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Importance of Participatory Science in 3 Panels of the 3rd United Nations Conference in Nice in June 2025



- News - General news -
Publication date: Monday 6 October 2025

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On the occasion of the 3rd edition of the UNOC Conference, the city of Nice hosted actors from all over the world for a conference “focused on action.”

This event was the perfect opportunity to highlight participatory science and its contributions to sustainable development (SDG14) and the protection of the marine environment.

Three major agreements emerged from this conference. Objectif Sciences International welcomes these decisions, which will help strengthen participatory science projects.

The Agreement on Plastic Pollution

First, OSI welcomed the announcement of an agreement aspiring to adopt a global objective to reduce the production and consumption of primary plastic polymers to sustainable levels.

This commitment was to be confirmed during negotiations held at the UN in Geneva from August 5 to 14, 2025, where OSI was present to bring forward the voice of participatory science.

However, the discussions of this “INC-5.2” session did not reach a consensus. States were divided on major issues such as limiting plastic production, including certain chemicals of concern, and financing arrangements.

The proposed text was ultimately deemed insufficient by several delegations, and no binding treaty could be adopted in Geneva. The negotiations therefore ended in a deadlock, with the only outcome being a “reflection note” prepared by the co-chairs to guide the next steps.

At this stage, the hoped-for global agreement has therefore not been formally confirmed. Negotiations will have to continue, and OSI will keep emphasizing the essential contribution of participatory science to document plastic pollution and mobilize civil society in support of a truly ambitious future treaty.

Enjeu: reducing plastic consumption

Participatory science, in addition to contributing to research, also has an educational and awareness-raising dimension aimed at civil society.

Multiplying participatory science initiatives over the long term can help raise public awareness, which in turn could support the objectives of reducing plastic consumption envisioned in this agreement.

Enjeu: reducing plastic production

Participatory Science also has an important role to play in reducing plastic production. Faced with the need to reduce plastic, research and participatory science could help identify alternative materials that are more environmentally respectful and less harmful (with minimal deleterious effects on ecosystems).

Governance of International Waters

This 3rd edition of the United Nations Ocean Conference also enabled the acceleration of the entry into force of the High Seas Treaty or BBNJ (Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction).

Signed on 20/06/2023, this treaty aims to combat the exploitation of the deep seabed and provide means to encourage scientific expeditions and initiatives.

This treaty is particularly important in the framework of UNOC and the pursuit of SDG14 because it should establish large-scale marine protected areas in the high seas, preventing the risk of these zones being appropriated by national powers.

These zones are extremely important in the fight against climate change and for marine biodiversity. This is why it is essential to counter national egoisms.

Olivier Poivre d'Arvor noted that "this is also a great victory for science." Indeed, it contributes at the same time to strengthening participatory science by facilitating access for seafarers, fishers, navigators, divers, NGOs, citizens, and collaborative expeditions, thereby facilitating contributions to scientific research.

Regulation of Fishing

Finally, one of the major decisions taken at this conference concerns fishing regulation and the intensification of the fight against illegal fishing, with the ratification of the WTO "Fish 1" agreement, which bans illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

Participatory science can also contribute here to the pursuit of these commitments.

Collaborative science projects could help design methods and devices to avoid overfishing practices. Indeed, it is known today that "for 1 target fish caught, 5 are discarded at sea."

Conclusion

Following these discussions, OSI (Objectif Sciences International) was present in Geneva in August, at the follow-up conference of UNOC, to continue the work undertaken.

The recognition of the role of participatory science through the agreements adopted at this 3rd edition marks an important turning point.

It heralds the opening of new pathways toward inclusive, transparent, and locally rooted ocean governance.

In this sense, OSI intends to continue its action by promoting the deployment of concrete projects, such as hackathons and science camps, to sustain this dynamic and make participatory science an essential lever for achieving SDG14 objectives and a key tool for ocean preservation and conservation.