

Peter Thomson - Meaningful Youth Inclusion Speech + Actionable Items!

On June 24-26, the UN Ocean Conference Youth and Innovation Forum took place, co-hosted by the governments of Kenya and Portugal, and co-organized by the UN Global Compact, Sustainable Ocean Alliance, and partners. The forum gathered more than 130 youth delegates representing nearly 60 countries from around the world. During three days, delegates were put into multi-cultural teams, having never met before, to tackle five respective challenges facing the oceans founded in the UN Global Compact: sustainable seafood, decarbonized shipping, ocean energy, ocean mapping, and waste management.

The formal result of this was the Official Youth Declaration, which was read during the closing plenary of the UNOC. The declaration stressed the need for collective action, strongly underscored the inextricable link between oceans and climate, and was read in solidarity with the frontline communities already suffering from climate change.

The informal result was more powerful: a call to action for meaningful youth contributions and solutions within the UN framework. This was duly noted by the UN Secretary-General, in his request for me to act accordingly and ensure these solutions have an impact.

I am pleased to say that in consultation with our incredible youth delegates, Sustainable Ocean Alliance, the UN Global Compact, and the municipality of Cascais, we have several actionable items to share.

Our first actionable items pertain to fostering meaningful engagement of young people in the decision-making processes at the UN level to transform 'listening' to genuine 'co-creation'. The importance of this was also reaffirmed during the Youth Forum of the United Nations Economic and Social Council this spring, and further underlined by our Secretary-General in Cascais.

1. Ensure youth voice in UN national delegations: Add a seat to each UN National Delegation for one young person (under 35, well fit for the position, from developing and developed coastal communities). This young representative serves in addition to one of the "five representatives and/or five alternate representatives" (UNGA rule 25). This young person will sit side by side with the national delegation in the UNGA/UN Conference room and have the same opportunities to speak and make motions as a more experienced representative would. This will eventually include an additional seat for youth in all international UN Conferences. This young person will hold a term of up to 3 years and will offer mentorship to another youth who will take their place for 1 year, creating a peer-to-peer mentorship program. This program will be scaled across UN initiatives, building on the standards outlined in UN MGCY, and allocated with a substantive youth engagement budget.

2. Establishing an inclusive Youth Ocean Advisory Council / Body to ensure coordinated inputs into the UN system: Provide 10 youth, an equitable balance of gender and developing/developed country representation, the opportunity to be heard and seen on a youth advisory board to the UN Ocean Envoy. The council should be sat within [UN-OCEANS](#), with the ability to provide inputs and ideas to respective UN entities. This directly responds to the UN SG's point about ensuring the respective solutions put forward by youth at the Youth and Innovation Forum actually reach the relevant UN body e.g. IMO, UNEP, etc.

3. Establish a Youth Task Force for the UN Ocean Conference 2025 organized by YOUNGO Oceans Voice and the UNEP MGCY, whose representative would have an advisory role in the organizing committee alongside the host governments, UN DESA, and other coordinating UN bodies. This could be loosely based on the existing [Stockholm+50 Youth Task Force](#). Noting for it to be meaningful, the inputs and coordination with the organizing committee task force are essential.

4. Including youth representation within the ISA: The voices of young people can strongly impact informed decision-making. An illustration of this was

seen during the UNOC 2022 regarding a moratorium on deep seabed mining. It would be extremely beneficial for ocean health, to have an exceptional young person on the council of the International Seabed Authority (ISA). This young leader would be elected by a member state or become the 37th representative of the ISA Council. This would enable the future generation to provide significant input into the importance of defending the deep sea, a common space for all.

5. Launching a youth-led ocean-climate proposal at COP 27: There is strong momentum for a global youth-led, ocean-climate action proposal coming out of UNOC and the Youth Innovation Forum. This proposal will build from existing youth and BIPOC led initiatives, including the [Global Blue New Deal](#) and [One World Breath](#). With the support of many partner organizations like [Sustainable Ocean Alliance](#) and [Ocean Uprise](#), this proposal can be implemented through regional intergenerational working groups. This can be launched at COP 27 in Egypt with direct support from the UNFCCC, UN Global Compact, UN DESA and other affiliated organizations.

