



OCEAN FUTURES 2030 – POLICY BRIEF #1 | MARCH 2024

Ocean Futures 2030: Science and diplomacy for ocean governance – our common ocean



UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN

▶ ▶ ▶ Summary of outcomes of the Ocean Futures 2030 event held in February 2024 in Brussels with recommendations on how science diplomacy can be an instrument for ocean equity.

3 key questions

- How can scientists contribute to the ocean governance of the future?
- Are the existing frameworks for ocean governance fit for the future?
- What interactions can be devised between mechanisms to ensure an ocean governance fit for the future?

Introduction

The event "[Ocean Futures 2030: Science and diplomacy for ocean governance – our common ocean](#)" took place 21 February 2024 at Norway House in Brussels. The atmosphere at the event was reminiscent of a United Nations-type side event and upsized. As members of the audience put it: "It was like a side event on steroids!" and "The room was buzzing!" This differentiated the event from the often "safe" gatherings at science diplomacy events where scientists are mainly speaking between themselves.

With a wide global presence at the heart of the EU the particular composition of representatives at the event to discuss the ocean-climate-biodiversity nexus was unusual. The diversity of the 130 participants from science, diplomacy (including a number of ambassadors), the EU Parliament, the EU Commission, the UN system, and the global south made the event appealing and dynamic. From a certain perspective, the design of the event was high risk, high gain and in the process reshaping how to create a science diplomacy event.

The event showed clearly what is at stake in ocean diplomacy. From something as common albeit complex as negotiating a fisheries agreement to something as transcendental and sobering as dealing with the disappearance of a sovereign state and its millenary culture due to sea level rise, there is a full spectrum of stakes at play in ocean governance.

The field of science diplomacy has a tendency to be full of ideas of science diplomacy in itself but not from the core issues of the ocean and climate frontline. However, science diplomacy is urgently needed at the frontlines of the crises in the world today. Much science diplomacy is entangled in western notions of biotech, advanced technology, geopolitics, etc but not so well focused on the justice dimension of global challenges, e.g., the ocean-climate-biodiversity nexus and the climate change frontline.

Science diplomacy needs to pivot more towards addressing the diplomatic demands for scientific solutions to urgent, global challenges. This shift necessitates moving away from a paradigm where scientists are not adequately woven into the diplomatic framework.

Analysis

The Ocean Futures 2030 event showed that science diplomacy can be a tool to make ocean diplomacy more effective. To achieve this, ocean diplomacy and science diplomacy should be brought together and called ocean science diplomacy.

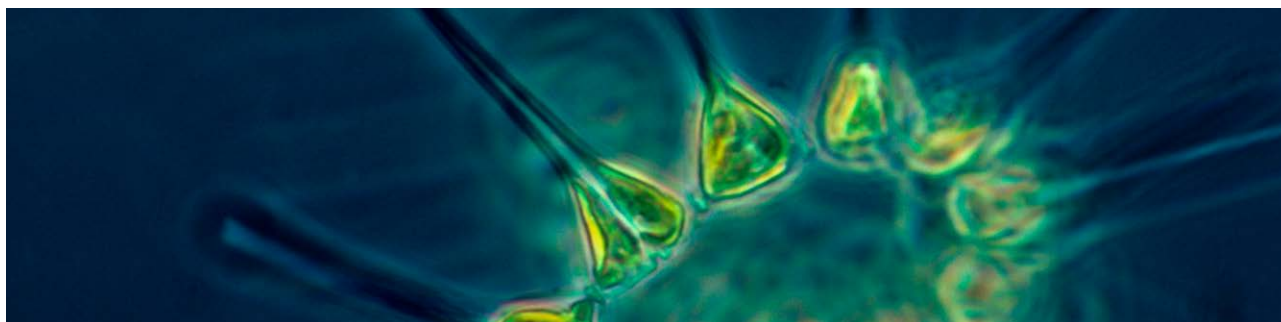
The themes where science diplomacy can contribute to ocean diplomacy are many, and just to mention a few of the emerging themes in ocean governance we list: Fisheries and aquaculture, food security, biodiversity conservation, marine protected areas, deep-sea mining, ocean acidification and deoxygenation, plastics pollution, marine carbon dioxide removal (with connections to tech diplomacy), marine genetic resources (with connections to health diplomacy), blue justice, and more.

