

Heads of State/Government, Ministers, and Senior Officials from 30 Countries to Convene in Tokyo for the Island States Ocean Summit

Approximately 300 Participants to Discuss Climate Resilience and Sustainable Ocean Planning and Management

Press Conference: June 2, 2026 / Summit Dates: June 3–4, 2026

The Nippon Foundation, in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO, will host the inaugural Island States Ocean Summit in Tokyo, bringing together approximately 300 participants, including Heads of State or Government, ministers, and senior officials around 30 island states in the Pacific, Caribbean, Asia, Africa, and Indian Ocean regions, as well as representatives of United Nations agencies and other international organizations (as of May 13).

Island states are among the most vulnerable to sea level rise, ocean pollution, and other impacts of climate change. While these issues are addressed through broader international frameworks such as International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS), there is also growing recognition of the value of more focused discussions on ocean-related challenges that can support concrete policymaking and implementation.

This Summit will be the first international summit of its scale, which is dedicated specifically to ocean issues and island states. During the Summit, discussions will be co-chaired by H.E. Surangel Whipps Jr., President of the Republic of Palau, together with fellow co-chairs, and will focus on the urgent challenges facing island states. The Summit will promote Sustainable Ocean Planning and Management (SOPM), an evidence-based and climate-resilient approach that provides these states with a comprehensive, strategic, and future-oriented framework designed to guide decision-making about the overall sustainable use and conservation of a nation's ocean resources.

The Summit discussions will be co-chaired by:

- Yohei Sasakawa, Honorary Chair of The Nippon Foundation
- Vidar Helgesen, Executive Secretary of IOC
- H.E. Surangel Whipps Jr., President of the Republic of Palau and Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)

The Summit is being held within the framework of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), and its outcomes will contribute to upcoming global discussions on biodiversity, climate change, and ocean governance, including COP17 of the Convention on Biological Diversity and COP31 of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Background and Objectives

Island States, especially Small Island Developing States, are widely recognized as being among the states most affected by impacts of climate change and face an urgent need to strengthen their resilience in response to unprecedented environmental changes.

The Island States Ocean Summit is the first international summit which is dedicated specifically to oceans and island states and aims to explore pathways that support the long-term resilience and self-reliance of SIDS. In collaboration with leaders from government, academia, industry, and the ocean community, the Summit will promote the development of new action plans that support the conservation of marine environments while enabling the sustainable use of ocean resources.

The Summit discussions will be co-chaired by H.E. Surangel Whipps Jr., President of the Republic of Palau, Mr. Vidar Helgesen, Executive Secretary of IOC, and Yohei Sasakawa, Honorary Chair of The Nippon Foundation. On the final day of the Summit, a new initiative aimed at driving global-scale transformation and

innovation is expected to be announced.

The outcomes of the Summit will contribute to future international discussions on biodiversity, climate change, and ocean governance, including COP17 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and COP31 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), through IOC. This Japan-led initiative is expected to make a significant contribution to supporting island states around the world.

The Nippon Foundation and Support for Island States

For decades, the Nippon Foundation has supported island states around the world, particularly those in the Pacific region, which became important partners for Japan's maritime and economic activities.

In 1989, the Foundation established the Sasakawa Pacific Island Nations Fund and has since supported capacity development in maritime affairs and ocean science, while providing patrol vessels and small boats to Pacific island states.

IOC

The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO is the UN's lead body for ocean science, promoting international cooperation to strengthen the management, sustainable use, and resilience of the ocean. Bringing together 153 Member States, the IOC coordinates global efforts in ocean observations and services, tsunami warning systems, ocean science, capacity development, and ocean literacy, ensuring that science effectively informs policy, society, and sustainable ocean governance. Through its work, the IOC contributes to UNESCO's mission to advance scientific knowledge and build capacity as foundations for peace, societal progress, and sustainable development. As the coordinator of the UN Ocean Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), the IOC leads global efforts to transform ocean knowledge into action for the benefit of people and the planet.

Sustainable Ocean Planning and Management (SOPM)

Sustainable Ocean Planning and Management (SOPM) is a comprehensive, strategic and future-oriented framework designed to guide decision-making about the overall sustainable use and conservation of a nation's entire ocean resources. It is a whole-of-society, whole-of-government approach that serves as a unifying umbrella framework for ocean-related governance at all scales.

In June 2025, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO's Member States adopted a 5-year Strategy (2025-2030) on Sustainable Ocean Planning and Management with the mission to equip every nation with the capacity to develop sustainable ocean plans.

By developing integrated plans for fisheries, tourism, renewable energy, and other ocean-based industries, SOPM helps countries strengthen climate resilience while ensuring the long-term sustainability of marine ecosystems and coastal communities.

About The Nippon Foundation <https://www.nippon-foundation.or.jp/>

The Nippon Foundation is Japan's largest philanthropic foundation, established in 1962. Guided by the principle "Together, for pain and hope. Together, for the future," the Foundation supports a broad range of initiatives including humanitarian assistance, disability inclusion, child welfare, disaster response, and ocean conservation.



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