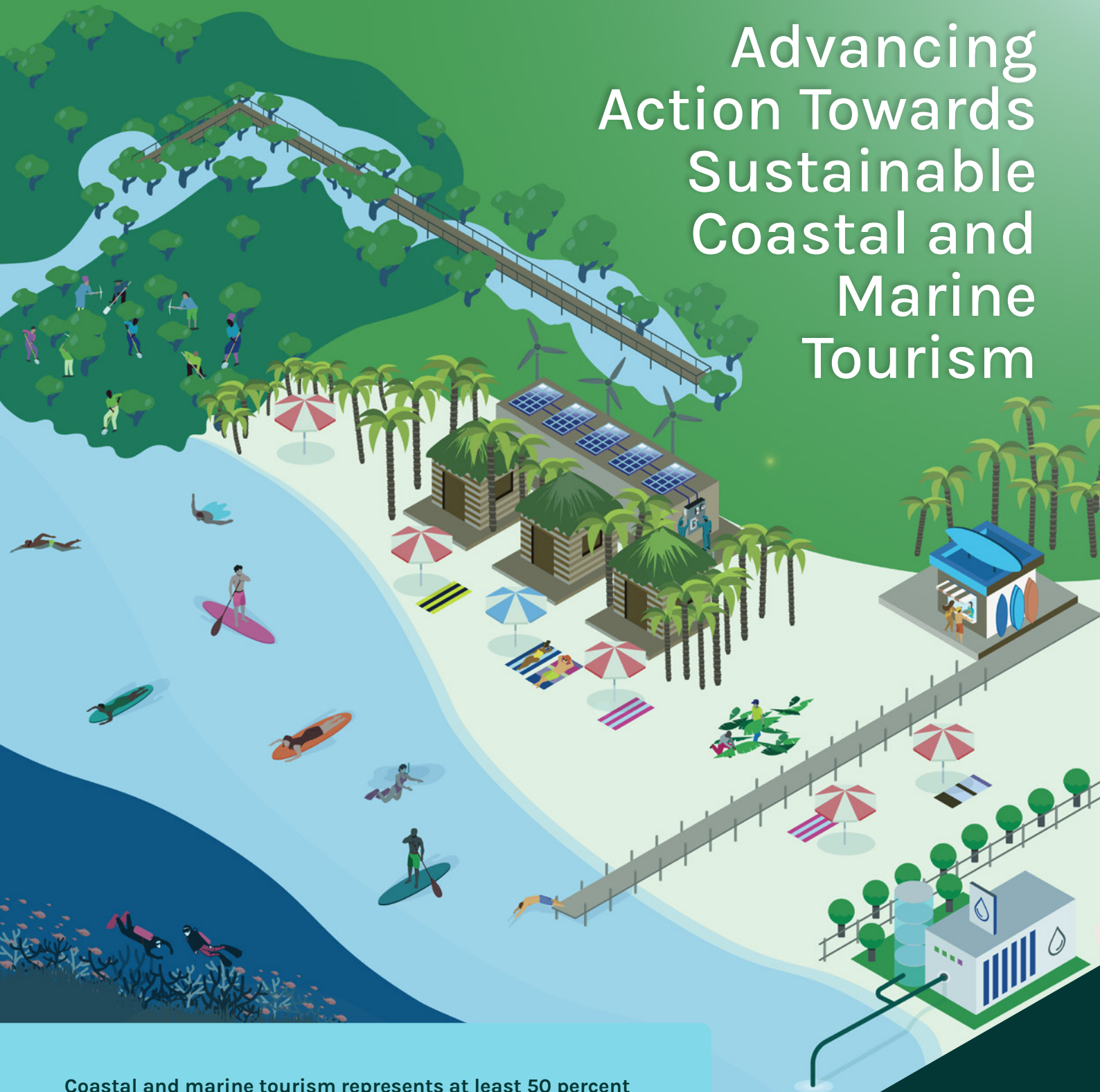


Advancing Action Towards Sustainable Coastal and Marine Tourism



Coastal and marine tourism represents at least 50 percent of total global tourism. It is the largest economic sector for most small island developing states and some coastal states, and is highly dependent on the quality of coastal and marine ecosystems to attract visitors. This means the sector is extremely vulnerable to threats such as climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss.

