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WORKING PAPER

Assessing 10 years of international commitments to sustainable ocean action

A global stocktake of the Our Ocean Conference

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CONTENTS

Working Papers contain preliminary research, analysis, findings, and recommendations. They are circulated to stimulate timely discussion and critical feedback, and to influence ongoing debate on emerging issues.

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Executive summary

Highlights

- Since 2014, the Our Ocean Conference (OOC) has emerged as a key forum to mobilize sustainable ocean action and resources through voluntary commitments across six action areas: the ocean-climate nexus, marine protected areas (MPAs), sustainable fisheries, marine pollution, the sustainable blue economy, and maritime security.
- From 2014 to 2024, the conference generated 2,618 commitments to ocean action, equivalent to US$160 billion in pledged funds.
- This working paper analyzes, for the first time, the overall implementation progress of all commitments. As of January 2025, approximately 1,130 commitments had been completed (43 percent), 1,005 were in progress (38 percent), and 483 (18 percent) had not been started. The OOCs have mobilized $133.4 billion for ocean action, comprising $23.8 billion in delivered funds from completed commitments and $109.6 billion for commitments under implementation. Most pledged finance (54 percent) is allocated to ocean-climate action.
- Future OOCs should further catalyze action from the private sector and academia, broaden geographic engagement, and encourage commitments that engage and address the needs of small island developing states, least developed countries, youth, women, and Indigenous and local communities.

Background

The sustainable blue economy has the potential to drive sustainable development and create transformative and equitable opportunity (Stuchtey et al. 2020). MPAs and other effective conservation measures can enhance biodiversity and provide valuable co-benefits for coastal communities (Grorud-Colvert et al. 2021). Ocean-climate solutions can deliver up to 35 percent of the emissions reductions required to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2050 (Hoegh-Guldberg et al. 2023). Addressing marine pollution is necessary to safeguard human and environmental health (Beau-

mont et al. 2019), and enhancing global maritime security can create an enabling environment, peace, and global access to markets (Bueger et al. 2024).

The Our Ocean Conference drives action across six areas: the ocean-climate nexus, the sustainable blue economy, sustainable fisheries, marine protected areas, marine pollution, and maritime security. The conference serves as a forum to coordinate global ocean ambition and develop and strengthen partnerships. OOC outcomes focus on mobilizing voluntary commitments to sustainable ocean action, including finance. Voluntary commitments are made annually by governments and nongovernmental actors and include local, national, and international actions such as financial pledges, research programs, policy or partnership announcements, and capacity-building initiatives. Importantly, the OOC also includes a commitment-tracking process that monitors implementation.

This paper provides a comprehensive assessment of OOC commitment implementation from 2014 to 2024, highlighting the important role of the OOC in driving global ocean policy and identifying opportunities and priorities for future action.

About this working paper and its methodology

This publication, developed for the 10th Our Ocean Conference in 2025, aims to strengthen accountability and transparency in the OOC process. It represents the first in an annual series by World Resources Institute (WRI), in the capacity of the OOC Secretariat, to strengthen the progress tracking of voluntary commitments and provide recommendations for future OOC hosts and participants. OOC reporting can serve as a model for other international forums that mobilize voluntary commitments, such as the United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC).

This analysis uses voluntary commitment data derived from the OOC global online platform, cross-referenced against existing host government outcome reports. The analysis assumes accurate self-reporting from governments and other organizations. Information on data cleaning and limitations is provided in the "Research methodology" section and Appendix A.

Key findings

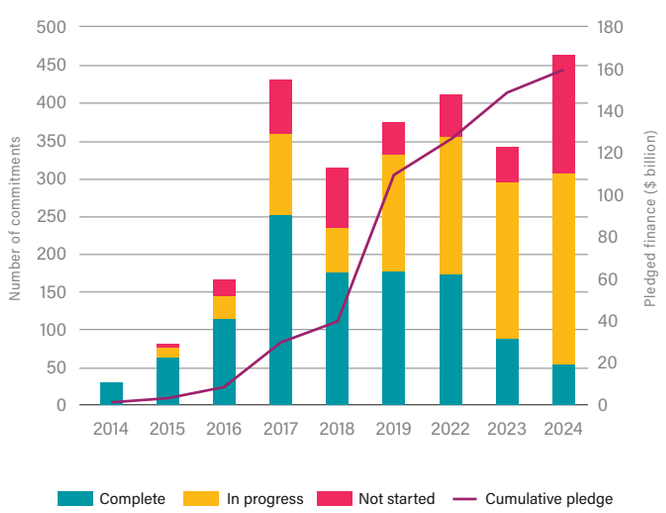
The OOC has mobilized a diversity of commitments across all ocean basins and by organizations in every region. In total, 2,618 commitments were made between 2014 and 2024, with a cumulative finance pledge of $160 billion (Figure ES-1).

The conference has grown significantly since its initial founding and has made progress toward commitment implementation. Since 2017, each OOC has delivered over 300 new commitments. By January 2025, 1,130 commitments (43 percent) had been completed with a further 1,005 in progress (38 percent) and 483 not yet started (18 percent). This equates to an estimated $23.8 billion in delivered funds, $109.6 billion in process of being disbursed, and $24.9 billion not yet started. Completed commitments tend to be associated with smaller financial pledges. Continued ambition and effort is needed to ensure that ongoing, multiyear commitments with large financial pledges are followed through to completion.

Commitment-makers are mainly governments and nongovernmental organizations from Europe, North America, and East Asia and the Pacific. Governments have the highest number of commitments and pledged funds of any sector, reflecting their critical role in mobilizing and investing in ocean action.

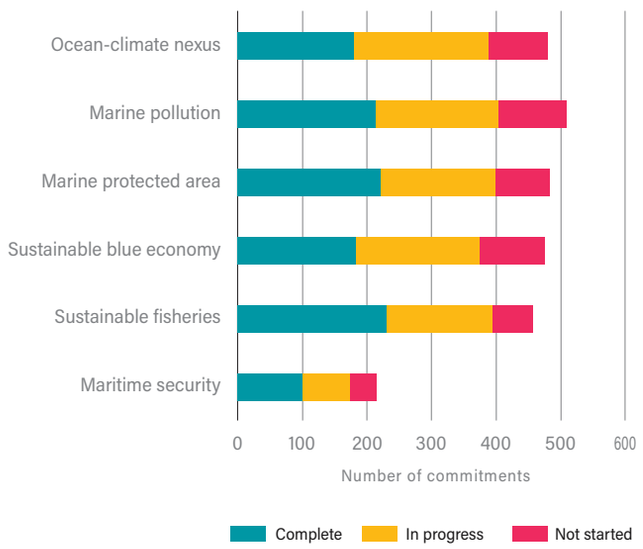
The total number of commitments and pledged funds diverge across thematic ocean action areas (Figures ES-2 and ES-3). The action areas, in descending order of number of commitments, are marine pollution (508), marine protected areas (483), the ocean-climate nexus (480), the sustainable blue economy (475), sustainable fisheries (457), and maritime security (215). Commitments related to ocean-climate solutions have received the highest amount of pledged funding ($86.6 billion) while MPAs have received the lowest ($6.7 billion).

Figure ES-1 | **Number of Our Ocean Conference commitments, cumulative pledged finance, and progress by year, 2014–2024**



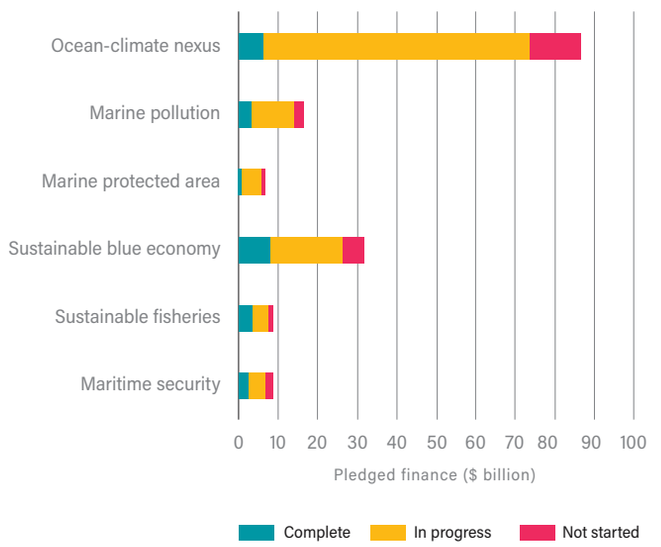
Notes: Due to COVID-19, no Our Ocean Conference events were held in 2020 and 2021.
Source: WRI authors.

Figure ES-2 | **Number of Our Ocean Conference commitments and progress by action area**



Source: WRI authors.

Figure ES-3 | **Pledged Our Ocean Conference finance and progress by action area**



Source: WRI authors.

Conclusions and recommendations

Since 2014, the Our Ocean Conference has driven ambitious global action and successfully mobilized resources. With 81 percent of commitments complete or in progress, commitment-makers appear to be making concerted efforts to meet their pledges. However, gaps remain, particularly in the full disbursement of pledged finance.

