

# ocean and human rights

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Clínica Jurídica para la Justicia Ambiental Berta Cáceres

CJA Berta Cáceres

Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, **Astrid Puentes Riaño**
Executive Summary of Report A/HRC/58/59

# I. INTRODUCTION

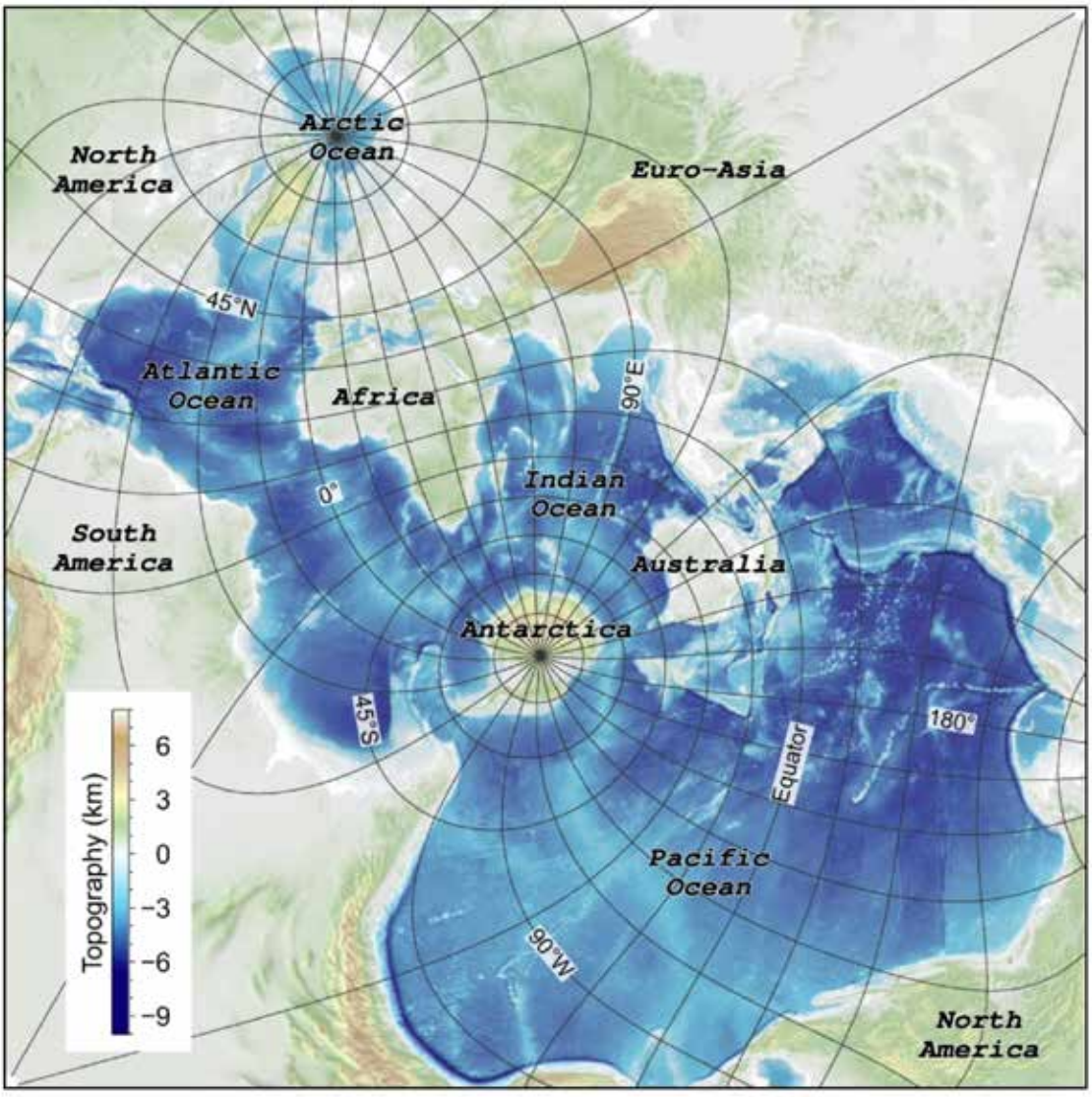
Life on Earth evolved from the ocean about 3.5 billion years ago. Covering 70% of the planet's surface, the ocean is the largest biome on Earth. Undoubtedly, the balance of life on Earth depends on the ocean, which provides food, regulates temperatures and currents, absorbs heat and carbon from the atmosphere, produces oxygen, even in deep sea waters, and constitutes the habitat of millions of species. Although knowledge about the ocean has advanced considerably, there is still much to learn from it.