A healthy ocean provides the foundation for a sustainable ocean economy, where a sustainable, regenerative and resilient coastal and marine tourism sector can deliver protection, production and prosperity by stimulating new high quality, year-round, economic opportunities for local communities, restoring and strengthening the resilience of ecosystems in which they operate, and revitalising culture and heritage.



HIGH LEVEL PANEL *for*
**A SUSTAINABLE
OCEAN ECONOMY**

Coastal and Marine Tourism Priority Actions

In December 2020, the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy (Ocean Panel) launched its ocean action agenda, the *'Transformations for a Sustainable Ocean Economy: A Vision for Protection, Production and Prosperity'*. This includes an ambitious goal that by 2030 'coastal and ocean-based tourism is sustainable, resilient, addresses climate change, reduces pollution, supports ecosystem regeneration and biodiversity conservation and invests in local jobs and communities.'

Achieving this goal requires action across the following areas:

- **Invest in sustainable tourism that regenerates the ecosystems on which it depends, builds the resilience of coastal communities and Indigenous Peoples, reduces inequality through promoting equal opportunity and equitable distribution of benefits and addresses climate change and pollution**
- **Implement sustainable tourism management strategies that advance environmental, social and economic priorities and enable monitoring and transparent reporting with the full participation of coastal communities and Indigenous Peoples**
- **Implement mechanisms to increase the reinvestment of tourism revenue into local and Indigenous communities to build capacity and skills for increasing local employment in tourism, diversify economic opportunities and increase resources for coastal and marine restoration and protection**
- **Accelerate financial incentives for including nature-based solutions in sustainable tourism infrastructure**
- **Invest in sewerage and wastewater infrastructure for coastal and marine tourism to improve the health of coastal communities and reduce the impacts on coastal and marine ecosystems**

The Ocean Panel remains committed to accelerating action in these areas, highlighting the importance of transforming the coastal and marine tourism sector and the multitude of opportunities and benefits a sustainable tourism sector can provide for people, nature and the economy. **However, to ensure the sector's longevity, more action - and action at scale - is needed.**



"Tourism is a critical economic industry for Palau and many other small island developing states and coastal states. In Palau, we understand our environment supports the marine life, terrain, flora and fauna that attract tourists. Additionally, as a people, we have known for a millennium that our very existence relies on healthy lands and ocean. As such, we have taken steps to promote preservation that also supports a robust and sustainable economy. However, we can't do it alone. The future of our people and our economy continues to be severely threatened by the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss. While we are grateful that other nations are taking action, we must build momentum globally and encourage more countries to switch to sustainable models that serve to protect and regenerate the natural environment as well as the communities and cultures on which the tourism industry depends."

Surangel S. Whipps Jr

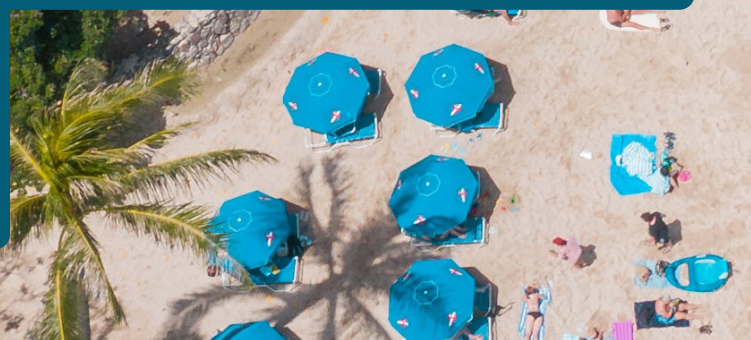
President of Palau and Co-Chair of the Ocean Panel



"Marine and coastal tourism is one of the largest sectors in the ocean economy. It represents more than half of all global tourism and provides a vital source of employment for millions worldwide. However, the activities in the sector can also lead to negative impact on animal health and natural resources, and emissions that contribute to climate change. The tourism sector must be made truly sustainable - for people and for the planet. That is the only way we can safeguard the future of the industry."

Jonas Gahr Støre

Prime Minister of Norway and Co-Chair of the Ocean Panel



An aerial photograph of a beach with people, umbrellas, and waves. The image is used as a background for the text overlay.

Ocean Panel Action is Showing the Way

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the tourism sector and the millions who depend on it for their livelihoods, bringing into focus forms of coastal and marine tourism that are not sustainable or viable in a changing world, and providing an opportunity to implement bold changes to transform and reshape the tourism sector.

