



# Canada

## 1<sup>st</sup> Ocean Partnership Forum

October 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> 2022

Brussels, Belgium

### ***Supporting a Healthy and Sustainable Ocean through International Collaboration to Enhance Knowledge and Data Sharing***

In 2019, the European Union (EU) and Canada concluded an Ocean Partnership Agreement<sup>1</sup> (the Agreement) to deepen longstanding collaboration on ocean affairs, and to foster international ocean governance and cooperation to ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of oceans. The Agreement established an Ocean Partnership Forum (OPF) to advance work between the EU and Canada on areas of mutual interest and benefit. Ocean observation, monitoring and marine data are the foundation for research, innovation and management and thus paramount to efficiently protect and sustainably manage the ocean. Both Canada and the EU recognise that sharing of data across boundaries supports management and drives entrepreneurial, civil society, academic and educational activities.

The overarching objective of establishing a Canada-EU OPF is to increase cooperation on ocean governance as well as cross-cutting tools and marine and maritime knowledge aimed at the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of the ocean, seas and marine resources. Items for collaboration can include any activities that pursue cooperation on ocean governance frameworks, or advance conservation and facilitate sustainable use of oceans.

The inaugural OPF, which occurred on October 3-4, 2022 in Brussels, Belgium, focused on ocean observation. It featured more than 30 ocean observation and data management experts providing key inputs about the respective processes and landscapes on marine in-situ data, common standards, and interoperability procedures. The discussions aimed to identify unique opportunities for collaboration between the EU and Canada in the fields of ocean observation, data management and marine knowledge, to be realised through existing collaboration platforms or through dedicated bilateral collaborations.

Three priority pathways of interest were identified, focusing on:

- **Ocean observing**, referring to sharing of observing capacity and joint activities to collect observations in areas of common interest and/or phenomena of common interest;

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<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/mare/document.cfm?doc\\_id=60974](https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/mare/document.cfm?doc_id=60974)

- **Ocean data management**, moving towards common approaches, vocabularies, connecting data and exchange technology;
- **Ocean data for society**, addressing the appropriate frameworks to make marine knowledge more available and more usable from a wider variety of societal actors.

Under this framework, specific areas of focus emerged as potentially meriting further interest, including: a) *Regional observations and data*; b) *Underwater noise*; c) *Ocean Climate Nexus*; d) *Marine Litter and Plastics*; e) *Ocean Literacy and Citizen Science*; f) *Data interoperability and Digital Twins of the Ocean*; g) *Fisheries Management/Marine biodiversity management* and h) *Vessel density mapping co-development*.

Some key elements that were highlighted for future collaboration include:

- infrastructure sharing and training opportunities on that infrastructure;
- inclusive, transparent, and relevant collaboration
  - with an aim to feature more equitable demographic representation;
- co-design and coordination between existing observing programs to optimize observing capabilities
  - to facilitate sharing of expertise among projects and institutions.

Overall, the first edition of the OPF was an opportunity to demonstrate the value of the Agreement and allowed for exchange between European and Canadian experts coming from science and policy. Sharing ocean observations, promoting partnerships, highlighting observation achievements, assessing monitoring and reporting performance, while also enabling infrastructure connections and exchange to facilitate future planning and coordination between nations and observation networks across the Atlantic Ocean, could yield tangible results. Future collaboration would provide an excellent framework for Canada and the EU to support delivery on international commitments (UN Ocean Decade, UN Sustainable Agenda SDG 14, G7 Future of Seas and Oceans initiative).

The European Commission, through the Directorate General of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, and the Government of Canada through Fisheries and Oceans Canada, will continue discussions to refine the objectives of potential EU-Canada collaboration to deliberate with the relevant stakeholders and identify the appropriate support frameworks for the realisation of the above mentioned. The next OPF will be hosted in Canada, in 2025.