Note: To avoid tokenism, these youth advisors will be nominated and co-selected by their peers and relevant UN agencies in a co-designed process that avoids bluewashing. This would create space to directly support a youth-led, ocean-climate action proposal. Thus, helping the UNSG act on their apology and commitments to the world's youth made on June 26.

Our second set of actionable items pertain to creating interdisciplinary networks for youth to drive change and be directly connected with finance. This means mobilizing and delegating the proper funds for truly meaningful youth inclusion.

4. Leveraging the municipality-university-youth nexus for ocean innovation: During the Youth and Innovation Forum, the special role of universities and cities as key drivers for youth participation was clear, evidenced by the strong support from the municipality of Cascais and NOVA SBE. Through activating and establishing youth innovation hubs and strengthening

relationships between youth movements and academia, more young people will be supported to participate and contribute to ocean-climate action.

The municipality of Cascais has already enthusiastically voiced its support for further connecting with networks of cities, universities, and youth movements.

5. The UN system should create more spaces for youth with key partners

to scale up and finance youth-led ocean innovation: The combination of partners who facilitated the youth forum - UN Global Compact, Sustainable Ocean Alliance, the municipality of Cascais, CEiiA and NOVA SBE Business School - consisted of the private sector, the UN system, governments, municipalities, youth movements, and academia working together to facilitate creativity and intercultural exchange. This forum connected businesses, entrepreneurs, policy makers, and NGO stakeholders who served as mentors for the young delegates, allowing them to connect with financiers and build up ocean innovations.

Incorporating these actionable points into UN procedures would truly allow meaningful intergenerational ocean-climate action. Young leaders would have the well-deserved opportunity to add value, fresh-energetic perspectives, and drive impact within the UN system itself. The time to act on youth, female, and BIPOC inclusion is now. Their ideas and solutions are paramount to the future of humankind and this living blue planet. We have seen from UNOC that representation, inclusion, and ocean equity are needed in larger forces. This is the change required for the ocean we need to survive and thrive. The time to act on lofty commitments for ocean-climate action must be done effectively and promptly in this decade. With the young ocean guardians of the world by our side, we can deliver on our promises and implement tangible intersectional solutions, empowering people, and the planet simultaneously.

Credits:

[One World Breath](#)

[Global Blue New Deal](#)

[Sustainable Ocean Alliance](#)

[Stockholm +50 Global Youth Policy Paper](#)

[UN Youth Envoy](#)

[UN MGCY](#)

[Ocean Uprise](#)

September 1: Intergenerational Ocean-Climate Action Items

1. Breakthrough: Youth Involvement with the UN Ocean Envoy and UNFCCC
 - a. Directly Proposed from Young Ocean Leaders
2. Badges for Young Ocean Leaders and ECOP at COP 27 for putting forth a youth ocean-climate proposal, including OWB, SOA, etc...
 - a. Youth invited to UNGC Events and provided badges for Global Forums and Events
 - b. Youth represented at all the Global Events and ingrained into decision making processes at HLPF
 - c. Build on what exists for Young Ocean Leaders
3. Share a breath for [One World Breath](#)

Meeting Participants:

1. UN Ocean Envoy - [Peter Thomson](#)
2. [UN Global Compact - Oceans](#)
3. [UN Youth Envoy and Team](#)
 - a. Recent [announcement](#): "More systematic and effective youth engagement is a top priority and clear deliverable of 'Our Common Agenda', true to the notion of an inclusive and networked multilateralism."
4. French Government - [Ashok Adicéam](#)
5. [Ocean-Climate Platform](#)
6. [Sustainable Ocean Alliance](#)