For millennia, human civilizations have thrived on the ocean. Known in various Indigenous languages by different names, such as Kai and Moana (Māori), Wardan (Nyungar) and Maritorio (Indigenous Peoples of Chile), the ocean has long been central to the identity and core values of many cultures. The lives of billions of people depend directly on the ocean and coastal areas, for food, shelter, work, culture, spirituality, medicine, transportation, education, and physical and mental health.[1]

The ocean links land, air, coastal and freshwater ecosystems, demonstrating the interconnected and interdependent nature of planetary ecosystems. Although there are several ocean basins, the ocean itself is a single global biome. This is why the report refers to the ocean, as a single existing biome, rather than the oceans.

1. See https://press.un.org/en/2021/sgsm20754.doc.htm; https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/14519SCBDinput_2017HLPF.pdf; and submission from Cynthia C. Umezulike. All communications from the calls for input available in https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2024/call-inputs-ocean-and-human-rights.

1. DRSHutter/Shutterstock




Chen, J., Zhang, T., Tominaga, M. et al. Ocean Sciences with the Spilhaus Projection: A Seamless Ocean Map for Spatial Data Recognition. Sci Data 10, 410 (2023). https://doi.org/10.1038/s41597-023-02309-6

The ocean is facing an unprecedented crisis due to climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, which is aggravated by the crossing of planetary boundaries due to human activities, particularly industrialization and extractive industries of different kinds. This degradation violates human rights, including the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, disproportionately affecting people and communities that have been historically and systematically marginalized. A human rights-based approach is vital to strengthen the implementation of international treaties such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), as well as to achieve compliance with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), guaranteeing access to information, public participation and environmental justice. To protect 30% of the ocean by 2030 and reduce pollution, States, the UN and businesses must also adopt inclusive and ecosystem-based strategies. Participatory and intersectional governance is essential to protect the ocean and ensure its role in global sustainability.

# II. INTERLINKAGES BETWEEN THE OCEAN, THE RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT, AND HUMAN RIGHTS FOR PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS

## A. SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

Fisheries provide an essential source of protein and micronutrients for the diet of millions of people, ensuring food security in rural communities. They also sustain livelihoods by providing income for fishing communities. Thus, the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is fundamental for fisherfolk, as it protects their historical ties to the ocean, which is foundational to their identity and key for their subsistence, culture, education and transportation. Unlike crops, fish can help to reduce seasonal vulnerability to hunger due to their different seasonal availability. Nearly 500 million people depend on small-scale fisheries. Coastal and Indigenous peoples, especially in the Arctic and on small islands, face severe impacts from climate change that require special protection[2]. Despite accounting for almost half of the fishing workforce, women remain invisible in decision-making and in the recognition of their traditional knowledge.

## B. HEALTHY ECOSYSTEMS

The ocean is the planet's main generator of oxygen, sustaining life through plankton, coral reefs and mangroves. Key ecosystems such as seagrass meadows and the deep-sea bed act as large carbon sinks and protectors of biodiversity. Indigenous Peoples, guardians of these ecosystems, play an essential role in their management, but their traditional knowledge remains underrepresented in global literature[3].

2. See https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/9aeb8ade-a623-4954-8adf-204daae3b5de/content.
3. Submission from UNEP

## C. A SAFE CLIMATE

The ocean is the largest global climate regulator, storing billions of tons of carbon and absorbing most of the heat generated by climate change.[4] Restoring ecosystems such as mangroves and seagrass meadows could sequester more than 1.4 billion tons of carbon per year by 2050[5].

## D. OCEAN DEFENDERS

Ocean defenders face increasing threats from the expansion of destructive activities and a lack of State protection. Indigenous and coastal communities, women, children and youth play a central role in defending their territories and human rights, and are especially vulnerable to criminalization, harassment and violence linked to their role as defenders.[6] Ensuring their protection is essential to protect the ocean and respect the rights of present and future generations.

