



Partnership for
Observation of the Global Ocean

Cabo Verde Declaration on Ocean Observations

A Statement by the Partnership for Observation of the Global Ocean (POGO), issued at its 20th Annual Meeting held in Mindelo, Cabo Verde, in January 2019.

Signed by the directors of POGO member institutions:



Call to Action

We call on all governments, as well as funders and stakeholders worldwide, to support ocean science institutions in Africa, Small Island Developing States, and other parts of the developing world to participate fully in global endeavours to measure and understand changes in their regional and local marine environments. Specifically, to establish and maintain observing systems, data sharing capacities and information development to advance science and inform ocean-related decision making in the context of the blue economy, environmental protection, improved ocean governance and sustainable development.

The Importance of Observing the Ocean

Despite its growing importance and pervasive impact, too little is known about the ocean. The Census of Marine Life¹ estimated that at least three species remain to be discovered for each already known. The First World Ocean Assessment (WOA) of 2016² points to the many gaps in our scientific understanding of the ocean, including sea-level rise, ocean acidification, nutrient distribution and cycling, primary production, biodiversity, population health and reproductive success, fish stocks, and threatened and declining species and habitats.

In recent years, the world has increasingly recognised the critical role that the ocean plays in the Earth's life-support system, as well as its importance for our societies and economies. The importance of the ocean has been emphasised at the highest political levels, as a critical dimension of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as evidenced by the establishment of Sustainable Development Goal 14 "Life Below Water", the ongoing process for a second Assessment of the State of the Ocean (see also a recent statement by POGO)³ and the recently established UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

Nevertheless, the expected growth towards the full deployment of the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) has slowed down in the last decade, for the following reasons:

¹ Census of Marine Life Highlights Report, 2010. <http://www.coml.org/highlights-2010> (accessed 4th Feb 2019).

² The First Global Integrated Marine Assessment, World Ocean Assessment I, by the Group of Experts of the Regular Process. http://www.un.org/Depts/los/global_reporting/WOA_RegProcess.htm (accessed 4th Feb 2019), and Cambridge University Press, 2017 (ISBN-13: 978-1316510018).

³ The Value of the Global Ocean Observing System and the Regular Assessment of the State of the Ocean in Support of Wise Decision-Making. POGO, September 2018. http://ocean-partners.org/sites/ocean-partners.org/files/public/attachments/POGO_statement_value_of_GOOS_WOA_final.pdf (accessed 12th March 2019).

1. the capacity for conducting ocean observations is lacking in many parts of the world, particularly in developing countries;
2. several critical sustained ocean observation activities are supported by short-term, research project funding with uncertain sustainability;
3. although technological developments are taking place for biological and biogeochemical observations, their high cost makes these technologies inaccessible to developing countries and currently prohibits their routine and large-scale deployment; and
4. the resources available for international coordination are currently insufficient for the scale of the work that is required.

Why prioritise ocean observations in developing countries?

The societies and economies of many developing countries rely heavily on the ocean, for example through coastal tourism, trade infrastructure, natural resource extraction, and small-scale and industrial fisheries and aquaculture. However, extreme weather events, sea-level rise, tsunamis, harmful algal blooms and water pollution threaten the world's poorest and most vulnerable coastal and island communities. Ocean observations and information services can be used to improve human health and safety and food security, support livelihoods and small-scale economic activities (artisanal fisheries and aquaculture, coastal tourism), and improve climate resilience and disaster risk reduction⁴. Thus, it is in the best interest of these developing countries to increase their capacity to access existing ocean information, and supplement that with support for ocean observing programmes in their coastal waters, alongside the development of targeted ocean information services, by taking advantage of capacity development opportunities provided by POGO and other international organisations.

GOOS established a diverse set of “Essential Ocean Variables” (EOVs) which range from physical quantities such as temperature, salinity and sea-level to chemical, biogeochemical and ecosystem variables, and important advances have been made, particularly in the realm of climate-related ocean observations. New and firm commitments are needed from all world nations to measure those EOVs, on a regular and sustained basis. The costs may seem high, especially during periods of economic downturn, but the societal, environmental and economic benefits will be far greater.

We believe that all nations must be involved in establishing the infrastructure that guarantees a manageable future for the global ocean and its resources. More than ever, it is critical that the world's governments prioritise funding of ocean observations and their coordination at the global level, to complete a comprehensive Global Ocean Observing System.

⁴ Examples of such services and other activities developed by the GEO Blue Planet Initiative can be found at www.geoblueplanet.org.

About POGO

Since 1999, the Partnership for Observation of the Global Ocean, POGO, has served as a forum for leaders of major oceanographic institutions around the world to promote global oceanography, particularly the implementation of international and integrated ocean observing systems. POGO is an international network of collaborators who foster partnerships that advance efficiency and effectiveness in studying and monitoring the world's oceans on a global scale. Through its efforts, POGO has promoted observations underpinning ocean and climate science, provided training and technology transfer to emerging economies, and built awareness of the many challenges still ahead.

The POGO membership comprises around 40 major oceanographic institutions from around the world, represented by their Directors (see <http://ocean-partners.org/members>).

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