



## Founding Declaration of Marine Universities

International Forum of Marine Universities – Nice, June 7, 2025

We, the marine universities from across all continents and gathered in Nice on June 7, 2025, for the inaugural International Forum of Marine Universities, held as part of the third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC 3), affirm our shared commitment to the preservation and sustainable stewardship of the Ocean.

### Ocean: A Major Challenge for the Future

The Ocean is essential for climate regulation, biodiversity, ensuring food security, and safeguarding human health. It is also at the heart of numerous environmental, economic, and societal challenges. In this context, universities have the responsibility to educate and empower future generations, and produce the knowledge and action necessary for the sustainable use and governance of the Ocean.

### Findings

#### 1. *Interdisciplinarity in Ocean Sciences*

- The study of the Ocean requires an interdisciplinary approach, encompassing Natural, Human and Social Sciences.
- The current structure of many universities often isolates these disciplines, making interdisciplinarity difficult to implement.
- Training at sea is essential but costly and unequally accessible across institutions and regions.

#### 2. *Universities and the Blue Economy*

- The blue economy is rapidly expanding, generating a growing demand for specialized skills.

- Universities should adapt their programs to better meet the needs of businesses, institutions, and civil society actors.
- There is often a lack of structured dialogue between universities and stakeholders in the maritime sector.

### *3. Strengthening inclusive Ocean Science Education Processes*

- Ocean sciences are a global issue, yet access to education and resources remains unequal.
- Awareness of Ocean issues should start as early as primary school and intensify throughout the educational journey.
- University education must include curricula adapted to both local contexts and global challenges.
- Ocean education must be available for communities and people outside formal education systems

## Recommendations

### *1. Developing an Interdisciplinary Approach to Ocean Sciences*

- Integrate interdisciplinarity into academic programs from the undergraduate level
- Promote inter-university collaborations to pool resources and develop specialized training programs.
- Establish training-at-sea programs accessible to a greater number of students.
- Integrate rapidly evolving technological advances in the design of marine training programs (eg. artificial intelligence, genomics...).

### *2. Strengthening Dialogue Between Universities and Blue Economy Stakeholders*

- Create exchange platforms between universities, businesses, and institutions to align a significant proportion of academic training with industry needs.
- Encourage businesses and government to fund fundamental research projects in Ocean sciences.
- Develop continuous professional training programs to support the evolving maritime professions in the context of a planet with limited resources and the need for transformative changes.

### *3. Developing and promoting literacy for Ocean empowerment for all*

- Enhance Ocean education, public awareness, public participation and public access to information, through formal, informal and non-formal education, life-long learning including citizen science
- Ensure equal access to knowledge and public participation for informed Ocean action and public policy
- Increase coordination efforts with formal education to promote Ocean science carriers and the development of common key competences in future students.
- Contribute to human development and global citizenship

#### *4. Structuring an International Network of Marine Universities*

- Establish national and regional networks of marine universities to facilitate cooperation and resource sharing,
- Institute the regular convening of the International Forum of Marine Universities at each UNOC to ensure commitment follow-up.
- Promote academic exchanges and the mobility of students and faculty between institutions, in particular from and within the Global South.
- Improve the implication of marine universities in major international platforms related to the Ocean.

#### **Our Ambitions for UNOC 4 in 2028**

In cooperation with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO and regional academic networks, we commit to achieve the following objectives and to review our progress at the next Forum in 2028:

1. **Establish shared training-at-sea programs** at the regional level and connect with existing networks to facilitate access to infrastructures and equipment for students and researchers from various universities.
2. **Create an international observatory for Ocean science education**, in partnership with the IOC, to map and harmonize academic curricula and promote interdisciplinarity.
3. **Launch a regional network of university incubators dedicated to the blue economy**, fostering innovation and maritime entrepreneurship in collaboration with economic and institutional stakeholders.

We also call on each maritime region to structure its own initiatives to address the specific needs of its local ecosystems while contributing to global efforts for a sustainable Ocean.

#### **Conclusion**

We, marine universities, reaffirm our commitment to strengthening international academic cooperation, promoting interdisciplinary education, and developing a structured dialogue with blue economy stakeholders. We call for concerted action to make Ocean education a fundamental pillar of sustainable development and marine conservation.

Done in Nice, June 7, 2025.