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4. Submission from UNEP.
5. See https://www.wri.org/insights/turning-tide-ocean-based-solutions-could-close-emission-gap-21.
6. See https://www.nature.com/articles/s44183-022-00002-6; and submission from Gender and Climate Justice Circle.



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The ocean is a vital resource to combat food insecurity. Nearly 500 million people depend on small-scale fishing.




The ocean is the main generator of oxygen on the planet. Key ocean ecosystems act as major carbon sinks and protectors of biodiversity.




Increased threats due to expansion of destructive practices and lack of protection.




Ocean as the largest global climate regulator.

# III. MAIN CHALLENGES FOR THE OCEAN AND HUMAN RIGHTS

## A. WEAK GOVERNANCE

More than 600 legal and institutional agreements regulate the relationship between human rights, economic activities and marine ecosystems, but their fragmentation and lack of coordination result in ineffective ocean governance. Political inaction, corruption and failure to comply with extraterritorial obligations exacerbate the lack of implementation of these legal frameworks. Furthermore, access to reliable information is limited by corporate restrictions and lengthy legal processes, which hinders accountability and jeopardizes human rights linked to the protection of the marine environment.

## B. INDUSTRIAL FISHERIES

Industrial fisheries prioritize profits over sustainability, using destructive methods that deplete fish stocks, damage marine ecosystems and jeopardize the food security of those who depend on small-scale fisheries.[8] Developed countries consume the majority of seafood, relying on industrial fishing fleets. Overfishing causes annual losses of US$83 billion and puts food security at risk, especially in developing countries.[9] In addition, the fishing sector consumes 1.2% of the world's oil and reduces the ocean's capacity to store carbon. By 2100, 45% of fish stocks will shift habitat due to climate change.[10] Trawling and other industrial practices are linked to human rights abuses, such as forced labour and human trafficking, affecting more than 128,000 fishers, while more than 100,000 people die annually due to unsafe working conditions. Marine resources linked to industrialized processes are mainly used in industrial aquaculture, food supplements and cosmetics, benefiting developed countries at the expense of food security in developing nations.[11]

## C. LACK OF SUPPORT FOR SMALL-SCALE FISHERS

Climate change, ocean acidification and the loss of coral reefs are reducing fish stocks, affecting the food security of small-scale fishing communities. Although women represent 47% of the global fishing workforce (56 million jobs), they face systemic inequalities such as undervalued and underpaid work, lack of access to fishing rights and secure and exclusion from decision-making.[12]

7. See submission from Earthjustice International Program.
8. See A/HRC/55/49.
9. See submission from Earthjustice Oceans Program.
10. See submission from Earthjustice Oceans Program.
11. See https://www.greenpeace.org/international/publication/22489/waste-of-fish-report-west-africa
12. See submission from Uta Schuchmann, Freie University Berlin.

In turn, industrial fisheries receive preferential subsidies and licences, forcibly displacing fishing communities without adequate compensation[13]. Lack of secure tenure rights and exclusion from fair decision-making reinforce marginalization, necessitating urgent implementation of the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Achieving Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries to protect the rights of the most affected communities and promote fisheries sustainability[14].

## D. DISORDERED COASTAL URBANIZATION

Infrastructure and tourism projects often lack integrated planning, further ignoring the interdependence between economic development activities and marine ecosystems. Lack of sustainable investment exacerbates environmental degradation, increasing the vulnerability of coastal communities and damaging ecosystems essential for climate resilience[15].

## E. MARINE POLLUTION

Every year, 14 million tons of plastic enter the ocean, representing 80% of marine debris, a figure projected to triple by 2040[16]. Pollution disproportionately affects coastal communities and artisanal fishing communities, while informal waste collectors, including women and children, work in precarious conditions.[17] Moreover, the ocean dumping of chemical waste, such as radioactive water in the Pacific and abandoned offshore oil infrastructure, contribute to marine pollution, affecting marine life and human health[18].



