

ALL-ATLANTIC CONNECT WEBINAR REPORT



All-Atlantic Ocean Research
and Innovation Alliance

In collaboration with



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All Atlantic Connect: Dialogue with O20

Background and Purpose of the All-Atlantic Connect Webinar Series

The first series of the All-Atlantic Connect Webinar Series, entitled “All-Atlantic Connect: Dialogue with O20”, was convened under the OKEANO Coordination and Support Action (CSA) project, in collaboration with Oceans20 Brazil and Ocean20 South Africa. The series formed part of a broader effort to sustain momentum across the Brazilian and South African G20 presidencies and the All-Atlantic Ocean Research and Innovation Alliance (AAORIA), aligning with and promoting the priorities established under the Oceans20 Communiqué and the All-Atlantic Declaration. Recognising the Atlantic Ocean as a shared space of ecological, economic, and geopolitical importance, the series aimed to strengthen dialogue and cooperation across the Atlantic through a science-informed and policy-relevant lens.

NRF-SAEON, as host of Ocean20 South Africa, collaborated with the Atlantic International Research Centre (AIR Centre), as OKEANO CSA project partner, and the UNESCO Chair for Ocean Sustainability at the University of São Paulo, an institutional partner in Brazil’s Oceans20 leadership, to design a platform that brought together experts from South Africa, Brazil and AAORIA working across diverse disciplines. The objective was to foster meaningful exchange on the Oceans20 Communiqué’s and the All-Atlantic Declaration’s priority themes, explore areas of alignment and divergence, and consider practical pathways for translating high-level commitments into action. While originally intended to run throughout the year, operational constraints resulted in the webinar series being delivered over three months, October till December 2025, with five focused sessions addressing key thematic areas central to ocean sustainability, governance, and innovation.

This dialogue facilitated engagement and contributed to the shared vision of the Ocean20 process and the All-Atlantic Ocean Research and Innovation Alliance (AAORIA), advancing cooperation, equity, and sustainability across the Atlantic community and empowering collective action towards a more just and resilient ocean future.

Objective

To facilitate knowledge exchange and generate constructive dialogue on the priority areas for Ocean20 and All-Atlantic Declaration by convening diverse experts and stakeholders across regions of the Atlantic. In doing so, advance actionable collaborations and solutions for the sustainable management of the ocean.

Thematic synthesis of discussions

All-Atlantic Connect: Dialogue Sessions with O20 | Opening Session | 21 October 2025

This opening session marked the first of a five-session series designed to foster sustained, structured dialogue linking Oceans20 Brazil, Ocean20 South Africa, and AAORIA, with the shared goal of strengthening international cooperation on ocean science, innovation, and governance across the Atlantic basin and beyond.

Ms. Tânia Li Chen, AIR Centre, opened with an overview of the evolution of the AAORIA, from the 2013 Galway Statement through successive expansions to the 2022 All-Atlantic Declaration, highlighting its role as a long-term, basin-wide framework for connecting, cooperating, and acting across the Atlantic.

Prof. Alexander Turra, Chair of Oceans20 under the G20 Brazil Presidency (2024) and UNESCO Chair for Ocean Sustainability, was the first to present and reflect on the creation of Oceans20 as a formal civil society engagement group within the G20 Sherpa Track. He described how O20 was designed to mobilise global ocean stakeholders, integrate ocean priorities into economic decision-making, and position the ocean as a transformative agent for society linked to climate action, social inclusion, food security, energy transition, and governance reform. He highlighted the extensive global ocean dialogues convened during Brazil's presidency, engaging thousands of participants across multiple regions, which culminated in the Oceans20 Communiqué and Action Plan structured around ten priority themes. Prof Turra emphasised the importance of networks such as the AAORIA as catalysts and connectors that can help translate G20 ambition into action, scale inclusive participation, and strengthen alignment with global frameworks such as the UN Decade of Ocean Science.

Building on this, **Dr. Tammy Morris**, Ocean20 South Africa Co-Lead, presented next and outlined how South Africa is advancing the O20 process as part of the G20 Troika, with a strong focus on implementation, inclusion, and Global South leadership. She described how Ocean20 South Africa has moved from agenda-setting to action through bottom-up "Ocean Actions" that engage communities, early-career professionals, women, youth, innovators, and businesses. Key initiatives discussed included accessible and open-source technologies for citizen science and coastal resilience, early-career ocean professional networks (ECON-SA), blue food and inland-ocean connectivity projects, intergenerational dialogues, and partnerships aligned with national, regional, and global priorities such as the BBNJ Agreement. Dr. Morris also highlighted challenges and opportunities in connecting African countries more effectively to basin-wide initiatives, and the need to strengthen blue finance mechanisms to sustain long-term impact.

