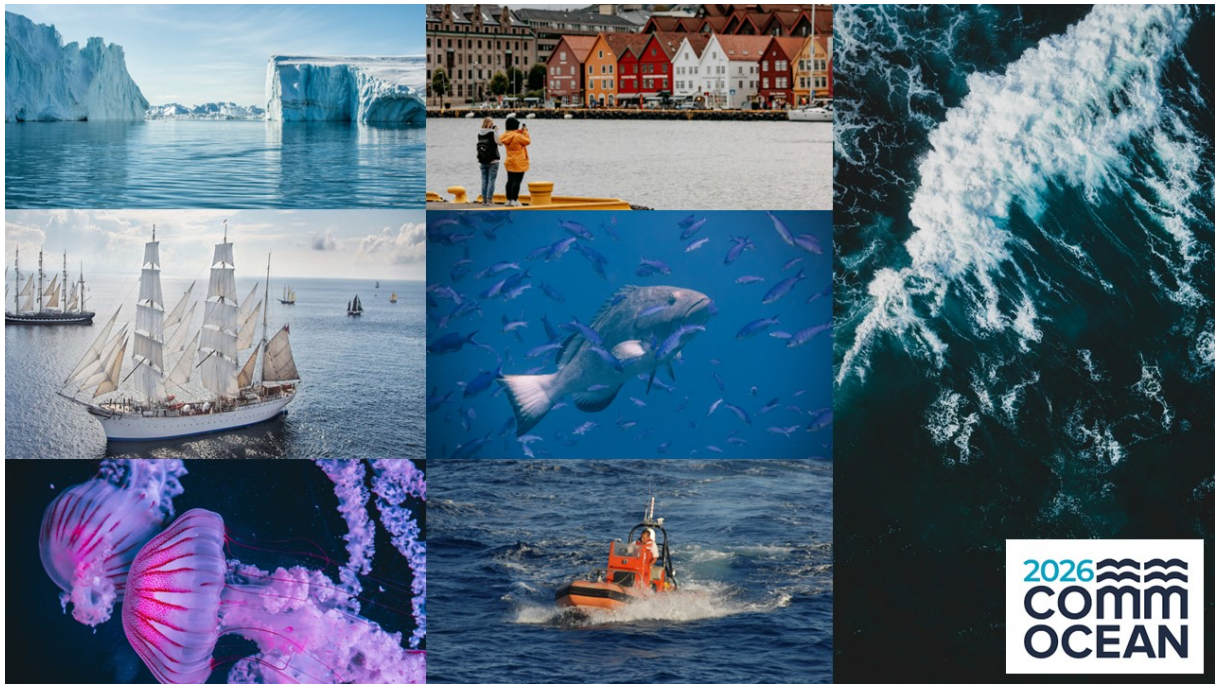




CommOCEAN 2026
Plenary 4:
‘Taking science communication to ocean action’
Thursday 3 September
15:25-16:25

SPEAKERS:

- **Lucky Dlamini**, Communications and Stakeholder Relations Manager, NRF-South African Institute for Aquatic Biodiversity (NRF-SAIAB): ‘Blending Indigenous Knowledge and Science: Communication Lessons from the IMIsEE Project’
- **Vår Dundas**, Researcher, Nansen Environmental and Remote Sensing Centre (NERSC): ‘Float Your Boat: Bringing curiosity and understanding about the Arctic Ocean to young audiences’
- **Isabel Caballero**, Communication Officer, JPI Oceans: ‘Navigating the in-between: ocean science, policy, and the art of communicating both’
- **Yandeh Sallah**, Communications and User Engagement Officer, Mercator Ocean International: ‘Connecting Communities for Ocean Forecasting: Dashboards, Learning Tools, and Capacity Building’

Moderator: Ángel Muniz Piniella, European Marine Board

PLENARY SESSION 4
Thursday 3 September
15:25-16:25

Lucky Dlamini, Communications and Stakeholder Relations Manager, NRF-South African Institute for Aquatic Biodiversity (NRF-SAIAB): ‘Blending Indigenous Knowledge and Science: Communication Lessons from the IMIsEE Project’

The Indigenous Marine Innovations for Sustainable Environments and Economies (IMIsEE) project uses transdisciplinary communication approaches to connect ocean science with African Indigenous Knowledge Systems and coastal communities in South Africa. Grounded in Community-Based Participatory Research, the project positions communication not as an output, but as a core research method to foster engagement, trust and co-creation.

This presentation will showcase a range of communication strategies designed to reach diverse audiences, including digital storytelling, sound postcards exhibitions, community imbizo (dialogue forums), learner-focused engagement activities, and facilitated access to research environments for non-scientists. These approaches integrate science, art and culture to make complex marine issues more accessible and relevant.