Recommendations to improve OOC outcomes include the following:

- **Actively fill geographic and policy gaps in OOC commitments,** increasing inclusion and commitment mobilization across Africa, Latin America, and South Asia.
- **Strengthen partnerships with governments while scaling engagement** with the private sector, academia, intergovernmental organizations, local communities, and underrepresented groups.
- **Improve the OOC online platform** to improve data quality and increase transparency.
- **Develop further thematic analyses of commitments** including deep dives, regular progress assessments, and analyses of implementation barriers and solutions.
- **Increase coordination between the OOC and other multilateral forums**, including UNOC, to address duplication risk across voluntary commitment platforms and drive global ocean ambition.
- **Explore options to provide more concrete support for organizations to implement their commitments** through internal knowledge-sharing and external partnerships.

A positive, productive, and equitable future for the ocean is possible with ambitious and coordinated action. The OOC has a key role in past, present, and future efforts to realize this vision.

Introduction

Ten years of the Our Ocean Conference

The Our Ocean Conference (OOC) was established in 2014 by the United States, bringing together governments, intergovernmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, philanthropies, civil society, and other stakeholders to drive action for a sustainable ocean via voluntary commitments. These voluntary commitments include financial pledges; policy or partnership announcements; research and monitoring initiatives; capacity-building programs; and other specific, measurable actions across all levels of governance. Alongside and in support of other events that mobilize commitments, including the United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC), the OOC has become a key annual forum to coordinate global ocean action and priorities and facilitate cross-sector dialogue.

Between 2014 and 2024, nine OOCs were held by eight host countries (Figure 1). The conference and commitments have been framed around six thematic action areas: the ocean-climate nexus; marine pollution; marine protected areas (MPAs); the sustainable blue economy; sustainable fisheries; and maritime security.

The Our Ocean Conference seeks to

- mobilize voluntary commitments to ocean action across regions and sectors and increase the financial, technical, technological, and partnership resources devoted to ocean action;
- elevate the ocean on the international diplomacy stage; and
- build accountability among commitment-holders to implement and report on actions pledged at the conference.

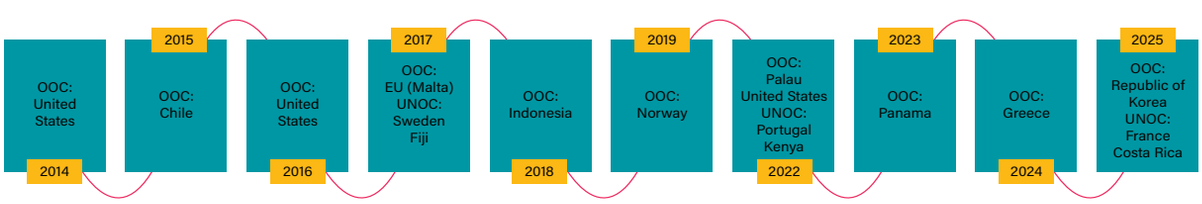
Addressing ocean challenges through voluntary commitments

The health of the ocean is central to life on our planet and presents a range of solutions to meet global environmental challenges. The ocean provides food for 3.2 billion people (FAO 2024), contributed US$2.6 trillion to the global economy in 2020 (OECD 2025), and is deeply embedded within human society and culture (Allison et al. 2020). It plays a critical role in regulating the climate, storing 25 percent of carbon dioxide emissions and absorbing more than 90 percent of excess heat (IPCC 2022). Ocean-based climate solutions have the potential to contribute up to 35 percent of necessary greenhouse gas emission reductions by 2050 to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius (Hoegh-Guldberg et al. 2023). Implementing inclusive, sustainable ocean management and conservation is essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 14 (Life Below Water).

Despite its importance, the ocean is subject to accelerating environmental and human pressures. Overfishing, ecosystem degradation, ocean warming and acidification, pollution, and other stressors are causing widespread biodiversity loss and reducing the productivity and functioning of ocean systems (Rogers et al. 2023; UNESCO-IOC et al. 2024). These trends place nature, food security, and human health at risk (Fleming et al. 2024).

Addressing ocean challenges is complex, but recently coordinated targets and action show that ambitious progress is possible. The Global Biodiversity Framework 30x30 target (to protect 30 percent of the global ocean area by 2030), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue, and the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of

Figure 1 | **Timeline of OOC and UNOC forums, including host countries**



Notes: Due to COVID-19, no Our Ocean Conference (OOC) events were held in 2020 and 2021. UNOC = United Nations Ocean Conference. EU = European Union.
Source: WRI authors.

Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement) are recent multilateral frameworks that will steer future global ocean conservation and ambition.

Alongside negotiated outcomes, there has been a growing use of non-legally binding "soft law" tools by both governmental and nongovernmental actors to address ocean and environmental challenges, including voluntary commitments (Neumann and Unger 2019; Urho 2021). Voluntary commitments benefit from a lower barrier to entry than negotiated legal instruments and enable more rapid and flexible implementation (Brown Weiss 2014).

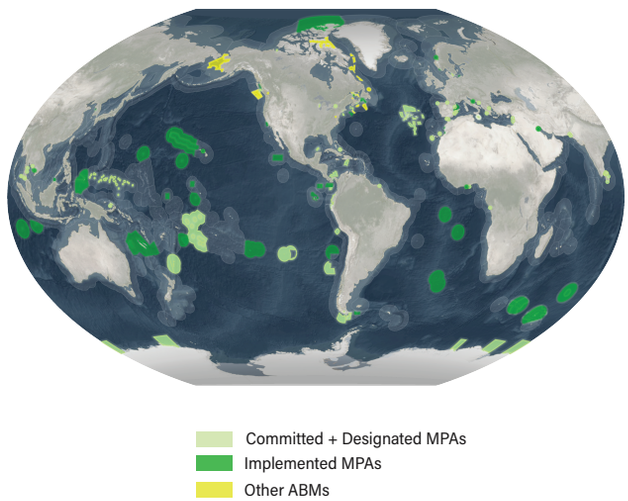
Over 2,600 commitments are registered on the OOC online platform. This tracks implementation by commitment-makers, who are requested to provide annual progress updates. OOC host governments also publish conference outcome reports, which list the roster of new commitments generated at each OOC. Tracking commitments remains challenging due to the large number of participating organizations and governments, limited self-reporting, and the broad scope of actions.

Voluntary commitment monitoring must strike a balance between seeking adequate information for concrete tracking and minimizing reporting burdens that may disincentivize participants from making or updating commitments. At scale, this often necessitates tracking intermediate outcomes (the extent to which commitments have been implemented), rather than assessing the real-world impact of individual commitments on target ecosystems and communities.

Several studies have assessed different aspects of OOC commitment implementation. MPA commitments have received the most robust analysis, assessing the outsize contribution of the OOC to global marine conservation and the 30x30 target (Grorud-Colvert et al. 2019; Sullivan-Stack et al. 2024). An estimated 42 percent of implemented MPAs were announced at OOCs, equivalent to over 8.7 million or 2.4 percent of global ocean area (Figure 2) (Sullivan-Stack et al. 2025). Huse et al. (2021) assessed OOC sustainable fishery implementation, highlighting contributions toward ratification of the Agreement on Port State Measures and action to address illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. Other analyses have focused on the blue economy and private sector, including the role of the private sector in announcing action at multilateral forums and the high number of plastic-producing companies (67 percent) engaged in voluntary commitment processes (Voyer et al. 2021; Diana et al. 2022). Voluntary commitments have also been used to generate global estimates of ocean expenditure (Johansen and Vestvik 2020) and project future marine conservation priorities (Nocito et al. 2020).

Each of these assessments focused on a single OOC action area and therefore did not provide a full characterization of the OOC's role in driving global ocean ambition or broader, disaggregated analysis of all commitments.

Figure 2 | **Map of independently verified MPA and area-based management Our Ocean Conference commitments**



Note: MPA = marine protected area. ABM = area-based management.
Source: Sullivan-Stack et al. 2025.

This is the first comprehensive analysis of global progress toward implementation of OOC voluntary commitments announced between 2014 and 2024. We set out to answer the following research questions:

- To what extent have OOC commitments to sustainable ocean action been implemented and resources mobilized?
- What are the spatial and temporal distributions of OOC commitments and commitment-makers?
- What are the trends, successes, and gaps in voluntary OOC commitment implementation?

Research methodology

The authors sourced voluntary commitment data from the online OOC commitments platform. To facilitate additional updates and ensure the accuracy of progress reporting, we conducted outreach to commitment-makers (809 representatives from 478 organizations and countries) in November and December 2024. Each representative received at least three requests for updates.

At least one progress update was reported for 66 percent of commitments on the platform. The level of detail provided in updates varied from updating the commitment's progress status to detailed written updates with evidence.

We exported all commitment data on January 17, 2025, and cleaned and cross-referenced it against the nine annual OOC outcome reports produced by host governments (GoC 2015; GoG 2024; GoI 2018; GoN 2019; GoPanama 2013; GoPalau 2022; GoUS 2014, 2016). From the existing data, we generated the following key indicators: sum of commitments, sum of pledged funds, sum of delivered funds, percent of completed commitments, percent of in progress commitments, and percent of not started commitments. We then disaggregated each of these across the six action areas and by year, sector, region, and ocean basin.

