



## ***UN Ocean Conference 2025 Side Event: Ocean Assist Programme***

### **Ocean Assist: coalescing scientific knowledge, stakeholder involvement, and finance in support of a Regenerative Blue Economy**

**CONCEPT NOTE AND AGENDA:**  
**Friday 13 June 2025, 2:45 PM to 3:45PM**  
**The Whale Pavilion – Green Zone**  
**Nice, France**

#### **CONTEXT**

The Regenerative Blue Economy is redefining the relationship between economic growth and marine conservation by prioritizing restoration and resilience over mere sustainability. This approach fosters thriving ocean ecosystems, strengthens local communities, and acknowledges the intrinsic link between the ocean, climate, and the economy and people.

At the forefront of this transition is the [Ocean Assist Programme](#), a pioneering initiative that channels financial and strategic support from the maritime industry into scientifically validated marine restoration projects linked to all priority areas of SDG 14 - Life Below Water. By investing in the rejuvenation of marine ecosystems, Ocean Assist enables maritime stakeholders to offset their ecological footprint while promoting biodiversity, carbon sequestration, and sustainable ocean practices.

A critical component of this framework is the Regenerative Contribution Units (RCUs)—a science-driven, transparent financial instrument that quantifies regenerative impact by enhancing biodiversity, improving health of soil & water, and supporting local communities; promoting holistic environmental and social benefits beyond one's supply chain. These units ensure that investments in marine conservation align with net-zero goals and contribute to nature-positive solutions.

The private sector's role in sustainability is increasingly scrutinized, with reports from the IPCC (2022, 2023) exposing the dangers of "maladaptation"—well-intentioned but ineffective climate actions. Through the Ocean Assist Programme, Carbon Credits and Regenerative Contribution Units are combined to provide a tangible solution of Regenerative Blue Economy: the Ocean Assist Units. Ocean Assist hence bridges regulatory gaps like the Green Claims Directive and CSRD, ensuring maritime actors invest in meaningful, measurable ocean regeneration, directly advancing SDG 14: Life Below Water.

The event will be announcing a specific Ocean Commitment - the Ocean Assist Programme, including target areas, finance allocated, its science-driven methodology and approach for transparently delivering a collective and measurable impact, and a globally recognized and independently validated registry. The Ocean Commitment by Water Revolution Foundation, initiator of the Ocean Assist Programme, can be found here: [ocean action commitment](#).



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A blue banner with a subtle wave pattern. In the top left corner, there are two logos: the Water Revolution Foundation logo (a white circle with a blue wave) and the United Nations Ocean Conference Nice, France 2025 logo (a circular emblem with 17 colored segments). Below these logos, the text "FRIDAY 13 JUNE 2025, 2:45 PM TO 3:45PM CEST" and "THE WHALE PAVILION - GREEN ZONE NICE, FRANCE" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font. In the center, the main title "Ocean Assist: coalescing scientific knowledge, stakeholder involvement, and finance in support of a Regenerative Blue Economy" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font. On the right side, there is a square QR code with a blue and white pixelated pattern. At the bottom of the banner, there is a row of logos: Università di Genova (a red shield with a white cross), UN trade &amp; development (a blue globe with a white wave), IUCN (a blue circle with a white wave), WCPA (a green circle with a white wave), PROJECT SEAGRASS (a green circle with a white wave), and Tetis (a blue circle with a white wave).





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**Event duration: 60 minutes total**

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE SIDE-EVENT**

The objectives of the side event will be:

- (i) To announce the Ocean Assist Programme and introduce the audience to its benefits and means of contributing.
- (ii) To announce the upcoming platform related to Ocean Assist Units [Regenerative Contribution Units according to the certification criteria] and the upcoming call for proposals.

