

## WOMEN AND THE OCEAN

### A CALL FOR EQUAL AND INCLUSIVE OCEAN GOVERNANCE

The Ocean is suffering severe impacts from the **triple planetary crisis** of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. At the same time, it is also **humanity's lifeline**. More than ever, **all hands on deck are needed** to protect the Ocean's health to ensure it protects us.

The Ocean has traditionally been a men's domain. Still today, despite comprising a large part of the ocean conservation community - and actively shaping a regenerative and sustainable ocean economy - **women are widely underrepresented in institutions, decision-making processes, and leadership positions regarding the use and protection of the Ocean**.

This gender imbalance not only undermines fairness but also **limits the effectiveness and resilience** of ocean governance systems.

Persistent **barriers** include cultural and legal obstacles, gender-bias, sexual violence and unsafe working conditions, along with systemic exclusion from the economic system, and unequal opportunities, etc.

Despite these barriers, **all over the world women have been acting to protect the Ocean and to use its resources more sustainably**. Evidence shows that where women are part of decision-making processes, the outcomes are better in the long-term, economically and sustainably, and benefit people and the planet.

Moreover, the right to a clean and healthy environment - including a healthy Ocean - is a **human right**, and **so is the right of equal participation in decision-making processes**.

While some initiatives are in place aiming at making Ocean governance more equal, more needs to be done to **connect SDG 5** (*achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*) **and SDG 14** (*conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources*).

Governments have recently adopted a range of **international instruments** that pave the way for gender-equal Ocean governance. They include :

- Target 23 of the 2022 Global Biodiversity Framework on ensuring **gender equality and a gender-responsive approach for biodiversity action**, and the related Gender Plan of Action,
- The 2024 CEDAW General Recommendation on the **Equal and Inclusive Representation of Women in Decision-Making Systems** (GR40), which provides concrete guidance to public and private actors.

What is needed now is **political will, coordinated action, transparency** and **accountability** to ensure these commitments become **reality**.

We therefore call on States and non-State actors at local, national, regional and international levels to commit to equal representation of women in all their diversity in leadership positions and in all decision-making processes relating to the protection and sustainable use of the Ocean and its resources, in line with international instruments, in full respect of indigenous and traditional knowledge, and putting in place adequate legal and financial resources to enforce this commitment.

Suggested actions include (but are not limited to):

- **Effectively removing barriers and biases** women face in accessing Ocean-related decision-making and leadership positions; ensuring women have safe working conditions.
- **Introducing a parity requirement and gender rotation in leadership roles** in order to enable equal access to decision-making positions at all levels, including through affirmative actions (quotas, gender-blind recruitment processes, parity terms).
- **Appointing women to senior roles** in all areas of Ocean-related decision-making, structurally revise recruitment, nomination, promotion and career management systems, and promoting female role models.
- **Ensuring equal access to public and private funding, dignified jobs and equal pay** to women in science, conservation and in a sustainable and regenerative Ocean economy;
- **Providing gender-sensitive education** in careers related to conservation and sustainable use of the Ocean, and ensuring **equal opportunities and access to professional networks and development opportunities** for women, such as mentorship, and sponsorship programmes, including at an early career stage.
- **Collecting gender disaggregated data and effectively monitoring and measuring progress** in achieving gender-equal Ocean governance.

THIS CALL FOR ACTION IS PUT FORWARD BY

WomenforSea  
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EQUAL

SHE<sup>TM</sup>  
changes ocean

SHE<sup>TM</sup>  
changes climate  
femmes & climat

Les  
IMPACTRICES  
Accélératrices des transitions



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