

How to invest in the blue economy to achieve ocean health and shared prosperity

“How to” workshop summary

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Summary

The “blue economy” is variously understood as “sustainable”, “regenerative” or “inclusive” economic activity in the ocean, highlighting the need to balance economic growth, ecosystem health and social equity. Despite growing recognition of its importance, too many economic activities in the ocean fail to meet these criteria. This workshop discussed the change needed to embed nature in decision-making, restore ecosystems and achieve sustainable outcomes for the ocean and coastal regions.

Table discussions were structured around the following three questions:

- What does the blue economy mean within the context of your work?
- What are the challenges, opportunities and current effective practice?
- What small actionable steps can be taken now?



The key takeaways from this session are:

The workshop explored how to translate blue-economy principles into action, addressing challenges in definitions, governance, investment, value chains and community engagement. Discussions focused on identifying practical solutions that align economic activities with environmental sustainability while ensuring inclusive benefits for coastal communities.

- **Governance and policy**

A successful blue economy requires integrated and adaptive governance models that place conservation restoration at the centre of economic growth. Participants emphasised the importance of regulatory clarity, as overlapping policies and governance gaps can hinder effective decision-making. Ocean-accounting frameworks should move beyond traditional extraction-focused models to also recognise the economic value of conservation and restoration. Strengthening collaboration between government agencies, private-sector stakeholders and local communities is essential to drive impactful policy development and implementation that aligns with inclusive sustainability goals.

- **Finance and investment**

Ensuring capital flows into the right projects rather than merely increasing investment is critical for the blue economy. Risk-mitigation mechanisms must be strengthened to attract private sector involvement, particularly in developing countries where investment barriers remain high. Blue bonds and blended-finance models emerged as promising solutions, providing long-term, stable funding for sustainable marine projects. Additionally, stronger connections are needed between large-scale investors and local blue-economy enterprises to facilitate equitable access to financing and encourage community-led solutions.

- **Reconfiguring value chains**

For the blue economy to be truly sustainable, businesses must integrate natural-capital considerations into their decision-making processes. Investment in nature-based solutions—such as regenerative aquaculture and eco-tourism—was identified as a way to generate economic value while enhancing ecosystem resilience. Policymakers and financial institutions should provide incentives that encourage businesses to adopt sustainable practices, ensuring that profitability and environmental stewardship go hand in hand. The adoption of frameworks like the System of Environmental Economic Accounting (SEEA) can further support economic planning by embedding ecosystem health into national financial models.

- **Community and local engagement**

Local and indigenous knowledge must be at the heart of decision-making in the blue economy. Sustainable ocean management can only be achieved when communities are actively involved in shaping policies and investment strategies. A participatory-governance approach ensures that coastal communities receive tangible benefits from

blue-economy initiatives, rather than being sidelined in favour of large-scale commercial interests. Strengthening the link between financial institutions and coastal communities can help bridge funding gaps, while co-designed economic-transition programmes can support fishers and marine-industry workers in adapting to changing market and environmental conditions.

- **Innovation and technological advancement**

Technology and innovation play a key role in accelerating the transition to a sustainable blue economy. Digital monitoring tools and data-driven fisheries-management systems can improve ocean conservation while optimising resource use. Knowledge-sharing across industries—including shipping, tourism and energy—can foster integrated approaches to ocean governance. Startups and business incubators have the potential to drive cutting-edge ocean-positive solutions, but they require supportive financial and regulatory environments to scale their impact. Additionally, investment in digital education and capacity-building initiatives can ensure that coastal communities have access to the skills needed to thrive in a more sustainable marine economy.

- **Moving forward**

The workshop concluded with participants reflecting on their commitments to advancing the blue economy through the Blue Economy Pledge. The discussions underscored the need for continuous collaboration among policymakers, investors, businesses and communities to build a sustainable and prosperous ocean economy. With the right governance, investment and innovation strategies, the blue economy can serve as a model for inclusive and regenerative economic development.