This transformation requires ambitious efforts from all stakeholders, including the tourism industry, community and government, as well as collaboration between the public and private sectors, development partners, communities and destinations. Throughout 2022, the Ocean Panel convened multiple high-level events to continue leading this conversation and imploring action from all aspects of the sector.

A special report published by the Ocean Panel in 2022 outlines opportunities to transform the sector towards a greater focus on sustainability, regeneration and resilience to restore the environment, support local economic prosperity, and protect and revitalise cultural traditions. The report also identifies priorities for a sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, with recommendations for strategic investment and government interventions.

The long-term viability and sustainability of coastal and marine destinations depends on enhanced efforts now to invest in regenerative approaches and improve their future resilience. Such efforts can make a significant contribution towards delivering the ambitions of the Paris Agreement, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals.

Examples of innovative action and ambition from the 17 countries of the Ocean Panel, both before and after the pandemic, are outlined in the following pages, across the priority action areas identified in the Ocean Panel's *Transformations*.

Although transforming the tourism sector will not be easy, its long-term viability and the health of coastal and marine ecosystems rely on it. The new tourism model provides more diverse benefits, it considers economic, environmental and socio-cultural aspects of sustainability, is regenerative by focusing on rebuilding and restoring damaged or depleted ecosystems, communities and traditions and builds resilience to future and current crises.

Invest in sustainable tourism that regenerates the ecosystems on which it depends, builds the resilience of coastal communities and Indigenous Peoples, reduces inequality through promoting equal opportunity and equitable distribution of benefits and addresses climate change and pollution.



Regenerative coastal and marine tourism extends beyond restoring ecosystems and encompasses economic regeneration, made possible through micro-financing for ecotourism ventures and local education and socio-cultural regeneration through Indigenous-led tourism.

Examples of Ocean Panel action:



Australia is working towards active restoration and resilience-building of the Great Barrier Reef with tourism operators providing up-to-date scientific and management information about the reef and explaining what national and international guests can do to make a difference. Programmes like the Master Reef Guides are striving to be the world's leading reef guides and interpreters and play a key role in restoring priority sites at a local scale with support from adaptive government policy.



Palau is the first country in the world to change its immigration law to ensure environmental protection whereby upon entry, visitors must sign a passport pledge that they will act in a culturally and environmentally responsible way for the duration of their trip. ²



The collaborative management of Bunaken National Park in North Sulawesi, **Indonesia** ensures the tourism industry works for the local community. It is supported by both the North Sulawesi Watersports Association, which represents the marine tourism industry in the area, and the Bunaken Local Community Forum working together to employ local people to be a part of the industry as dive guides, boat captains and staff in tourist lodgings. ³



In **Ghana**, Community Resource Management Areas bring communities together under a common goal of sustainable use and management of natural resources to ensure all can benefit. Integrating sustainable tourism activities helps preserve and regenerate ecosystems and develops economic opportunities. ⁴ Furthermore, tourists being invited to join annual traditional festivals observed by Ghana's different ethnic groups, provides a unique opportunity to share in the country's rich history and culture. ⁵



France's Reinventing Heritage programme aims to support tourism and cultural activities that safeguard heritage while attracting both local populations and visitors. The economic model sees tourism revenue reinvested into the safeguarding of these sites. ⁶



Norway established the Sustainable Destination Program, a national labelling scheme for travel destinations that helps businesses and destinations become holistically sustainable by considering the environment, local communities, cultural heritage and the economy. To achieve this extensive work, Innovation Norway has created an advisor's guide, a database for all documentation and a control system that checks that everything is in place.

Priorities for further action: invest in Indigenous-owned and operated businesses; source the majority of goods and services locally; develop tourism policies, plans and products and focus marketing on attracting both domestic and international visitors who wish to engage with the communities and destinations they visit and support in the regeneration of the local environment, economy and community; develop strategies to increase sustainable and resilient financing for conservation and restoration activities by leveraging user fees and environmental taxes; ensure the longevity of conservation activities by establishing conservation trust funds; restore cultural heritage sites with guides and materials provided in local languages to preserve and revitalise local knowledge systems and languages.

Implement sustainable tourism management strategies that advance environmental, social and economic priorities and enable monitoring and transparent reporting with the full participation of coastal communities and Indigenous Peoples.