We simplified the "progress" field from a sliding numerical scale (0–100 percent) into three discrete categories—"complete," "in progress," or "not started"—and consolidated "implementing organization sector" classifications, disaggregating academic institutions and combining NGOs and civil society organizations. To enable a deeper thematic analysis, we added the following variables to the dataset: ocean basin of implementation, year of completion, delivered funds, secondary action area, and the country and region of the commitment-maker. Additional variables were sourced exclusively from self-reported descriptions and progress updates provided by commitment-holders. We assumed delivered funds to be the full pledged amount or as described in progress updates, if different from the initial pledge.

Recognizing the overlap among action areas (notably between the ocean-climate nexus and sustainable blue economy, and between sustainable fisheries and maritime security), we assigned a secondary action area where relevant. This was applied to 519 commitments (20 percent of the total). We quantified the number of commitments by specific policy area using key search terms (see accompanying dataset) and drew from the relevant primary and secondary tags (e.g., the number of offshore wind commitments includes those submitted either as ocean-climate or blue economy). This was the only analysis in which we used secondary action areas.

To evaluate geographic distribution, we assigned organizations and countries with World Bank regional classifications: East Asia and the Pacific; Europe and Central Asia; Latin America and the Caribbean; Middle East and North Africa (MENA); North America; South Asia; and sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank 2025).

To assess equity dimensions, we identified commitments supporting gender outcomes and women, actions by or in support of leadership by Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and commitments by or in support of young people using key search terms (see accompanying dataset). We also identified commitments that were either made by or implemented in small island developing states (SIDS) and least developed countries (LDCs) (UN-OHRLLS 2025a, 2025b).

We selected a sample of commitments to exemplify sustainable ocean action mobilized by the OOC in each action area based on completion status, level of ambition, and financial value, also considering geographic and thematic representation.

To focus on substantive ocean action, this analysis excludes 13 commitments (equivalent to $4.7 million) made under the "Future Our Ocean Conferences" action area. These are funding commitments to support hosts with running OOCs. It should also be noted that the maritime security action area was introduced by the host government of Indonesia in 2018 and this classification was retroactively applied to previous commitments following the creation of the OOC platform in 2019.

Data-cleaning requirements were extensive due to inconsistencies in reported data. In total, eight data-cleaning interventions were required to ensure comparability and completeness of the dataset (Table A-1). A total of 605 commitments required cleaning interventions (23 percent). The most common data edits were updates to pledged or delivered fund values and currency updates. When commitment information in the tracker system was overwritten after publication (e.g., an organization reduced a past funding pledge), it was reverted to the original pledge if possible. All data-cleaning edits and thematic commitment tags are noted in the attached dataset for transparency and replicability.

Some limitations should be noted. As we were not able to independently verify all commitments and their levels of completion, our analysis assumes that self-reported updates provided by countries and organizations are accurate and up-to-date. A lack of a standardized monitoring framework and common performance indicators means we cannot quantify commitments' real-world impact on the ocean. As such, this publication is not intended to monitor or collate the direct impact of individual commitments. The Our Ocean Conference is situated within the broader landscape of multilateral ocean partnerships, projects, and events that facilitate global ocean action. This publication provides an early indication of intermediate progress toward these goals.

Due to the global scope of the dataset and large number of organizations and countries making commitments, data collection was a considerable challenge. Financial results are also limited as a notable proportion of commitments (33 percent) lacked budgetary information. Finally, while levels of representation and ambition within the commitment dataset may provide important trends, they are inherently skewed toward OOC participants and therefore may not accurately reflect the full distribution of global ocean action. Nor do commitment data alone fully represent the number and diversity of stake-

holders, regions, and sectors engaging in and benefiting from OOCs (i.e., from participation, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing opportunities at the conferences).

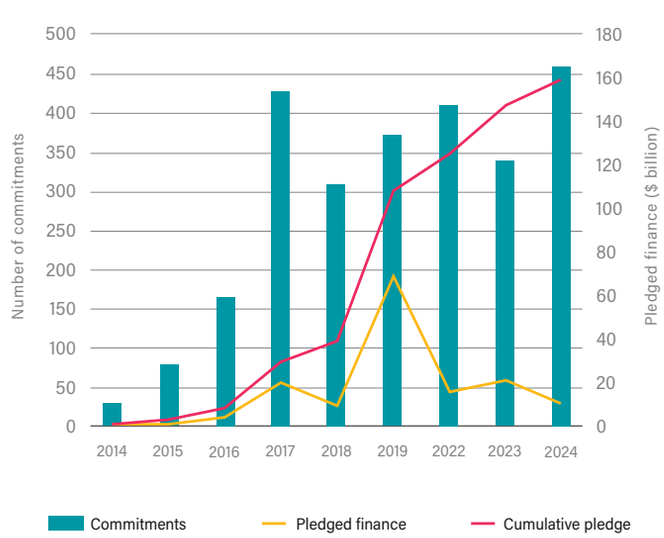
Results and discussion

The OOC has shown increased impact and ambition since 2014

Since its inception, the conference has grown significantly, from 30 initial commitments and $1.8 billion pledged funds in 2014 to 464 commitments and $11.6 billion in 2024 (Figure 3). Since 2017, OOCs have produced over 300 new commitments per year. Pledged finance showed higher variability around an average of $17.8 billion.

As of January 2025, 1,130 commitments (43 percent) had been completed, 1,005 (38 percent) remained in progress, and 483 (18 percent) had not been started (Figure 4). Over 80 percent of commitments are complete or in progress, reflecting a strong record of delivery by OOC participants. Earlier conference years have higher completion rates (Table 1) with an average commitment completion time of two years. This also reflects that recent conferences have trended toward more ambitious, larger-scale, and longer-duration commitments, which require more time to complete and can include many separate actions.

Figure 3 | **Number of Our Ocean Conference commitments, pledged finance, and cumulative pledged funds by year, 2014–2024**



Notes: Due to COVID-19, no Our Ocean Conference events were held in 2020 and 2021.

Source: WRI authors.

Most OOC commitments (67 percent) have associated financial pledges. Estimates of delivered funds, based on completed commitments and subsequent progress updates, suggest a likely delivery of $23.8 billion. Total delivered funds from completed commitments are estimated to be $1.7 billion less than their initial gross funding pledge. Sixty-nine percent of the pledged finance is still in progress and being disbursed, equivalent to $109.6 billion. The average value of financial commitments is $3.4 million (Table A-2). Twenty-nine commitments have financial pledges of over $1 billion, and most of these remain in progress. Commitments with larger financial pledges were more likely to be assigned "in progress" or "not started" statuses. These have average financial pledges of $4.5 million and $4.3 million, respectively, compared with $2.2 million for "complete" commitments.

Action is ongoing across all OOC action areas

OOC commitments are very diverse in scale, thematic focus, and ambition. Numbers of commitments are fairly evenly distributed among action areas: marine pollution (508), MPAs (483), ocean-climate nexus (480), sustainable blue economy (475), and sustainable fisheries (457) (Figure 5). Maritime security received the fewest commitments (215). This is likely the result of its niche focus and later introduction in the OOC process. Additionally, the sensitive nature of maritime security actions, particularly related to naval and defense capacity, likely limits their inclusion in this public forum. Completion rates by number of commitments are comparable across action areas, ranging from 38 to 50 percent.

High-value commitments are heavily concentrated in the ocean-climate nexus area, which accounts for $86.8 billion pledged, or 54 percent of the total. In contrast, MPAs, maritime security, and sustainable fisheries have each received less than $10 billion. MPAs, although a major public focus of the OOC, have received the lowest quantity of pledged funds at $6.7 billion. These distributions may reflect the differing priorities of governments and other stakeholders; the varying availability and accessibility of finance to address different ocean challenges; and the various themes of OOCs over the years.

For example, mobilizing ocean-climate finance has been an active priority for many governments and organizations. Climate finance commitments are also common across other multilateral forums (e.g., the UNFCCC) and announcements are likely highlighted at multiple events. The emphasis on climate finance may also reflect the comparatively higher upfront capital investment costs of achieving these commitments. These actions, such as investment in offshore energy and maritime transport, can also present a compelling investment case and so mobilize larger-scale partnerships

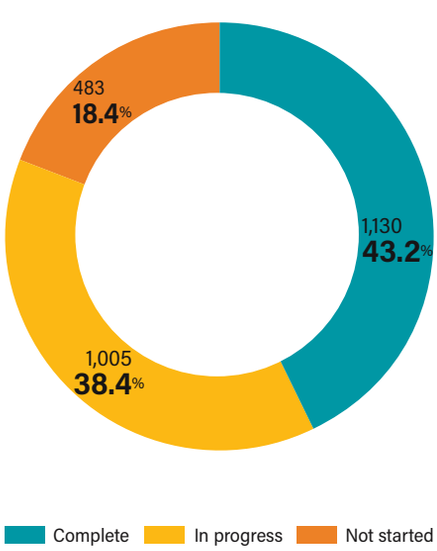
Table 1 | **Number of Our Ocean Conference commitments, pledged finance, and progress by year, 2014–2024**

OUR OCEAN CONFERENCE	YEAR	NUMBER OF COMMITMENTS	PLEDGED FUNDS ($ BILLION)	COMPLETE (%)	IN PROGRESS (%)	NOT STARTED (%)
OOC1	2014	30	1.8	100	100	0
OOC2	2015	81	1.7	78	78	6
OOC3	2016	167	5.3	69	69	13
OOC4	2017	432	21.2	59	59	17
OOC5	2018	314	10.0	56	56	25
OOC6	2019	375	69.8	47	47	12
OOC7	2022	412	16.8	42	42	14
OOC8	2023	343	21.9	26	26	14
OOC9	2024	464	11.6	12	12	34
TOTAL		**2,618**	**160**	**43**	**38**	**18**

Source: WRI authors.

and financing (Konar and Ding 2020). Finally, large climate commitments more frequently encompass both ocean and non-ocean activities (e.g., a government announces a total investment in wind energy at an OOC that includes a subset for offshore wind funding).

