

## Article 1: Ocean20 Mid-Way Meeting 27 August 2025

On 27 August 2025, NRF-SAEON hosted the **Ocean20 Mid-Way Meeting** under South Africa's G20 Presidency. The online gathering brought together a wide network of ocean stakeholders—from researchers and policymakers to civil society and business leaders—to reflect on progress, share innovations, and chart the way forward for the Ocean20 agenda.

Opening the meeting, **Prof. Juliet Hermes (NRF-SAEON)** welcomed participants and outlined five core aims for the session: refining and scaling Ocean Actions; strengthening connections between science, policy, and industry; elevating voices from the Global South and Indigenous knowledge holders; fostering cross-sectoral partnerships; and building a long-term roadmap beyond 2025 linked to global frameworks such as the UN Decade of Ocean Science.

**Dr. Tammy Morris (NRF-SAEON)** provided a progress update, highlighting how Ocean20 has amplified the role of the ocean within G20 processes. She emphasized that no discussions on trade, finance, or sustainable development can succeed without ocean considerations, and called for a just and inclusive ocean economy.

The programme's core centred on **Ocean Action proposals**.

- **Megan van der Bank (SeaPeople, South Africa)** underscored inclusive ocean co-management, ensuring grassroots voices influence decision-making.
- **Ms Yan Li (China Oceanic Development Foundation, China)** shared China's global training initiatives on Marine Spatial Planning, including an eight-step development plan.
- **Dr. Maryam Ficociello and colleagues Princess Haifa Al Saud and Sian Bradley (Red Sea Global, Saudi Arabia)** showcased Saudi Arabia's bold initiatives such as **WAVE (Women in Aquaculture Vision Empowerment)** and the **AEON marine restoration programme**, which are advancing eco-tourism, creating opportunities for women in ocean sectors, and restoring degraded marine ecosystems in the Red Sea. These projects demonstrated how localised innovation can deliver global lessons.
- **Prof. Joleen Steyn Kotze (HSRC, South Africa)** proposed the establishment of a Women in Marine Science Working Group to strengthen gender equity in ocean leadership.

The **Ocean Innovation and Investment Showcase**, led by **Mr. Herland Cerveaux (OceanHub Africa)** and **Mr. Mark Johnson (NRF-SARAO)**, demonstrated how financing and entrepreneurial support can help transform ideas into viable ocean sustainability ventures. Both speakers stressed the value of public-private-philanthropic collaboration to turn innovation into long-term impact.

The final panel discussion, "Beyond 2025 – A Global Commitment to Shared Ocean Futures," featured members of the Ocean20 South Africa Advisory Group, including the UN Global Compact, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI), Brazil's National Oceanographic Research Institute (INPO), and NRF-SAEON. The discussion emphasised the need for clear and practical recommendations that G20 leaders can realistically act on, while also ensuring greater inclusivity by amplifying voices from developing nations. Panelists underscored the importance of strengthening South–South collaboration, recognising that nations of the Global South share common challenges and can achieve

more by pooling resources, knowledge, and expertise. They also highlighted the value of connecting research with investment so that scientific knowledge directly shapes funding priorities, and called for long-term collaborations that extend beyond South Africa's 2025 presidency to ensure Ocean20 leaves a meaningful and lasting legacy.

In her closing remarks, **Ms. Nicole du Plessis (NRF-SAEON)** emphasized that Ocean20's strength lies in partnerships and inclusivity. She reiterated that recommendations submitted to the **G20 Leaders' Summit in November 2025** must be practical, globally relevant, and firmly rooted in collaboration.

Overall, the meeting underscored that progress will come not from duplicating efforts, but from collaborating, finding overlaps in initiatives, and amplifying each other's work. The Mid-Way Meeting marked a pivotal step in South Africa's Ocean20 journey, ensuring that dialogue translates into measurable action and that the ocean remains central to shaping sustainable futures.