



# ECOPS AT THE 2025 ALL-ATLANTIC FORUM

All-Atlantic Ocean Research and Innovation Alliance (AAORIA)

Authors: Uriel Mendoza, Kardiatou Samba

Date: October 2025

High-level officials, ocean researchers, policymakers and civil society actors gathered in Brussels, Belgium, on 25–26 September 2025 for **the All-Atlantic Forum, organized by the All-Atlantic Ocean Research and Innovation Alliance (AAORIA)**. Born from the Galway (2013), Belém (2017) and Washington (2022) processes, AAORIA consolidates a transatlantic community dedicated to science, innovation and diplomacy to tackle common challenges in the Atlantic Ocean: warming, sea level rise, biodiversity loss, pollution and overexploitation.

In 2025, AAORIA reaffirmed its results-oriented approach and commitment to serving coastal communities. Two strategic pillars guide its action: **coastal resilience, and ocean observation and modelling**. The first promotes co-designed solutions with governments, communities and science, including frameworks and indicators, ecosystem-based restoration such as mangrove and seagrass beds, and early warning and participatory systems. The second integrates observation and interoperable data platforms, such as Copernicus Marine Service, the European Digital Twin Ocean and GOOS best practices, to underpin policy decisions with robust evidence.

The Forum also marked **important institutional milestones**. Ghana formally joined the Alliance through the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, while ICES, the AIR Centre, GEOMAR, Europe Jacques Delors, the Oceano Azul Foundation and The Ocean Race were welcomed as new Supporters. Key initiatives were launched or consolidated: the Network of Coastal Resilience Beacon Sites, a set of recommendations for implementing the Ocean Observation and Modelling Work Plan, and the Blue Intergenerational Programme connecting early-career ocean professionals with senior experts. A new line of work on sustainable aquaculture was also introduced to align evidence, social acceptance and best practices.

Concrete mechanisms were highlighted, including technical assistance to governments, regional hubs in Latin America and the Caribbean, West Africa and the Caribbean, and capacity building through educational and intergenerational programmes. At the close of the Forum, Brazil was announced as the host of the 2026 All-Atlantic Forum in Salvador, Bahia, on 15–16 April 2026.

## 2025 All-Atlantic Forum

---

The two-day programme combined high-level plenary sessions, thematic panels and co-design spaces with the Atlantic community.

Day 1 opened with welcoming remarks from the European Commission and the European Parliament, followed by the session **“From Enlightenment to Action”**, which set AAORIA’s transition towards implementation, with contributions from Ghana, Morocco, Canada, Argentina, Cabo Verde and the EU. The first thematic block focused on **coastal resilience**, with presentations from Germany, Trinidad & Tobago, South Africa and Argentina, and the official launch of the Network of Coastal Resilience Beacon Sites. This was followed by the **ocean observation and modelling** session, with NOAA, the European Commission, SAEON, GOOS and private sector representatives underlining the need for interoperability, addressing data gaps and co-designing activities in under-observed Atlantic regions. The day also featured the first part of the Intergenerational Dialogue and afternoon sessions on **ocean literacy, public engagement** and the launch of the **Blue Intergenerational Programme**.

Day 2 began with a scene-setting panel including leaders from the EU and South Africa, and continued with **cross-cutting Atlantic science interactions**. AAORIA Supporters such as IOC-UNESCO, the AIR Centre, ICES, The Ocean Race, GEOMAR, the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation and the Oceano Azul Foundation shared their perspectives and initiatives. The block on the **sustainable blue economy and food from the ocean** brought together ICES, EATiP, Matís, UNTDF, Cefas and the European Commission.

A dedicated session addressed linkages with the polar seas, with AWI, Europe Jacques Delors, the Argentine Antarctic Institute and the European Polar Coordination Office. The afternoon featured project pitches from Mission Atlantic, BlueMissionAA, OPERA, ACTNOW and others, followed by the announcement of Brazil as the 2026 Forum host. The event concluded with a reaffirmation of AAORIA's agenda focused on coastal resilience, ocean observation and sustainable aquaculture, all under an intergenerational lens.



*ECOPs gathered at the Intergenerational Dialogue Session  
Credit: Thomas Blairon, Pixelshake*

Side events prior to the All-Atlantic event on 24<sup>th</sup> of September contributed to shaping the Forum's outcomes. In Scotland House, stakeholders co-designed resilience pathways and drafted a Work Programme on Good Practices and Indicators. At the Charlemagne building, two workshops addressed polar oceans and climate, with initiatives such as Antarctica InSync and Arctic Ocean 2050 in view of the 5th International Polar Year, and the co-design of ocean observation and modelling activities to operationalize the Work Plan recommendations. Two days earlier, on 23 September, the Intergenerational Dialogue gathered ECOPs and senior professionals to prepare policy recommendations and a dedicated policy brief for the Alliance's high-level board.