Figure 4 | **Progress status of Our Ocean Conference commitments**



Source: WRI authors.

In contrast, action areas with a smaller total financial commitment, such as MPAs, sustainable fisheries, and marine pollution, may have relatively lower access to financial resources or lean on lower-cost policy tools or collaborative approaches to achieve their outcomes.

Recognizing these competing influences, the differentiated needs and varying accessibility of resources make clear that finance, though important, should not be the only proxy for measuring ocean ambition.

Governments and NGOs are driving commitment implementation

Commitments have been made by 478 unique organizations and governments, including representation from all sectors included in the conference and all geographic regions. An average of 92 organizations and countries have made commitments every year with a maximum of 182 commitment-makers in 2017 (hosted by the European Union). The sector with the highest number of commitment-makers is NGOs (36 percent), followed by private sector organizations (28 percent) and governments (24 percent) (Figure 6).

However, governments remain the most common sector both making and implementing commitments. They have made the most commitments by number (61 percent). This reflects the important responsibility of governments in driving overall action and ambition. Governments also have the second-highest average financial pledge per sector at $5 million (behind philanthropies at $8 million) and account for 17 of

the 29 commitments larger than $1 billion. This indicates their important role in planning and implementing larger-scale, multiyear projects and their ability to mobilize finance, though capacity and resources vary significantly from state to state.

As a key target audience of the OOC, governments are the longest partners and most consistent attendees of the conference. This strong record of OOC engagement has likely driven both higher numbers of commitments and greater reporting.

Across action areas, governments are particularly well represented in maritime security (submitting 73 percent of commitments), MPAs (72 percent), and the ocean-climate nexus (64 percent). This is followed by NGOs, which account for 19 percent of sustainable fisheries commitments, 17 percent of marine pollution commitments, and 17 percent of ocean-climate commitments.

Compared with governments, which engage in the OOC on an annual basis, individual NGOs and private sector organizations typically attend and make commitments at one or two conferences (usually when held within their region), and so have less long-term engagement and reporting. This may be due to staff turnover, less stability in resources for ocean action, and a more limited ability to engage with the OOC as it rotates host countries (though there are several notable exceptions of consistently and highly engaged organizations).

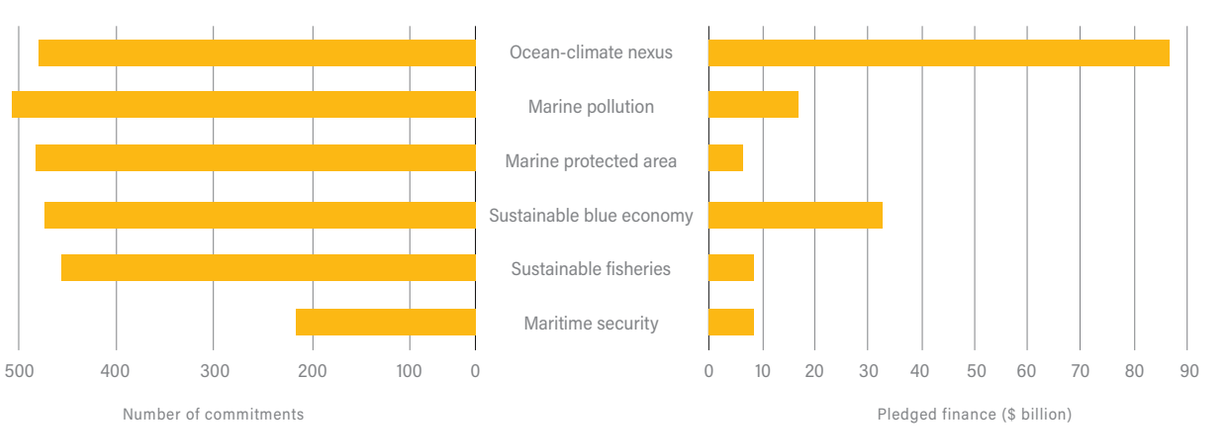
Although included in OOC events, there have been fewer commitments made by academia, the private sector, intergovernmental organizations, and philanthropic organizations themselves. However, commitments can be submitted by only a single entity, which can mask collaboration and partnerships. Behind many completed OOC commitments lies a diverse cross-sector network of implementing partners, funding bodies, local communities, subject matter experts, and more. For example, philanthropies, although not often implementing entities themselves, play a key enabling role in financing the ocean actions of other organizations. Similarly, many government commitments may be implemented in partnership with NGOs or private sector entities to distribute grants or deliver services.

Completion rates are comparable across sectors, ranging from 30 to 46 percent. However, completion varies among regions. North America has the highest commitment completion rate (51 percent) followed by East Asia and the Pacific (46 percent). Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest proportion of "not started" commitments (44 percent), which may reflect more limited financial resources, lower reporting levels, and commitment implementation challenges.

Figure 6 | **Number of commitment-making organizations and commitments per sector**

Source: WRI authors.

Figure 5 | **Commitments and pledged finance by thematic action area**



Source: WRI authors.

Commitment and financial flows between regions and action areas are presented in Figure 7 and highlight the diverging trends across numbers of commitments (7a), pledged fund distributions (7b), and delivered fund distributions (7c). Most commitment-makers are organizations and countries in Europe (46 percent) and North America (24 percent) (Figure 8). This may reflect wealth disparities among countries and regions to drive ocean action, locations of previous conferences, higher levels of nongovernmental participation from those regions, and the outsize role of the United States in establishing and supporting the conference. Europe has provided a disproportionately high amount of funding relative to its number of commitments, driven by several high-value commitments from financial institutions and the European Union. The proportions of stakeholders making commitments from MENA (1 percent), South Asia (2 percent), sub-Saharan Africa (5 percent), and Latin America and the Caribbean (7 percent) have been notably low. Additionally, several major economies and ocean states are underrepresented in OOC commitments, including large developing economies.

When disaggregated by ocean basin, most actions are implemented as multi-basin initiatives, followed by actions in the Atlantic and Pacific ocean basins (Figure 9). The Indian, Southern, and Arctic ocean basins have received the fewest commitments and financial investments. This largely reflects the geographic distribution of commitment-makers, suggesting a tendency to invest locally. The high proportion of multi-basin programs creates uncertainty in estimating comparative financial statistics across oceans basins.

Greater engagement with SIDS, LDCs, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, women, and youth is needed

Indigenous Peoples and local communities and other underrepresented demographics have a critical role in sustainable ocean management and ocean-climate leadership (Crosman et al. 2022; Strand et al. 2024). SIDS in particular have a deep connection with the ocean, managing 16.1 percent of the global exclusive economic zone (the ocean area under national jurisdiction) (UN-OHRLLS 2020). More equitable ocean action and integration of Indigenous and local knowledge can result in more effective conservation outcomes (Loch and Riechers 2021).

However, despite increasing global attention on ocean equity issues, systemic barriers remain (Claudet et al. 2024). While not a standing action area of the OOC, in alignment with WRI policy on diversity, equity, and inclusion, the authors looked at the extent to which commitments have been made by or addressed the needs of underrepresented demographics (including SIDS, LDCs, women, and youth). Commitments made by or implemented in SIDS account for 349 commitments (13 percent of total commitments). Similarly, commitments made by or implemented in LDCs account for only 183 commitments (7 percent). These are concentrated in the ocean-climate nexus action area for SIDS (84 commitments) and sustainable fisheries for LDCs (53 commitments). Indigenous Peoples and local communities, traditional knowledge, or Tribal organizations are referenced in 135 commitments (5 percent). OOC7 in 2022, co-hosted by Palau, included the highest number of SIDS-related commitments (75) and LDC-related commitments (40) of any conference year, highlighting the power of host countries in setting policy priorities.

While analyses of ocean justice and equity are limited by the high-level framing of commitment data and lack of structural inclusion within the OOC framework, initial findings show significant areas for improvement. Only 69 commitments (3 percent) directly refer to women or gender outcomes in their submissions or progress updates, while 87 commitments (3 percent) address opportunities for young people. The ocean-climate nexus, marine pollution, MPA, and maritime security areas each have fewer than 10 gender-focused commitments.

