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The Southern Ocean contribution to the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development

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Information Paper submitted by SCAR

Background

In 2017, the United Nations proclaimed a [Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development](#) (2021-2030) to reverse the cycle of decline in ocean health, and globally strengthen the international cooperation needed to develop the scientific research and innovative technologies that can connect ocean science with the needs of society. By gathering stakeholders worldwide, the initiative intends to set up a common framework to ensure ocean science can fully support countries in achieving the sustainable management of oceans across the globe.

The vast, remote and harsh environment of the Southern Ocean means that no single nation can sustain a research and data strategy alone to understand and manage this region. The Southern Ocean community of stakeholders is globally unique in its operation within the context of the [Antarctic Treaty System](#), which is based on scientific understanding and environmental protection. It is imperative to strengthen international collaborations to improve scientific understanding of this remote region.

The Decade Societal Outcomes are strongly affiliated with the remit of the Antarctic Treaty. The Southern Ocean community therefore recognises the need to develop and implement a coordinated, international plan that builds on an understanding of how human interactions with the Southern Ocean can benefit society in ways that will also protect and conserve the unique characteristics of this region.

The Southern Ocean process

Based on the recommendations in the global Ocean Decade implementation plan, the Southern Ocean community engaged in a stakeholder-oriented process to develop the Southern Ocean Action Plan (**Figure 1**).

Coordinated by the [Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research \(SCAR\)](#), the [Southern Ocean Task Force](#) (currently involving SCAR, SCAR Antarctic Biodiversity Portal, SOOS, ICED, SCOR, EPB, IODE, IAATO, CLIVAR and PewTrusts) launched a series of workshops and meetings to identify key research priorities for the Southern Ocean – the first of which was held in February 2020 in San Diego (USA). The 30 participants, from 11 countries, included individuals representing all career stages and expertise in ocean science, policy, governance, and science communication. The workshop provided input for 3 of the 7 Ocean Decade Outcomes, namely a Healthy and Resilient Ocean, a Predicted Ocean, and a Sustainable and Productive Ocean. The full report of this first workshop can be found [here](#).

During the first semester of 2021, an extensive desk study was conducted to collect information from partners' implementation plans as well as previous polar and Antarctic initiatives, including the SCAR Horizon Scan, EU-PolarNet, and COMNAP Antarctic Roadmap Challenges. This desk study generated a report of identified strategic and scientific priorities for the Southern Ocean which served as a basis for the Southern Ocean survey, launched in May 2021.

In view of reaching a broad audience and engaging a maximum number of stakeholders for the public consultation of the plan, the Southern Task Force launched its [website](#) in April 2021 and established a social media presence on [Twitter](#). A [newsletter](#) was also established to keep the community up-to-date with the latest news and progress.

This stakeholder-oriented consultation aims to identify gaps within the report and prioritize Southern Ocean objectives to ensure the well-representation of all groups. Additionally, stakeholders will provide input on the activities and contributions that should be developed in the context of the Decade. Working Groups will then be set up for each of the Decade's Societal Outcomes. Here, Antarctic challenges will be identified to

develop concrete strategies to achieve the Decade's mission. The input from each Working Group will be synthesised into a Draft Southern Ocean Action Plan, which will then be jointly consulted by all stakeholders.

The process will culminate at the Second Southern Ocean Regional Workshop, to be held from 20-22 September 2021 in The Hague (NL)¹, which will bring forward a community consensus on how the Southern Ocean community will engage within the Ocean Decade Framework. Following the 2nd Workshop, the Task Force will review and finalize the Southern Ocean Action Plan.

The 2nd Southern Ocean Regional Workshop will be co-located and co-organised with the 4th Polar Data Forum (PDF IV) which will focus on polar oceans (22-24 September 2021). This will enable PDF IV to be aligned with the launch of the UN Decade of Ocean Science and support its activities in the Southern Ocean.

The development process of the Southern Ocean Action Plan aims to engage a broad community spanning from the scientific research community, to the business and industry sector, and governance and management bodies. Through this combined effort, we will identify synergies in priorities over the next decade and identify tangible actions and deliverables to achieve these priorities as a community.

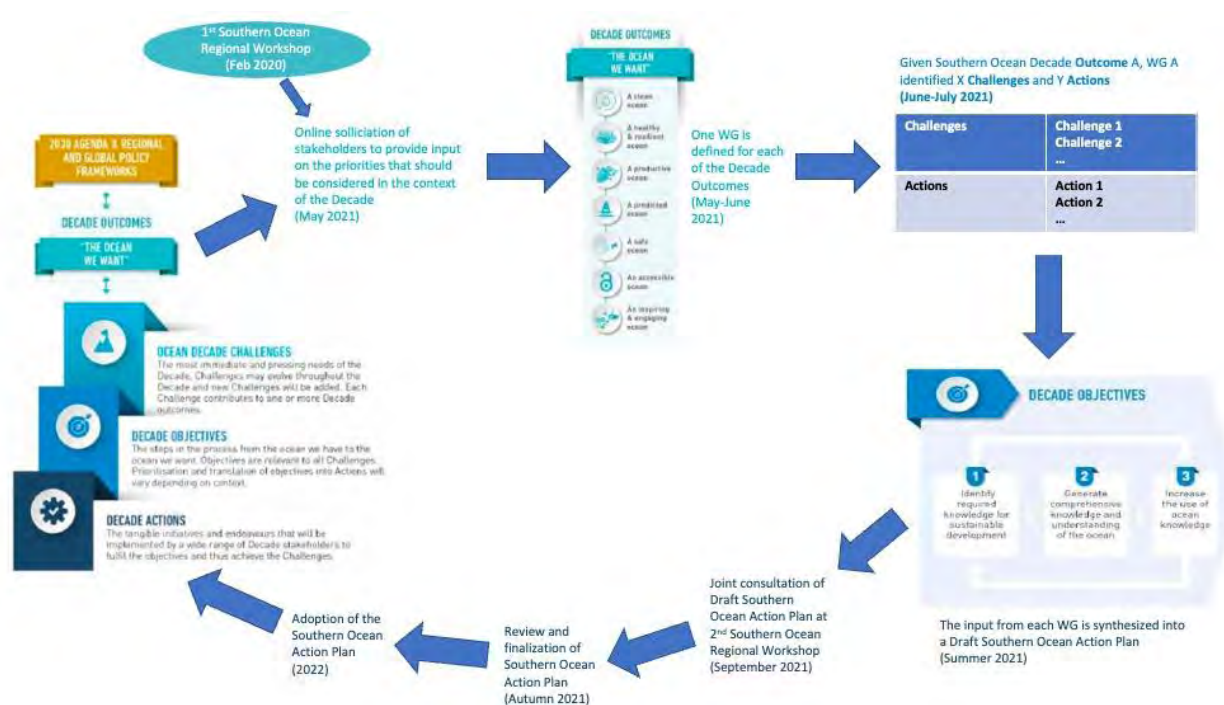


Figure 1 The Southern Ocean Process (<https://www.sodecade.org/southern-ocean-process/>)

The Southern Ocean Task Force for the UN Ocean Decade invites Parties to contribute to the Southern Ocean Process and to spread the word about the initiative. Anyone interested in being informed of activities and progress of the Southern Ocean community contribution to the UN Ocean Decade should subscribe to the [newsletter](#).

¹ Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the format of the second workshop might be adjusted and transformed into a (semi-) online set-up.