

What is the "UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development"? Considering Present and Future Expectations of Ocean Sciences

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The oceans are now severely subject to climate change, marine pollution, and marine-ecosystem destruction, and their impacts on human society are of concern. It is the future crisis of a sustainable Earth. Based on this recognition, on March 6, 2019, the Science Council of Japan hosted the Science20 summit under the joint-statement theme of “Threats to Marine Ecosystems and Conservation of the Marine Environment—With Special Attention to Climate Change and Marine Plastic Waste,” which also served to communicate to the world the importance of the role of ocean science. Following that, the G20 Osaka Summit, held in June in 2019, set a goal to eliminate additional pollution and agreed to establish a framework for implementing marine plastic-waste management.

What should researchers in ocean sciences and related fields do, beginning in 2021, for the United Nations (UN) “Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development”? A top priority would be the cooperation of the ocean-science community to disseminate and understand the UN Decade of Ocean Science. Therefore, the Specialty Committee of Marine Biology of the Science Council of Japan (SCJ) recently convened a symposium on the “United Nations Decade of Ocean Science—Toward One Ocean” in cooperation with the Ocean Policy Research Institute and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation. The organizers (both Marine Biology and the Scientific Committee on Oceanic Research) set up discussions on two main themes, climate change and marine-ecosystem conservation, and exchanged views on ocean observation and ocean research over the next decade. A second SCJ ocean-science initiative was in the form of a proposed Master Plan 2020, themed “Organization of Global Research Network of Ocean Biological Science—Toward a Sustainable Future of Oceans” Although this proposal was not selected as a priority large-scale research project, the Specialty Committee of Marine Biology of SCJ will continue to propose further enhancement of coastal marine observations and strengthening of the relationship between ocean sciences and local communities for the UN Decade of Ocean Science. In this presentation, we report on the outcome of the symposium and its relation to the UN Decade of Ocean Science.

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