Evaluating implementation progress by action area

The ocean-climate nexus

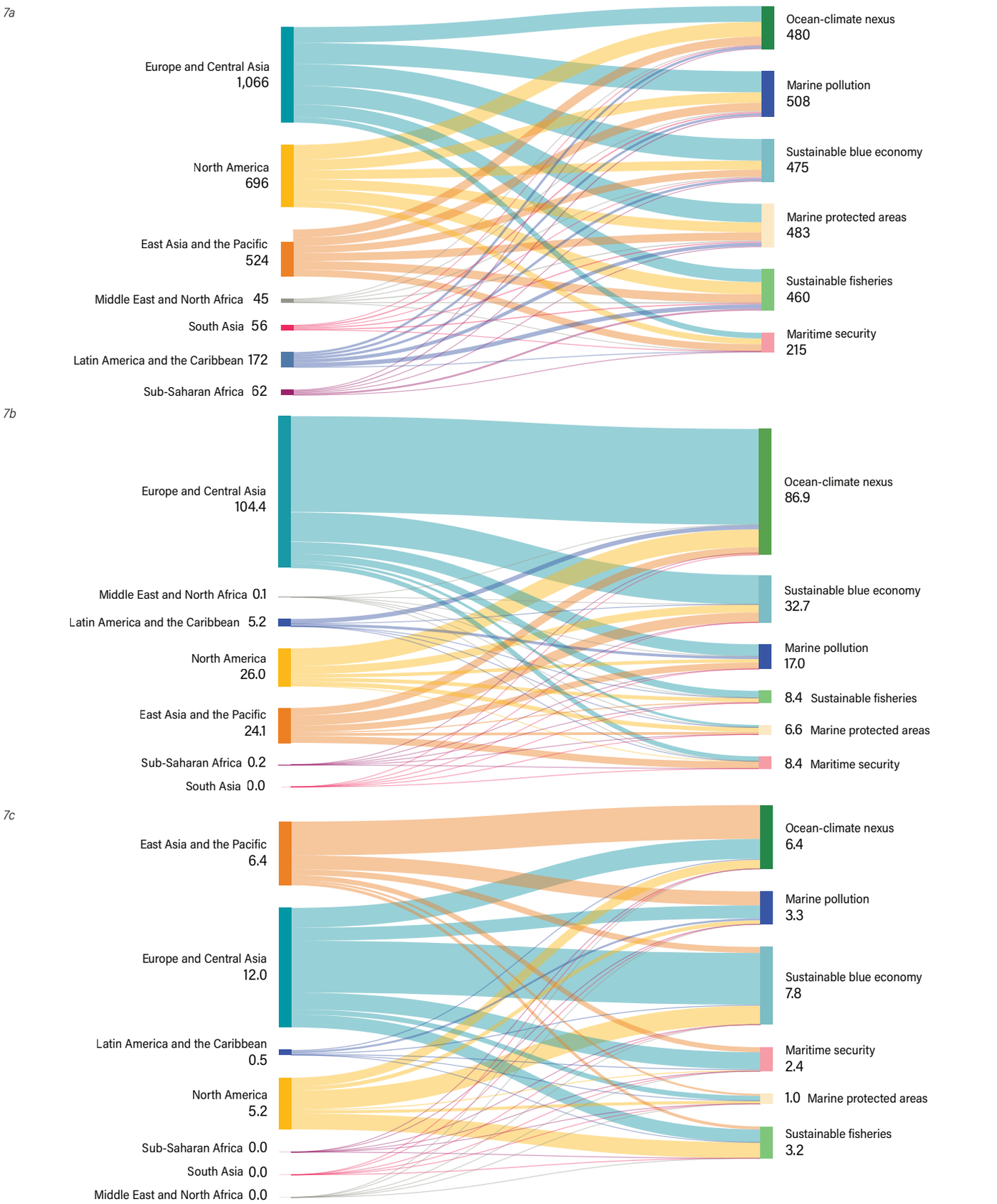
Carbon emissions from human activity are causing ocean warming, acidification, and sea level rise (IPCC 2022). Climate-induced declines in ocean health and services are predicted to cost the global economy up to $428 billion per year by 2050 and $1.98 trillion by 2100 (IPCC 2022). Strengthening the nexus between the ocean and climate action is critical to identifying and implementing effective solutions.

A total of 480 ocean-climate commitments have been made, equivalent to $86.8 billion. This accounts for 18 percent of commitments by number but approximately 54 percent of all financial pledges. Commitments have a median financial pledge of $4.9 million, though the largest is equivalent to $49 billion, made by Norwegian bank DNB, representing a large proportion of all pledged finance.

Progress tracking for this action area shows 38 percent complete and 44 percent in progress. Completed commitments tend to be those with lower financial values, and most pledged ocean-climate finance ($67 billion) remains in progress. Approximately $6.5 billion has been delivered by completed commitments. Ocean-climate actions have been pledged in all ocean basins, though they heavily skew toward larger, multi-basin initiatives (49 percent).

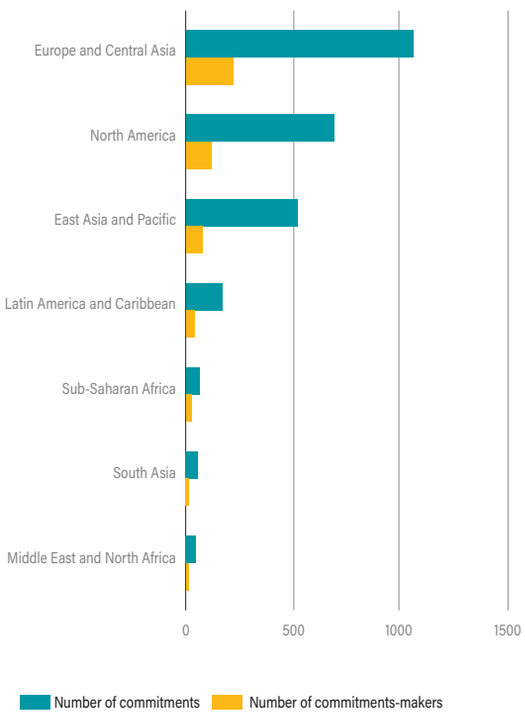
OOC commitments include actions to address all major ocean-climate impacts described by the IPCC (2022) and propose a wide range of solutions (Table 2). Scientific research

Figure 7 | **Commitment implementation by region of commitment-maker and action area**



Note: Commitment flows are presented by (7a) number of commitments; (7b) pledged finance ($ billion); (7c) delivered finance ($ billion).
Source: WRI authors.

Figure 8 | **Number of commitment-making organizations and number of commitments by region**



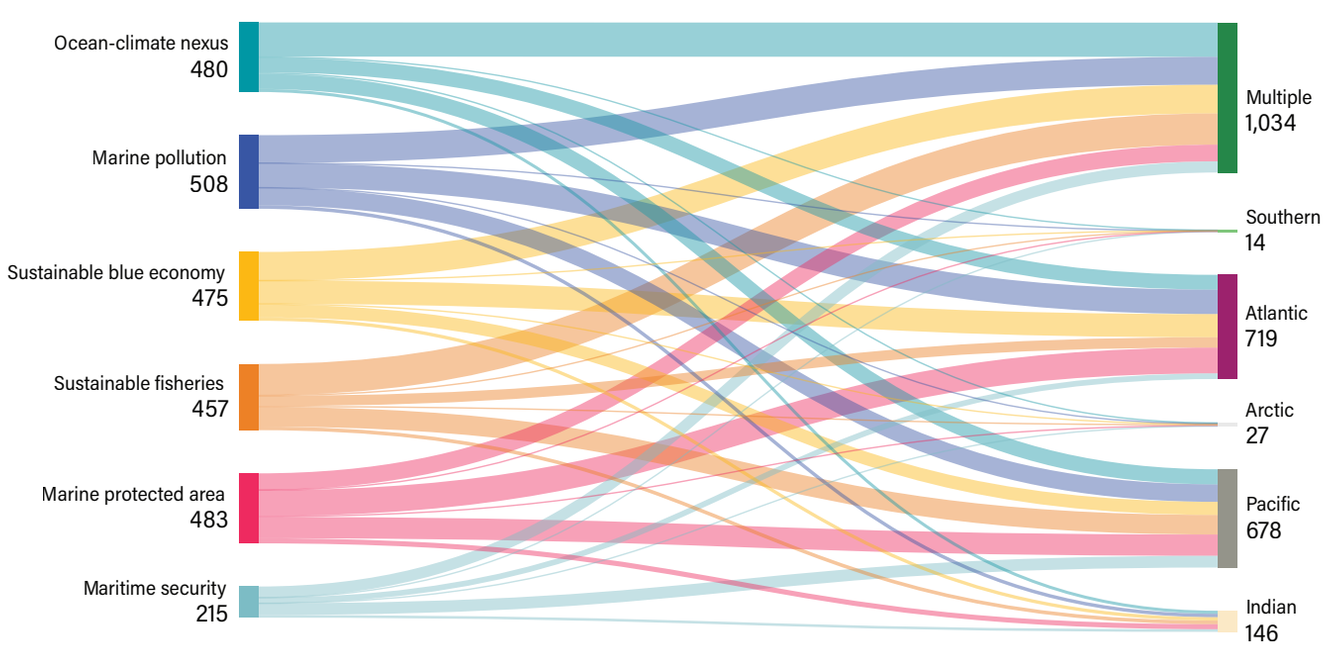
Source: WRI authors.

is a clear crosscutting theme, referenced in 188 commitments. Mirroring the general framing of action by the wider climate community, 199 ocean-climate commitments directly reference adaptation, mitigation, or resilience outcomes.

