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EDITORIAL

The Launch of the Plankton Manifesto in September 2024

The Plankton Manifesto is a pioneering call to action advocating for the protection of one of Earth's most crucial life forms - plankton-. It has been met with great enthusiasm at its recent presentation to the United Nations General Assembly. The Manifesto highlights the critical role of plankton and offers a series of strategic recommendations to guide global efforts in protecting it while harnessing its potential to address the interconnected crises of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss. It is the result of a collaborative effort, led by Vincent Doumeizel, Senior Advisor Ocean at the United Nations Global Compact, who brought together more than 30 international experts from academia, institutions, and industry.

The Plankton Manifesto resonated strongly with attendees, sparking constructive discussions on its implications for international policy and conservation strategies. Delegates from several institutions expressed interest in collaborating on initiatives to safeguard plankton, recognizing its essential role in regulating the Earth's atmosphere and food chains.

Sanda Ojiambo, CEO and Executive Director of the UN Global Compact, emphasized the urgency of this initiative, stating: *"The Plankton Manifesto represents a vital step forward in our collective response to the triple planetary crisis. Plankton are not only the foundation of marine ecosystems but also key players in our fight against climate change and pollution. By safeguarding plankton, we are protecting a crucial part of our planet's life support system, ensuring the resilience of our oceans and freshwater ecosystems for future generations."*

Through 10 concrete propositions, the **Plankton Manifesto** calls for:

- A deeper understanding, better collaboration, and increased research on marine and freshwater plankton.

- Initiatives in education to better understand, utilize, and protect planktonic ecosystems, and the myriad species they support.
- Integrating plankton into international discussions (national policies & contributions, COP Climate, COP Biodiversity, BBNJ, international food organizations discussions and other UN programs, etc.) to develop programs and define objectives.

The official launch during the UN General Assembly was complemented by an online webinar. Experts from the core editorial team and high-level speakers endorsing the Manifesto shared valuable insights, providing a comprehensive understanding of these fascinating organisms. Key topics included their ecological importance, innovative monitoring techniques, existing industrial applications, economic potential, and more. Speakers were **Peter Thomson**, UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean, **Valerie Hickey**, Global Director, Environment, Natural Resources and the Blue Economy, The World Bank, **Chris Bowler**, Research Director, ENS CNRS Paris, **Paul Falkowski**, Distinguished Professor, Bennett L. Smith Endowed Chair in Business and Natural Resources, Rutgers University, **Xin Lin**, Associate Professor, Xiamen University, **Flora Vincent**, Research Group Leader, EMBL, and **Hubert Bonnefond**, CEO DareWin Evolution & Associate member - INRIA. Paul Falkowski stated:

“We are the fragile species, not the plankton: the plankton will survive us. We must be careful about how we undergo our economic development, ensuring we do not completely cannibalize everything that has existed on this planet for hundreds of millions of years before us.”



Fig. 1. The cover of *The Plankton Manifesto*. The complete, 20 page, document is available for downloading at <https://unglobalcompact.org/library/6242>

The recording of the webinar presentation is available on the YouTube channel of the United Nations Global Compact: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B2RbN-1aun8>

The Next Steps: Building on this momentum, efforts are already underway to actively engage with governments, NGOs, and scientific bodies to ensure plankton remains at the forefront of the global environmental agenda. The European Union who was part of the

Core Editing Team committed to take action into Plankton based on the Manifesto's recommendations, and follow up discussions, are already planned. The World Bank, also part of the Editing team, announced an ambitious objective for its support to plankton which will be carefully monitored. More generally, the Manifesto will serve as a basis of knowledge on plankton, and will seek further endorsements at key global environmental conferences, including COP29 on Climate, COP16 on Biodiversity, and the United Nations Ocean Conference in Nice, France, in June 2025.

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