

A JUST YOUTH DECLARATION & LIVING OCEAN

As youth, engaged in ocean advocacy and global justice, we are bringing our priorities to the 3rd UN Ocean Conference in Nice 2025.

A MESSAGE TO OUR LEADERS

We, young people from Germany, united by our common love and right to protect the ocean, stand at a critical moment in history.

We urge negotiators to recognize youth not as stakeholders, but as rights-holders, innovators, and ocean citizens. Policy-making must match the urgency of the crises we face—rooted in equity, guided by science, and carried forward with youth at the helm.

True leadership in ocean governance means accounting for ecological debt, respecting the global commons, and championing justice beyond borders.

Do not make ocean policy without us.

Do not sacrifice our future for short-term gains.

Let the UN Ocean Treaty be a legacy of courage—not compromise.

OUR DEMANDS

1. Ensure full, effective and meaningful youth engagement
2. Uphold global ocean justice & equity
3. Human rights at the Heart of the UN Ocean Treaty
4. Ocean action is climate action
5. Moratorium on deep-sea mining
6. 60+ ratifications of the BBNJ Treaty by December 2025

1 ENSURE MEANINGFUL YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Youth engagement at the UN Ocean Conference and all Ocean related fora thereafter must prioritize equitable representation, by addressing structural barriers and providing targeted support and funding especially for young people from the Global South. Institutionalized coordination mechanisms, including a designated youth focal point and regular dialogue with UN bodies dedicated to oceans, are essential to ensuring consistent and impactful youth participation, moving beyond tokenism.

Member states should officially integrate youth delegates into their delegations and include their perspectives in resolutions as well as invite them to high-level meetings.

- Recognize the Right to Ocean Citizenship in international frameworks
- Urge all member states to include Youth Delegates to UN Ocean Conferences
- Full, meaningful and effective youth engagement in all ocean-related negotiations

"WE DON'T JUST WANT A SEAT AT THE TABLES—WE WANT TO SHAPE THE AGENDA. THE OCEAN IS OUR FUTURE, AND WE ARE ITS PEOPLE"

2 UPHOLD GLOBAL OCEAN JUSTICE & EQUITY

Global North countries have a historical and ongoing responsibility to act. Ocean governance must center the rights of Indigenous peoples, Small Island States, small-scale fishers, youth, and frontline communities. Global North countries must lead by example: ending marine pollution exports, halting destructive fishing, and financing ocean resilience in the Global South.

"OCEAN LEADERSHIP MUST BE ROOTED IN RESPONSIBILITY—NOT DOMINANCE. CLIMATE AND OCEAN JUSTICE ARE INDIVISIBLE"

- Acknowledge and act on the Global North's disproportionate impact
- Transform the UN Ocean Treaty into enforceable legislation
- Prioritize Indigenous and community-led marine conservation
- Provide legal, financial, and technical support to Global South countries
- Establish dedicated BBNJ funding streams for Small island states
- Recognize the unique vulnerabilities and rights of SIDS in all negotiations

3 HUMAN RIGHTS AT THE HEART OF THE OCEAN TREATY

Human rights language is vital for the UN Ocean Treaty. A rights-based approach is essential for real protection.

- Defend human rights language in the Treaty
- Provide legal safeguards for ocean defenders and communities

"WITHOUT RIGHTS, THERE IS NO OCEAN JUSTICE. WITHOUT OCEAN JUSTICE, HUMAN RIGHTS ARE AT RISK"

4 OCEAN ACTION = CLIMATE ACTION

The ocean is the planet's largest carbon sink—but this comes at a cost. Ocean acidification and warming are accelerating. Last year the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea confirmed that greenhouse gas emissions are marine pollution under international law.

"PROTECTING THE OCEAN IS NOT OPTIONAL—IT'S OUR FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE AGAINST CLIMATE COLLAPSE."

- Legally enforce obligations under the Law of the Sea Convention to reduce GHG emissions
- Strategic linking of UNFCCC, UNCLOS, and beyond in the international legal system to promote mutual gains
- Protect blue carbon ecosystems
- Do not sacrifice ocean health for climate gains—protect both

5 NO DEEP-SEA MINING UNDER FALSE PROMISES

Deep-sea mining is the extraction of minerals and metals from the seabed. It risks destroying fragile ecosystems and losing the seabed as a vital carbon sink. Claims of its role in a "green transition" are dangerously misleading.

"NO CLIMATE SOLUTION SHOULD COME AT THE COST OF OCEAN DESTRUCTION"

- Immediate moratorium on deep-sea mining
- Globally halt all exploitation licenses
- Recognize the deep seabed's role in climate regulation and long-term carbon storage
- Fund and prioritize independent scientific research on deep-sea ecosystems

6 BBNJ: BIODIVERSITY BEYOND NATIONAL JURISDICTION

The BBNJ Treaty is a historic opportunity to protect marine biodiversity in the high seas.

"THE OCEAN BEYOND BORDERS NEEDS LAWS BEYOND BORDERS"

- At least 60 ratifications by the end of 2025
- Full implementation of area-based protection, environmental assessments, and benefit-sharing
- Establish dedicated BBNJ funding streams for SIDS
- Recognize the Treaty as essential for the 30x30 target under the Convention on Biological Diversity

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Reach out to us! Contact point: Alina Reize, alina.reize@bundjugend.de

UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change)

An international treaty adopted in 1992 to address climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and supporting climate resilience.

UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea)

A 1982 treaty that defines nations' rights and responsibilities in the world's oceans, including maritime zones, navigation, and resource management.

ITLOS (International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea)

An independent judicial body established by UNCLOS to settle disputes related to the interpretation and application of the Convention.

BBNJ (Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction)

A legal framework under negotiation to protect marine biodiversity in areas beyond national borders, covering conservation, sustainable use, and fair sharing of benefits.

ISA (International Seabed Authority)

A body under UNCLOS that regulates mineral activities in international seabeds. Due to environmental concerns, many are calling for a moratorium on deep-sea mining—a temporary pause on approvals—to allow time for more research and stronger environmental rules.

30x30 Biodiversity Target

A global conservation goal to protect 30% of the planet's land and oceans by 2030, adopted as part of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

GLOSSARY