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13. *Ibid*
14. See https://doi.org/10.4060/cc3251en.
15. See submissions from Brazil, Lebanon, Qatar, Fundación Ojos de Mar, Azul, University of Toronto, Vedant Pathak, Seas at Risk and Jubilee Australia.
16. See https://iucn.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/marine-plastic-pollution-issues-brief_nov21-april-2024-small-update_0.pdf.
17. See submission from UNEP.
18. See submission from Center for International Environmental Law.

## F. LAND POLLUTION

80% of marine pollution comes from land-based sources, including wastewater, heavy metals and plastics. These pollutants enter the ocean through rivers and direct discharges, causing habitat degradation and biodiversity loss.[19] Agricultural runoff with pesticides and fertilizers causes algal blooms, eutrophication and dead zones in the ocean,[20] particularly affecting Indigenous and low-income peoples who depend on coastal ecosystems for food and well-being. These communities face threats to access to clean water, food security and traditional ways of life[21].

## G. CLIMATE CHANGE

The ocean faces multiple climate threats, from global warming and acidification to rising sea levels.[22] The Arctic is warming two to four times faster than the global average, causing permafrost to thaw and release stored carbon. The expansion of offshore oil and gas extraction, which is projected to increase by 60% by 2030, contradicts climate commitments, threatening marine biodiversity, ecosystems and livelihoods.[23] More than 32,000 abandoned wells in the Gulf of Mexico leak toxins and emit greenhouse gases, while shipping accounts for 3% of global greenhouse gas emissions, exacerbating ocean pollution.[24]

## H. DEEP-SEA MINING-RELATED RISKS

Deep-sea mining endangers marine biodiversity and the balance of ocean ecosystems.[25] Its impact on the seabed could release stored carbon, reducing the ocean's ability to mitigate climate change. Current research warns of harmful and unknown consequences of deep seabed mining.[26] Currently, 32 States have agreed to a moratorium on the risks of irreversible damage, based on the precautionary principle.[27] However, these activities continue to threaten fisheries, which account for up to 84% of government revenue in some Pacific nations.

19. See submission from Vedant Pathak.
20. See https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGII_FullReport.pdf
21. See https://www.sehn.org/sehn/economic-damages-from-nutrient-pollution-create-a-toxic-debt.
22. Submissions from Brazil, Lebanon, Malaysia, Poland, Qatar, Oceans North and, World Forum of Fisher Peoples.
23. See https://www.woodmac.com/news/opinion/global-deepwater-production-to-increase-60.
24. See https://www.gecf.org/_resources/files/pages/global-gas-outlook-2050/gecf-global-gas-outlook-20231.pdf.
25. See submissions from The Pew Charitable Trusts, Pacific Network on Globalization and Deep-Sea Conservation Coalition.
26. See submission from Deep Sea Conservation Coalition.
27. See submission from The Pew Charitable Trusts. Also see https://deep-sea-conservation.org/solutions/no-deep-sea-mining/momentum-for-a-moratorium/.

## I. MARINE GEOENGINEERING

Proposals for marine geoengineering, such as ocean fertilization and solar geoengineering, pose serious risks to the stability of marine ecosystems. Their impacts include alterations in rainfall patterns, extreme temperatures and reduced oxygen in the water.[28] These technologies can also increase pollution and cause displacement of Indigenous Peoples, increased violence, and violations of human rights.[29] Instead of resorting to high-risk solutions, it is essential to prioritize climate mitigation measures based on the conservation and restoration of marine ecosystems.

## J. BLUE ECONOMY

While the blue economy seeks to balance economic growth with marine conservation, in practice it prioritizes corporate profits over human rights and sustainability. Multiple State policies have facilitated "ocean grabbing," displacing fishing communities and forcing them into industrial sectors such as energy and tourism.[30] Blue loans and bonds fund initiatives such as ecosystem restoration and renewable energy but impose debt burdens on developing countries. Furthermore, the expansion of marine protected areas under these policies can conflict with the social and economic rights of coastal communities.[31]

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28. See submission from Seas at Risk.
29. See A/HRC/54/47 and A/HRC/56/46.
30. See submission from World Forum of Fisher Peoples.
31. See submission from World Forum of Fisher Peoples and FIAN Indonesia.



