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About the Ocean Centres

1. What are Ocean Centres?

Ocean Centres are multi-stakeholder collaboration platforms that support transition toward safer and more sustainable ocean economies in the Global South. By bringing together diverse stakeholders, they foster collective dialogue to identify needs, challenges, and solutions that unlock safe blue growth. Building on this, they aim to promote responsible business practices in ocean-based economies and influence adoption of industry-recognized, enforceable standards, regulations and policies.

2. Who are the founding partners?

Ocean Centres are a partnership initiative of UN Global Compact's Ocean Stewardship Coalition (as a convener of key stakeholders in ocean industries) and the Lloyd's Register Foundation (global safety charity) to put safety at the heart of discussion of sustainability practices in countries with emerging ocean industries.

3. Why are they needed?

Our changing world presents both challenges and opportunities that need collective action. As we navigate towards a more sustainable ocean economy, it is essential that safety is built into how we approach this transition. To effectively move towards a decarbonised and nature positive future, key stakeholders in the ocean industries need to work together to apply risk and safety lens in their decision-making.

Collective action requires commitment from a wide group of stakeholders who are relevant to driving change in the local context. Private sector, SMEs, finance institutions, as well as government bodies, NGOs and academic institutions can together identify issues and encourage action aligned with local needs and evidenced through robust and credible data and insight. Ocean Centres will enable local coalitions for change to build safer and more sustainable ocean industries.

It is expected that improvements of standards and practices will reduce risks and attract more blue investment.

4. What does putting safety at the heart of sustainability actually mean?

The only way to accelerate sustainability-focused transitions, without unintended consequences and without accidents (that is without human, economic and environmental costs), is to approach them through the safety lens. Transitions can only work if they are both nature and people positive.

We need a safety lens that goes beyond Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) and considers the role of different stakeholders (policy, finance, engineering, education, safety) at different levels (workplace/ sectoral/ national) and at different stages of the project cycle (planning, design, construction, operation, maintenance, decommissioning). OSH professionals cannot tackle safety problems alone. If a country has weak systems in place to equip its workforce with engineering and technology skills or no technology governance standards, mistakes in planning and design are inevitable and these can escalate into occupational and ecological risks.

In addition, climate change induced risks such as heat stress, flooding and infrastructure vulnerability results in a much more challenging and hazardous environment for workers, requiring significant adaptations in training, equipment, and procedures to maintain their safety and safety of infrastructures which they interact with.

Ocean industries are the bedrock of many economies but carry inherent risks that can result in catastrophic incidents, causing significant loss of life, environmental damage, costs and disruptions. It takes commitment on the workplace, sectoral and national level to build a safe and sustainable ocean economy.

5. What are the main goals of Ocean Centres?

The main goals are to promote greater understanding of risk, safety and sustainability in business practices; promote the model and value of multi stakeholder dialogue in tackling safety challenges and support emerging blue economies in safe tackling of climate and biodiversity crises.

Each country has its own individual challenges which are being identified and addressed by stakeholders using a locally-led approach.

6. What ocean industries are the focus on Ocean Centres?

A scoping study carried out in 2023 identified that the biggest safety challenges and the biggest opportunities to improve safety are in green ports, green shipping, fishing/ aquaculture, and offshore renewables. At the same time, Ocean Centres may address safety challenges in any ocean industries, as dictated by the local need, e.g. hazards from potentially polluting wrecks.

7. Why the focus on Ocean industries?

The focus for ocean centres on ocean economies lies in their crucial role in addressing global challenges, such as climate change, and biodiversity loss, while contributing to sustainable development. Ocean economies support resilient ecosystems and provide essential resources like food, clean energy, and trade, directly linking them to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In addition, the ocean is home to some of the most hazardous industries and professions, underscoring the importance of prioritising safety and sustainability. Oceans play a crucial role in global trade by supporting shipping lanes and economic activities. However, they are particularly susceptible to the impacts of climate change. Significant uncertainties exist due to the limited data available about ocean depths and the potential risks arising from interactions between various ocean users and industries.

For example, Indonesia demonstrates the economic significance of ocean economies. The Indonesian ocean economy contributes approximately 20% of the country's GDP, while the maritime sector employs 10% of its workforce. Indonesia's strategic position along global shipping lanes like the Strait of Malacca—which handles about 40% of global seaborne trade—and its status as the world's second-largest wild capture fisheries producer highlight the interconnectedness of ocean economies with global supply chains and food security.

This blend of opportunity and risk underscores the importance of focusing on ocean economies to ensure safety, sustainable development, economic resilience, and environmental protection.

8. How do Ocean Centres contribute to a sustainable ocean economy?

They foster a collaborative, multi-stakeholder platform that promotes a systemic, safety-enabled approach to developing a sustainable ocean economy by addressing unique local needs and priorities.

9. Where are they based?

They're currently based in Brazil, Ghana, Kenya, India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Each Ocean Centre is hosted by a UN Global Compact Country Network and led by a Country Lead, who is responsible for coordinating all activities, such as identifying and inviting national stakeholders to join the Ocean Centres, and leading the organisation of workshops, working groups, conferences, webinars, and more.

10. Why were these specific places chosen?

During the scoping phase, studies identified seven emerging economies in the Global South with growing ocean industries. The research included a review of Ocean Stewardship Coalition strategy documents, academic studies, benchmarking, and expert interviews across diverse countries. In the longer term, as the project evolves, more Ocean Centres may be established beyond the initial seven.

Each selected country produced a national Blue Economy report, outlining key opportunities and challenges related to its expansion, as well as workforce and infrastructure preparedness. These insights shaped the project's four Action Areas.

These countries bring unique expertise and resources, providing valuable insights into tackling ocean safety challenges, identifying and managing risks early, and fast-tracking solutions.

11. Are they physical centres?

They are not physical centres but rather communities of engagement/ dialogue which are locally led, evidence-based and inclusive of all relevant voices. Offices of UN Global Compact provide venues and staff to deliver this multi-stakeholder engagement.

12. What makes the Ocean Centres different from other initiatives?

The Ocean Centres are grounded in a community-driven, locally led, and evidence-based approach. They are the only multi-stakeholder platforms of their kind, operating in the emerging economies of the Global South. By facilitating inclusive dialogue, each Centre identifies urgent safety challenges and barriers to action, while supporting the development of context-specific solutions.

The approach is designed to evolve through the active input of stakeholders engaged across the seven Ocean Centres between 2025 and 2026. Additionally, the initiative is breaking new ground and may lead to a blueprint model that can be followed by other emerging ocean economies and scaled with the support of other funders.

The Ocean Centres are not following an existing model. We are building this methodology together, step by step, through collaboration and shared learning.

In the next phase, the goal is to scale the initiative to additional countries while deepening and expanding its impact in the current locations.