



# The Blue Economy in the New Normal: Capacity Development beyond COVID-19 Challenges and Opportunities

*Webinar on Microsoft Teams*  
27th November 2020 – 10.00 AM CET

## *Programme*

10:00 – 10:05	<b>Introduction</b> <i>Antonella VASSALLO, Managing Director, IOI – Panel Moderator</i>
10:05 – 10:15	<b>Welcome Remarks</b> <i>Awni BEHNAM; Honorary President, International Ocean Institute; Malta</i>
10:15 – 10:30 15 minutes	<b>Blue Economy challenges and opportunities: A perspective from the World Maritime University</b> <i>Cleopatra DOUMBIA-HENRY, President, World Maritime University</i>
10:30 – 10:45 15 minutes	<b>Extending the ‘contactless’ paradigm to the marine domain; How technology is revisiting our relationship with the sea in the lockdown era</b> <i>Alan DEIDUN; Ocean Ambassador for Malta; Director, IOI Malta</i>
10:45 – 11:00 15 minutes	<b>Adaptation strategies and resilience for the Blue Economy in the new normal: A trade perspective</b> <i>Isabelle DURANT; Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD, Switzerland</i>
11:00 – 11:15 15 minutes	<b>Opportunities in the advent COVID-19: The Blue Economy Solution</b> <i>Chad BLACKMAN; Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Barbados to the UN and Other International Organisations at Geneva</i>
11:15 – 11:30 15 minutes	<b>Capacity development beyond COVID-19, challenges and opportunities</b> <i>Aimee GONZALES; Executive Director of PEMSEA, Philippines</i>
11:30 – 11:45 15 minutes	<b>Blue growth opportunities and environmental responsibilities</b> <i>Karmenu VELLA; Fmr European Commissioner for Environment Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Malta</i>
11.45 – 12.00	<i>Questions and Discussion: moderated panel discussion</i>
12:00	<b>Closure of Session</b>

## Development of Panel:

During this webinar, invited speakers will share knowledge and experiences gained in areas of the Blue Economy, ocean governance, climate and oceans, and human health, from the perspective of capacity development. Together the speakers will provide an outlook on the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic and explore opportunities to mitigate its effects by focusing on the human factor and identifying actions to empower collaboration and capacity building in response to the challenges in the times of COVID-19 and beyond.

The COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented in our lifetime and estimates show that it may generate a decline of world trade by a third this year alone, with Blue Economy sectors such as maritime transport, fisheries, and tourism being severely disrupted by the pandemic.

At the same time, the UN/DESA Policy Brief #81<sup>1</sup> illustrates how COVID-19 threatens to reverse progress on the global achievement of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and will have “in some cases, turned back years of progress”. The impacts of the pandemic have spared no segment of the population, no economic sector, and no part of the world, with a disproportional impact on the poor and the vulnerable.

The likelihood of this situation to extend beyond 2021 looks very possible at the time of writing. Current forecasts of vulnerability to more socio-economic shocks, lack of progress in the SDGs, and in implementing the Paris Agreement, and the already significant gaps in implementation of the provisions of UNCLOS on capacity development and transfer of marine technology, hinder the sustainable harnessing of Blue Economy resources at a pivotal moment in time when such resources may deliver a much needed impetus towards a quick post-COVID-19 recovery.

Capacity building in ocean governance plays a critical role in the reversal and mitigation of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. It can enhance progress in achieving the SDGs and ultimately in ensuring safe and healthy oceans. The aim of such capacity development should be to increase scientific knowledge, promote sustainable practices and encourage planning and decision-making aimed at achieving equitable ocean governance practices, to govern and sustain a Blue Economy that benefits the generations of today and tomorrow, across the world.

Placing people at the centre of the international response to achieve equitable and resilient outcomes for all, identifying future skills and capacity needs - including in ocean governance - will be essential in order to harness the Blue Economy to its full potential. The SDGs, the Paris Climate Agreement, the issue of marine technology transfer and capacity building within the new international legally binding agreement on biodiversity beyond national jurisdictions (BBNJ) are all critical components of any post-COVID transformative recovery.

**Moderator:** Antonella Vassallo, Managing Director, International Ocean Institute

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<sup>1</sup> The UN/DESA Policy Brief #81: Impact of COVID-19 on SDG progress: a statistical perspective; <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/un-desa-policy-brief-81-impact-of-covid-19-on-sdg-progress-a-statistical-perspective/> accessed Oct23, 2020