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## FRAGMENTED GOVERNANCE

**+600** agreements regulate the ocean

More than 600 agreements regulate the ocean, but their lack of coordination and poor enforcement leads to ineffective management, making genuine accountability difficult.

## UNSUSTAINABLE INDUSTRIAL FISHERIES



Industrial fishing prioritizes profit over sustainability, depleting resources, damaging ecosystems, and resulting in human rights violations.

## LACK OF PROTECTION FOR ARTISANAL FISHERS



Fishing communities, especially women, face inequalities, forced displacement, and lack of rights in the face of subsidies for industrial fishing.

## GEOENGINEERING



Proposals such as ocean fertilization carry serious risks by altering climate patterns, reducing water oxygen levels, and displacing Indigenous communities.

## BLUE ECONOMY



Although it aims to balance growth and conservation, in practice, the blue economy often prioritizes corporate profits over human rights and sustainability.

## MARINE AND TERRESTRIAL POLLUTION



Massive dumping of plastics, chemical waste, and other pollutants deteriorates the health of the ocean and of the communities that depend on it.

## CLIMATE CHANGE



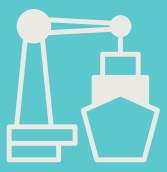
Warming, acidification, and expanded extractive activities on the high seas alter ecosystems, causing displacement and changes in marine habitats.

## DEEP-SEA MINING



Mining on the seabed threatens biodiversity and could release stored carbon, compromising the ocean's ability to mitigate climate change.

## UNPLANNED COASTAL URBANIZATION



Infrastructure expansion and tourism without integrated planning harm marine ecosystems and increase the vulnerability of coastal communities.

# IV. STATE OBLIGATIONS TO RESPECT, PROTECT AND FULFIL HUMAN RIGHTS RELATED TO THE OCEAN

## A. OBLIGATION TO PREVENT, CONTROL AND REDUCE HARM TO THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT

### 1. Regulating, controlling and monitoring polluting activities

States must regulate all sources of marine pollution from land-based and atmospheric sources, including dumping, shipping, and activities involving the seabed ensuring the protection of human rights from environmental harm[32]. Implementation of regulations must include permits, operational standards, safety measures and oversight to mitigate threats.[33] Establishing independent, well-funded monitoring and enforcement mechanisms is essential to ensure compliance with these regulations. Destructive fishing practices such as bottom trawling should be banned,[34] offshore drilling should be regulated, nuclear waste dumping and single-use plastics should be restricted, and a moratorium on deep seabed mining should be urgently adopted.[35]

### 2. Environmental Impact Assessments

Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) must be conducted for all activities that may cause significant marine pollution or detrimental changes to the marine environment.[36] These assessments must be conducted prior to decision-making regarding specific projects, ensuring access to information, public participation, access to justice, as well as the use of the best available science, including ancestral knowledge. They must include detailed documentation and assess socio-economic,[37] cultural, social, environmental, transboundary and cumulative impacts,[38] as well as analysing their effects from and to climate change. Integrating these studies into decision-making strengthens the protection of the ocean and human rights.

32. United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, arts. 207–212.
33. Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Advisory Opinion OC-23/17, para. 141.
34. General Assembly resolution 59/25, para. 66.
35. OHCHR, "Key human rights considerations on the impact of seabed mining" https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/climatechange/information-materials/ohchr-seabed-mining-10-july.pdf
36. International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, Advisory Opinion of 21 May 2024, paras. 352 ff.; Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention), art. 2 (2) and (3); Convention on Biological Diversity, art. 14; and United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, arts. 204-206.
37. Kunming-Montreal Global biodiversity framework, para. 2.
38. See Espoo Convention, appendix II.

### 3. Precautionary principle

The precautionary principle, recognized in treaties such as UNCLOS,[39] the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC),[40] the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)[41] and the Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biodiversity beyond National Jurisdictions (BBNJ),[42] obliges States to prevent severe or irreversible harm, even in the absence of definitive scientific evidence about the occurrence or the risk of harm.[43] Its application is key to avoiding risks associated with marine pollution, climate change and the exploitation of marine resources.

