

Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue, 2026

COP 31 Presidency Segment on the Ocean

Intervention by Sally Box, Deputy President of Negotiations and COP31 Chief Negotiator

It is an honour to be addressing you all alongside our COP31 Partners, Türkiye, at the Ocean & Climate Change Dialogue.

The discussions you have here at SB64 in the Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue are critically important to strengthen global climate action.

COP31 will be a global COP for a global challenge.

No nation can tackle climate change alone, nor does any one nation have the solutions for all the world.

Similarly, protecting and sustainably managing the Ocean, requires all of us.

That is why our collective engagement to shape a collective response is essential, and the Ocean and Climate Change dialogue is an important opportunity to do just this.

We must do this together.

Together, we must look at how we can make ocean-climate action more practical, investable and scalable, *because investing in ocean action is an investment in our climate future.*

The ocean is our global ally in the fight against climate change.

It provides climate regulation services, absorbs emissions, and offers underutilised opportunities for decarbonisation and renewable energy.

Its continued health is critical for adaptation, global resilience, and livelihoods.

This year, Australia will work in partnership with Fiji to host the Pre-COP.

Hosting Pre-COP in the Pacific shines a light on the ocean-climate nexus.

The existential reality of the climate crisis will be front and centre as Ministers and delegates come together to build consensus and momentum toward practical outcomes at COP31.

We will also host a leaders' event ahead of the pre-COP, which will serve as a high-ambition political moment from the frontlines of the fight against climate change. Seeing first hand the lived experience of Tuvalu, a low-lying atoll.

This year, we are working closely with our Pacific partners to not only deliver pre-COP, but to support a successful COP31. And elevating the ocean-climate nexus is key to that success.

Australia has worked closely with Pacific Climate Ministers, as well as our COP31 Partners, Türkiye, to appoint three Pacific Envoys.

Including Pacific Ocean Envoy, the Honorable Inia Seruiratu from Fiji, who you heard from earlier.

The Ocean Envoy has articulated what all of us in this room already know - the ocean, our shared Moana, is a significant global ally in the fight against climate change.

This year, we intend to build upon the strong ocean foundations established through previous UNFCCC COPs, which has been a product of continued advocacy often led by Small Island Developing States – more aptly known as Large Ocean States, as well as Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and civil society.

We are asking: where and how COP31 can meaningfully deliver for the ocean?

We are also thinking beyond COP31 - how do we set ocean-based climate action up for the future – where do we collectively want to be by 2030 by 2035?

And through our consultations on the ocean, we understand Parties are interested in better integrating the ocean into UNFCCC processes; strengthening ocean mitigation and adaptation action; and crucially, shifting from dialogue to implementation.

We want to continue to hear from you on *how* we can make ocean-climate action more practical, investable and scalable

And we know Parties want to do this work.

Through the Information Note, you would have seen that over three-quarters of Parties included at least one explicit reference to the ocean in their new NDCs.

86 per cent of these Parties included ocean-based adaptation measures and 55 per cent included ocean-based mitigation measures.

These commitments have been made. And we want to make it easier for Parties to invest and deliver on them – through setting up the right conditions, enablers and political momentum for delivery.

Also to ratchet up ocean-climate ambition for future climate strategies, plans and processes – such as NDCs, NAPs, BTRs and GST2.

We hope your discussions in the dialogue are rich and solutions focused.

We look forward to observing, and hearing your diverse experiences, inputs and views.

In our role as COP31 Presidency of Negotiations, we have been thinking deeply about the ocean-climate community and its contributions to climate action.

There are many analogies and metaphors that can and have been drawn over the years – a blue wave, a rising tide.

So please forgive us for adding our own – but waves are often short-lived and crash, tides go back and forth. But an ocean current is a continuous, directed movement.

And that's what we, the ocean-climate community, need to be - a continuous directed movement.

So I'd like to ask you to join this ocean-climate current from Bonn, to the Our Ocean Conference in Mombasa, to the Ocean Impact Summit in Bali, to Pre-COP, COP31 and beyond.

Along this journey, we look forward to you bringing forward your own concrete Ocean-climate commitments and actions, your support for blue investment-ready approaches and activities, and your pursuit of integrating ocean outcomes at COP31 that are practical and deliverable.

This work can only be done together, so let us continue toward a lasting ocean legacy.