

Presentation of the International Panel for Ocean Sustainability (IPOS): The scientific keystone supporting sustainable ocean policies



Thursday 15th November 2023, 12:45 – 14:30 CEST

Hosted by MEP Catherine Chabaud

Vice-Chair of the European Parliament Intergroup on “Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development”

Speakers:

- **MEP Catherine Chabaud**
- **Françoise Gaill**
- **Raphael Goulet**, Head of Unit B1: Ocean Governance, Law of the Sea, Arctic Policy, DG MARE, European Commission
- **Tanya Brodie Rudolph**
- **MEP Pierre Karleskind**, Chair of the European Parliament Committee on Fisheries
- **Elisabetta Balzi**, Head of Unit ‘Healthy Ocean & Seas’, DG RTD, European Commission
- **Paul Treguer**, Oceanographer, and former director of the European Institute for Marine Studies (IUEM)
- **Brian O’Riordan**, Policy Adviser, Low Impact Fishers of Europe (LIFE Platform)
- **Geneviève Pons**, CEO and Vice Chair of Europe Jacques Delors
- **Olivier Poivre d’Arvor**, French Ambassador to the poles and maritime issues

Opening Remarks

MEP Catherine Chabaud

“The IPOS has made me aware of what the oceans bring to humanity, its riches and its fragilities.”

As an opening statement, **MEP Catherine Chabaud** recalled the **importance of the ocean for mankind**, its riches and fragilities, and the **importance of science** and scientists that contribute to the knowledge about the ocean. She stated the need for more indicators, to have **cross-referenceable data**. She mentioned the need for science to help stabilize the **international framework for MPAs**. She also said there is a need to measure the resilience of an ecosystem where bottom-trawling has been stopped. She highlighted the need to have a **trajectory towards sustainable fisheries and aquaculture**, and she called for policies to implement a **vision for the future**.

Françoise Gaill

“IPOS is the new gateway for reconnecting knowledge and policy to guide public action for ocean sustainability”

Dr. Françoise Gaill emphasised **IPOS’s** essential role in **global ocean sustainability and governance**, given the **“Ocean Emergency”**, as declared by the UN Secretary-General. She pointed out the inefficiency in current efforts to translate ocean knowledge into effective policy actions, hindered by fragmented knowledge across many complex reports. She highlighted the need for an IPOS, a **new global mechanism** designed to transform the **ocean knowledge-decision interface**, drawing on **systemic, inclusive, and action-driven** approaches. She presented the history of IPOS, and its inception which stemmed from the idea of the Ocean as a Global Commons, and highlighted concerted international efforts that led to its creation. She also shed light on the EU’s significant role in supporting and pioneering IPOS's work. She announced the official launch of IPOS scheduled for the United Nations Conference in June 2025. She called for **the EU** to continue to be a **crucial partner in the IPOS’ work**.

Raphael Goulet

“Science is telling us that we are not moving fast enough, the decline of the ocean is accelerating as unsustainable human activities and their harmful impacts continue to degrade the ocean.”

Mr Raphael Goulet stated **the role of science to the ocean** and the need to inform **citizens** and especially **policy-makers** of the importance of the ocean. He reminded that **political attention to the ocean is relatively recent**, but that attention is growing and is up to the scientific community to keep the momentum going. He claimed that **the state of the ocean is declining at an accelerating pace**. Despite the importance of the ocean, he recognised that it does not have a targeted science policy platform. He further highlighted the role **IPOS** plays in **bringing together scientists with policy-makers and civil society**. He said that the **IPOS** should include **long-term thinking for the ocean** and ensure that policies are based on the best available scientific evidence. He also stated that he is looking forward to future conferences to further ingrain the role of **IPOS** and science in the discussion about the ocean.