## B. OBLIGATION TO ENSURE ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PARTICIPATION AND JUSTICE IN OCEAN GOVERNANCE

States must ensure that all relevant stakeholders, prioritizing women, Indigenous Peoples, coastal and island communities, ocean defenders and small-scale fishers, children and youth, can fully and meaningfully participate in marine environmental governance at all levels, which requires equitable access to information, participation and justice[44]. It is essential to recognize and protect the traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples in the management of marine resources and to ensure their free, prior and informed consent for decisions affecting their ancestral sea[45]. Furthermore, States must protect those who defend the ocean from threats and reprisals.

## C. OBLIGATION TO RESTORE THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT

The right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment requires the restoration of degraded marine habitats and ecosystems. States must implement measures to restore marine habitats and ecosystems,[46] involving Indigenous Peoples and local communities in these processes[47]. In the case of transboundary environmental damage, compensation may be an appropriate form of reparation for damage if restitution is impossible[48]. Compensation may be awarded for the impairment or loss of ecosystem services and may include payment for the restoration of the damaged environment.[49]

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39. International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, Advisory Opinion of 1 February 2011, paras. 131–135.
40. Art.3.
41. Preamble.
42. Arts. 19. (3), and 26. (5).
43. Rio Declaration, principle 15.
44. A/79/270, para. 39.
45. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, art. 32 (2); Convention on Biological Diversity, art. 8 (j); and International Labour Organization (ILO), Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), art. 6.
46. Convention on Biological Diversity, art. 8; and International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, Advisory Opinion of 21 May 2024, para. 441 (4) (b).
47. Convention on Biological Diversity, decision XI/16 (2012).
48. Certain Activities Carried Out by Nicaragua in the Border Area (Costa Rica v. Nicaragua), para. 31.
49. *Ibid*., paras. 42 and 53.

## D. OBLIGATION TO COOPERATE

International cooperation is essential to prevent and mitigate marine pollution and protect, preserve and restore the marine environment. States should formulate and develop rules, standards, practices and recommended procedures, based on the best available scientific knowledge[50], conduct scientific research and encourage the exchange of information[51], and establish appropriate scientific criteria on which to formulate and develop rules, practices and recommended procedures to combat marine pollution, integrating traditional knowledge[52]. It is essential to provide technical and financial support to developing countries, particularly large ocean States, to strengthen their capacity to address marine pollution and protect their marine ecosystems[53].

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50. United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, art. 197.
51. *Ibid*., arts. 200 and 201.
52. ILO, Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169); United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas; and Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Case of the Rama and Kriol Peoples, the Black Creole Indigenous Community of Bluefields et al.v. Nicaragua.
53. United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, arts. 202 and 203; and International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, Advisory Opinion of 21 May 2024, paras. 327 and 339.



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# V. BUSINESS RESPONSIBILITIES RELATING TO A CLEAN, HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE OCEAN

Businesses operating in ocean environments often lack adequate regulation, leading to environmental damage and human rights abuses. Regardless of State regulations, businesses have an obligation to respect human rights, including the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. To do so, they must exercise due diligence, assessing and disclosing the environmental impact of their activities and complying with international standards[54]. Extractive industries must also integrate respect for human rights into their energy transition plans. In addition, businesses must transparently address their climate impact and comply with human rights standards, assessing and reporting their emissions across their operations[55]. States have an obligation to ensure access to justice for victims of corporate abuses, strengthening regulations and protecting ocean defenders[56].

54. See A/HRC/55/41.
55. See A/79/176.
56. See Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.



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# VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The ocean faces dire threats from unsustainable human activities such as fossil fuel extraction, industrial fishing, uncontrolled urbanization and high-risk marine technologies. These practices disproportionately affect marginalized communities, especially in large ocean States, exacerbating economic and environmental inequalities. Despite the existence of more than 600 international agreements, ocean governance remains ineffective due to a lack of coordination and enforcement. It is therefore urgent to adopt an ecosystem-based and human rights-based approach to ocean protection, promoting the inclusion of traditional knowledge and gender equity, ensuring the participation of women and the protection of environmental defenders.

The implementation of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is fundamental to improving ocean governance and ensuring sustainable development within planetary boundaries. Immediate and coordinated measures are required to mitigate the ocean crisis, aligned with SDG 14 and other multilateral commitments. States, companies and the United Nations system must recognize that ocean issues are also human rights issues, affecting both present and future generations.