Only through truly inclusive and participatory decision-making processes are sustainable tourism management strategies able to equitably deliver the benefits sustainable tourism can bring to communities.

Examples of Ocean Panel action:

-  **Maya Ka'an** is the first low-impact and sustainable destination brand in Quintana Roo, **Mexico**. The initiative aims to minimise the impact of tourism on the environment and diversify the tourism industry for the benefit of local communities with ecotourism, rural tourism and adventure tourism activities linked to Mayan communities.⁷
-  **Jamaica** has implemented its Blue Ocean Strategy to help support the sustainable recovery of tourism after the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. A vital component of the strategy is strengthening the tourism zones for each destination to have its unique elements and characteristics preserved and enhanced.⁸
-  **Namibia** is the first country in Africa to include sustainable management of its environment and natural resources within its constitution.⁹ This is a critical enabling factor in shifting tourism in Namibia towards a comprehensively sustainable industry.¹⁰
-  **Chile's** National Tourism Strategy 2022-2025 provides a roadmap for sustainable tourism development that is inclusive and promotes gender equality with the full participation of local communities. Furthermore, this strategy provides actions that help tackle the impacts of climate change and protect key ecosystems.¹¹
-  **Portugal's** Tourism Strategy 2027 drives environmental, social and economic development across five pillars: valuing historical and cultural resources; boosting the economy, promoting innovation to attract foreign investment; promoting knowledge; generating connectivity for air travel and stakeholders; and promoting Portugal as an attractive and sustainable destination.¹²
-  The **Japan** Sustainable Tourism Standard for Destinations (JSTS-D) is a national standard launched in June 2020, and recognised by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council. The JSTS-D considers that sustainability in all aspects including socioeconomics, culture, environment and its management, and implementation been widely encouraged. JSTS-D has supported five destinations in 2020 and another 15 in 2021.
-  The **United States'** National Travel and Tourism Strategy takes a whole-of-government approach to support the tourism sector to become resilient to natural disasters, public health threats and the impacts of climate change. It also aims to reduce tourism's contributions to climate change and foster a sustainable sector that integrates protecting natural resources and ensuring equitable development.¹³
-  **Australia's** national strategy for the visitor economy, THRIVE 2030, is a long-term strategy for the sustainable growth of the industry centred on taking a balanced approach to sector growth that considers social and environmental objectives as well as economic growth. The strategy's Action Plan 2022-2024 includes a range of actions to encourage tourism businesses to pursue sustainable practices.¹⁴
-  **Kenya's** Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Heritage has been actively promoting the Kenya coast to local tourists through the Magical Kenya International Fair that is held annually. To support this, the Kenya Wildlife Service has been working closely with local boat operators who organise tours to marine parks. Regular meetings are held with operators on issues of beach cleanliness, safety and security, protection of marine ecosystems etc.

Priorities for further action: diversify the tourism sector by investing in a varied range of products and/or services for tourists; enable and promote an active domestic tourism market; establish behavioural guidelines for all tourist sites and operators; develop inclusive and participatory destination management plans and strategies.

Implement mechanisms to increase the reinvestment of tourism revenue into local and Indigenous communities to build capacity and skills for increasing local employment in tourism, diversify economic opportunities and increase resources for coastal and marine restoration and protection.



To be truly sustainable, efforts need to go beyond reducing the negative environmental impacts of tourism or ensuring that tourism revenue is kept within the local community.

Examples of Ocean Panel action:



Namibia's National Tourism Investment Profile & Promotion Strategy 2016-2026 outlines the objectives for sustainable development of the tourism industry and includes achievable actions for tourism stakeholders. It provides a collaborative platform for people to participate in shaping and delivering the outcomes of the tourism industry and increases employment and income generation opportunities for local communities.^{15 16}



The Government of **Canada** announced commitments over two years of CAD 20 million (USD 15 million) for an Indigenous Tourism Fund and CAD 4.8 million (USD 3.5 million) to support the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada's operations, to help the Indigenous tourism industry to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and position itself for long-term growth.¹⁷



The **Palau** Bureau of Tourism leads the Sustainable Travel International and Slow Food initiative, which promotes local food production for tourism activities to reduce imports and the associated environmental impacts; and has developed an online platform for tourists to offset their carbon emissions by investing in blue carbon projects such as mangrove restoration. Ultimately the initiative aims to contribute to Palau becoming a carbon-neutral tourism destination.¹⁸



The Eye on the Reef monitoring and assessment programme in **Australia** enables visitors to the Great Barrier Reef to contribute to its long-term protection by collecting valuable information about reef health and marine animals to help inform how the reef is managed.