## **SIDE EVENT HOSTS / PARTNERS**

- [Water Revolution Foundation](#) (host)
- [University of Genoa](#) (host)
- [IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas](#)
- [UNCTAD](#)
- [Project Seagrass](#)
- Sound Sea



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#### **MODERATOR**

Mr. Ameer Aweida, IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas

#### **KEYNOTE**

Ms. Vienna Eleuteri, Initiator and Vice President, Water Revolution Foundation

Time	Intervention	Speaker
3 min	Moderator welcomes all and opens the session	Ms. Tundi Agardi, Executive Director, Sound Sea
Keynote: Ted-style talk		
7 min	The importance of a regenerative approach to the blue economy and scientific tools to measure progress – introducing the Ocean Assist model	Ms. Vienna Eleuteri, Initiator and Vice President, Water Revolution Foundation
Panel		
25 min	Ms. Vienna Eleuteri, Initiator and Vice President, Water Revolution Foundation	
	Ms. Adriana Del Borghi, Vice-Chancellor for Sustainability, University of Genoa	
	Ms. Elisabeth Dewar, Ocean and Circular Economy Consultant, UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD)	
	Ms. Tundi Agardi, Executive Director, Sound Sea	
	Mr. Richard Unswort, Chief Scientific Officer at Project Seagrass Associate Professor at Swansea University	
Moderated Q&A		
20 min	Questions from the audience	All panelists
Closing remarks		
3 min	Mr. Jorge Barbosa, Blue Economy Advisor, Water Revolution Foundation	



## SPEAKER BIOS



### MODERATOR

*Mr. Ameer Aweida, IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas*

Professor Ameer A. Eweida is a marine conservation scientist with over 30 years of experience in sustainability, resilience, and ecosystem-based management. He serves in advisory and leadership roles with the Red Sea Authority, MENA Oceans Initiative, Goumbook, and IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas, and is an Adjunct Full Professor at the University of Miami's Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science. He has led major programs with organizations such as IUCN, UNEP, USAID, and

Mission Blue, focusing on regions from the Red Sea to Australia's coral reefs. A National Geographic Explorer and Rotary Ambassador, Professor Eweida is recognized for his work in marine spatial planning, blue economy, biodiversity conservation, and climate adaptation. His interdisciplinary approach integrates science and policy to manage socio-ecological systems. He has authored over 80 scientific publications and has contributed to international conventions including the CBD, UNESCO World Heritage Convention, RAMSAR, and UNCLOS.



### KEYNOTE

*Ms. Vienna Eleuteri, Initiator and Vice President, Water Revolution Foundation*

Vienna Eleuteri is a Sustainability Scientist and Development Anthropologist specializing in regenerative development across marine and coastal sectors. She has led international projects on sustainable development, food security, climate resilience, and pollution, working with governments and communities to implement adaptive technologies.

Vienna is the founder of the *Waterevolution model*, a science-based platform to reduce environmental impact and mobilize structural funding for marine conservation. Her work supports implementation of the Paris Agreement and SDGs, with particular focus on ocean-related NDCs. She serves as Vice-President of the Water Revolution Foundation and Senior Advisor to the CEO of the Saudi Red Sea Authority, helping integrate sustainability into governance frameworks aligned with Vision 2030.



As architect of Ocean Assist, Vienna has developed a pioneering climate contribution model that enables the private sector to directly support ocean regeneration, biodiversity protection, and blue food systems—bridging science, innovation, and policy for a regenerative ocean economy.

## PANELISTS



*Ms. Adriana Del Borghi, Vice-Chancellor for Sustainability, University of Genoa*

Prof. Adriana Del Borghi, PhD is Vice-Chancellor for Sustainability of the University of Genova, Italy, and Vice-Director of the Department of Civil, Chemical and Environmental Engineering. Full Professor in Sanitary and Environmental Engineering at the University of Genoa, she is currently member of the Technical Commission of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)/Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) at the Italian Ministry of Ecological Transition. Delegate for the International climate negotiations at the United

Nations Climate Change Conference of Parties, CEO and Co-founder of TETIS Institute S.R.L., manager of the eCO2care Registry, she is scientific manager of several funded research projects on sustainability, ecodesign and climate change. She is member of the Editorial Board of international journals and author of more than 150 scientific articles.



