldsmith, Minister for Pacific and International Environment, said:

The world's ocean is in crisis and we have reached a tipping point. This week world leaders came together to redouble their efforts to protect the marine environment. But it absolutely critical these commitments are translated into action and that our ocean remains firmly on the global agenda.

Through our new £500 million Blue Planet Fund we are helping countries tackle a wide range of issues, from illegal fishing to plastic pollution and marine protection. And I'm delighted to announce further UK support for the goal to protect 30% of the world's ocean by 2030, including £154 million for coastal restoration and up to £100 million for marine protection.

The UK government, with Canada and the US, has also this week launched a world-first global alliance to tackle illegal, unregulated and unreported

(IUU) fishing which poses a threat to ocean ecosystems, coastal communities and global fish stocks by undermining fisheries management and distorting trade.

The IUU Fishing Action Alliance will bring together countries leading the fight against IUU fishing, countries targeted by IUU fishing, and organisations helping tackle the issue. It will acknowledge and strengthen existing international commitments, back improved monitoring, control and surveillance, and improve the transparency of fishing data.

Today's announcements sit alongside continued support for programmes under the Blue Planet Fund including:

- £43 million to the Ocean-Country Partnership Programme (OCP): to provide further technical assistance and support to strengthen local scientific expertise and domestic policies in developing coastal countries so they can better manage and mitigate pressures across the marine environment and efforts to achieve sustainable seafood and marine biodiversity.
- £36 million to the Sustainable Blue Economies Programme: through this programme, the UK will provide expertise and support to small islands governments as they develop a climate-resilient ocean economy, including through protecting biodiversity, better ocean management and greater use of nature-based solutions.
- £7.5 million to the Global Plastics Action Partnership (GPAP): to be provided over the next three years, taking the total UK contribution to £15 million. The UK was one of the first donors of GPAP in 2018 which brings together world leaders, industry and civil society to prevent plastic from entering the ocean.

Background

- The Climate and Ocean Adaptation and Sustainable Transition Programme (COAST) programme sits under the £500 million Blue Planet Fund and will support developing countries and vulnerable coastal communities adapt to climate change and build sustainable, prosperous coastal economies.

Other UK announcements being made at the UN Ocean Conference are:

- £6m to the Global Ocean Accounts Partnership (GOAP): GOAP supports the development and maintenance of ocean natural capital accounts in developing countries. The UK will provide a further £6m to GOAP over the next three years, taking the total UK contribution to £7m.
- UK announces membership of the Ocean Acidification Alliance: the UK will

work with partners to increase scientific understanding of ocean acidification and explore actions that can better protect coastal communities and livelihoods across the globe from the threats it poses.

- Launch of the Global Ocean Decade Programme for Blue Carbon (GO-BC): GO-BC will act under the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development to enhance collaboration on ocean science, provide a robust evidence base to protect and restore blue carbon habitats and build resilient marine ecosystems. The UK government will launch this in partnership with St Andrews University, the Scottish Government, Blue Carbon Initiative/Conservation International, the International Partnership for Blue Carbon, and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO.

The UN Ocean Conference follows the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly whereby the UK worked with international partners to secure a breakthrough on negotiations to kickstart a new legally binding treaty on plastic pollution. The UK is now partnering with OPLN to draw upon the world-class expertise of UK stakeholders to help shape this ambitious new international treaty through a series of UK Plastics Treaty Dialogues.

The UN Ocean Conference comes ahead of the 15th Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP15) in December this year where the UK will be calling for an ambitious new framework of biodiversity goals and targets.