Indonesia's government, in agreement with Misool Eco Resort and the traditional local owners, established a 'no-take' marine protected area at the site of the resort's eco-lodge. This was to protect the marine biodiversity; a key reason tourists came to the area. The resort later created the Misool Foundation, which provides employment and training for the local community to manage the area, supporting them through financial payments and the provision of local school operations and recycling services.



In **Japan**, Ama tourism is keeping traditional knowledge alive. Ama, meaning 'sea women', free dive to collect abalone, sea snails and other small shore creatures as well as harvest seaweed. The practice appears in ancient literature and is a part of the history of the area, Shima, in the Mie prefecture. The availability of tours changes with the diving season in order to observe changes to the environment and ensure they do not cause harm. The tourism experience provides a source of supplementary income to the coastal communities but also preserves and continues local knowledge and skills for future generations.



The Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund receives income from an environmental fee paid by everyone travelling to Svalbard, **Norway**. This, alongside tourism guidelines developed with local communities, government representatives and industry operators, helps make Svalbard 'one of the best-managed wilderness areas in the world'.^{19 20}

Priorities for further action: tourism revenues fund education programmes for local communities such as apprenticeships, training and management courses leading to long-term career paths; implement mechanisms to increase the reinvestment of tourism revenue into local and Indigenous communities that build capacity and skills for increasing local employment in tourism; diversify economic opportunities and increase resources for coastal and marine restoration and protection; encourage economic activities that support giving back, engaging local stakeholders and localising supply chains to reduce economic leakage.

Accelerate financial incentives for including nature-based solutions in sustainable tourism infrastructure.

Well-designed and implemented nature-based solutions within tourism infrastructure can cost less than hard-engineered approaches for addressing climate threats and have the potential to generate larger economic returns because of the multiple societal benefits they deliver.^{21 22}



Examples of Ocean Panel action:



The Watamu Sustainable Tourism and Eco-tourism Development Project in **Kenya** is supporting the development of community-based small tourism enterprises. The project has successfully rebuilt a mangrove boardwalk and restaurant that provides a critical habitat for many key species that attract tourists from all over the world.²³



In Demak, **Indonesia**, the government has supported the Building with Nature programme to address coastal erosion and flooding. The natural regeneration and restoration of mangroves along the coasts helped to reduce wave impact and hold sediment preventing erosion. Restoring the mangroves has since enhanced fisheries, increased catch and developed alternative livelihoods such as local ecotourism initiatives.²⁴



The Government of **Fiji** is planning to construct 19 nature-based seawalls to help communities prevent coastal erosion, maintain beaches and protect the livelihoods that depend on these ecosystems being intact. The Ministry of Waterways is also supporting a community-based mangrove nursery, which helps to prevent soil erosion around agricultural land and create more ecosystems around coastal zones.²⁵



The **UK** Government through the G7 Legacy Project for Nature Recovery, aims to over five years deliver for people, nature and climate and contribute to the 30x30 target. This includes transforming the tourism sector in Cornwall through the recovery of blue carbon habitats, improving water quality and creating once-scarce habitats such as wetlands, while creating 'green' jobs that involve the local community in nature's recovery.²⁶



In the **US** state of Hawaii, the Hawaii Tourism Authority Strategic Plan 2020-2025 has a central pillar of respecting natural and cultural resources. This recognises the need to act upon climate change impacts and sea level rise to safeguard these resources to make a resilient industry.²⁷

Priorities for further action: rewarding low-carbon industry practices and introducing requirements that limit high-polluting activities; legislate for coastal setbacks in new developments to allow for natural flooding of coastal environments with sea level rise such as protecting and restoring dunes and removing infrastructure that may be exacerbating coastal change; leverage the uniqueness of each destination through the development of place-sensitive infrastructure design, visitor experiences and management strategies.


Invest in sewerage and wastewater infrastructure for coastal and marine tourism to improve the health of coastal communities and reduce the impacts on coastal and marine ecosystems.





Sewage and untreated wastewater can have a devastating impact on coastal communities as well as coastal and marine ecosystems, with studies finding that sewage discharge can lead to the degradation of water quality that results in substantial ecological changes impacting the viability of destinations that rely on healthy ecosystems to attract tourists.