## Early Careers at the 2025 All-Atlantic Forum

**Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs)** were deeply involved throughout the Forum, from the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September Dialogue session and the side events on the 24<sup>th</sup> to the plenary sessions on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>. ECOPs participation was structured around six main thematic groups: increasing understanding of the relationship between the ocean and climate; monitoring, protecting, and restoring marine ecosystems and biodiversity; coordinating ocean observing and seabed mapping efforts; tackling the impacts of marine pollution; promoting circular and sustainable ocean economies and fisheries; and advancing ocean literacy and public engagement in ocean science.

As a partner of the [Early Career Ocean Professional \(ECOP\) Ocean Decade Programme](#) and co-coordinator of the [Ocean B.R.I.D.G.E.S Task Force \(Bridging ocean Research, Innovation and Diversity across Generations of Experts and Stakeholders\)](#), **GEO Blue Planet** works to ensure meaningful ECOP participation in such high-level events, empowering the next generation of ocean leaders.

With funding from the EU4OceanObs project, we were proud to support the authors of this report, two ECOPs, in attending and contributing to the 2025 All-Atlantic Forum. Uriel de Jesús Mendoza Castillo is pursuing a Master's degree in Geospatial Information Sciences at [CentroGeo](#), Mexico, where he is developing a national web platform to monitor massive sargassum arrivals in the Mexican Caribbean. Kardiatou Samba Sall, from Senegal, will begin a PhD at the [University of Montpellier](#) exploring coastal risks and adaptation pathways in Senegal's coastal areas.

The authors' group focused on **"Monitoring, protecting, and restoring marine ecosystems and biodiversity, thereby enhancing their resilience and potential for adaptation to climate change and other natural and anthropogenic stressors."** Within this framework, ECOPs

emphasized that quantitative data are essential but insufficient on their own. Building transformative coastal resilience requires integrating local and indigenous knowledge, ensuring that communities and science work together to create richer, more actionable evidence.

In this context, ECOPs proposed to expand and enrich the **All-Atlantic Coastal Resilience Knowledge Hub**, launched in 2024 in Ottawa, a co-created and searchable platform uniting ecological monitoring data, satellite products, and project outputs with qualitative insights and community narratives. The 2025's proposal is to primarily make it more inclusive and accessible, and to complete it with qualitative and narrative knowledge from local communities. The Hub's aim would be to empower both science and policy with evidence that reflects the social and ecological realities of the Atlantic coast. This vision aligns with the All-Atlantic Declaration priority on ecosystem protection and restoration, while complementing EU strategies such as the Biodiversity Strategy, the Water Resilience Initiative, and the Ocean Pact, adding a crucial cultural and human dimension to existing infrastructures like EMODnet and the Digital Twin of the Ocean.

As Kardiadou Samba, from Université Clermont Auvergne, expressed:

*"Each step of my journey reinforces one conviction: adapting coastal cities requires science, dialogue, and cooperation. The forum was a strong reminder that the Atlantic is not a boundary, but a bridge between our communities. Oceans know no borders, and neither should our responses."*

Uriel Mendoza, from the National Autonomous University of Mexico, highlighted the value of cooperation:

*"I was able to take part in this international dialogue, where I shared insights on the sargassum crisis in the Mexican Caribbean, a complex challenge that demands international cooperation. The intergenerational dialogue taught me the value of listening to diverse perspectives, and reinforced the need for an All-Atlantic Ocean Knowledge Hub to connect quantitative data with qualitative knowledge and narratives to strengthen coastal resilience."*



*From left to right: Kardiadou Samba, Elaine Shen (Mercator Ocean International) and Uriel Mendoza*

This intergenerational dialogue proved to be a deeply enriching exercise, bringing together diverse perspectives, disciplines, and cultural backgrounds in a shared effort to address complex ocean challenges. Developing the policy brief was both a challenge and a valuable learning experience, closely mirroring real-world policy contexts where scientists, policymakers, and community representatives must work together to build common understanding and chart a collective path toward coastal and ocean resilience.

The intergenerational group [produced a policy brief](#), which provides further details to the All-Atlantic Coastal Resilience Knowledge Hub, a collaborative, open-access platform connecting quantitative data (ecological monitoring, satellite observations, ocean modelling) with qualitative knowledge (local

narratives, practices, and traditions) to strengthen decision-making, support evidence-based policies, and foster adaptive management at multiple scales.

