

4th Potsdam Ocean Governance Workshop

The Ocean in 2030 – How to get to the future we want?

Concept Note

Date: 13–14 December 2017 | welcome dinner on 12 December 2017

Venue: Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS)
Berliner Straße 130, 14467 Potsdam

Background and concept

There has been a widely cited expression of hope that the year 2017 could become a game-changer in international ocean governance. The 4th Potsdam Ocean Governance Workshop will bring together outstanding international scientists and representatives from governments, international organisations and the civil society for a critical review and discussion of what has been achieved, and of the challenges and possible next steps to advance ocean sustainability.

By December 2017, several key meetings for the oceans will have taken place, including the first UN Ocean Conference, the EU-hosted “Our Ocean” conference in Malta, the annual session of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), and UNFCC COP 23. In parallel, the UN General Assembly will have taken a decision on negotiating a legally-binding agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

These meetings, together with complementary national and regional efforts, will have a critical influence on how governments, stakeholders, science and civil society will approach the complex issues of ocean governance in the forthcoming years. The 4th Potsdam Ocean Governance Workshop aims to discuss lessons learned from these critical meetings for oceans sustainability, to identify leverage points for implementing and reviewing the 2030 Agenda with a focus on SDG 14, and by that to support the on-going policy processes.

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Plenary and workshop sessions

The **opening plenary** will start off with a critical review of progress made and challenges identified in 2017 and of the current state of affairs in ocean governance. The aim will be to come to a joint understanding of what has been achieved, and, acknowledging the limited time frame for implementing the 2030 Agenda, to identify leverage points for delivering SDG 14 and advancing ocean sustainability.

In **three parallel workshop sessions**, we will move on to discuss and reflect on options that could catalyze actions for strengthened ocean governance:

- **1. Unlocking the potential of SDG interactions:** The SDGs have been framed with a particular consideration for the interconnectedness of People, Planet, Prosperity, Justice and Peace. This level of interconnectedness provides a great challenge for a fragmented system of decision making and management as it is the case in ocean governance. But it also provides the potential of delivering co-benefits that support the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda as a whole, as well as other policy processes and agendas such as the UNFCCC's Paris Agreement. This workshop session will identify possible approaches to implement this indivisible agenda without getting "lost in complexity", both from a policy-making and from a scientific perspective.
- **2. Achieving Ocean Sustainability through Voluntary Commitments:** The reporting of voluntary commitments on actions for ocean sustainability has become an important tool in ocean governance. This workshop session will analyze experiences with goal-based ocean governance approaches such as those established under the UN Ocean Conference and the Our Oceans conferences as well as other relevant pledge & review frameworks, e.g. the Registry of National Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Climate Agreement. By learning from current examples, this session will consider criteria and processes for a global registry that could provide a basis for the assessment of actions towards meeting SDG 14.
- **3. Building Regional Ocean Partnerships:** The role of regional ocean governance in delivering the SDGs for the ocean has been one of the key points for discussion at the UN Ocean Conference in New York. Several marine regions have embarked on implementing the SDGs for the oceans. The Partnership for Regional Ocean Governance will provide an international forum to support SDG implementation and other key ocean governance processes at the regional scale. The aim of this session is to identify obstacles and leverage points for regional cooperation in the SDG delivery. Starting from experiences in current regional implementation processes, it will develop a mutual understanding of the needs and benefits of collaboration between regions, and between the regional and the global level to improve current ocean governance.

Following up on the Potsdam Ocean Governance Workshops in 2013, 2014, and 2016, this year's event will provide a unique opportunity for international scientists, decision makers and civil society to reflect on achievements and challenges, and to engage in solution-oriented dialogues contributing to ocean sustainability policy and science.

Conclusions of the 2017 Workshop will feed into global policy as well as related scientific discussions and processes, including on the implementation, follow-up and review of the SDGs at the national, regional and global level. Participants will be invited to contribute to a special issue on "Oceans, Coasts, and the 2030 Agenda: Implementing the sustainable development goals in our oceanic world" in the journal "Marine Policy".