Examples of Ocean Panel action:

 Atout **France**, the France Tourism Development Agency, established a new system for awarding hotels that commit fully to sustainable actions. The new system contains mandatory criteria such as water-saving and waste management measures as well as waste sorting systems for guests.

 **Chile** implemented the Sustainable Sanitation Systems project that aims to tackle water scarcity, with the pilot programme directly benefitting women tourism operators in rural areas.²⁸

 The COAST Project in **Kenya** is working to implement technology-transfer projects in two hotels at the Watamu Demo Site such as waste composting with a bio-digester and recycling with a mobile plastic chipper.²⁹

 MARTI, the Meso-American Reef Tourism Initiative in **Mexico**, has seen the development of wastewater treatment plants that ensures the only source of drinking water for the local community and the missions of tourists that visit each year is clean.³⁰

 The Green Growth Framework for **Fiji** was established as a tool to guide the sustainable development of all sectors in the Fijian economy to improve social well-being, enhance economic growth, and strengthen environmental resilience to the effects of climate change. A key action element for tourism as identified in the framework is enhancing waste management in the tourism sector by strengthening composting efforts, maximising solid and liquid waste recycling and establishing wastewater purification and distillation systems.³¹



Priorities for further action: minimise the impact of high-intensity tourist zones and conflicts with other coastal and marine users through effective zoning, land-use and integrated coastal zone planning; invest in improving the sustainability of destination infrastructure, including through the development of renewable energy, rainwater capture and reuse, solid waste management and sustainable financing.

Going beyond the priority actions.

The priority actions of the Ocean Panel's *Transformations* are critical to making the tourism sector sustainable, resilient and regenerative. However, work does not just stop there. For example, the tourism sector has an important role in ensuring the responsible use of plastics by minimising plastic waste and avoiding problematic, and unnecessary plastics. The Ocean Panel countries are implementing a comprehensive suite of initiatives and programmes in addition to the five priority actions, that show the diversity of activities underway depending on their unique circumstances and national contexts.



Examples of Ocean Panel action:



In 2020, **Kenya** banned all single-use plastics including straws and water bottles in protected areas such as national parks and beaches. ³²



Jamaica launched the Tourism Workers Pension Scheme (TWPS) in January 2022, enabling all employees in the sector to work towards a financially secure retirement. ³³ The TWPS was given JMD 1 billion (USD 6.5 million) in seed money by the government and is the largest human capital development initiative in the history of Jamaica's tourism sector. ³⁴



Palau launched Ol'au Palau, a new initiative that promotes sustainable responsible tourism through a gaming app. The reward-based app teaches visitors how to be eco-friendly by completing tasks such as using reef-safe sunscreen. ³⁵



The **Ghana** Guru programme is an interactive learning platform that provides communities with the knowledge and skills to show Ghana as a leading tourism destination with specific courses providing information on ecotourism and cultural heritage. ³⁶



In spring 2022, **Canada** introduced new non-mandatory environmental measures that strengthen discharge requirements for cruise ships operating in waters under Canadian jurisdiction. The measures were developed and implemented in full collaboration with the industry and aim to help restore marine habitats. ³⁷



In **Australia**, High Standard Tourism Operators voluntarily operate to a higher standard than required by legislation as part of their commitment to ecologically sustainable use within the Great Barrier Reef. These operators are independently certified as meeting best practice management standards for the key areas of protection, presentation, and partnership. ³⁸



In 2018 the state-owned enterprise Enova approved NOK 88 million (USD 8.6 million) in funding for Havila Voyages, that operates cruise ships along the coast of **Norway**. Havila Voyages' ships have a battery pack that allows them to sail for up to four hours on battery power and in June 2022 they made history by operating the first zero-emission cruise through the UNESCO protected Geirangerfjord.



