



# **THE OCEAN, A GLOBAL CHALLENGE AND SOLUTION**

Presentation

**STRATEGIC REPORT 2022-2023**

# THE OCEAN, A GLOBAL CHALLENGE AND SOLUTION

**STRATEGIC REPORT 2022-2023**



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## Reading grid

The Royal Institute for Strategic Studies (IRES) 2022/2023 Strategic Report is produced in hybrid layout for the very first time: a Summary Report in both paper and digital versions along with a collection of supporting in-depth Wikis, published on the Foresight Intelligence digital platform.

For easier navigation between the Summary Report and the Wikis available on the IRES website:

- QR codes were included in the print edition alongside the relevant text. To access the reference documents directly, simply scan the QR code with a smartphone,
- Hyperlinks to the corresponding documents were included in the digital version

Terms with an asterisk (\*) are defined in the online lexicon.

### Legend :

**Burgundy:** Important elements

**Bold:** Titles and keywords

**Blue:** Hypertext links



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## Liminary

Oceans are essential to the habitability of the planet. They regulate the Earth's climate and weather patterns, provide water that supports life, supply oxygen and food that sustain life at sea and on land, and perform a wide range of ecosystem functions. Oceans have absorbed some 90% of greenhouse gas-induced heat and 25% of human-induced carbon emissions to date.

The future of the ocean, mankind's collective heritage and lifeblood of our planet, today however, presents significant existential risk to the survival of living beings, at a time when, paradoxically, we need it more than ever.

The fact is that ocean health is deteriorating at an unsuspected pace. Little studied by scientists, hardly or not at all taken into account by politics, neglected by a consumerist civilization unaware of its vulnerability, the world's ocean is in distress.

The multitude of marine and coastal ecosystem services is deteriorating, coastlines are changing and water levels rising, hurricanes are intensifying as extreme climatic phenomena multiply, marine life is suffocating, toxic species proliferate and entire stretches of ocean no longer have the capacity to sustain life. Hence the urgency for robust, efficient and rapid solutions to this state of affairs, which is set to worsen irreversibly in the years to come.



How should we reconsider the Ocean issue in the face of multiple anthropogenic pressures and ongoing global warming? How should we embrace the scope of this matter in social, economic, geopolitical and governance terms? These are the questions that, to be resolved, first require understanding and knowledge of the Ocean, its workings along with man-made and natural disruption risks it faces.

Is there still time to act? The answer is yes, because the stakes are enormous and the ocean's ability to recover is remarkable. The Covid-19 pandemic proved that Nature is able to reclaim its rights and that self-purification of both air and water took place as soon as contaminating activities ceased in the initial phases of the global lockdown.

For if the ocean is the issue, it is also the solution: the only way to slow down climate change giving humanity the time to transform lifestyles and evolve into a civilization that is more responsible towards the planet and future generations.

Morocco, a maritime country, is affected in more than one way by the Ocean question. It cannot remain on the sidelines of global efforts to safeguard the ocean. The Kingdom needs to master the issues in order to fully commit itself in the same way it has always done. Morocco never ceased to work towards a policy of sustainable development since the 1992 Rio Summit. The country thus pursued a strategy of regional and international cooperation.

As a State Party to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which it ratified on May 31, 2007, the Kingdom also signed a number of international conventions for the preservation of marine environments and biodiversity and for the fight against global warming and pollution.

The willingness to join the global effort to combat climate change, which is responsible for ocean warming, permeates to the highest level of the State, as attested by the commitment and efforts of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, notably in:

- "The Tangier Call" for strong joint action in favor of the climate, launched on September 20, 2015, by the Moroccan Sovereign and French President François Hollande,
- adhering to the Paris Agreement and to the first "Because the Ocean" initiative declaration,
- organizing the COP 22 in Marrakech in November 2016,
- holding an "Ocean" thematic day at COP 22, on November 11, 2016 in the Green Civil Society Zone and a special "Ocean Action Day" on November 12, 2016 as part of the United Nations Global Action Agenda,
- launching programs and action plans as part of the process of adapting to climate change,
- developing renewable energies, which are expected to account for 52% of installed electrical capacity by 2030.

Morocco established itself as a naval power as early as the Middle Ages, thereby making its mark on history and engaging in trade with neighboring countries and faraway civilizations. The country holds a very special place in :

- the Mediterranean, as a common regional space of peace, stability and prosperity: strengthening the Euro-Mediterranean partnership should lead to reducing the development gap between its two shores.

The development of major infrastructure projects (Tangier-Med port complex, Nador free zone, ...) is part of "Our strategic project that aims to make the Mediterranean space a powerful driver for national development and take-off, economic partnership and cultural interchange."

