

Summary of Outcomes: Addressing the Funding Challenges for the Global Ocean Observing System

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The discussion explored how diversified funding models, stronger industry engagement, and international partnerships could help address persistent funding gaps in the global ocean observing system.

Role of the Marine Economy

Participants highlighted significant potential for the marine economy to contribute science-ready ocean data, provided appropriate policy frameworks and incentives are in place. Key sectors include maritime transport and ports, submarine telecommunications cables, energy, tourism, defence, and fisheries. Ships of opportunity and infrastructure such as telecom cables offer scalable platforms for data collection (e.g. seismic, environmental, biodiversity). However, collaboration often remains fragmented and localized, with challenges around data ownership, monetization, and regulatory complexity, particularly in regions with overlapping national and sub-national governance.

Industry Engagement Dynamics

Interest in ocean data varies by organisational maturity:

- Start-ups are data-hungry and innovation-driven.
- SMEs often build proprietary data streams for commercial use.
- Large industries collect data at scale and are increasingly interested in projections and uncertainty management.
Energy and extractive industries may fund data collection indirectly (e.g. EIAs), but data access and reuse are often restricted.

Government Funding and Policy

Growing governmental investment requires a coherent, unified message and clearer interfaces with policymakers. Examples such as France's coordinated policy approach and forthcoming national policy briefs illustrate the value of single entry points to government and aligned advocacy. Case studies demonstrating societal benefits (e.g. tourism, coastal protection, climate services) were seen as essential.

Philanthropy and Alternative Funding

Philanthropy is an important but complex funding source. Understanding philanthropic motivations is critical, as interests may skew toward high-profile topics (e.g. marine CDR). Risks include misalignment with long-term observing needs. Opportunities include:

- Developing compelling case studies linking ocean observations to priority themes (MPAs, climate, interventions).
- Sharing best practices among POGO members.
- Direct engagement between POGO and philanthropic organisations.
- Creating a portfolio of fundable ocean observing projects.
- Exploring POGO's role as a funding broker or recipient, including innovative mechanisms such as pooled or crowd funding and links with climate finance (e.g. Green Climate Fund).

Potential Role for POGO

POGO could act as a trusted intermediary by:

- Creating structured channels with industry to articulate ocean data needs.
- Brokering best practices for national engagement and industrial approvals (e.g. EIAs).
- Advocating globally for the value of ocean observations.
- Facilitating data sharing, sensor development, and partnerships.
- Serving as an entry point for philanthropic and redistributed funding to support its pillars and member initiatives.

Overall, the session emphasized the need for coordinated advocacy, diversified funding sources, and POGO's potential role as a connector between science, industry, governments, and philanthropy.