



**G20** SOUTH AFRICA 2025



# OCEAN20 SOUTH AFRICA NEWSLETTER

September - October  
2025 Issue

## Ocean20 Mid-Way Meeting – Charting Shared Ocean Futures

27 August 2025 • NRF-SAEON

The **Ocean20 Mid-Way Meeting**, hosted under South Africa’s G20 Presidency, brought together researchers, policymakers, industry leaders, and civil society to reflect on progress and map the road ahead. Discussions reaffirmed that healthy oceans are not a side issue – they anchor trade, climate resilience, finance, food security, job creation and sustainable development.

### Ocean Actions

Examples from across the globe showed how diverse approaches can drive inclusive ocean governance. **SeaPeople (South Africa)** shared how co-management puts coastal communities at the centre of decision-making. From China, **Ms. Yan Li (China Oceanic Development Foundation)** introduced eight initiatives designed to balance ecological, social, and economic needs.

**Saudi Arabia’s WAVE** and **AEON Collective** stood out as bold initiatives linking conservation with inclusivity. WAVE is a collective action platform dedicated to restoring a thriving ocean by 2050, founded by **Her Royal Highness Princess Reema Bandar Al Saud**, while **AEON Collective** – an interdisciplinary sustainable-development organization focused on the intersection of social, economic, and ecological well-being – works to restore Red Sea ecosystems through eco-tourism, and presented on their “Regenerative Blue Economy Facility” impact tool. Under WAVE’s broader industry mobilization, Saudi Arabia also introduced the ‘**Quieter Oceans**’ initiative – a **G20 call for collaboration** to reduce ocean noise pollution by connecting national commitments with industry action.

Building on this momentum, **Prof. Joleen Steyn Kotze (Human Sciences Research Council)** proposed establishing a Women in Marine Science Working Group to strengthen equity in leadership.

Together, these contributions showed that sustainable ocean futures depend not only on ecological action, but on empowering people and communities.

### Innovation & Investment Showcase

The meeting also featured an Innovation and Investment Showcase led by **OceanHub Africa** and **NRF-SARAO**, which demonstrated how entrepreneurship and financing can help turn promising ocean ideas into viable long-term ventures. Both presenters stressed the importance of public-private-philanthropic collaboration to move beyond pilots and deliver impact at scale.

### Beyond 2025

A final panel with global and regional leaders explored the theme “Beyond 2025 – A Global Commitment to Shared Ocean Futures.” Panelists stressed that recommendations to the G20 must be practical, inclusive, and rooted in the realities of developing nations. South-South collaboration was highlighted as essential for pooling knowledge and resources.

In her closing remarks, **Nicole du Plessis (NRF-SAEON)** captured the key message: Ocean20’s strength lies in its partnerships. True progress will come not from duplicating efforts but from working together, finding overlaps, and amplifying each other’s initiatives.





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# Open Climate Webinar – Advancing Data Sharing for Climate Action

28 August 2025 • Ocean20 & Science20 (NRF-SAEON, ASSAf)

Following the Mid-Way Meeting, Ocean20 partnered with **Science20 (S20, ASSAf)**, to co-host a high-level webinar on “**Open Climate: Advancing Data Sharing for Climate Action.**” The session brought together climate scientists, policymakers, Indigenous knowledge holders, and civil society networks to explore how open and reliable climate data can support resilience and justice.

Opening remarks by **Ms. Nicole du Plessis (NRF-SAEON, Ocean20)** and **Mrs. Susan Veldsman (ASSAf, Science20)** set the tone by stressing the urgent role of both social and natural sciences in bridging climate knowledge with real-world action.

## Data Systems in Focus

**Ms. Delani Mathevula (DFFE)** presented South Africa’s National Climate Change Information System (NCCIS), a platform designed to monitor climate adaptation efforts. While it represents a major step forward, she noted that accessibility and technical capacity remain challenges that need to be addressed if the system is to reach its full potential.

## Governance & Human Dimensions

**Prof. Coleen Vogel (WITS University)** reminded participants that climate change is not just an environmental issue but a deeply human one. She emphasised gaps in governance and adaptation, warning that without inclusive frameworks, data risks reinforcing inequalities rather than solving them.

## Community & Indigenous Knowledge

**Ms. Yanga Malotana (University of Pretoria)** highlighted the role of Indigenous knowledge and local participation in building resilience. She stressed that communities already hold valuable solutions but often lack recognition in formal systems. **Mr. Leo Chiloane (NRF-SAEON)** reinforced this by calling for equitable and trustworthy governance models that prevent exclusion and build confidence in shared data.

