



Plenary Statement by the World Federation for Animals (WFA) on the 2026 Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue

The World Federation for Animals, a federation of over 70 organisations from across the globe, thanks the co-facilitators for the opportunity to contribute to this year's Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue.

The ocean is the foundation of life on Earth. Covering more than 70% of the planet, it is the largest and most interconnected ecosystem – the planet's primary life-support system and home to the majority of Earth's biodiversity. It drives global nutrient cycles, especially those of carbon and nitrogen, and produces much of the world's oxygen.

None of this happens on its own: the ocean's life-support functions depend on the animals that drive them. As recognised by over 260 scientists from around the world via the Scientific Consensus on Wildlife and Climate, wild animals such as whales, sharks, seabirds, fish, and invertebrates underpin the very integrity of marine ecosystems. Wild animals structure food webs, fertilise primary producers, sustain blue carbon habitats and shape where and how carbon is stored, among other critical ecosystem functions for climate action.

Animals are not only victims of climate change impacts, they are our hidden allies in meeting the Paris goals. For resilient coasts, robust blue carbon sinks, sustainable aquatic food systems and a stable climate, marine animals must be able to thrive and fulfil their ecological roles.

Considering that, as the [Third World Ocean Assessment](#) has reminded us this week, the ocean's health is in serious jeopardy, with ecosystems and habitats near or cross critical tipping points, this crisis calls for us to use all available tools. This includes protecting aquatic animals, given their indispensable role in climate action.

Elevating ambition in NDCs

The current NDC cycle represents a critical opportunity to raise ocean-based ambition across all five thematic priority areas, and to place marine animals at the heart of their ambition. Concrete commitments on wildlife-inclusive marine spatial planning, the protection of blue carbon sinks, the phase-out of practices that harm animals and ecosystems, such as bottom trawling, mangrove clearance, and destructive coastal development, would strengthen the ocean/climate-nexus in NDCs.

Achieving these commitments requires addressing the well-documented barriers: ocean-based measures tend to lack quantified targets and timelines; governance remains

fragmented across the ministries responsible for coastal planning, fisheries, energy and climate; and the contributions of wildlife to carbon cycling are absent from most accounting frameworks. Tools, such as the World Federation for Animals' [Animals4Climate](#) tool and the International Fund for Animal Welfare's [Wildlife guidelines for NDCs](#), can guide countries to translate animal-mediated processes into concrete, implementable measures.

The protection of marine wildlife offers a practical and concrete bridge between the ocean, climate and biodiversity agendas

The same measures that protect and restore wild animal populations can enhance carbon sequestration, strengthen climate resilience and secure the well-being of communities worldwide. As the summary and messages from this Dialogue are prepared for the wider UNFCCC process and the implementation of the Paris Agreement policy cycle, we encourage marine animals to be highlighted as a connecting thread: a practical entry point for more ambitious ocean NDCs, more coherent national strategies and more effective international cooperation.

The World Federation for Animals stands ready to work with Parties, other observers and communities to help turn these insights into concrete policies and partnerships in the years ahead.