

Discovering the unknown blue potential: ocean research for man and planet.

Prof. Jan Mees, general director Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ), Belgium

The vast and largely unexplored ocean holds immense potential for both humanity and the planet, yet it faces significant pressures that threaten its health and sustainability. This presentation, led by Prof. Dr. Jan Mees, General Director of VLIZ, delves into the critical role of ocean science in unlocking this "blue potential" through interdisciplinary research and international collaboration.

Key themes include the importance of the ocean in regulating the global climate, its role as a source of novel bioproducts, and the urgent need to address the major stressors it faces, such as climate change and biodiversity loss. The presentation highlights recent discoveries in the deep sea, underscoring the ocean's status as a frontier for scientific exploration and its vast untapped resources, with the potential for significant economic and societal benefits.

Moreover, the presentation outlines VLIZ's pivotal role as a partner in the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, emphasizing the importance of collaboration across the science-policy-industry interface and the engagement of citizens in fostering a sustainable blue economy. The session concludes by reinforcing the notion that while the ocean is under threat, through innovative research and global partnerships, it remains a beacon of hope for future generations.