

CALL TO ACTION

OCEAN DECADE ALLIANCE SEABED MAPPING INITIATIVE

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The health of the ocean is vital for the planet's well-being, influencing climate regulation and providing food, energy, and livelihoods for billions. Despite its importance, significant gaps remain in our understanding of the ocean, hindering sustainable governance.

Seabed mapping is foundational to virtually all ocean science, and the General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO), led by the International Hydrographic Organization and Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, with the support of The Nippon Foundation through The Nippon Foundation - GEBCO Seabed 2030 Project, has spearheaded the coverage of global seabed mapping in the past eight years. Yet, only 26.1% of the global seabed has been mapped by direct observation, limiting our ability to mitigate and adapt to climate change, manage marine biodiversity, prepare for and respond to natural disasters, support marine spatial planning, and develop sustainable ocean plans. While sustainable ocean practices have become a global priority and various projects are underway, their implementation remains complex. This is especially true for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs), who are particularly dependent on sustainable ocean-based economies and most vulnerable to climate change. The political declaration that is expected to be adopted at the 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference makes specific reference to the need for increased efforts in seabed mapping.

Recognizing the urgent need to accelerate the availability of seabed mapping data globally, the Ocean Decade Alliance has initiated the Seabed Mapping Initiative, which aims to catalyze support for GEBCO's mission and Challenge 8 of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030 ('Ocean Decade'). In addition, this initiative will support the work of the Nippon Foundation - GEBCO Seabed 2030 Project, itself an endorsed activity of the Ocean Decade.

WHAT IS THE OCEAN DECADE ALLIANCE DOING?

Through the Seabed Mapping Initiative, Alliance members have made new commitments to accelerate collective efforts in seabed mapping including:

CANADA

- Contribute new bathymetric data collected through transits from Halifax, Canada, to Tromsø, Norway, in 2025, 2026, and 2027, and offer at-sea opportunities to students/young professionals during the transits in 2026 and 2027.

GERMANY

- Collect new bathymetric data with a special focus on the effective use of the transit routes ("targeted underway bathymetry") of large research vessels, as well as processing and publication of these data.

MONACO

- Since 1903, when Prince Albert I launched the General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO), a foundational project in oceanographic research, the Principality of Monaco has demonstrated its longstanding and pioneering commitment to seabed mapping. Monaco has maintained this strong interest in the ocean as well as oceanography.
- Today, the Principality of Monaco hosts key organizations dedicated to science and ocean, like the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO), in continuing its legacy as a global hub for ocean exploration, and supports its task in charting the future for mapping the world's ocean.

NORWAY

- Contribute data from the MAREANO programme for seabed mapping that maps depth and topography, sediment composition, contaminants, biotopes, and habitats in Norwegian waters.
- Participate in all ocean observation and seabed mapping initiatives under the All-Atlantic Ocean Research and Innovation Alliance.
- High-resolution seabed mapping and sample collection north of the Fram Strait in 2025 GoNorth expedition.
- Continuous support to technology development.

PORTUGAL

- Through the combined efforts of the Hydrographic Institute; the Institute for Sea and Atmosphere, Underwater Systems and Technology Laboratory - INEGI, University of Porto; the Institute for Systems of Robotics - IST, University of Lisbon; CESAM and Geosciences Department, University of Aveiro; and the Port of Aveiro, collect and share new bathymetric data (including in shallow waters), and catalogue historical data.
- Implement the new standard for hydrographic data (S-100) and support the development and deployment of new technology for data acquisition (e.g. autonomous vehicles, gliders, and new sensors).
- Support capacity development of Portuguese-speaking African countries and provide training on marine robotics.
- Develop and implement ocean literacy initiatives, including in schools.

FUGRO

- Contribute bathymetric data via our "in-transit bathymetry" logging program.
- Support and co-chair the Ocean Decade Corporate Data Group to develop frameworks and mechanisms that provide public access to private sector bathymetry data, and support the International Hydrographic Organization Crowdsourced Bathymetry Working Group to enable and accelerate crowdsourced bathymetry programs globally.
- Promote bathymetric data sharing with customers and industry associations.
- Invest in new technology development (e.g. Uncrewed Surface Vehicles and artificial intelligence/machine learning-enabled processing).
- Collaborate with Seabed 2030 in satellite-derived bathymetry capacity development as well as in capacity development for SIDS and LDCs.
- Make publicly available the Fugro course on "Ocean Science Initiatives" and join the All-Atlantic Floating University Network.
- Advocate for national government regulatory frameworks that allow public access to private bathymetric data acquired under lease arrangements within waters of national jurisdiction.

INTERNATIONAL SEABED AUTHORITY

- The International Seabed Authority (ISA) reaffirms its support for its AREA2030 Initiative, jointly implemented with the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO), which aims to achieve high-resolution mapping of the international seabed area (the Area) by 2030. This effort is essential to expanding scientific knowledge of the deep sea and advancing responsible ocean stewardship.
- As part of this effort ISA will continue encouraging more of its contractors to share their high-resolution bathymetric data. This includes both data collected within their designated contract areas and in-transit bathymetric data gathered en route to and from these sites that jointly cover 1.5 million square kilometers.