OOCs have mobilized 123 commitments related to energy transitions, including 34 that refer to investment in wind energy. This includes dedicated climate finance ($6.1 billion pledged), maritime decarbonization investment, ocean monitoring systems, and carbon capture and storage approaches. OOC commitments support several global climate frameworks including the Paris Agreement and SDG 13. An estimated 66 commitments reference ocean acidification, equivalent to $885 million in pledged funds. This includes contributions to initiatives such as the International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification, Global Ocean Acidification Observing Network, and Ocean Acidification International Coordination Centre, alongside various national policies and action plans.

Areas for greater attention include ocean-climate action in the Indian, Arctic, and Southern ocean basins. This is particularly relevant for the polar regions experiencing high rates of warming and sea ice loss (IPCC 2022). Continued scaling of renewable energy interventions, particularly by private sector organizations beyond Europe, and commitments to phase out offshore fossil fuel extraction are needed (Hoegh-Guldberg et al. 2023). Continued commitments to support research

Figure 9 | **Number of commitments made by action area and ocean basin of implementation**



Source: WRI authors.

Table 2 | **Sample of completed ocean-climate nexus commitments**

YEAR	COMMITMENT
2014	The government of Norway allocated $1 billion to climate change mitigation and adaptation assistance.
2015	The government of New Zealand announced $1.2 million to build resilience to ocean acidification in Pacific Island countries.
2016	The government of Panama announced $1.7 million to conserve marine ecosystems and biodiversity in the Bocas del Toro and Las Perlas archipelagos.
2017	The government of Australia dedicated $29 million for climate adaptation and mitigation in the Pacific.
2018	The Wildlife Conservation Society invested $23 million to reduce threats to coral reef ecosystems.
2019	The government of Mozambique committed $3 million to restore degraded mangrove ecosystems.
2022	The government of Indonesia allocated $1 million to support blue carbon ecosystems through mangrove and coastal rehabilitation.
2023	The government of Japan contributed $3 billion to the Green Climate Fund to combat climate change, including through coastal and marine ecosystem conservation.
2024	The European Union announced $75 million to strengthen marine monitoring and forecasting through its Copernicus satellite program.

Source: OOC Secretariat 2025.

and operationalize innovative technologies will be required to realize goals of the Paris Agreement (WEF 2024). Commitments that address adaptation to extreme coastal events, including marine heatwaves and sea level rise, particularly for low-lying coastal communities and SIDS, could also benefit from greater attention.

The ocean-climate analysis is impacted by extensive overlap with the sustainable blue economy area, both of which share commitments referring to decarbonizing shipping and maritime industries and investments in renewable energy (50 blue economy commitments have a secondary climate focus).

Marine pollution

Marine pollution, including plastic pollution, marine debris, eutrophication, and chemical pollution, harms ocean biodiversity and human health and livelihoods. Plastic pollution comprises the largest proportion of marine waste (UNEP 2021). Under a business-as-usual model, the quantity of plastic litter entering the marine environment is expected to triple to 23–37 million tons by 2040 (UNEP 2021).

Marine pollution accounts for 508 OOC commitments, equivalent to $17 billion in pledges (Table 3). This represents 19 percent of commitments and approximately 11 percent of financial pledges. The median marine pollution pledge is $2.9 million. In total, 42 percent of marine pollution commitments are complete and 37 percent in progress. Approximately $3.2 billion has been disbursed through completed commitments, equivalent to a delivery rate of 19 percent. Similar to other areas, marine pollution actions have been implemented mainly as multi-basin programs (192) and in the Atlantic (169) and the Pacific (121) ocean basins.

Addressing plastic pollution has been a major thematic focus, directly mentioned in 309 commitments. This includes 73 commitments referencing circular economy approaches and 67 referencing single-use plastics. National plastic pollution action plans, bans, or restrictions on certain items have been announced by over 30 countries. This aligns with the high impact and visibility of plastic pollution (UNEP 2021). Once negotiations conclude on the international, legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, actions supporting implementation of the agreement will be a prime area for mobilizing OOC commitments.

Other pollution issues, such as abandoned fishing gear (referenced in 45 commitments) and chemical pollution, hazardous waste, and eutrophication (referenced in 51 commitments, of which 26 are related to oil spills), have received comparatively less attention. Other gaps include marine pollution programs targeting informal sector waste management workers and local communities (referenced in 21 commitments).

Marine pollution has been the most active area for private sector organizations, which have made 75 commitments. Considering their integral role in plastic production, use, and disposal, increasing ambition and engagement with these stakeholders through future conferences is an area of opportunity.

Table 3 | **Sample of completed marine pollution commitments**

YEAR	COMMITMENT
2014	The Trash Free Seas Alliance committed to invest over $100 million in marine debris prevention, response, and mitigation.
2015	The European Union launched its first circular economy action plan.
2016	The Ellen MacArthur Foundation announced $10 million for the New Plastics Economy initiative.
2017	The Ocean Conservancy, Trash Free Seas Alliance, and Closed Loop Partners announced $150 million to improve waste management in Southeast Asia.
2018	The European Investment Bank and Agence Française de Développement allocated $2.2 billion to reduce marine pollution over five years.
2019	The Global Ghost Gear Initiative invested $2.5 million to remove abandoned fishing gear and expand the initiative to over 20 countries.
2022	The government of Canada provided $100 million in funding for the Ocean Plastics Charter and marine litter mitigation fund.
2023	The government of Finland committed $36 million to reduce nutrient pollution from agriculture.
2024	The government of the Republic of Korea invested $9 million to establish a fishing gear deposit system.

Source: OOC Secretariat 2025.

Marine protected areas

The announcement of new or expanded MPAs has been a key focal point for OOCs. Globally, 8.4 percent of the ocean area is protected in over 18,000 MPAs (UNEP-WCMC and IUCN 2024) though only 3 percent is classified as fully or highly protected (MPAtlas 2025). Studies report that up to 72 percent of assessed threatened marine species are known to occur within MPAs, highlighting their significant biodiversity benefits (UNESCO-IOC et al. 2024). Effectively managed and enforced MPA networks can increase food security for coastal communities, promote greater carbon sequestration, and support coastal protection (Sala et al. 2021). For a detailed and independent assessment of the OOC MPA commitments, see Sullivan-Stack et al. (2025).

Since 2014, 483 MPA commitments (18 percent of the total) have been made (Table 4). This action area reported the lowest total funding pledge, approximately $6.7 billion (4 percent of the total) and $0.9 billion delivered. Overall, 46 percent of commitments were reported as complete and 37 percent in progress.

As stated above, governmental organizations are responsible for most commitments. MPA actions have been concentrated in the Atlantic (178 commitments) and Pacific ocean basins (147 commitments). Approximately 111 commitments reference MPA enforcement and monitoring, while 62 reference expanding MPAs. The conservation of biodiverse coral and reef ecosystems emerged as a particular focus, referenced in 111 commitments.

Due to the thematic framing of the OOC, the MPA pillar has become a catch-all for conservation commitments. This includes work related to ecosystem restoration, local development projects for coastal communities, funding for marine conservation NGOs, research programs, and more.

In light of the upcoming 30x30 target deadline and ongoing campaign to promote ratification of the BBNJ Agreement, a continued focus on commitments to support these targets will be key. Regional MPA gaps include the Indian ocean basin, polar ocean regions, and high seas. Achieving positive MPA outcomes depends on the MPAs' levels of protection and other enabling factors (Grorud-Colvert et al. 2021); limited financial resources are widely recognized as a barrier to effective MPAs (Gill et al. 2017). Greater investment in effective MPA management is therefore a key area of opportunity for future OOC commitments, particularly for enforcement and monitoring and local participatory approaches.

Sustainable blue economy

The sustainable blue economy creates employment and prosperity while preserving ecosystem health. It encompasses fishing, tourism, shipping, transport, energy, marine biotechnology, and more. The investment case for the ocean is clear with estimated 5:1 returns from ocean investments, particularly across offshore wind production, decarbonization of international shipping, and aquaculture and fisheries (Konar and Ding 2020).

Table 4 | **Sample of completed marine protected area commitments**

YEAR	COMMITMENT
2014	The government of Palau established the Palau National Marine Sanctuary (475,000 km^2).
2015	The government of Chile announced an MPA around the island of Rapa Nui (720,000 km^2).
2016	The Wildlife Conservation Society, Waitt Foundation, Blue Moon Fund, and Global Environment Facility invested $48 million for MPA expansion and improved management.
2017	The government of France expanded the Southern and Antarctic Lands marine reserve (1,600,000 km^2).
2018	The government of Australia launched five MPA management plans (covering 2,300,000 km^2).
2019	The government of Canada established the Tuvaijuittuq Marine Protected Area (319,411 km^2).
2022	The government of Niue announced the Niue Nukutuluea Multiple-Use Marine Park (317,500 km^2).
2023	The government of the United Kingdom committed $24 million for coral reef ecosystem conservation and restoration.
2024	The government of Mexico announced new Bajos del Norte National Park and the Isabel Island National Park MPAs (1,335 km^2).