*Excerpt from the King's Speech during His Official Visit to the Oriental Region, March 18, 2003.*

- the Atlantic is an international space intended not only to facilitate dynamic relations with the American continent but also to create a vast area of close interdependence with the countries of West Africa, particularly on matters of sustainable development and security :

"The Kingdom of Morocco, by virtue of its geostrategic position, could play a constructive role in the extension of the "Maritime Silk Road", not only towards Atlantic Europe, but also and above all, towards countries of West Africa, with whom My country holds multidimensional ties."

*Excerpt from the King's Speech addressing attendees of the China-Africa Cooperation Forum Summit, December 5, 2015*

"We are committed to making the Moroccan Sahara an axis for trade and human interaction between Africa and Europe."

*Excerpt from the King's Message addressed to participants of the first African Congress "Maintenance, Preservation of Road Heritage and Technical Innovation", May 4, 2016.*

In addition, Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Hasnaa, Chair of the Mohammed VI Foundation for Environmental Protection and Patron of the Decade of Ocean Sciences for Sustainable Development Alliance, reiterated Morocco's commitment to achieving the objectives of this Decade, at the "A Brave New Ocean" high-level event, held on February 10, 2021, in conjunction with the Executive Council of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission.

In the wake of Royal Guidelines, the Royal Institute for Strategic Studies (IRES) has paid particular attention to marine and maritime issues since 2015:

- Organizing an international meeting on the geostrategic stakes of maritime spaces, in November 2015.
- Drawing of the 2017 Strategic Report on "Planetary stakes of the biosphere", which highlights the ocean as a major breaking point in Earth's ecosystems.
- Hosting a day of reflection entitled "The Strait of Gibraltar: issues, challenges".
- Organizing an international conference on major issues and sustainable solutions for seas and oceans in February 2020.

Today, it has become more urgent than ever to recognize the global stakes at play for the future of the ocean and coastal areas, not only for sustainable development, but for the very survival of the human species.

This is why IRES, as is now the case with its strategic reports, chose to objectively address the issues to suggest possible response strategies and sustainable actions, in line with the development model outlined in its 2019/2020 Strategic Report.

The IRES 2022/2023 Strategic Report is Morocco's contribution to global reflection and action as part of the 'United Nations Decade of Ocean Sciences for Sustainable Development 2021-2030'.

Devised following the prospective meta-method (Understand, Anticipate, Propose), the present report is based on a new interpretation grid of the world, as adopted by IRES, resting on the five following pillars: refocusing on human beings, reconsidering Man's relationship with Nature, planetarization, exponentiality and governance. It consists of a Summary Report and a digital knowledge platform, comprising more in-depth articles, databases, graphics, videos and other resources.

This hybrid format meets the following four objectives :

- facilitate the appropriation of ocean issues by decision-makers by providing a synthesis of the essence of the analysis,
- enable students, researchers and professionals who require more detailed information to access IRES' extensive data and analysis library, available in the digital platform of this report,
- contribute to raising ocean literacy among young people, elected officials, members of civil society,
- placing the issue addressed in a long-term perspective by updating it over time on the dedicated website.

Intended primarily to gain an appreciation for ocean ecosystems as a global and worldwide system: the Ocean Sphere, the first part of this Strategic Report outlines the current status and conditions (Chapter 1) and foresees possible future developments (Chapter 2).