**ALL ATLANTIC OCEAN RESEARCH & INNOVATION ALLIANCE FORUM** **25-26 SEPTEMBER 2025**

## INTERGENERATIONAL PITCH FROM DIALOGUE: ATLANTIC YOUTH

**BRINGING COOPERATION & SUSTAINABILITY INTO SCIENTIFIC RESOURCES**

UNIFYING EXISTING RESOURCES

IDEAS FOUNDED

DATA GENERATED THE SHORTEST PERIODS

ENSURE THE UPKEEP OF KNOWLEDGE GENERATED

**CONNECTING THE DISCONNECTED: BUILDING A NETWORK FOR ATLANTIC FISHERIES & AQUACULTURE**

INCLUSIVE SUSTAINABLE

MEETING THE NEEDS OF SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES

ECONOMICALLY RESILIENT

**AAORIA OCEAN LITERACY HACKATON**

COMMUNITIES' PRESSING CHALLENGES

SEED FUNDING FOR WINNING IDEAS

BEING THE OCEAN BACK TO THE PEOPLE

COLLABORATIVE CO-CREATION OF SOLUTIONS

By MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TEAMS

LOGOS: EUROPEAN UNION, OKEANO

VISUALS BY MARIA FROUZANIÉ FROM VISUALITY

**ALL ATLANTIC OCEAN RESEARCH & INNOVATION ALLIANCE FORUM** **25-26 SEPTEMBER 2025**

## BUILDING BRIDGES AMONG GENERATIONS

**ALL-ATLANTIC BLUE INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMME**

LEVERAGE (EXISTING) EXPERTISE & INFRASTRUCTURE

DATA BASE OF CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVE

INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUES

SUMMER SCHOOLS

FLOATING UNIVERSITIES

CONNECTING OCEAN PROFESSIONALS ACROSS GENERATIONS & GEOGRAPHIES

LET'S GO FROM COOPERATION TO COOPERATION

INTERDISCIPLINARY & MULTICULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

LOGOS: EUROPEAN UNION, OKEANO

VISUALS BY MARIA FROUZANIÉ FROM VISUALITY

## Coastal Resilience and AAORIA's role

Coastal resilience has emerged as one of the most urgent challenges for Atlantic communities. Rising sea levels, increasing erosion, biodiversity decline and the intensification of extreme events create vulnerabilities that directly affect livelihoods, economies and ecosystems. The IPCC has underlined that integrated responses are needed, combining protection, accommodation, ecosystem-based adaptation, coastal advance and, where possible, retreat. At the 2025 All-Atlantic Forum, **AAORIA Partners addressed this challenge by launching the Network of Coastal Resilience Beacon Sites**, a platform designed to serve as a living laboratory of good practices where communities, scientists and policymakers can test, document and scale effective measures.

The Beacon Sites Network builds on the **Coastal Resilience Knowledge Hub** established in 2024, and now provides a concrete structure to compare experiences across regions. Each site contributes knowledge about what works in practice, whether nature-based solutions like mangrove and seagrass restoration, technical measures for flood control, or governance innovations that strengthen participation. By linking these examples in a transatlantic network, AAORIA creates a mechanism to make local experiences transferable and to inform broader policies.

**A core message from the Forum was the need for inclusiveness and dialogue.** Building resilience requires the integration of many actors: governments, research institutions, local communities, NGOs and private sector partners. Importantly, cooperation must also address asymmetries between the Global North and South. While northern partners often possess advanced monitoring capacities and data infrastructures, many southern countries face significant data gaps and limited resources. This imbalance can undermine their ability to design and implement effective adaptation strategies. Strengthening resilience therefore depends on sharing data, capacity and resources, enabling southern partners to participate equally in co-designing solutions.



Participants also highlighted the importance of **connecting scientific knowledge with local and indigenous know-how**. Communities that live with coastal risks on a daily basis bring invaluable understanding of ecological dynamics and adaptation practices. When combined with scientific evidence, this knowledge provides a foundation for conservation and restoration projects that are both socially legitimate and environmentally effective. Organizational capacity and local ownership were repeatedly emphasized as key conditions for long-term success.