PRADA GROUP

- SEA BEYOND will support the initiative by developing ocean literacy workshops on seabed mapping, not only for students but also for professionals.

SCHMIDT OCEAN INSTITUTE

- Collect new bathymetric data with the Falkor (too) research vessel and support new technology development and testing.
- Purchase and utilize new technology and provide technology training and other capacity development opportunities on the vessel.
- Promote the need for simpler permitting processes (for mapping and other scientific data).
- Develop communications on the importance of seabed mapping.

THE NIPPON FOUNDATION

- Build on the progress made by The Nippon Foundation - GEBCO Seabed 2030 Project by continuing to:
 - collaborate with our global partners of the Nippon Foundation - GEBCO Seabed 2030 Project and the greater ocean community to collect new bathymetric data and publish the multi-resolution GEBCO grid to be utilized by the world.
 - engage with government, industry and other relevant stakeholders to encourage ocean mapping and sharing of bathymetric data.
 - encourage and support the development of novel technology that contributes to ocean mapping.
- Continue to support the training of the next generation of ocean mappers from around the world, with priority given to countries where expertise in ocean mapping are lacking.

CALL TO ACTION

OCEAN DECADE ALLIANCE
SEABED MAPPING INITIATIVE



TAKE ACTION NOW AND JOIN THE OCEAN DECADE ALLIANCE INITIATIVE

This Call to Action urgently calls on governments, the private sector, philanthropies, non-governmental organizations, and academia to join Ocean Decade Alliance members in making tangible and impactful commitments that accelerate the mapping of the world's ocean and make these data available to all.

We invite you to join the initiative by registering specific commitments that also accelerate the mapping of the world's ocean.

To register your commitments or find out more, click here: <https://forms.office.com/e/QR3FxYUgXa>

Use your resources, knowledge, and expertise to expand seabed mapping by focusing on these key areas of action.

COLLECTING AND SHARING DATA:

- Gather more data: Ramp up efforts to collect new seabed data.
- Share more data: Make it easier to share the data we already have.
- Expand funding: More diverse and robust funding sources for data collection and sharing.

ADVANCING TECHNOLOGY:

- Maximize current tech: Increase the use and accessibility of the technologies we already have.
- Innovate for the future: Develop cutting-edge solutions to enhance seabed mapping.

BUILDING SKILLS AND ENSURING FAIRNESS:

- Create career paths: Establish clear pathways for early-career professionals in ocean mapping.
- Develop a skilled workforce: Train more ocean mapping experts, educators, and policy advocates.
- Promote equity: Ensure everyone, especially SIDS and LDCs, has access to these resources.

OCEAN LITERACY AND EDUCATION:

- Inform policymakers: Increase awareness among policymakers about the benefits of seabed mapping.
- Build a strong case: Advocate for more investments in seabed mapping and partner with the Nippon Foundation - GEBCO Seabed2030 project.

CROSS-CUTTING ACTION:

- Simplify permitting: Simplify and accelerate national permit approvals for marine scientific research and allow the sharing of crowdsourced and in-transit mapping data.
- Regulatory reform: Establish national government policies and regulations that require the sharing of industry data acquired under lease arrangements within national waters.

About the Ocean Decade Alliance:

The Ocean Decade Alliance is a group of eminent partners, which includes Heads of State, governments, leaders of philanthropy and industry, coming together to resolve some of the most pressing ocean challenges through the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030 ('Ocean Decade'). Focusing on action and co-designed solutions, it supports all forms of ocean science and knowledge to successfully deliver the Ocean Decade's vision of "the science we need for the future we want," and thus contribute to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Leading by example, Ocean Decade Alliance members catalyze support for the Ocean Decade through targeted resource mobilization, networking and influence, leveraging and multiplying financial and in-kind resource commitments for sustainable development.

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2021-2030 United Nations Decade
of Ocean Science
for Sustainable Development

OCEAN DECADE ALLIANCE:

PATRONS:

H.E. José Maria Pereira Neves
President of the Republic of Cabo Verde

H.E. Wavel Ramkalawan
President of the Republic of Seychelles

H.E. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa
President of the Republic of Portugal

H.E. Surangel Whipps Jr.
President of the Republic of Palau

H.E. Jonas Gahr Støre
Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway

His Serene Highness Prince Albert II
Sovereign Prince of Monaco

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Executive Director, Prada Group

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Chairman, The Nippon Foundation

INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERS:

Cabo Verde

Canada

Federal Republic of Germany

Kingdom of Norway

Kingdom of Sweden

Republic of Kenya

Republic of Korea

Republic of Portugal

Republic of Seychelles

Republic of Palau

International Hydrographic Organization

International Seabed Authority

United Nations Environment Programme

Great Barrier Reef Foundation

**Mohammed VI Foundation for
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Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation

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