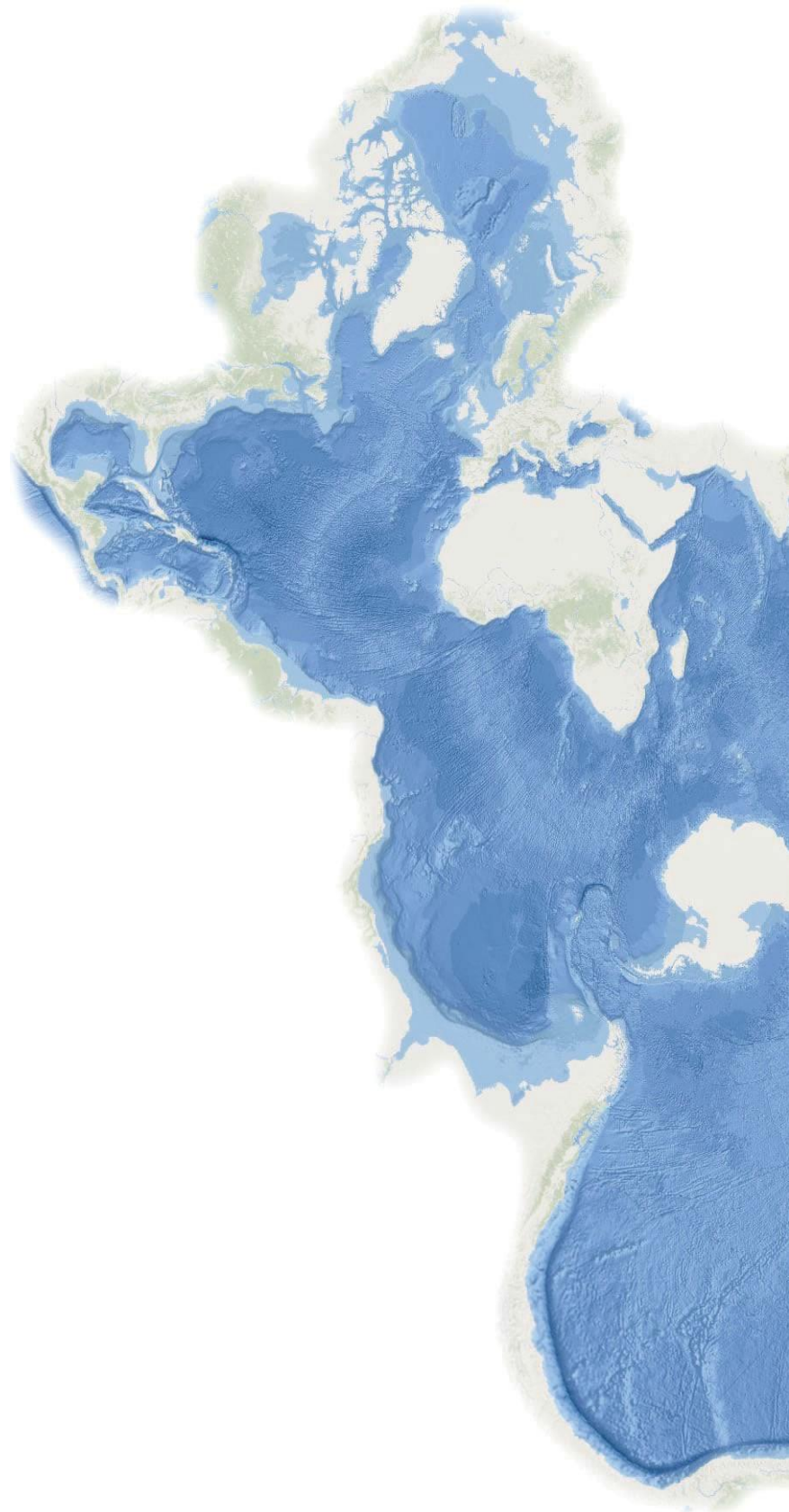
The second part highlights interactions binding humanity and ocean as an interface between nature and culture (chapter 1) and details the damage wrought on the ocean by humanity's recent economic development and potential knock-on effects to be faced in the coming century (chapter 2).

The third part offers solutions to remedy the situation, through reversing the dominant Anthropocene paradigm for a new approach to sustainability (Chapter 1), a significant advance in global governance (Chapter 2) and the ocean development of Morocco, as an aquapreneur, a country with its own vision of the future of the ocean, protector and entrepreneur of the aquatic world (Chapter 3).

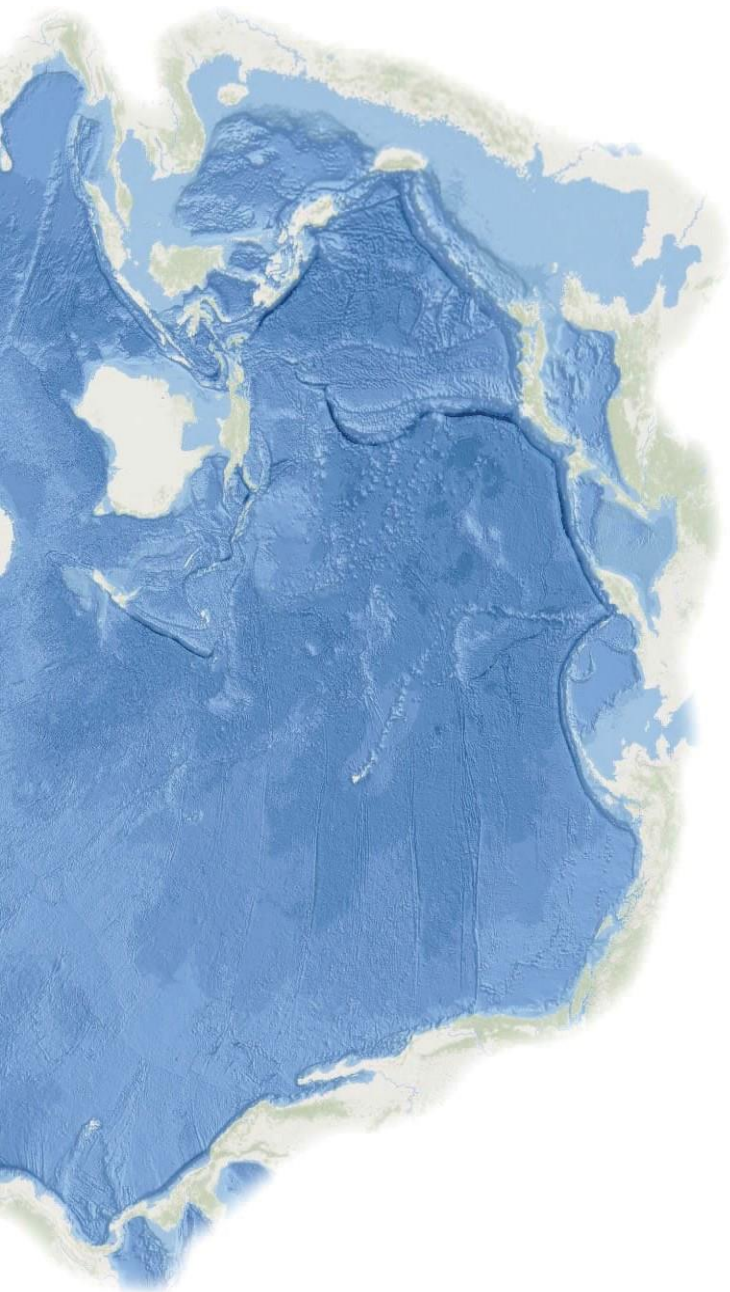
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The Spilhaus map depicts the world's oceans as a single body of water.