Following the presentations, **Ms. Laura McDonagh**, OKEANO Project Manager, facilitated an interactive dialogue that followed these presentations but began by introducing AAORIA's priorities, including coastal resilience and ocean observation, and outlined key initiatives such as the Coastal Resilience Beacon sites network and the All-Atlantic Blue Intergenerational Programme, before guiding a structured panel discussion through targeted follow-up questions.

The discussion explored opportunities for shared action on coastal resilience, ocean observation, youth engagement, and inclusive governance, and invited reflections on funding, partnerships, and scaling community-led approaches. **Dr. Morris** stressed that Africa remains underrepresented in basin-wide initiatives despite its extensive coastlines and strategic importance. She emphasised accessible and open technologies, citizen science, and the development of communities of practice as practical ways to strengthen coastal resilience, improve ocean observation, and avoid "parachute science," while also underscoring the growing but still challenging role of blue finance in supporting sustainable ocean action. **Prof. Turra** emphasised the role of AAORIA as a connector and catalyst, linking existing networks, youth, universities, civil society, governments, and the private sector to the G20 and UN Ocean Decade processes. He highlighted the importance of



youth and intergenerational co-creation, responsible private-sector engagement through a “Business to Blue” approach, and strong G20 leadership to scale impact globally, positioning AAORIA as a model for turning international ambition on oceans into coordinated, long-term action.

The session concluded with a shared recognition that AAORIA and Ocean20 are highly complementary: together, they offer a pathway to convert global policy ambition into concrete, collaborative action across research, innovation, policy, and communities, positioning the Atlantic as a living laboratory for inclusive, sustainable ocean governance with relevance well beyond the basin

All-Atlantic Connect: Dialogue Sessions with O20 | Session 2: Ocean Economy, Finance & Partnerships | 6 November 2025

The All-Atlantic Connect: Dialogue Sessions with O20 continued with its second dialogue session, focusing on how innovative finance and cross-sector partnerships can accelerate ocean action across the Atlantic basin. A video message by **Prof. Alexander Turra** opened the session. He emphasised that the creation of O20 by the Brazilian G20 presidency was a milestone that recognised the ocean's central role in the climate, energy, and environmental agendas. In Brazil, the ocean agenda was a key pillar of the climate and sustainability working group, coordinated with multiple partners including UNESCO, the World Economic Forum, and INPO. He emphasised that initiatives like AAORIA connect researchers across the Atlantic to share knowledge for sustainable ocean management and encouraged questions and comments from the audience.

The second All Atlantic Connect Dialogue session with O20 comprised 6 speakers; **Thauan Santos**, Naval War College, **Dennis Fritsch**, Oceano Azul Foundation, **Luis Pazos**, Brazil Development Bank, **Alexis Grosskopf**, Ocean Hub Africa, **Senia Nhamo**, University of South Africa, and **Klaas de Vos**, Ocean Fox Advisory, who focused on the ocean economy as both a foundation of societal wellbeing and a critical pillar of the global economy, underpinned by vital ecosystem services and an estimated asset value of approximately USD 24 trillion. Speakers emphasised that declining ocean health represents a systemic economic failure, placing trillions of dollars in value at risk annually and exposing significant portions of the global financial system to nature-related risk. This disconnect reflects an ocean finance gap driven by financial flows that continue to support unsustainable and extractive activities, underscoring the need to fundamentally rethink how the ocean is valued within economic and financial systems.

The session highlighted that closing this gap requires coordinated action across governments, financial institutions, industry, development finance, and civil society, guided by global frameworks such as the Ocean Investment Protocol and the O20 process under Brazil’s G20 Presidency and South Africa’s leadership. Using South Africa as a case study, speakers illustrated both the scale of opportunity and risk in blue economy development, noting that while the country is a continental leader and major recipient of ocean-related finance, much of this capital has historically flowed into unsustainable sectors. Redirecting investment toward sustainable fisheries, aquaculture, marine renewable energy, and responsible tourism was framed as essential, alongside ensuring inclusive growth, equitable benefit-sharing, and resilience to nature-related financial risk.

Practical pathways for action were showcased, including blue bonds, sustainability-linked finance, blended finance instruments, marine spatial planning, and integrated national approaches exemplified by development banks such as BNDES. The session concluded that finance must be treated not merely as a funding source, but as a strategic lever for reshaping incentives, managing systemic risk, and enabling a sustainable and regenerative blue economy—supported by strong governance, partnerships, and knowledge systems across the Atlantic and beyond.