Scientific Presentation

“The current state of ocean knowledge production and interfaces: Results of the Seascape Assessment” by Tanya Brodie Rudolph

“There is a need for a dedicated ocean science-policy interface mechanism such as an IPOS to ensure that the best possible evidence base is available to support decision-making”

Ms. Brodie Rudolph highlighted the need for urgent actions to **restore the health of the ocean, given current tipping points**. She stated that transformative actions will require **political will, societal incentives**, as well as a comprehensive and cohesive evidence base to drive such actions. She highlighted the EU’s role in addressing ocean health, noting that in 2022, the EU Commission commissioned a Seascape Assessment to better understand the current state of ocean knowledge and the influence of knowledge on policy action. She then presented the **two objectives of the Seascape Assessment**: to **analyse and explore the current scientific evidence base** provided by global environmental processes and assessments, and to **evaluate how effectively the scientific base is conveyed to policy-makers to inform decisions**. She then presented the scope work of the study, which involved reviewing 35 global reports, conducting 21 interviews as well as three workshops. She then outlined the research methodology to assess comprehensiveness, legitimacy, credibility and salience of these reports. She pointed out several gaps identified in the study, such as the lack of sustainability focus, coherence of ocean knowledge, a lack of actionable solutions, and insufficient inclusion of local and indigenous knowledge in global reports. She highlighted that these findings demonstrate that the current global assessment and science-policy interface for the ocean is insufficient to provide a continuous, coherent evidence base for ocean sustainability decisions. Accordingly, there is a need for a dedicated ocean science-policy

interface mechanism such as an IPOS to ensure that the best possible evidence base is available to support decision-making.

Panel discussion

Speakers that took part in the panel discussion:

- **MEP Pierre Karleskind**, Chair of the European Parliament Committee on Fisheries
- **Elisabetta Balzi**, Head of Unit 'Healthy Ocean & Seas', DG RTD, European Commission
- **Paul Treguer**, Oceanographer, Presidium of the European Academy of Science, EurASc
- **Brian O'Riordan**, Policy Adviser, Low Impact Fishers of Europe (LIFE Platform)
- **Geneviève Pons**, CEO and Vice Chair of Europe Jacques Delors
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The panel discussion started with the intervention of **MEP Pierre Karleskind**, who stated that **IPOS** and its feasibility study are at the **core** of what is needed to achieve a **better ocean policy**. He also highlighted that science is key to **better fisheries management** and that **fishers are also invested in the advancement of scientific knowledge**. He demonstrated his frustration at **a lack of an integrated and ecosystem approach** and claimed that the **Common Fisheries Policy is incomplete** in terms of knowledge and understanding, therefore underlining the importance of **IPOS**.

The next speaker was **Elisabetta Balzi**, who underlined that **ocean research is key to the European Commission**. She mentioned that **there cannot be any Green Deal without a Blue Deal**. She also talked about a 1 Billion euro **strategic initiative** that involved all stakeholders, from the **fisheries, and local and coastal communities to the political and scientific community**. Besides the **strategic initiatives at the European Union and international level**, there are also **partnerships with member states on a sustainable blue economy**. She stated that the Commission is already working closely together with **IPOS** and other intergovernmental assessment bodies. However, she called for the reports written by these bodies to be complimentary and build on what already exists. She also reminded that **communication must go beyond political and scientific communities, and also reach civil society**. She was further questioned about the coordination between **DG RTD and IPOS**, and how would it be possible to increase the **IPOS'** effectiveness. She underscored the importance of having a **system, interdisciplinary, inclusive, and action-driven approach**. She also reminded that **IPOS** and its supporters should see the ocean as embedded in and contributing to all policy areas

Following her, it was time for the intervention of **Paul Treguer**, who introduced the **European Academy of Sciences** and recalled the **key role of the ocean in maintaining**

climate, stating that **the majority of the heat is absorbed by the ocean** which also absorbed 1/3 of the anthropogenic CO₂ release in the atmosphere. Referring to the frontier forums the European Academy of Sciences (EurASc) organise every two year with the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), he highlighted that the **temperature, acidity, and sea level are rising**, and that this sea level rise can lead to the erosion and **submersion of coastal areas**. He identified possible solutions, such as reducing the amount of GHG in the atmosphere, **stopping funding fossil fuels, and investing in renewables**. He also claimed human activities have led to an **overexploitation of resources** and the **release of great amounts of plastic**, both macro and microplastics to which the solutions would be **regulating the exploitation of coastal areas**. He is questioned about the expansion of IPOS at a **global level**, to which he replied that there needs to be support from institutions from the **US and Canada**, without disregarding the **Southern Hemisphere**, and paying attention to key **academic and economic actors**.