## Infrastructure & Interoperability

On the technical side, **Dr. Gustav Rautenbach (NRF-SAEON)** outlined practical steps for improving environmental data infrastructure. By making systems more interoperable and user-friendly, open data can directly inform both science and policy, ensuring that climate action is timely and evidence-based.

The discussions reinforced that open climate data is not only a technical matter but a question of climate justice. As **Dr. Melusi Thwala (ASSAf)** closed the session, he underscored the importance of cross-sector and cross-border partnerships. South Africa, through its leadership in Ocean20 and Science20, is emerging as a key voice in shaping how open science can accelerate global climate solutions.



# Ocean20 Side Events at South African Marine Science Symposium (SAMSS) 2025

## ■ Building Bridges Through Intergenerational Dialogue • 10 September 2025



A joint collaboration between **Women20** and **Ocean20**, this lively session created a safe space for “**real talk**” across generations. Early-career researchers and established professionals came together to share challenges, experiences, and lessons learned. What emerged was a reminder that no one faces these struggles alone: stories of setbacks, perseverance, and success resonated across the room.

Importantly, wisdom flowed both ways — from mentors to mentees, but also peer to peer, making the dialogue deeply enriching. The session’s second half, a fireside chat on “**Women in Marine Science**” – **An Intergenerational Conversation on Journeys, Challenges, and Collective Wisdom**, explored lived experiences of women working in marine science. The panel spoke candidly about fieldwork challenges, gender stereotypes, and the need to create safe, inclusive work environments. Mentorship, peer networks, and advocacy emerged as key tools for building resilience and opening doors for the next generation of women in ocean science.

## ■ Accessible Technologies & Modelling Workshop • 11 September 2025



This full-day, **interactive workshop** explored how openly available global and regional ocean datasets, together with affordable technologies, can transform marine science in under-studied regions. Participants were introduced to **cost-effective sensors, open-access modelling platforms, and data integration techniques** that make it possible to monitor and manage coastal systems even where resources are limited.

Designed with **young scientists and technicians from South Africa** in mind, the session provided hands-on experience with practical tools while also building connections for future collaboration. Importantly, the workshop did more than showcase technology, it demonstrated how combining affordable sensors, ocean observations, and numerical models can strengthen coastal resilience and support a sustainable Blue Economy. A resource-rich report will follow, ensuring participants and their institutions have ongoing access to the knowledge and tools introduced during the day.



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# WIOMSA SIDE EVENT AND WORKSHOP

Ocean20 continued to strengthen regional collaboration through two key engagements hosted under the **Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA) Symposium 2025** in Mombasa, Kenya.

The World Climate Research Programme (WCRP) Special Session, led by Nicole du Plessis (NRF-SAEON), explored ways to enhance the inclusion of Global South researchers in the Earth sciences. The panel moderated by Safiyya Sedick (NRF-SAEON) and featuring Tammy Morris (NRF-SAEON), Nico Willemse (Nature Alliance, Namibia), and Frank Mirobo (University of Dodoma, Tanzania) – highlighted barriers to participation and outlined pathways for stronger involvement of people from the Global South in WCRP activities. The sessions also aimed to showcase current efforts and opportunities, and develop recommendations to submit to the Global South inclusion Task Team (GSiTT).

The Accessible Technologies & Modelling Workshop built on the workshop held at SAMSS 2025 and once again introduced participants to affordable sensors, open datasets, and modelling platforms that support cost-effective ocean observation in under-studied regions. Designed for early-career scientists and technicians, the session provided hands-on experience and fostered new collaborations across institutions. Together, these engagements showcased how inclusive networks and open science can bridge knowledge gaps, empower regional researchers, and strengthen the foundation for a sustainable Blue Economy.

## Upcoming Events



**SAVE THE DATE**  
**OCEAN20 SUMMIT**

**4-5 November 2025**  
**Cape Town, South Africa**  
*Venue will be confirmed*

SCAN TO RSVP

### Cape Town

4-5 November 2025

[Scan the QR code or click here to register](#)

### Connect With Us

Email: [ocean20sa@saeon.nrf.ac.za](mailto:ocean20sa@saeon.nrf.ac.za)  
 Website: <https://egagasini.saeon.ac.za/ocean20sa/>  
**Social Media:**  
 Instagram: [@ocean20sa](#)  
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*Thank you for being part of the Ocean20 community. Together, we're shaping shared ocean futures.*

### Join the Ocean20 Summit

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