Notes: MPA = marine protected area. km^2 = square kilometers.
Source: OOC Secretariat 2025.

A total of 475 sustainable blue economy commitments valued at $32.7 billion have been pledged. This is equivalent to 18 percent of commitments and 20 percent of pledged finance. Commitments include seven valued at over $1 billion, with a median financial pledge of $4.9 million. Commitment-makers reported that 39 percent of commitments had been completed and 40 percent were in progress. This equates to $7.8 billion in delivered funds (24 percent). Sustainable blue economy actions have been taken in all ocean basins, though most have been implemented as multi-basin initiatives (198) and actions in the Atlantic (160). The high prevalence of blue economy commitments made by stakeholders in the European and North American regions (72 percent) is consistent with previous studies (Voyer et al. 2021).

Commitments have targeted a broad range of marine industries (Table 5). Investment in maritime transport, including shipping and port infrastructure and operations, is a key theme, referenced in 129 commitments. Decarbonizing and green shipping are referenced in 51 commitments, including 26 related to the Declaration on Zero Emission Shipping and green shipping corridors. Investment in tourism is referenced in 61 commitments, equivalent to $6 billion in pledged funds. Deep-sea mining is the subject of 16 commitments, including regulatory actions and research for mining activity as well as conservation campaigns to prevent it. While most blue economy commitments are related to large-scale ocean finance and projects, 46 reference entrepreneurship support such as start-up incubators and training programs. Marine spatial planning and blue economy policy frameworks have played a greater role in recent years, referenced in 32 commitments.

Areas for greater and continued attention include emerging technologies in maritime industries such as artificial intelligence, climate adaptation or retrofitting of ports and maritime infrastructure to enhance resilience, and continued investment in green shipping and renewable energy (considering projected global increases in trade volume and electricity demand). Research related to deep-sea mining and marine genetic resources stand out as other areas for greater consideration, alongside ambitious commitments to support spatial planning such as the development of Sustainable Ocean Plans (Ocean Panel 2021).

Energy- and climate-related blue economy commitments are discussed under subsection "The ocean-climate nexus." Fisheries commitments are addressed in the next section, "Sustainable fisheries."

Sustainable fisheries

Sustainable fishery management is critical to achieving SDGs 2,12, and 14 and for improving global food security. Over 500 million people rely on small-scale fisheries for their livelihoods, including 53 million involved in subsistence fishing, 45 percent of whom are women (FAO 2024). Threatening this productivity, IUU fishing activities are estimated to cost

Table 5 | **Sample of completed sustainable blue economy commitments**

YEAR	COMMITMENT
2014	The government of the United States announced coastal development programs valued at $170 million.
2015	The European Union invested $110 million per year in marine research, which it increased to $280 million annually from 2018.
2016	The government of Australia announced $2.2 million for the Blue Economy Challenge for aquaculture innovation.
2017	The World Bank announced $352 million to advance sustainable oceans and blue economies in developing countries.
2018	The Nature Conservancy and countries in the Caribbean, Pacific, and Western Indian Ocean partnered to mobilize $120 million in blue bonds.
2019	The European Investment Bank launched the Blue Sustainable Ocean Strategy and committed to deploy over $2.5 billion for blue economy projects.
2022	The Asian Development Bank launched the Blue SEA Finance Hub to deploy $300 million for sustainable ocean projects across ASEAN.
2023	The European Union committed $13 million to develop the European Digital Twin of the Ocean.
2024	The government of Niue announced that its entire exclusive economic zone is under a sustainable management plan.

Note: ASEAN = Association of Southeast Asian Nations.
Source: OOC Secretariat 2025.

between $26 billion and $50 billion per year (Sumaila et al. 2020). To secure the benefits of a resilient ocean, it is essential to implement sustainable fisheries policies.

Actions for sustainable fisheries are valued at $8.4 billion across 457 commitments, approximately 5 percent of pledged finance, and 17 percent of total commitments (Table 6). The median sustainable fisheries pledge is $2.7 million. By January 2025, 50 percent of commitments had been completed and 36 percent were in progress, the highest of all the action areas. This equates to $3.1 billion in disbursed funds and a 38 percent delivery rate. Sustainable fisheries actions have been predominantly implemented in multi-basin projects (216) and in the Pacific ocean basin (135).

Action to address IUU fishing is a clear theme, referenced in 189 OOC commitments and accounting for $2.7 billion in pledged funds. Of these, monitoring and enforcement is referenced in 102 commitments, including the launch of major global programs such as Global Fishing Watch. Thirty-six commitments address the Agreement on Port State Measures ratification, implementation, or training, a key issue also highlighted by Huse et al. (2021) and for which there was a major push at the 2016 and 2017 Our Ocean Conferences. Aquaculture development is referenced in 94 commitments, equivalent to $3.5 billion, while small-scale and artisanal fisheries are referenced in 48 commitments.

Fishery-related opportunities for future commitments include continued investment in aquaculture (now the largest component of global aquatic food production) and actions addressing other stages of the fishery value chain, particularly blue food processing, loss, and waste. Commitments related to small-scale fisheries management, including approaches that acknowledge traditional and Indigenous knowledge, are a notable gap. Policy opportunities include mobilizing ratification of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, as well as strengthening IUU monitoring and enforcement, especially for any new high seas MPAs. Finally, strengthening climate-fishery linkages and access to climate finance is a further area of opportunity.

Maritime security

Maritime security challenges are found at the intersection of the marine environment, economic development, human security, and national security interests (Bueger 2015). Key challenges include the illegal trafficking of goods, people, and wildlife; piracy and maritime terror and cyberattacks; IUU fishing; and strengthening international cooperation.

Maritime security has the fewest OOC commitments by number (215), equivalent to $8.3 billion in pledged funds. Of the commitments, 47 percent had been completed and $2.3 billion delivered by January 2025.

Maritime security actions have been geographically concentrated in the Pacific ocean basin (81 commitments) and multiple basins (77 commitments). Japan's government has played an outsize role in mobilizing 51 maritime security commitments (24 percent of the total). Capacity-building, partnerships, and training initiatives are a common theme, referenced in 157 commitments, particularly collaboration among coast guard agencies (48 commitments). Illegal

Table 6 | **Sample of completed sustainable fisheries commitments**

YEAR	COMMITMENT
2014	The World Bank invested $10 million to manage migratory fish stocks.
2015	The European Union committed $730 million for the development of Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements.
2016	The David and Lucile Packard Foundation committed $550 million for ocean protection and sustainable seafood production.
2017	The government of Taiwan committed $77.5 million to manage distant water fishing fleets and combat IUU fishing.
2018	Thai Union, Chicken of the Sea, and Monterey Bay Aquarium committed $73 million for sustainable global seafood supply chains.
2019	The governments of Namibia, Angola, and South Africa committed $3.8 million for research activities under the Benguela Current Convention.
2022	FAO pledged $1.7 million to implement the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries.
2023	The government of Taiwan committed $3 million for sustainable aquaculture technology in SIDS and landlocked countries.
2024	The government of the Republic of Maldives committed $2 million to adopt tropical tuna harvest controls.

Note: IUU = illegal, unreported, and unregulated. FAO = Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. SIDS = small island developing states.
Source: OOC Secretariat 2025.

wildlife, goods, and human trafficking are referenced in 37 commitments, and human rights and labor offenses are the focus of 23 commitments.

Maritime security represents an opportunity for growth for the OOC. OOC commitments directly address 9 of the 10 maritime security matrix issues highlighted by Bueger (2015), with the exception of interstate disputes (Table 7). The following emerging maritime security issues would benefit from more attention at future OOCs: maritime cybersecurity; subsea infrastructure; formalizing regional maritime security governance; "greening" defense industries; and tackling "white collar" maritime crime such as corruption, tax evasion, and money laundering (Witbooi et al. 2020; Bueger et al. 2024).

As previously discussed, maritime security commitments overlap extensively with the sustainable fisheries action area in relation to IUU fishing.

Table 7 | **Sample of completed maritime security commitments**

YEAR	COMMITMENT
2014	The governments of the United States and Palau announced a maritime surveillance program resulting in the development of a maritime security plan.
2015	The European Union required all vessels over 15 meters fishing outside EU waters to have an IMO number.
2016	Vulcan invested $3.7 million in AI satellite image analysis to detect IUU fishing.
2017	The government of Taiwan invested $77.5 to combat IUU fishing and enhance electronic monitoring of fishing vessels.
2018	Inmarsat invested $1 billion in satellite ocean monitoring systems.
2019	The government of Norway launched the Blue Justice Initiative to support the implementation of the International Declaration on Transnational Organized Crime in the Global Fishing Industry.
2022	The government of Indonesia announced $73.3 million for patrol vessel and airborne marine surveillance and investigations.
2023	The government of Japan assigned $380,000 for international cooperation with regional coast guard organizations.
2024	The government of Peru invested $7.1 million in electronic coastal zone surveillance.

