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Brief Progress Update

(November 2019)

Ocean Innovation Challenge

Component 4 of UNDP Global Water and Ocean Governance Support Programme

Atlas Output 00117778, Project 00115482

(Sida Reference 61050352, Cost-sharing agreement signed 2 Jan-2019)

Introduction

The Global Water and Ocean Governance Programme aims to contribute meaningfully to Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) on water management and sanitation and SDG 14 on conservation and sustainable use of marine resources; along with poverty reduction. The originally three project outputs/components were recently complemented with a fourth project output: “Innovative and scalable solutions to ocean challenges identified and supported” which formalises the Ocean Innovation Challenge initiative (OIC).¹

The present progress update briefly outlines inception activities and highlights initial achievements and plans for the OIC. All is set for the launch of Challenge #1 focusing on marine pollution (SDG 14.1). After an initial screening of concepts, promising ideas will be invited to submit full proposals. The winners of the first Challenge awards are to be announced during the next Ocean Conference in Lisbon in June 2020. Challenge #2 is to focus on sustainable and equitable fisheries.

¹ This initiative was originally conceptualised as the Ocean Innovation *Facility* but has since evolved into the Ocean Innovation *Challenge* as the name under which to launch this mechanism.

Innovative and scalable solutions to ocean challenges identified and supported

Building on the successful 2017 Ocean Conference including its 1,400 voluntary commitments, UNDP has established an **Ocean Innovation Challenge** (OIC) dedicated to spur action by identifying and financing a suite of pilot initiatives that demonstrate highly innovative approaches to ocean sustainability, cutting across SDG14 targets and associated sustainability challenges.

By providing seed financing, advice and guidance, technical, knowledge and networking support, the Challenge will help to remove key barriers by demonstrating approaches that can deliver transformational changes in ocean and ocean-relevant land-based resource management. The OIC's resources and support are targeted to the private sector, NGOs, local communities, national and sub-national government agencies, UN system organizations and development banks, intergovernmental organizations, and others positioned to pilot replicable and scalable innovations for ocean transformation.

Interventions – particularly technological and social innovation from the private sector and social entrepreneurship – which deliver positive 'returns on investment' will be encouraged, but other types of interventions, including those related to policy and regulatory reform and economic and financial incentives that transform ocean use will also be considered.

Upon ensuring the start-up financing for a proof of concept, OIC has been preparing for the global announcement of its first challenge call ahead of the Preparatory Meeting for the 2nd UN [Ocean Conference](#). The PrepCom is scheduled to take place in February 2020 at the UN Headquarters in New York, with a purpose to define the procedures and outcomes for the 2020 UN Ocean Conference to be held in Lisbon, Portugal, from 2 to 6 June 2020.

OIC: Executed and Planned Activities

Following are the description of activities executed in order to prepare for the full-fledge launch of the Ocean Innovation Challenge and its first call.

- **OIC Online Platform:** A dedicated online platform has been developed (secured domain: www.OceanInnovationChallenge.org) with key functionalities and a user-friendly and attractive design, which seamlessly allows submission of online applications by interested innovators from different sectors. The platform also allows for online review of applications on solutions to support achievement of SDG 14 on conservation and sustainable use of marine resources by a committee of ocean experts. The OIC online platform is fully integrated with the well-established Ocean Action Hub (www.oceanactionhub.org), launched by UNDP and the Government of Sweden at the 2017 UN Ocean Conference, to facilitate dissemination to broad networks of experts and practitioners. At the time of this reporting period, the online platform is scheduled to be launched on 5 December 2019, when the 25th COP on Climate Change will be happening in Madrid (See Annex I for the online platform screenshots in staging). The launch of the

OIC platform is particularly of relevance as 2020 will be the year of Nature with important targets under SDG 14 and SDG 15 reaching their deadlines.

To target and include a broader pool of innovators globally to gather new, innovative and scalable solutions to ocean challenges, the OIC platform will be available in English, Spanish and French, including the online challenge application form. In addition, a Google translation service for all other languages will be embedded into the OIC platform.

The beta version of the OIC Platform can be accessed at the following link (prior to going live on 5 December 2019):

<http://oif.atypica.com>

username: **guest**

password: **guest#aty321**

- OIC Media Kit: To attract the best innovations from a diverse range of actors, across developing countries and regions, and promote the OIC more widely at international and local levels, a media/press kit is under development. The package will include: a challenge flyer, OIC flyer, social media banners, social media short video (45 sec), and an OIC video trailer (90sec). The media/press kit will be available in English, Spanish and French. It will be released prior to the PrepCom for the 2020 Ocean Conference.
- Recruitment of a full time OIC Ocean Advisor: As of the time of reporting, the full time OIC Ocean Advisor position is under recruitment². A brief delay in the advertisement occurred due to the conclusion of the realignment process of the structure of the Bureau for Policy and Programme, which directly impacts on the final decision of the location of the post as per the organogram chart for the Bureau. The post is expected to be advertised in coming weeks (December 2019). The Ocean Advisor will lead the implementation of the OIC and contribute to the ocean and water thought leadership and technical assistance to country level on ocean and water governance matters.

