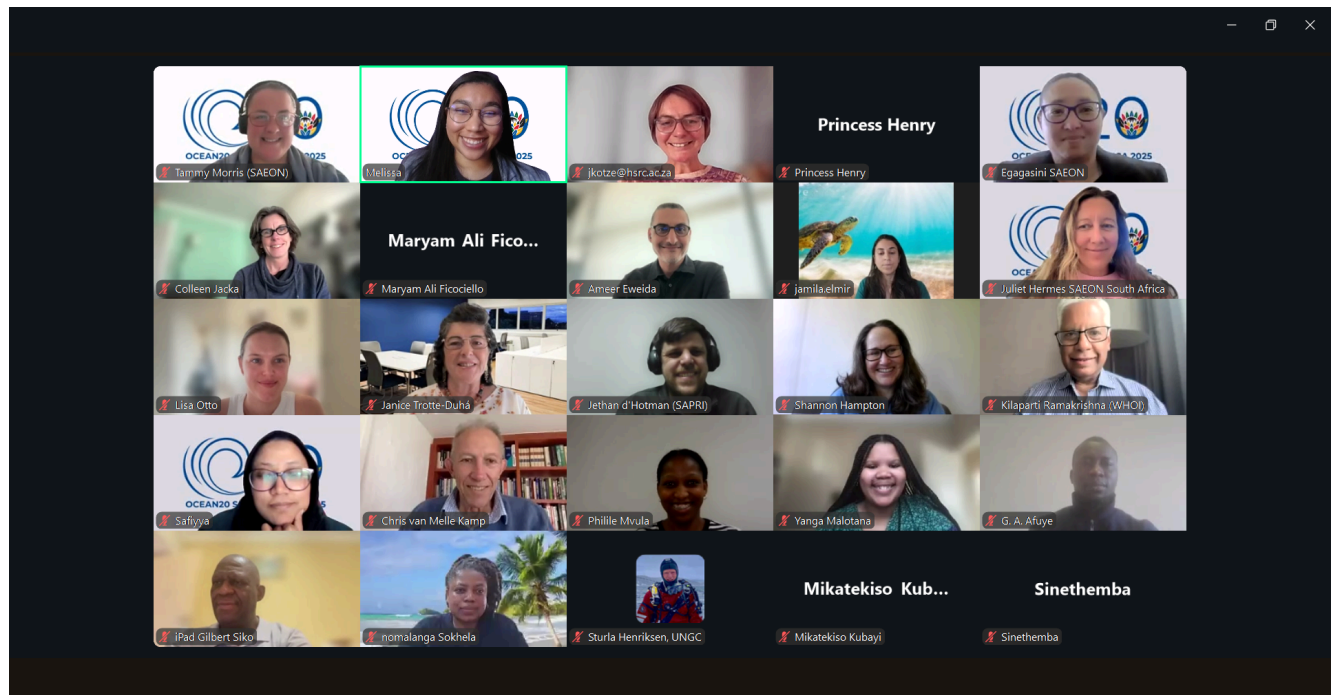


Ocean20 Mid-Way Meeting Report

Date: 27 August 2025

Host: Ocean20 South Africa (NRF-SAEON)

Platform: Virtual



1. Introduction

The Ocean20 Mid-Way Meeting, hosted by the South African G20 Presidency through NRF-SAEON, brought together a diverse network of ocean stakeholders to reflect on progress, share innovations, and chart the way forward for the Ocean20 agenda. The meeting served as a key milestone to showcase the achievements since the Ocean20 launch and identify priorities for the upcoming G20 Leaders' Summit in November 2025.

2. Objectives

The meeting aimed to refine and scale up Ocean Actions, strengthen connections between science, policy, and industry, and elevate voices from the Global South and international partners. It also sought to foster cross-sectoral partnerships and consideration of a long-term roadmap beyond 2025.

3. Opening Remarks

Prof. Juliet Hermes (NRF-SAEON) welcomed participants and highlighted the importance of continued collaboration to ensure that ocean issues remain central within G20 discussions. She emphasised the interdependence between ocean health, trade, finance, and sustainable development. Dr. Tammy Morris (NRF-SAEON) provided a progress update, noting how Ocean20 has elevated the ocean's profile within the G20 framework. She called for a just and inclusive ocean economy that leaves no community behind.

4. Key Proceedings

The session's core focus was on Ocean Action proposals and the exchange of innovations among global participants. Ms. Megan van der Bank (SANBI; representing SeaPeople, South Africa) emphasised the importance of inclusive ocean co-management to ensure that coastal communities have a meaningful voice in decision-making. Several members of SeaPeople shared personal testimonies illustrating why co-management is essential.

