

COP31 Presidency calls for stronger global action on oceans and seas

Turkey's COP31 Presidency has called for stronger international cooperation to accelerate action on oceans and seas as government leaders, international organisations, scientists, civil society and private-sector representatives gathered in Trabzon ahead of the UN climate summit in Antalya in November.

The two-day Oceans and Seas Summit focused on practical action on ocean governance, climate science, the blue economy and access to finance.

At the summit, the COP31 Presidency launched the COP31 Marine Litter Action Platform, a new initiative aimed at helping successful marine litter solutions expand across countries and regions by connecting projects with knowledge, technical expertise and financing.

The platform will operate through three main areas. It will establish a knowledge-sharing network to exchange successful projects and technical approaches, develop a digital monitoring dashboard to map marine litter initiatives worldwide, and connect project developers with potential financial and technical partners.

The initiative links two priorities of the COP31 Presidency: Oceans and Seas and Zero Waste Blue, building on Turkey's experience with its Zero Waste initiative and highlighting the links between waste management, marine ecosystems and climate change.

COP31 President-Designate and Turkey's Minister of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change Murat Kurum said

the summit should produce practical outcomes that can be implemented on the road to COP31.

“At the end of these two days, we want to leave with concrete, practical and shared outcomes. Outcomes that can be implemented and carried forward on the road to COP31,” Kurum said.

“Protecting the oceans is a responsibility we all share. We call on every party to turn that responsibility into bold, concrete action: restoring ecosystems and building resilience,” he added.

The summit also issued the Trabzon Call to Consensus, Dialogue and Action, calling for tangible and implementable outcomes on oceans and seas at COP31 and greater mobilisation of resources from public and private sources.

Oceans and seas are a key priority for the COP31 Presidency because of their role as carbon sinks. Climate change is threatening marine and coastal ecosystems as well as the livelihoods of communities that depend on them. Damage to these ecosystems could also weaken their ability to absorb carbon, potentially reinforcing the impacts of climate change.

Turkey is working with Australia, Pacific Island countries and the wider international oceans and seas community to bring regional perspectives and practical solutions into the COP31 agenda. The Trabzon summit also highlighted the specific climate risks facing the Black Sea region.

High-level discussions at the summit addressed blue finance, resilience and the proposed Blue NDC approach. Kurum said work would continue on the issue following the discussions.

The work initiated in Trabzon will continue through the UN General Assembly, New York Climate Week and the Pre-COP in Fiji before reaching COP31 in Antalya in November.

Ahead of the summit, a youth programme was held on Sept. 9, bringing together climate volunteers and climate ambassadors from different countries to exchange experiences on climate action, ocean protection and environmental sustainability.