We will reflect on lessons learned from implementing these approaches, including the importance of culturally grounded storytelling, the value of co-created content and the challenges of language diversity and unequal digital access. Early observations indicate increased community participation, improved understanding of marine issues and stronger relationships between scientists and local stakeholders.

By sharing both successes and challenges, this case study offers practical insights into how inclusive, creative communication can strengthen ocean literacy and counter marginalisation of indigenous knowledge.

PLENARY SESSION 4
Thursday 3 September
15:25-16:25

Vår Dundas, Researcher, Nansen Environmental and Remote Sensing Centre (NERSC): 'Float Your Boat: Bringing curiosity and understanding about the Arctic Ocean to young audiences'

Roughly 200 small wooden boats will be on their way to the Arctic Ocean in August, all colourfully decorated. They are part of the International Buoy Program's "Float Your Boat" (FYB) project, which brings creativity, curiosity and science to primary school students. This spring, we will visit three schools in Bergen.

First, we discuss the ocean and climate, focusing on the Arctic. We encourage the students ask questions and aim to spark curiosity, which acts as a stepping stone for further learning and understanding. Following this more academic session, each student gets their own boat to decorate. We then walk around, answering questions and comments that arise as the topics we discussed in the beginning have time to settle.

This autumn, when we're high up in the Arctic Ocean doing fieldwork, we place the wooden boats and a scientific buoy on an ice floe. The buoy transmits its real-time location, allowing the students to track its trajectory, thus keeping the discussion about the Arctic Ocean alive in the classroom.

We believe each student's personal involvement in the project strengthens the curiosity about the ocean and the understanding of this remote but important region. Teachers tell us that students bring up their boats long after our visits.

We will highlight how the FYB initiative engages an audience that is usually not the target of ocean communication by researchers and share insights we've gained along the way which have helped us refine the setup.

PLENARY SESSION 4
Thursday 3 September
15:25-16:25

Isabel Caballero, Communication Officer, JPI Oceans: ‘Navigating the in-between: ocean science, policy, and the art of communicating both’

As an organisation, JPI Oceans sits at a unique intersection, and so does its communication work. We are neither a research institution producing science nor a policy body making decisions. Instead, we bridge the two, and this in-between is more complex than it looks.

Science communication is foundational to our communication practice: we make ocean research legible to ministries, funding agencies and decision-makers, not by highlighting individual scientific discoveries, but by framing the results of entire projects and initiatives (our “Joint Actions”). Yet policy communication plays an even bigger role, demanding different timing and a sense of where a message may land in the policy cycle.

Lastly, climate communication has become closely attached to ocean science, requiring familiarity with sensitive, often-contested narratives. The result is a role defined by disciplinary breadth, audience fragmentation, and a peculiar challenge: rather than one specific position or discovery, we promote transnational coordination and knowledge exchange.

This talk reflects on the JPI Oceans communication experience with honesty: the wins, exemplified by our approach to UNOC3, and the fails, when activities didn’t deliver as planned. Because, ironically, inhabiting the space between science and policy is harder than standing on either side. And the most useful thing we can offer to a room full of ocean science communicators is not a success story, but a map of that terrain.

PLENARY SESSION 4
Thursday 3 September
15:25-16:25

Yandeh Sallah, Communications and User Engagement Officer, Mercator Ocean International: ‘Connecting Communities for Ocean Forecasting: Dashboards, Learning Tools, and Capacity Building’

This contribution examines how communication and outreach tools enhance ocean prediction capacity and stakeholder engagement within the UN Ocean Decade through the OceanPrediction DCC, OP4CR, and OPERA initiatives.

At the global level, the OceanPrediction DCC acts as a coordinating hub: facilitating access to shared resources, data, and platforms, including the OceanPrediction Atlas, Forum and Regional Teams to support a more integrated and collaborative ocean forecasting network across our shared ocean.

At the regional scale, through our two flagship projects we look at engagement and communications based on user needs. OP4CR in Costa Rica demonstrates how co designed marine monitoring dashboards and user-oriented tools convert complex ocean data into practical information for decision makers and local stakeholders, supported by targeted workshops and engagement activities. OPERA advances ocean literacy and capacity development in Sub Saharan Africa through training programmes, MOOCs, and accessible knowledge resources and workshops strengthening both technical capabilities and informed ocean governance.

Collectively, these efforts demonstrate the role of strategic communication in connecting science and society, enabling informed decision making, and supporting the development of inclusive and sustainable ocean prediction systems on the road to 2030.