All-Atlantic Connect: Dialogue Sessions with O20 | Session 3: Climate, Energy & Social Inclusion | 11 November 2025

Session 3 of the All-Atlantic Connect Dialogue session with O20 examined the interlinked challenges of climate change, energy transitions, and social inclusion from a South African perspective, with relevance for the broader African continent and Atlantic basin.

The first presentation was delivered by **Ms. Yanga Malotana**, PhD candidate at the University of Pretoria and an energy and climate policy analyst. She framed Africa’s energy challenge as a “wicked problem,” characterised by complexity, competing priorities, and intergenerational consequences. While Africa is rich in energy resources, the continent faces deep energy poverty, with millions lacking electricity access and relying on traditional biomass for cooking, resulting in severe health and social impacts. At the same time, modern economies are increasingly dependent on reliable electricity for water, healthcare, communications, and digital connectivity.

Focusing on South Africa, Ms. Malotana highlighted how chronic electricity shortages and load-shedding reflect deeper systemic challenges, including historical inequalities, governance failures, and underinvestment. She stressed that the transition to renewable energy must balance four pillars of energy security—availability, affordability, reliability, and environmental sustainability—while ensuring a just transition that protects jobs, livelihoods, and vulnerable communities. She cautioned against the emergence of a “green extractive economy” that addresses environmental goals while perpetuating social injustice, noting risks associated with mineral extraction for green technologies and emerging debates around deep-sea mining. Ms. Malotana emphasised the need for integrated, inclusive solutions aligned with Ocean20 principles, including community ownership models, skills development, and African-led innovation.

The second presentation, by **Dr. Vishal Surban**, Senior Lecturer in Maritime Law at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, explored social inclusion through a legal and governance lens. Drawing on South African case law, he examined a landmark court challenge brought by coastal and indigenous communities against offshore seismic surveys for oil and gas exploration along the Wild Coast. The court found that affected communities had not been meaningfully consulted, highlighting that genuine public participation requires more than procedural compliance or “tick-box” approaches.

Dr Surban underscored the importance of recognising indigenous knowledge systems, customary law, and the spiritual and cultural connections that many coastal communities have with the ocean. The ruling demonstrated how constitutional rights, environmental justice, and social inclusion can and should shape ocean governance decisions. He argued that these domestic legal lessons offer valuable guidance for regional and international processes, particularly Ocean20’s call for inclusive participation in shaping a sustainable blue economy.

Overall, Session 3 reinforced that effective climate action, energy transitions, and ocean governance depend on meaningful social inclusion. The South African experience illustrates both the consequences of exclusionary decision-making and the transformative potential of integrated, participatory approaches that place communities, youth, and justice at the centre of sustainable development.

All-Atlantic Connect: Dialogue Sessions with O20 | Session 4: Governance & Policy Coherence | 4 December 2025

Session 4 of the All-Atlantic Connect Dialogue session with O20 focused on governance and policy coherence, highlighting how inclusive, adaptive governance frameworks are essential for empowering coastal communities and translating ocean policy into meaningful, long-term impact.



The first presentation was delivered by **Dr. Leticia Grimett**, maritime law scholar and research expert at the South African International Maritime Institute (SAIMI). Speaking to Theme 5 of the Brazil Communique ‘*Strengthening Inclusive and Adaptive Ocean Governance*’, Dr Grimett emphasized that sustainable ocean outcomes depend on governance systems that prioritise transparency, inclusivity, and meaningful public participation. She noted that capacity building in developing countries must be understood as multi-dimensional, encompassing technological, financial, governance, institutional, and knowledge-based capacities.

Drawing on South African case studies, including the iSimangaliso Wetland Park and litigation related to offshore seismic surveys, Dr. Grimett illustrated how exclusionary governance approaches often lead to conflict, non-compliance, and environmental harm. In contrast, she demonstrated how inclusive governance like bringing together communities, traditional leadership, civil society, academia, and government, can strengthen resource management, improve data quality, and enhance legal and policy outcomes. She highlighted the growing importance of indigenous knowledge systems, cultural values, and social accounting approaches in ensuring equity within blue economy initiatives. Dr Grimett further situated South Africa’s Ocean20 principles as building on Brazil’s thematic framework, with a strong focus on inclusivity, collaboration, sustainability, practicality, and measurable impact.

The second presentation was delivered by **Dr. Stacy Webb**, Head of Marine and Coastal Impact Programmes at the Sustainable Seas Trust, who addressed ‘*Theme 7: Policy Coherence*’ of the *Brazil Communique*. Dr. Webb illustrated how global and national policy commitments can be translated into tangible outcomes through integrated, community-driven approaches. She emphasised that policy coherence only becomes meaningful when it is reflected in the lived experiences of communities.

