

Statement of the Steering Committee on Oceans, Islands, and Coastal Zones of the Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research (IAI)

On the occasion of the 33rd Meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research (IAI), held in Asunción, Paraguay, on 29–30 May 2025, the Steering Committee on Oceans, Islands, and Coastal Zones, in alignment with the principles of scientific excellence, international cooperation, open data sharing, regional resilience, and environmental governance in the Americas, and building upon Decision XXXI/6—which instructs the IAI Directorate to establish a research and training program on the nexus of oceans, islands, coastal systems aligned with the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science, to support decision making by Parties, to seek extramural research funding to support these activities, and to identify partners—hereby states as follows:

Considering:

1. The IAI is developing a regional transdisciplinary ocean research and training program under the UN Decade of Ocean Science, addressing knowledge gaps, supporting the co-design of research, and strengthening science-policy interfaces in the Americas.
2. The IAI is supporting collaborative efforts to address the sargassum crisis in the Caribbean, contributing to the promotion of integrated management and regional governance of sargassum to build a resilient blue economy in Caribbean countries.
3. We recognize the regional leadership of the Eastern Tropical Pacific Marine Corridor (CMAR) and support efforts to enhance transboundary cooperation and marine governance through science and capacity building.
4. The IAI promotes the Blue One Health approach that links ocean health with human, animal, and environmental well-being.
5. We support investment in scientific capacity and policy dialogues around coastal blue carbon ecosystems, including mangroves, seagrasses, and tidal marshes, as key pillars and mainstream tools for achieving the 30x30 targets and advancing nature-based solutions.
6. The IAI is fostering regional research to monitor, understand, and mitigate the effects of environmental changes on marine ecosystems and coastal communities.
7. The IAI serves as a science-policy platform to support Parties in the integrated implementation of the CBD, UNFCCC, and UNCCD, and in aligning with other related international agreements. It encourages using ocean-based solutions that connect biodiversity conservation, climate action, and land–sea interactions.

We reaffirm our commitment to:

1. **Strengthening cooperation** across North, Central, and South America and the Caribbean through enhanced South–South and South–North collaboration. This includes supporting regional research networks, data sharing, and capacity-building efforts to co-develop solutions for ocean sustainability.
2. **Recommending the integration** of the Blue One Health approach into global ocean policy frameworks, including in the 3rd UN Ocean Conference Declaration, to reinforce

the linkages between ocean sustainability, public health, biodiversity, and climate adaptation, particularly for vulnerable coastal and island communities.

3. **Affirming the importance of valuing Indigenous and local knowledge systems.** Inclusive capacity building, the recognition of traditional knowledge, and the active participation of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) are essential for equitable and effective ocean solutions.
4. **Recognizing ocean literacy as a cornerstone of sustainable ocean stewardship.** We support inclusive education and outreach programs that raise awareness, build capacity, and foster behavioral change across generations, sectors, and governance levels. Ocean literacy must be mainstreamed into public and private decision-making processes and supported through formal, informal, and community-based learning initiatives.
5. **Investing in capacity-building platforms and long-term mechanisms for co-producing knowledge and fostering science-policy dialogue.** These efforts must ensure the meaningful inclusion of IPLCs in knowledge systems, governance spaces, and capacity-strengthening initiatives. The IAI's Science, Technology and Policy (STeP) Fellowship Program is one such model to empower early-career professionals, including those from underrepresented groups, to support informed, evidence-based ocean governance.
6. **Underscoring the urgency of tailored and accessible financing mechanisms for ocean science,** particularly for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) and its Small Island Developing States (SIDS), which face disproportionate ocean-related risks and resource constraints. We call for developing, establishing, and expanding innovative financial models, including blue bonds, blended finance, and climate-ocean trust funds. These mechanisms must ensure long-term sustainability, support locally led initiatives and enable the inclusive participation of IPLCs. Strengthening financial resilience in LAC and SIDS is essential to advancing the implementation of ocean-based solutions, nature-based adaptation, and overall sustainability.
7. **Highlighting the critical role of transdisciplinary science, co-designed with policymakers, stakeholders, and social actores, in enabling actionable, inclusive, and equitable responses to ocean-related challenges.** Ocean sustainability requires scientific excellence, societal relevance, and results that are actionable and accessible to both decision-makers and communities. We call for increased investment in transdisciplinary and stakeholder-driven research initiatives, such as the Belmont Forum's Oceans 2 Collaborative Research Action (CRA), co-developed by diverse partners to address pressing ocean challenges across scales.

On behalf of the Committee,

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