[Projet Spilhaus ArcGIS, CC BY-ND](#)







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*A shared consciousness of our global interdependence must give rise to a new common logic, to define and recognize the global commons that support life on Earth – the planetary system that connects us all and on which we all depend.*

*Restoring our common home:  
declaration for Stockholm+50*

## Conclusion

*“Climate models predict significant changes in ocean conditions over the next century: warming (virtually certain); ocean acidification (virtually certain); decreased stability of calcite mineral forms (virtually certain); loss of oxygen (very likely); near-surface nutrient depletion (likely) ; decreased net primary productivity\* (high confidence); reduced fish production (likely); and loss of key ecosystem services (medium confidence) that are important for human well-being and sustainable development” (IPCC, [Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere](#), chapter 5, 2021)*

In summary, the Anthropocene is directly responsible for major and irreversible climate change, the artificialization of much of the Earth’s landmass, particularly its coastlines, and the accelerated degradation of the Ocean Sphere, which is a vital contributor to life on Earth through oxygenation of the atmosphere and regulation of the climate.

Whether as a result of climate change\* or other direct anthropogenic reasons, the ocean is in serious danger of becoming so unbalanced that it no longer is able to provide the ecosystem functions that sustain life on Earth.

At the same time, in order to develop our material civilization, currently at an impasse as a result of our exponential consumption, we must resort to a more sustainable development, both for the ocean, whose systemic equilibrium we must absolutely protect, and for humanity, which must continue to breathe, feed itself, and move about...

The impetus of the Decade of Ocean Sciences\* (UNESCO) has re-launched the mobilization around the Sustainable Development Goal 14 "Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development" and opened the way to global awareness.

However, while many citizen movements and local initiatives have taken off, major global industry and institutional actors remain divided between those who are truly committed to the protection and sustainable use of the ocean, those who are "blue-washing" themselves in adopting the fashionable discourse of ocean protection and those who persist in ignoring the problem, pursuing destructive activities (overfishing, coastal urbanization, destruction of ecosystems, ...) and even accelerating the industrialization of the ocean.

The year 2022 has proven to be a pivotal year for **global** ocean policy :

- Countless voices (States, citizens, stakeholders) were heard at various international conferences, testifying to the emergence of a will to change things.
- Multiple multilateral negotiations have taken place, ranging from the development of a legally binding international instrument to stop plastic pollution, to the reduction of harmful fishing subsidies, to a treaty on marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction, to a post-2020 global biodiversity framework... all opportunities to demonstrate the determination of nations to reverse the decline in ocean health.

However, the pace of international decision-making and national implementation, as well as the means of enforcing the rules, do not measure up to the gravity of the situation.

Climate, oceans, biodiversity... the environmental stakes are no longer compatible with the 20<sup>th</sup> century's modes of development: the Anthropocene and the economy of predation.

What is needed now is a real overhaul of our conception of the world - placing human beings at the heart of Nature and no longer above it - and of our global development model, in favor of a new kind of wealth created by the protection, maintenance and observation of a healthy environment.

Under the leadership of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, the Kingdom of Morocco can become an exemplary witness of such a change in perspective, by recognizing the Ocean Sphere as a common good of humanity, by developing innovative solutions that add value and are not destructive, and by leading a community of oceanic interests capable of advancing the law, knowledge and skills in this area.

Thus, the ocean will not only be a global issue, but will also become the planetary solution to the unsustainability of current development.