As part of a common ocean governance the countries of the world are currently in the implementation stages on global agreements that affect the ocean, e.g., biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and various commitments under the Conference of the Parties (COPs) of various ocean-related multilateral environmental agreements.

To engage meaningfully in the implementation processes the main agreements on global ocean governance need to be strengthened globally. Consideration should be given to strengthening dialogue between levels of governance, e.g., between UN, EU, and national levels and in general between the global south and the global north. Existing frameworks for direct science-policy discussion need to be explored and utilized more efficiently.

Science diplomacy in its ideal form is a platform to unite scientists, policy makers, and diplomats. Currently science diplomacy remains lopsided towards the scientific community. This needs to change as the uniqueness of the Ocean Futures 2030 event demonstrated.

The science diplomacy of the future must reinforce the synergies brought forward in discussions at the event, e.g., synergy between levels, stakeholders, topics, opinions, different types of knowledge. The essence of science diplomacy is to create a fertile synergy generated by bringing scientists and diplomats into exchanges.



To succeed in this endeavour science diplomacy must interact more directly with the global south and indigenous and local knowledge. Who decides what is a topic? Who decides what is knowledge? This is a matter of justice. Global justice. It is not acceptable simply to talk about the global south. The global north and the global south must be in constant dialogue. ‘Not about us without us’ must be the guiding principle.

Among topics discussed were science justice, linguistic diversity, convening power, climate and environmental justice, ocean equity, and in general the concept of inequality in conjunction with other elements such as connecting the global levels of justice across various frontlines. In the case of the All-Atlantic Ocean Alliance the literature from the partners in the global south disagree with the self-congratulatory tone of the global north.

A push in resources from the ocean (e.g., minerals, fisheries, tourism, energy) intensify ongoing geopolitical developments (e.g., the South China Sea, long distance fishing fleets, disputed maritime areas). The global increase in human interaction with the ocean reinforces the increased need for global agreements and frameworks. Ocean science diplomacy must address these issues. The EU Science Diplomacy Alliance has established ocean science diplomacy as one of its Thematic Entry Points (TEP) to address this issue.

Conclusions

For good and relevant science diplomacy you need both a supply and a demand side. More interaction between

science and diplomacy is needed, including the genuine involvement of the global south and their organisations and groupings (such as the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States, the Africa Group, and AOSIS) in all aspects. This will ensure a constant, mutually reinforcing flow of relevant knowledge and information. Expressing demands for science-based knowledge, in combination with other forms of knowledge, will create new agendas and arenas for science diplomacy.

A result of this would be to develop stronger science diplomacy ties between the global south and the global north. It must become mandatory to involve partners from the global south in science diplomacy activities. As part of this, local and indigenous knowledge must work with scientific knowledge to put different forms of knowledge on an equal footing. This is necessary to achieve global justice incorporating science justice. The pluralisation of science is one way to reach science justice.

The objective of ocean science diplomacy is to bring together ocean and science diplomacy. This means putting the practitioners and scholars of both ocean and science diplomacy more directly in touch with each other. This will unite the cases and the experiences of those involved in different forms of diplomacy and strengthen both the ocean and science diplomacy agendas.

Events such as Ocean Futures 2030 are a way of achieving direct dialogues and create a fertile forum to identify and develop the priorities of ocean science diplomacy and the research needed to underpin this type of partnership dialogue.

Recommendations

- We recommend the EU in its ongoing work to establish a science diplomacy framework to integrate ocean science diplomacy into this framework and to include ocean science diplomacy funding opportunities in the upcoming Horizon Europe (FP10) programme.
- The countries of the global north (e.g., EU, Norway, USA, Canada, Japan) must commit to a stronger collaboration with the global south in all aspects of ocean science and diplomacy. This includes making sure that traditional knowledge and scientific knowledge can work together to provide the science diplomacy of the future.
- The countries of the global north must secure/guarantee funding for more joint global south and north initiatives in ocean science diplomacy to fulfil global commitments for the ocean as manifested in SDG14, Life Below Water, and the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

This policy brief is the result of the Ocean Futures 2030 event at Norway House in Brussels 21 February and contributions to a discussion at a post event meeting at the UiB Brussels offices 22 February 2024.

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Relevance to the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development

This policy brief is particularly relevant to [Ocean Decade Challenge 5](#) (Unlock ocean-based solutions to climate change), 9 (Skills, knowledge and technology for all) and 10 (Change humanity's relationship with the ocean).

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