Notes: EU = European Union. IMO = International Maritime Organization. AI = artificial intelligence. IUU = illegal, unreported, and unregulated.
Source: OOC Secretariat 2025.

Conclusions and recommendations

Over the past 10 years, the OOC has proved to be an effective platform to drive ocean action and investment. With reports indicating that $175 billion is required to finance SDG 14 per year (Johansen and Vestvik 2020), there is an urgent need for continued ocean finance.

The OOC can play an important role in convening diverse partnerships and mobilizing action and investment to meet this need. However, making commitments alone is not enough. Commitment-makers must continue to follow through and complete their "in progress" commitments, especially those associated with large financial pledges, alongside rapidly disbursing the $24.9 billion in pledged funds that currently sit in "not started" commitments.

Voluntary mechanisms such as the OOC commitment process, while imperfect, have a valuable role in the ocean policy space. They present a more flexible tool to encourage ocean action and engagement, especially from governments and organizations that lack capacity to use more rigid legal mechanisms. At the same time, voluntary mechanisms cannot be a replacement for legally binding environmental agreements (Brown Weiss 2014). They must work in conjunction to support and strengthen these negotiated outcomes, particularly for agreements approaching entry into force like the BBNJ Agreement and the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, and the anticipated legally binding instrument on marine plastic pollution.

The relatively high self-reporting rate (66 percent) found in this analysis is believed to be associated with the higher levels of direct outreach and engagement by host countries to commitment-makers. Increased reporting is also supported by the singular focus of OOCs on commitments, rather than political outcomes or negotiations. Typically, announcing new commitments or providing substantive updates on existing commitments has been a prerequisite for countries and organizations seeking high-level involvement at the conference.

Going forward, there are clear opportunities for the OOC to continue to grow and meaningfully drive ocean action. The following short-to-medium-term recommendations can be addressed by future host governments and the OOC Secretariat to improve outcomes at upcoming conferences:

- **Actively fill geographic and policy gaps in OOC commitments**. Dedicated outreach is required to close geographic disparities in OOC commitments, particularly in the Indian, Arctic, and Southern ocean basins. Likewise, efforts can be made to scale up finance for relatively underresourced action areas, noting their different financial needs. This can be achieved by doing the following:
  - Engaging proactively with governments and organizations in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and South Asia to encourage broader representation and inclusion in the OOC agenda, with a particular focus on SIDS and LDCs.
  - Prioritizing the African, Middle Eastern, and Caribbean regions to host future conferences given the important role hosts play in setting the global ocean agenda and prioritizing areas of action.
  - Encouraging a greater focus on financing for fisheries and aquaculture, MPAs, marine pollution, and maritime security in commitments.
- **Strengthen partnerships with governments while scaling engagement with nongovernmental sectors.** National governments stand out as the main entity making commitments and driving successful long-term implementation. The OOC can continue to push for increased ambition from governments while seeking new partnerships and action from a broader range of actors. This can be achieved by doing the following:
  - Building longer-term partnerships with NGOs and civil society organizations, especially smaller NGOs and underrepresented groups. Sustained participation from these demographics can promote greater equity in ocean outcomes and commitments that respond to and are shaped by the needs of local communities.
  - Increasing engagement with the private sector and international financial institutions to foster greater finance mobilization and partnerships. Priority organizations include development banks; maritime transport, tourism, and ocean energy firms; actors within aquatic food value chains; and plastic producers and waste management firms.
  - Encouraging academic institutions to mobilize commitments focused on data- and knowledge-sharing, capacity-building, and research. Further commitment-monitoring initiatives also present opportunities to engage subject matter experts across the OOC framework.
  - Seeking greater participation from intergovernmental organizations, including regional fishery management organizations, regional seas organizations and conventions, and intergovernmental bodies. Incorporating them into the OOC process can promote collective action by member states and accelerate global ocean policy progress.
- **Improve the commitment process and functionality of the OOC online platform.** This analysis was limited by varying data quality and consistency. Modernizing and

improving usability of the OOC platform could ease commitment-making, reporting, and monitoring for hosts and users. In part, this can be achieved by doing the following:

- Updating the commitments platform to include the new variables generated for this paper (ocean basin, optional secondary action area, differentiation of pledged versus delivered funds), and preventing commitment-makers from overriding previous data. These changes would improve transparency and accountability and enable more comprehensive and accurate analysis.
- Providing user training and guidance on the commitments process and enforcing minimum "SMART" commitment requirements. This would ensure that new commitments are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timebound, and include financial information where possible.

The following strategic recommendations could improve the longer-term positioning, sustainability, and legacy of the OOC:

- **Provide concrete support for organizations to implement their commitments.** With increased institutionalization of the OOC process through the Secretariat, it is possible to explore how the OOC could better support commitment-makers in implementing action. This can include the following:
  - Convenings that can build partnerships among commitment-makers and subject matter experts to share successes and challenges during implementation.
  - Strengthening partnerships with funding and philanthropic organizations to support commitment finance mobilization.
- **Increase coordination among the OOC and other multilateral forums, including UNOC, to address duplication risk across voluntary commitment platforms**. Although the current commitment duplication rate between OOC and UNOC commitments is estimated to be only 13.4 percent (Chan 2024), this fraction may grow over time, especially if conferences are held in the same year. Efforts to address this can include the following:
  - Coordinating and differentiating policy priorities for each voluntary commitment process.

As discussed, analysis of OOC commitment impact is limited by its design as a voluntary, self-reported system. Moving beyond intermediate outcomes to assess the comprehensive impacts of commitments on broader ocean health indicators would require significant funding and increased capacity, beyond the scope of the current OOC Secretariat. A concrete global impact assessment would require verified evidence of individual commitment completion and a consolidated impact monitoring framework. However, four potential research opportunities are proposed for follow-up:

- Development of a more extensive, independent verification methodology conducive to working with a smaller subset of commitment data. This may help overcome self-reporting limitations and allow for more robust impact assessments.
- Annual reports, integrating progress outcomes and successful case studies with the OOC priorities set by future host governments.
- Further analysis to understand barriers to implementation and identify possible solutions.
- A repeat study assessing both the OOC and UNOC voluntary commitment datasets. Synthesizing both datasets and standardizing reporting methodologies would provide a more accurate perspective of progress toward global ocean goals.

A sustainable future for the ocean is possible across all regions and sectors, but now is the time to accelerate from ambition to action. The outcomes of the OOC thus far—over 1,000 completed actions and more than $24 billion of ocean finance delivered—indicate that voluntary commitments, coupled with enabling conditions to support their implementation, can be important contributors to the health and sustainability of our ocean. With an upcoming 2030 deadline to meet SDG 14 and conserve 30 percent of the global ocean, the OOC—both in its track record of success and the areas in which it has opportunities to grow—has a key role to play in continuing to drive ambition for our ocean.

Appendix A. Supplementary commitments data

Table A-1 | **Our Ocean Conference commitments, data-cleaning summary**

CLEANING TYPE	EXAMPLE USE CASE	RESPONSE	NUMBER
Progress status update	A progress update describes a commitment as complete but the system status remains not started.	The commitment status is changed to align with the progress update.	32
Pledged funds update	The original pledged budget was not included in the system budget field or has been overwritten.	The budget is added and/or pledge reverted to the original value.	384
Currency update	The original pledge is made in euros instead of US dollars.	The financial pledge is converted into dollars using the average annual exchange rate from the conference year.	137
Delivered funds update	The progress update says only half of pledged funds were delivered.	The delivered funds are updated.	150
Action area reclassification	An MPA commitment is classed as an ocean-climate action.	The commitment is reclassed.	36
Duplicate commitment	A commitment is published multiple times in the database.	The duplicate commitment is deleted and original commitment flagged.	14
Commitments are missing or combined or there are other errors in the report or database	A commitment is in the OOC report but not in the online database.	The commitment is added to the database and flagged.	108
Commitment includes non-ocean actions	A commitment includes non-ocean or generic actions or lacks specificity.	The commitment is kept in the database and flagged.	10

Note: MPA = marine protected area. OOC = Our Ocean Conference.
Source: WRI authors.

Table A-2 | **Our Ocean Conference commitments, financial statistics summary**

STATISTICS	ALL	ACTION AREA					
		Ocean-climate	Marine pollution	Marine protected areas	Sustainable blue economy	Sustainable fisheries	Maritime security
Number of commitments	2,619	480	508	483	475	457	215
Number of financial commitments	1,754	376	287	291	336	305	159
Minimum ($ million)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Quartile 1 ($ million)	0.7	0.8	0.6	0.5	1.1	0.9	0.5
Median ($ million)	3.4	4.9	2.9	2.9	4.9	3.8	2.2
Quartile 3 ($ million)	15	20	16.7	10.7	22.5	11.5	10.9
Maximum ($ million)	49,000	49,000	4,000	976.8	6,667.6	4,000	3,000

Source: WRI authors.

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