He was followed by **Olivier Poivre d'Arvor**, who was questioned about the role of IPOS in **the Ocean Conference** that will take place in France in 2025. He stated the position of France in supporting IPOS, which is a key actor in that Ocean Conference. He also reminded that the support for IPOS is growing, both inside and outside the EU, given the importance these countries give to the production of knowledge that can support policy-makers. He claimed that this **production of knowledge**, while of great scale, is **too fragmented**, and there is a need to aggregate this knowledge with other scientific reports, to make it **more accessible to decision-makers**. He expected IPOS to submit simple metrics, targeting **ocean health**, to keep global warming in the 1.5 degrees target. He also said he trusted IPOS, as a very important tool, to be an active working group, given its **immense responsibility**. He was asked about the need for more science, to which he answered that **there is urgency to act**, given that the **submersion of coastal areas will impact 1 Billion people by 2050**. Therefore, he stated the importance of **understanding and acting upon the collapse of the cryosphere**. He also called for the **creation of science together with BRICS and the Southern Hemisphere** in general, so that they can be truly involved in tackling this issue because **scientific consensus can lead to political consensus**.

Then the next speaker was **Brian O'Riordan**, who was asked about **engaging local and indigenous communities**, to which he replied that small-scale fisheries in Europe constitute the majority of the workforce and fleet, but a very diminutive percentage of the catch, and in general **Europe is highly dependent on imports of catches from other parts of the world**. He remarked that, unlike the IPOS initiative that seeks to establish a centralised knowledge hub, **small-scale fisheries** operate on a very local level, at the **frontier between human society and the ocean**, therefore experiencing the effects of climate change and global warming directly. These communities have **knowledge (experiential, local, traditional) and a perspective of the sea** that will be vastly **different from the scientists, but important in its own right**. He mentioned the challenge of **bringing together science and policy-makers with small-scale fisheries and their local knowledge**. He mentioned the "Call to Action" prepared by small-scale fishers from

around the world, and their “Rules of Conduct” as a good starting point for the IPOS to understand how to approach small-scale fishing communities and to understand their concerns. Citing the principle of “Nothing About Us Without Us”, he called for a **formalisation of relations with small-scale fishers**, given that **IPOS** taking action without them would be unacceptable. On the question of how **IPOS** would interact with these small-scale fisheries, he replied that there’s a need for a special mechanism to have that engagement. He cited examples of such mechanisms established by FAO. He also advised **avoiding using proxies or the internet**, and instead use **local representatives**, since a centralized hub would not be able to directly interact with local fishers. In conclusion, he said that the “co-creation” of knowledge with small-scale fishing communities will be a vital role for IPOS.

Finally, it was the turn of **Geneviève Pons** who was questioned about the **challenges to policy action** in this issue. She stated that there are two challenges to policy action, them being **vested interests and national interests**. The existence of **contradictions** in the available science can lead to countries defending their positions, that may go against the scientific community and EU’s interests, such as glyphosate, the Farm to Fork strategy, and the Southern Ocean’s MPAs. She said this has led to several actors, like **China**, **questioning that science**, and also calling to **bring all countries together through science**. She also remarked that the **global metrics** must be translated into **International Agreements**, for the civil society to monitor.

Closing remarks

As closing remarks, **Tanya Brodie Rudolph** mentioned that the work of **IPOS** is not finished and that they will have a **challenging 18 months ahead**. Finally, she also encouraged all actors to **share feedback and suggestions** with **IPOS**.