*Ms. Elizabeth Dewar, Ocean and Circular Economy Consultant, UNCTAD*

Elizabeth Dewar is an Ocean and Circular Economy Consultant at UNCTAD, where she supports developing countries in designing and implementing inclusive, sustainable ocean economy strategies. Her work focuses on nature-based solutions, circular value chains – particularly seaweed – and innovative finance tools such as debt-for-nature swaps. With an MSc in Biodiversity, Conservation and Management from the University of Oxford and a BSc in Biological Sciences from the University of Birmingham, Elizabeth brings a

science-policy approach to building resilient coastal economies, enhancing ocean governance, and advancing environmental and economic priorities in line with international development goals.





## PANELISTS (ct'd)



*Ms. Tundi Agardi, PhD, Executive Director, Sound Sea*

Dr. Tundi Agardi is the Executive Director and founder of Sound Seas, an independent group working at the nexus of policy and science to promote marine conservation. As an internationally renowned marine conservationist, Tundi has extensive field and policy experience in regions of Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, North America and the Pacific. Her specialties include coastal planning and assessment, marine protected areas, fisheries management, marine spatial planning, and ocean zoning, and she has published widely in these fields. Through Sounds Seas she advises donor agencies and multilaterals, working with national and local authorities to design and implement marine plans, undertakes ecosystem services assessments, and catalyzes ocean and coastal restoration. Tundi previously served as Director of the MARES Program of Forest Trends, which focused on identifying marine values and protecting marine ecosystem services through market-based mechanisms, was Senior Scientist at World Wildlife Fund, and launched Conservation International's Global Marine Program, which she oversaw as Senior Director. Tundi Chairs the Oversight and Selection Panel of the Endangered Landscapes and Seascapes Programme based at the Cambridge Conservation Initiative, is Scientific Advisor for the Water Revolution Foundation, Chairs the Board of Trustees of the World Ocean Observatory, is a longstanding Board Member of the Living Oceans Society, and is a member of the Global Ocean Forum. She also serves on the editorial boards of the journals Ocean Sustainability and Ocean and Coastal Management. In 2024 she was appointed Distinguished Visiting Fellow at Worcester College, University of Oxford. Tundi was a Marine Policy Fellow and post-doc at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, after receiving her degrees of Ph.D. in Biological Sciences and Masters in Marine Affairs from the University of Rhode Island.



*Mr. Richard Unsworth, Chief Scientist at Project Seagrass and Associate Professor at Swansea University*

Richard Unsworth is a leading expert in seagrass ecosystems and has spent the past decade working at the forefront of nature-based solutions. With a career spanning over 25 years, he has authored more than 180 academic publications and numerous technical reports, contributing to seagrass research on every continent.

Over the last ten years, Richard has led the development of the UK's first large-scale seagrass restoration programme, bridging cutting-edge science with on-the-ground conservation efforts. He has provided expert advice to government programmes and policy initiatives both across the UK and internationally. His work also led to the establishment of the UK's first major seagrass nursery, based in South Wales.



Richard is an Associate Professor at Swansea University and serves as the co-founder and Chief Scientific Officer of Project Seagrass, a marine conservation charity. He is a former President of the World Seagrass Association and has published influential work in top-tier journals including Science, Nature, and PNAS.

## CLOSING REMARKS



*Mr. Jorge Barbosa, Blue Economy Advisor, Water Revolution Foundation*

Over the past 15 years, Jorge has led programs on marine and coastal governance, climate adaptation, and biodiversity conservation across Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia-Pacific, and the Gulf. Jorge's work has contributed to global dialogues on ocean sustainability, mobilizing over US\$10 million in program funding, and informed innovative policy solutions in collaboration with national governments and multilateral partners. For example, serving as an 'ocean advisor' and working closely with ambassadors of the Pacific

Small Islands Developing States (PSIDS), Jorge made significant contributions to the negotiations and drafting of the original SDG 14 concept note in 2013. Whether at the World Bank, the United Nations (UNDESA, FAO, IFAD), or in high-level advisory roles in governments [e.g., Saudi Arabia], Jorge has consistently applied results-driven leadership, technical rigor, and a deep commitment to inclusive development. Jorge's hobbies include SCUBA Diving and sailing 'traditionally rigged' vessels.