In the coming six months, priority is given to the preparation and launch of the first OIC Challenge on reducing marine pollution (SDG 14.1) “By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution”.

The first call will launch the OIC online Platform as a soft-social media launch during the happenings of 25th COP Climate Change in Madrid. It will open for a first round of submissions of brief concept notes opens on 15 January 2020. (See detailed timeline below). A 2nd phase of selection in April will be open to pre-selected challenge submissions. These will be reviewed by a broader set of thematic experts (drawing e.g. on pertinent members of the project’s Technical Advisory Group). The announcement of award winners is expected to take place during the 2020 Ocean Conference in Lisbon.

² Terms of reference have been drafted and cleared internally. Post is under classification by HR.

Ocean Innovation Challenge – timeline of planned activities

(December 2019 - June 2020)



The second OIC Challenge is envisaged to be focused on sustainable and equitable fisheries (SDG 14.4/14.B), which will also contribute significantly to increasing benefits to Small Island Developing States. This second Challenge is envisaged to be launch also in conjunction with the Ocean Conference and the announcement of the winners of the first Challenge.

Way Forward

Great emphasis will be given to develop project-specific visibility and communications guidelines to ensure efficiency and consistency in external outreach. A communication plan is being developed for the various OIC challenges with a professional look that can attract high-quality applications from a diverse range of sectors. The OIC will coordinate and share information with related initiatives such as the World Bank's ProBlue, Sustainable Ocean Fund, Sustainable Ocean Alliance, and others.

The present Sida funding phase – within the Global Water and Ocean Governance Support Programme – will host two Challenges during the course of 2020; the present on marine pollution (SDG 14.1) and the second on fisheries (14.4/14.B). From 2021 the OIC will be incorporated (as area B.2) into the broader Sida-UNDP Strategic Collaboration Framework on Environment and Climate Change project document. The ambition is to mobilize the necessary resources for the OIC to continue at the present level with two challenge calls per year.

Annex I – Ocean Innovation Challenge Online Platform Screenshot

Financing Innovations for Sustainable Development Goal 14 Oceans

Home What it is What it does Why it matters Ocean Challenge #1

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What it is

The Ocean Innovation Challenge is a unique new mechanism that has been designed to accelerate progress on SDG14 via the identification, financing, advising and mentoring of truly innovative, entrepreneurial and creative approaches towards ocean and coastal restoration and protection that sustains livelihoods and advances the 'blue economy'. Towards maximizing and catalyzing impact, OIC seeks innovations that are transferable, replicable and scalable.

The overall goal of the OIC is

To accelerate progress on SDG14 by catalyzing replicable and scalable innovations – including technological, policy, economic, financial – that can be sustained and directly contribute to delivery of one or more SDG14 targets.

For the purposes of the OIC, "innovation" can include both truly new approaches, or the transfer or adaptation of existing proven approaches to new contexts and/or locales:

What it does

The Ocean Innovation Challenge will issue a series of staggered "Ocean Challenges," or Requests for Proposals, each focused on a specific SDG14 target. Initial concepts may be submitted by public or private entities, including governments, private companies (including start-ups), NGO/CSO, United Nations entities, academic institutions, and intergovernmental organizations.

Concepts passing initial review and meeting OIC criteria will be invited to submit "full" proposals for further internal and external ("peer") review and consideration. Grants range from US \$50,000 to \$200,000 and project time frames can range from one to two years. Project proposals must be implemented in and benefit stakeholders in developing countries but may derive from developing or developed country proponents. Proposals should also provide a special focus on ensuring gender equity, livelihoods of the poor and poverty eradication.

The OIC will also work to develop, disseminate and provide easy access to information and resources on successful ocean innovations, both those funded by the OIC and others. This will be primarily done through the OIC website and the *Ocean Action Hub*, an established knowledge platform which aims to connect experts and practitioners. The OIC will coordinate and share information with related initiatives such as the World Bank's ProBlue, Sustainable Ocean Fund, Sustainable Ocean Alliance, and others.

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Why it matters

The world's oceans and seas face unprecedented challenges in terms of the near- and long-term sustainability of the trillions in both market and non-market ecosystem goods and services oceans provide to humanity, from climate regulation to food security to energy resources. Despite some progress, many ocean issues, from nutrient pollution to IUU fishing to ocean acidification, continue to follow negative trends.

SDG 14, Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, sets forth a very ambitious agenda for oceans restoration and protection. For the bulk of ocean using and ocean impacting sectors, from fisheries to aquaculture to industrial agriculture, the "business as usual" scenario will not deliver the kinds of transformational change needed to move towards truly sustainable ocean use.

A combination of technological innovation and cutting-edge policy, financial and economic incentives are needed to transform ocean-related sectors, both sea-based and land-based. At present, while there are a handful of relevant initiatives, these are limited in their sectoral scope. A mechanism is required that cuts across the unique innovation needs of each SDG14 target, whether it be reduction of plastics pollution, eliminating overfishing, or enhancing access for small scale fishers.

For more detailed information on each SDG 14 target

[View the SDG 14 Targets, Context and Indicators](#)