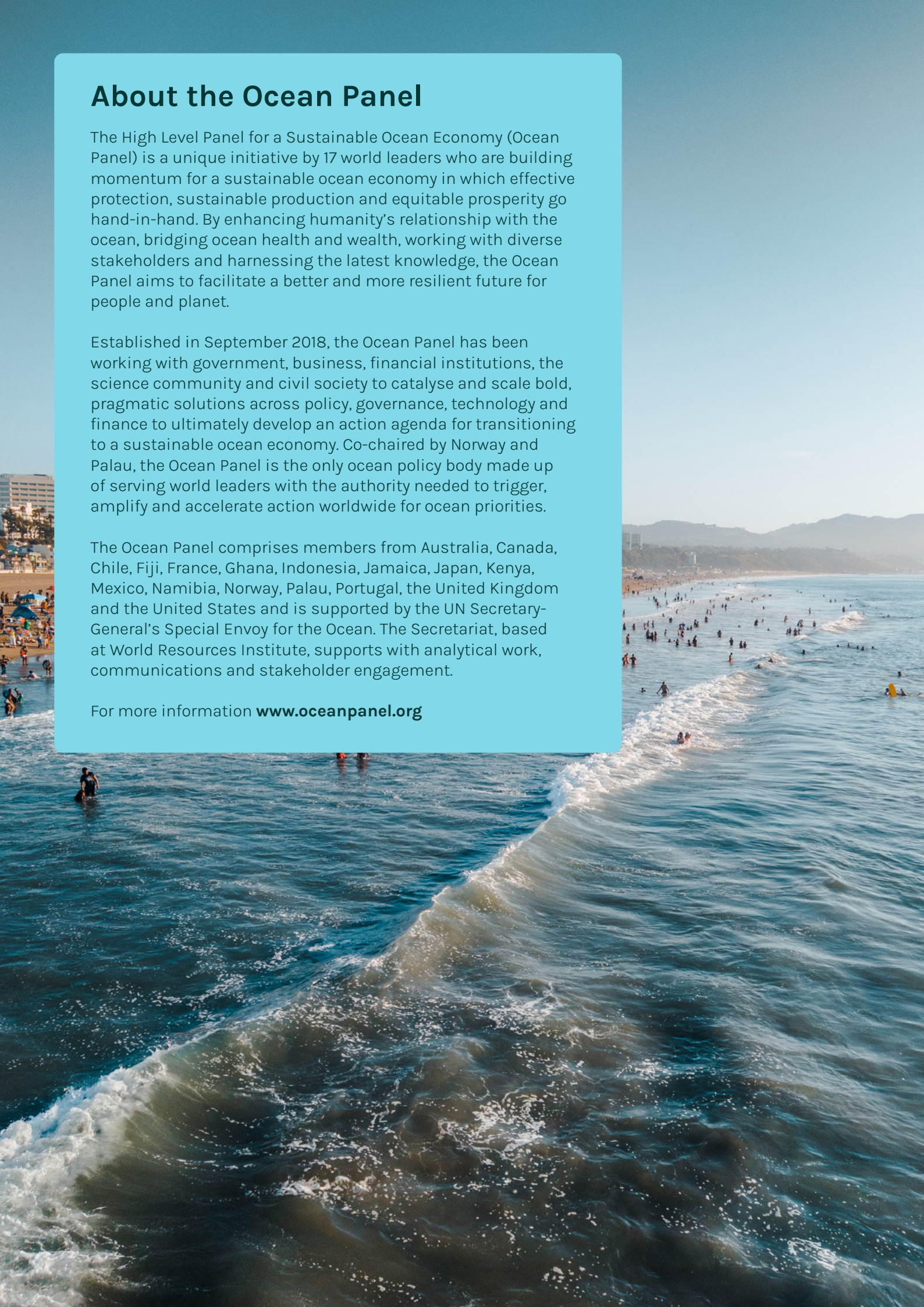
About the Ocean Panel

The High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy (Ocean Panel) is a unique initiative by 17 world leaders who are building momentum for a sustainable ocean economy in which effective protection, sustainable production and equitable prosperity go hand-in-hand. By enhancing humanity's relationship with the ocean, bridging ocean health and wealth, working with diverse stakeholders and harnessing the latest knowledge, the Ocean Panel aims to facilitate a better and more resilient future for people and planet.

Established in September 2018, the Ocean Panel has been working with government, business, financial institutions, the science community and civil society to catalyse and scale bold, pragmatic solutions across policy, governance, technology and finance to ultimately develop an action agenda for transitioning to a sustainable ocean economy. Co-chaired by Norway and Palau, the Ocean Panel is the only ocean policy body made up of serving world leaders with the authority needed to trigger, amplify and accelerate action worldwide for ocean priorities.