Key points highlighted included how co-management serves as a bridge of communication between communities and government, enabling local stakeholders to actively contribute to policy and law-making processes. Speakers also underscored that Indigenous Knowledge Systems must be recognised as a central component of sustainability. As Ms. Buhle Francis expressed, "With co-management, we can create an inclusive ocean economy where all communities are recognised as custodians of marine biodiversity and equal partners in ocean governance."

Ms. Yan Li ([China Oceanic Development Foundation](#), China) presented China's Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) training initiatives, which include eight core programmes designed to promote balanced ecological, social, and economic outcomes. These initiatives aim to create platforms for knowledge exchange, develop talent through marine training and exchange programmes, and expand coastal zone assessments and marine disaster research to deliver science-based solutions to pressing challenges. All these efforts are being undertaken in collaboration with other countries to foster shared learning and economic growth.

Dr. Maryam Ficociello, Ms. Sian Bradley, and Ms. Jamila Elmir (Red Sea Global, Saudi Arabia) showcased Saudi Arabia's initiatives such as [WAVE](#), a collective action platform dedicated to restoring a thriving ocean by 2050, founded by Her Royal Highness Princess Reema Bandar Al Saud. Under WAVE's broader industry mobilisation, 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.

Princess Mashael AlShalan from The [AEON Collective](#) — an interdisciplinary sustainable-development organisation focused on the intersection of social, economic, and ecological well-being — presented their work to restore Red Sea ecosystems through eco-tourism and sustainable innovation.

Prof. Joleen Steyn Kotze ([HSRC](#), South Africa) proposed the establishment of a Women in Marine Science Working Group to strengthen gender equity and leadership opportunities in ocean-related fields. She highlighted that, although women make up more than half of the workforce across ocean sectors, their contributions often remain undervalued, underpaid, and underrepresented in decision-making spaces. The proposed working group aims to address these persistent gender gaps and promote women's active participation and leadership across all areas of ocean governance.

Moderated by Ms Safiyya Sedick, the Innovation and Investment Showcase, presented by Mr. Herland Cerveaux ([OceanHub Africa](#)) and Mr. Mark Johnson ([NRF-SARAO](#)), demonstrated how entrepreneurship and financing can transform sustainable ocean ideas into scalable ventures. Both presenters stressed the value of public–private–philanthropic collaboration to move innovation beyond pilots and deliver long-term impact.

The final panel discussion, titled 'Beyond 2025 – A Global Commitment to Shared Ocean Futures,' featured representatives from the [UN Global Compact](#), Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution ([WHOI](#)), the [Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Oceânicas \(INPO\)](#), and NRF-SAEON. Panelists discussed how Ocean20 can extend its legacy beyond South Africa's presidency, emphasising the need for clear and practical recommendations for G20 leaders that are inclusive, feasible, and globally relevant. South–South collaboration was highlighted as a key mechanism for sharing knowledge and resources among developing nations. The panel also underscored the importance of linking research and investment so that scientific findings directly shape funding priorities.

5. Key Outcomes

The meeting underscored the diversity of initiatives and proposals emerging across the Ocean20 community, highlighting how these efforts collectively contribute to advancing a sustainable and inclusive ocean agenda. Presentations and discussions showcased innovative actions, from community-based ocean co-management and women's leadership in marine science to restoration programmes and ocean innovation financing, that offer valuable opportunities for collaboration and scaling.

Rather than signalling a lack of opportunities, the discussions revealed that success depends on connecting the right people, expertise, and resources to existing initiatives. The Mid-Way Meeting therefore served as a vital platform for aligning efforts, fostering partnerships, and identifying synergies across sectors and regions. This spirit of collaboration will be essential in ensuring that ongoing Ocean Actions continue to grow in impact and remain anchored in shared global priorities.

6. Closing Remarks

In closing, Ms. Nicole du Plessis (NRF-SAEON) emphasised that Ocean20's strength lies in partnerships and inclusivity. She reiterated that true progress will stem from collaboration, coordination, and amplification of efforts rather than duplication. The recommendations to the G20 Summit must therefore be practical, globally relevant, and rooted in collaboration to ensure meaningful, lasting impact.



7. Conclusion

The Ocean20 Mid-Way Meeting marked a pivotal moment in the South African Ocean20 Presidency. It reaffirmed the shared commitment to keeping the ocean at the center of sustainable development and global cooperation. The discussions and outcomes from this meeting have laid a strong foundation for the upcoming G20 Leaders' Summit and for continued collaboration beyond 2025.