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# TO EFFECTIVELY PROTECT THE OCEAN,

## States must:

1. Protect fragile marine areas effectively, ensuring the participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, prohibiting harmful extractive activities and ensuring adequate financing.
2. Undertake environmental and human rights impact assessments before authorizing high-risk projects in marine and coastal areas.
3. Apply the precautionary principle, especially in deep seabed mining, trawling, geoengineering and destructive industrial fishing, ensuring strict regulations. Such activities should only be authorized when there is scientific certainty that they do not pose a significant risk to the ocean and when comprehensive regulations and safeguards are in place.
4. Reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, by stopping new offshore fossil fuel projects and regulating plastic pollution especially industrialized and high-emitting States.
5. Ensure the rights of coastal and marginalized communities, ensuring their access to marine resources, their participation in ocean governance and their protection from forced displacement.
6. Protect environmental defenders, ensuring a safe space and addressing situations of vulnerability with an intersectional approach.
7. Apply the best available scientific knowledge, prioritizing biodiversity conservation and eliminating harmful subsidies for industrial fishing.
8. Guarantee access to sanitation and sustainable urban planning, regulating the impact of agroindustry and land-based pollution in coastal areas.
9. Incorporate the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment into global decision-making, starting with the UN Ocean Conference in 2025 and other multilateral forums.
10. Strengthen international cooperation to implement international law and improve marine conservation, providing equitable financing and promoting participatory research.

## Businesses should:

recognize their responsibility in protecting the ocean, complying with the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and:

1. Collaborate with States and the UN to improve ocean governance and avoid undue influence that delays urgent solutions.
2. Adopt robust sustainability goals, assessing the impact of their operations on marine ecosystems and human rights.
3. Assume responsibility for environmental clean-up and restoration, ensuring proper decommissioning of offshore infrastructure and avoiding toxic legacies.

## The United Nations system should:

promote coordination among States and private entities, ensuring that ocean policies integrate environmental, socio-economic, cultural and human rights considerations. Balancing these factors will be key to ensuring ocean protection and global sustainability.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## For States:

**PROTECT** Protect fragile marine areas effectively, ensuring the participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, prohibiting harmful extractive activities and ensuring adequate financing.

**CONDUCT** Conduct environmental and human rights impact assessments before authorizing high-risk projects in marine and coastal areas.

**APPLY** Apply the precautionary principle, especially in deep seabed mining, trawling, geoengineering and destructive industrial fishing, ensuring strict regulations. Such activities should only be authorized when there is scientific certainty that they do not pose a significant risk to the ocean and when comprehensive regulations and safeguards are in place.

**REDUCE** Reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, by stopping new offshore fossil fuel projects and regulating plastic pollution especially industrialized and high-emitting states.

**ENSURE** Ensure the rights of coastal and marginalized communities, ensuring their access to marine resources, their participation in ocean governance and their protection from forced displacement.

**PROTECT** Protect environmental defenders, ensuring a safe space and addressing situations of vulnerability with an intersectional approach.

**APPLY** Apply the best available scientific knowledge, prioritizing biodiversity conservation and eliminating harmful subsidies for industrial fishing.

**GURANTEE** Guarantee access to sanitation and sustainable urban planning, regulating the impact of agroindustry and land-based pollution in coastal areas.

**INCORPORATE** Incorporate the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment into global decision-making, starting with the UN Ocean Conference in 2025 and other multilateral forums.

**STRENGTHEN** Strengthen international cooperation to implement international law and improve marine conservation, providing equitable financing and promoting participatory research.

## For Businesses:

**COLLABORATE** Collaborate with States and the UN to improve ocean governance and avoid undue influence that delays urgent solutions.

**ADOPT** Adopt robust sustainability goals, assessing the impact of their operations on marine ecosystems and human rights.

**ASSUME** Assume responsibility for environmental clean-up and restoration, ensuring proper decommissioning of offshore infrastructure and avoiding toxic legacies.

## For the UN System:

**PROMOTE** Promote coordination among States and private entities, ensuring that ocean policies integrate environmental, socio-economic, cultural and human rights considerations.

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