



*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 – Green Zone: Ocean Sustainability: Trade and Food House, UNCTAD Pavilion (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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**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 Eweida, 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	<b>Mr. Ameer Eweida</b> , IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas
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	<b>Ms. Vienna Eleuteri</b> , Initiator and Vice President, Water Revolution Foundation
Panel		
25 min	<b>Ms. Vienna Eleuteri</b> , Initiator and Vice President, Water Revolution Foundation	
	<b>Ms. Adriana Del Borghi</b> , Vice-Chancellor for Sustainability, University of Genoa	
	<b>Mr. Ludovic Arnaud</b> , Associate Economic Affairs Officer, UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD)	
	<b>Mr. Richard Unsworth</b> , 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	<b>Mr. Jorge Barbosa</b> , Blue Economy Advisor, Water Revolution Foundation	



## SPEAKER BIOS



### MODERATOR

**Mr. Ameer Eweida, 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 Vic-Chair, 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 *Waterrevolution 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-Chair 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)



***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.

