



Communication and Marketing Department
Isebe loThungelwano neNtengiso
Kommunikasie en Bemerkingsdepartement

Private Bag X3, Rondebosch 7701, South Africa
Welgelegen House, Chapel Road Extension, Rosebank, Cape Town
Tel: +27 (0) 21 650 5427/5428/5674 Fax: +27 (0) 21 650 5628

www.uct.ac.za

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UCT part of UN endorsed international network to boost sustainable ocean cities

The Ocean Cities (OC-NET) Programme, in which the University of Cape Town's [Marine and Antarctic Research Centre for Innovation and Sustainability \(MARIS\)](#) participates, has received endorsement as an official [United Nations \(UN\) Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development programme](#) under the first 'Decade call for Action'. The UN Ocean Decade harnesses, stimulates and coordinates interdisciplinary research efforts at all levels, in order to generate and use knowledge for the transformational action needed to achieve a healthy, safe, and resilient ocean for sustainable development by 2030 and beyond.

The ultimate goal of OC-NET is to turn ocean cities into communities permeable to the marine environment, regenerating the coastline as much as possible and enhancing a harmonic community-land-ocean connection through mind (science), heart (art) and soul (awareness). It will be carried out with and for the people, promoting bottom-up collaboration of all actors and endorsing policy dialogue towards effective evidence-based policies that set the city border well beyond the shoreline.

As an inter- and transdisciplinary research centre at UCT, [MARIS](#) as the South African OC-Net partner, will be responsible for building and co-ordinating a local network of investors, sponsors, supporters and/or allies who will designing and implement projects that speak to the over-arching goals of the programme.

Speaking on the significance of the endorsement Dr Louise Gammage, [MARIS](#) Ocean Cities co-ordinator shared: "This programme presents the opportunity to draw on our vast experience with real-world challenges facing Cape Town and other South African coastal cities. Specifically, it provides a platform to actively pursue a truly transdisciplinary approach to promote the implementation of the SDGs in our ocean cities."

"Resilience of coastal cities in the face of climate change is a critical challenge for decades to come. It is therefore an excellent development that Ocean Cities will be a part of the first set of endorsed programmes of the [UN Decade of Science for Sustainable Development](#)", said Dr Vladimir Ryabinin, executive secretary of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, the UN body charged with the task of coordinating the Ocean Decade.

The OC-NET is an international network coordinated by the [Institut de Ciències del Mar](#) and [Unitat de Tecnologia Marina](#), part of one of the largest research institutes of the [Spanish National Research Council](#).

The consortium of participating institutions will encourage participation between citizens and researchers, decision-makers and other stakeholders in OC-NET to change the way coastal cities are interacting and evolving with the ocean. In this sense, the partners agree on the need to implement an ocean dimension of coastal towns and cities that drives the daily operations of a city: from a micro-level (i.e. daily consumption habits of coastal city dwellers) to a macro-level (i.e. urban and harbour planning activities and its impact on the neighbouring waters).

"Citizens living in coastal towns have to open their mind and soul to the ocean. This requires an increased awareness of the essential role of the marine environment in our everyday lives and, possibly even more important, a more intimate and harmonic relation between the city, its citizens and the companion sea", said Josep Lluís Pelegrí, the ICM CSIC director and coordinator of OC-NET Programme.

Media enquiries

Dr Louise Gammage; louise.gammage@uct.ac.za



Parts of the Cape Town shoreline

Photo: [Jaman Asad](#) on [Unsplash](#)

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Aamirah Sondag

Media Liaison and Monitoring Officer
Communication and Marketing Department
University of Cape Town
Rondebosch
Tel: (021) 650 5427
Cell: (076) 947 6071

Email: aamirah.sondag@uct.ac.za

Website: www.uct.ac.za