The Ocean Panel comprises members from Australia, Canada, Chile, Fiji, France, Ghana, Indonesia, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Namibia, Norway, Palau, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States and is supported by the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean. The Secretariat, based at World Resources Institute, supports with analytical work, communications and stakeholder engagement.

For more information www.oceanpanel.org



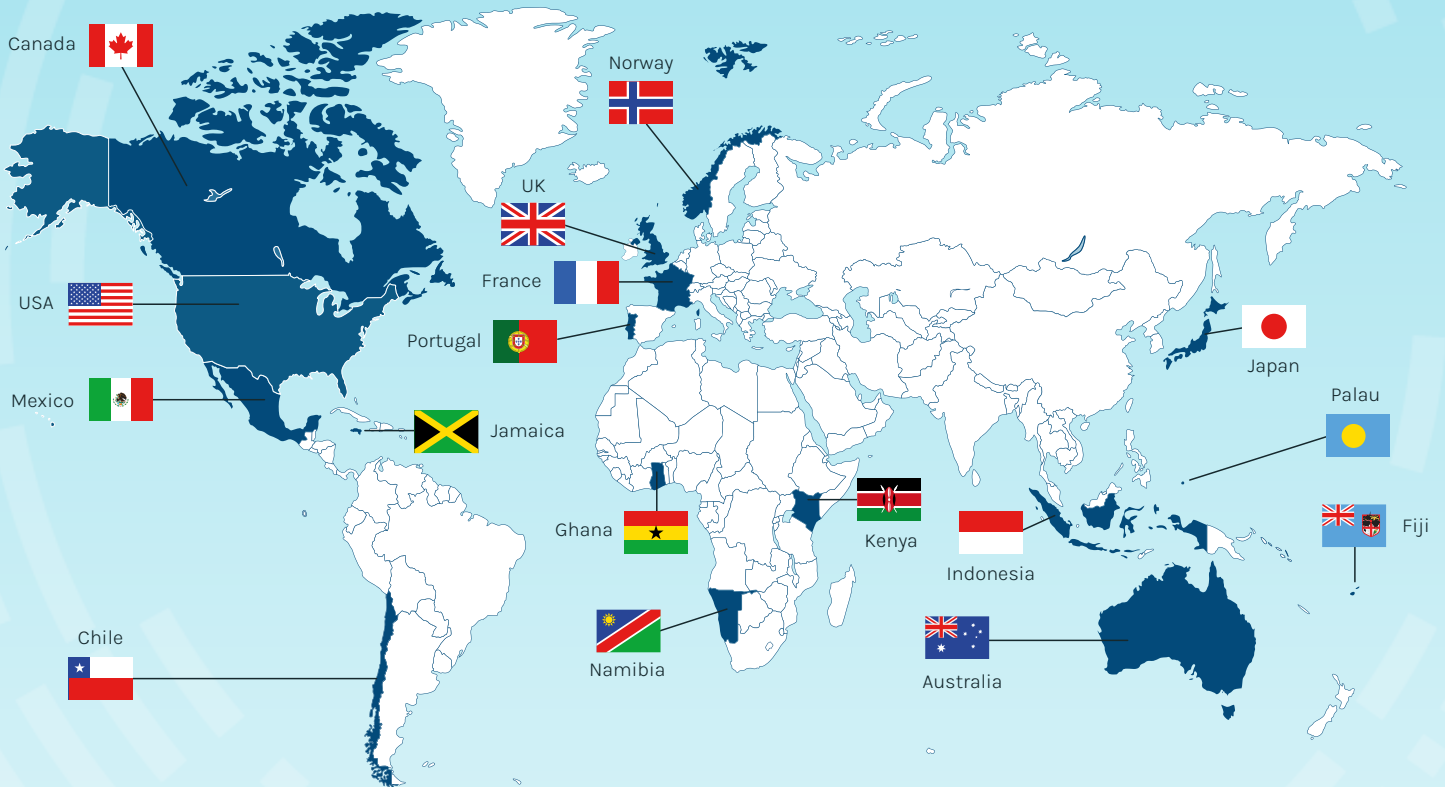
Countries across our blue planet are coming together for a sustainable ocean economy. Nations large and small, across all ocean basins, at every stage of economic development, at every extreme of the ocean environment from the tropics to the arctic. Ocean Panel countries account for approximately:

44% of global EEZs

26% of the world's fisheries

20% of the world's shipping fleet

50% of global coastlines



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