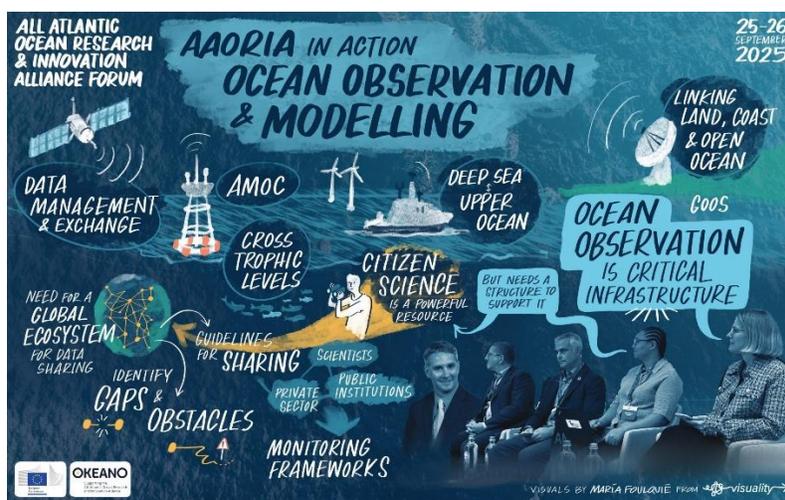
AAORIA can support this agenda through several mechanisms. First, by funding and coordinating transdisciplinary projects that explicitly involve communities and local governments. Second, by deploying regional hubs in Latin America, West Africa and the Caribbean to strengthen cooperation in areas most affected by climate change. Third, by promoting capacity building through educational programmes, intergenerational initiatives and platforms like the Blue Schools and Future Ocean Leaders Academy. Finally, through science diplomacy, AAORIA can foster a shared language of resilience that integrates social sciences, traditional knowledge and natural sciences, enabling decision-makers to design policies that are both evidence-based and inclusive.

## How AAORIA can support Ocean Observations

Ocean observation and modelling represent AAORIA’s second strategic pillar. The vastness and complexity of the Atlantic make it impossible for any single country to monitor, understand and manage its dynamics. Climate variability, ecosystem changes, pollution and socio-economic pressures demand coordinated, long-term, and interoperable observation systems. At the 2025 All-Atlantic Forum, this message was reinforced through discussions on how to implement the Ocean Observations and Modelling Work Plan, endorsed by AAORIA’s High-Level Board.

A report published in August 2025 by expert groups outlined recommended activities to advance the objectives of this Work Plan. These recommendations were presented as a “menu” of thoughtfully co-designed actions, ranging from enhancing satellite and in situ monitoring capacities, to integrating regional and global observing systems, to expanding FAIR data platforms accessible to all stakeholders. The Forum solicited input from the community on how best to implement these activities, emphasizing inclusiveness and maximum impact. Going forward, AAORIA committed to track and share the implementation process through its website, ensuring transparency and collective ownership.

The central idea was clear: **decision-makers cannot act without reliable data and scientific knowledge is only as strong as the observation systems that sustain it.** For many countries, particularly in the Global South, limited capacity to collect and analyze ocean data creates significant barriers to informed decision-making. AAORIA was recognized as a crucial actor in bridging this gap, by fostering data-sharing agreements, advocating for mandatory release of private data collected in Exclusive Economic Zones, and encouraging private sector contributions, such as information from submarine cables, offshore energy infrastructure or fisheries monitoring.



Another theme was accessibility. Decision-makers often lack the technical expertise to handle raw data or complex modelling outputs. What they need are integrated platforms that simplify access, translate data into actionable insights, and support policy and management decisions. The development of digital twins of the ocean exemplifies this approach, allowing users to simulate scenarios, test management strategies and anticipate impacts under different climate conditions. For this vision to succeed, systems must be interoperable, inclusive and designed with the end user in mind.

AAORIA can support this agenda through scientific coordination, bringing together experts, research centers and agencies around shared priorities. It can also strengthen advocacy and diplomacy to ensure that ocean data are treated as a global public good, accessible and useful to all. Moreover, AAORIA can provide technical and logistical support to oceanographic missions, particularly in countries with limited resources, and promote training and skills transfer to build scientific sovereignty across the Atlantic. By incubating technological innovations and linking researchers with industry, the Alliance can also help transform new ideas into operational solutions.

Looking ahead, the challenge is to transform the wealth of existing and future data into a governance tool. Ocean observation is not an end in itself but a lever for resilience, sustainability and adaptation. The Forum reaffirmed that **only through cooperation can observation systems deliver their full potential**. As one participant put it, without data we are far from having scientifically valid information, but with shared platforms that integrate observations and make them usable, decision-makers can finally focus not on the complexity of analysis but on the urgency of action. AAORIA's role is to ensure that this transformation happens, connecting data, technologies and communities to support a healthy and resilient Atlantic Ocean.