Dr. Webb shared practical examples from Sustainable Seas Trust initiatives, including the African Marine Litter Monitoring Manual and the Operation Clean Spot programme. These initiatives demonstrate how accessible, low-cost citizen science methods can generate standardised data that feeds into national, regional, and global policy processes. Operation Clean Spot was highlighted as a circular, community-led waste management model that connects households, informal waste collectors, recyclers, and municipalities, while reinforcing local ownership, accountability, and long-term sustainability.

All-Atlantic Connect: Dialogue Sessions with O20 | Session 5: Science, Innovation & Cooperation | 11 December 2025

The fifth and final session of the All-Atlantic Connect Dialogue session with O20 focused on reflection, synthesis, and forward-looking action, drawing together the key themes explored across the series and reinforcing the transition from dialogue to implementation. The session served as a full-circle moment, linking Oceans20 Brazil’s foundational contributions with South Africa’s leadership of Ocean20, while emphasising continuity, collaboration, and delivery within the G20 ocean agenda and the All-Atlantic Declaration.

Contributions from **Prof. Ken Findley (Afriseas Solutions)**, **Prof. Alexander Turra (Oceans20 Brazil)**, and **Dr. Tammy Morris and Ms. Nicole du Plessis (Ocean20 South Africa)** collectively highlighted the importance of sustained civil society engagement, science diplomacy, and policy coherence in shaping inclusive and effective ocean futures. Speakers reflected on the All-Atlantic Connect Dialogue session with O20 as a platform that brought together diverse voices across science, policy, and practice, creating space for trust-building, shared learning, and cross-Atlantic collaboration.



Prof. Findlay emphasised the importance of grounding high-level ocean dialogues in practical realities, noting that lasting impact depends on the ability to translate commitments into coordinated, implementable action. He highlighted the value of partnerships that span institutions, sectors, and regions, and stressed that collaboration, rather than fragmentation, is critical in addressing complex, interconnected ocean challenges. His reflections reinforced the need for continuity across initiatives, ensuring that knowledge generated through dialogue processes is carried forward into policy development, implementation, and monitoring.

A central theme of the discussion that followed was the role of ocean literacy as a foundation for inclusive participation. Speakers stressed that education, both formal and informal, helps bridge the gap between scientific knowledge and everyday decision-making, empowering youth, coastal communities, and civil society to engage meaningfully in ocean governance processes. Ocean literacy was positioned not only as awareness-raising, but as a tool for strengthening agency, stewardship, and intergenerational responsibility.

The discussion also reflected on the importance of connecting knowledge to action. Participants noted that platforms such as All-Atlantic Connect can support this by fostering collaboration across disciplines, regions, and sectors, and by creating spaces where scientific, indigenous, and experiential knowledge are valued alongside policy expertise. Ensuring that learning outcomes inform implementation, monitoring, and feedback processes was identified as a key priority moving forward.

In closing, the session reaffirmed that resilient and sustainable ocean futures depend on long-term investment in people, knowledge, and relationships.

Key outcomes:

- **Cross sectoral exchange of knowledge:** Stakeholders in the finance, academia, maritime and other industry sectors exchanged knowledge and perspective on pressing ocean concerns.
- **Public awareness on challenges within the ocean space:** The discussions were instrumental in creating awareness of the challenges being faced in the ocean and industry environment.
- **Identification of opportunities to collaborate:** Knowledge exchange helped to identify both gaps in current understanding or practice, as well as opportunities for collaborative research, shared resource development, or joint initiatives to address the identified challenges.
- The series enhanced **shared understanding of Ocean20 and the All-Atlantic Declaration priority themes**, including inclusive ocean governance, sustainable finance, climate and energy transitions, food security, and science-based cooperation.
- The dialogues elevated **Global South and African perspectives**, particularly through South African case studies that demonstrated how inclusive, participatory, and rights-based approaches can strengthen ocean governance, improve policy outcomes, and enhance legitimacy.

Conclusion:



The All Atlantic Connect: Dialogue with O2O served as an optimal platform for Ocean20 and AAORIA to engage with the wider ocean community regarding its strategic priorities. This initiative facilitated a space for stakeholders to interact, elevate their ocean-related actions onto a global stage, and underscore initiatives intended for continuation beyond AAORIA and the G20 Brazilian and South African Presidency.



Appendix



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X1VR5T3UFCo>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VW-_s3uLSN0&t=2095s



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ohzBFTET9GM&t=19s>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_W5dLDAti7M&t=1005s



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ve1wcDv5oMw&t=2731s>