



Speech by President von der Leyen at the OceanEye International Alliance Pledging Event

New York, 23 September 2026

Prime Minister Carney, dear Mark,

Heads of state and government,

Fellow leaders, excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

This is a great day for the ocean. Because today we launch the OceanEye Alliance. OceanEye has a special mission, that is – to protect Ocean Observation. And I am delighted that 30 countries have already pledged their support. Humanity has been awed by the sea since the dawn of time. But understanding the ocean has never been as important as today. Because the ocean is changing. And its transformation impacts our nature, our economies, and our communities. The ocean is telling us a lot. It is giving us vital information. Let me give you just one example. Last year, Ireland was hit by a destructive hurricane with winds above 150 km/h. The storm caused serious damage. But the data captured by ocean sensors gave Ireland almost a full week to prepare and warn its people. Here, ocean observation helped save lives and livelihoods. But beyond moments of crisis, ocean data is essential every day. It helps us: adapt to climate change, advise on shipping routes, and restore vital fishing stocks. So, we must listen to our ocean and protect it more than ever before.

And yet Ocean Observation is under huge pressure. The global network that provides this data faces a critical funding shortfall. Sensors need upgrading. And there are still gaps in governance and coverage. This is why we have launched OceanEye – our moonshot ambition for Ocean Observation. OceanEye can make us the leading ocean data provider in a matter of years. So, I want to emphasize three points. First, funding. Today, I am delighted to announce that we as European Union have increased support for Ocean Observation by almost 100 million euro. This comes on top of 155 million euro already invested in projects around the world. Now, Europe will expand our network of sensors, including in space. Just last week, we launched Sentinel 3C – a new satellite to monitor sea temperature. Next year, the Cristal-A satellite will give new data about the polar regions. And more satellites will follow. So, from outer space to the deepest ocean, European funding helps us keep watch beneath the waves.

My second point is the following: we are expanding our network to the least-observed areas on Earth. I am excited to share that the Vendée Globe ocean world sailing race has joined us in this adventure. These brave sailors race across the most remote waters, like the Southern Ocean. Now, thanks to OceanEye and IOC-UNESCO, all 40 boats in the 2028 race will carry scientific instruments. This will give us new insights on some of the most isolated parts of the planet. And bring the power of ocean observation to new audiences.

My third and last point, we are putting observation data to work. Turn data into action. Everything we collect needs to be processed and analysed – so that we can act on it. In Europe, we do this with the Digital Twin of the Ocean. It is a virtual replica of the ocean that helps us understand our seas and protect them at the same time. And is very powerful in predicting the future. We are now making the Digital Twin available to anyone around the world – citizens, scientists and policy-makers. We basically want European science at the service to all. But now it is over to you. I want to ask everyone here to be an ambassador for the OceanEye Alliance. I ask you to champion Ocean Observation everywhere you go. OceanEye can show us what is happening in the ocean right now, while the digital twin of the ocean can help us predict what may happen next. Ocean Observation is our eyes and ears beneath the waves. We only have this one ocean. We depend on it. We have to care for it. It is an early warning system. It is a legacy for our children. Our ocean is counting on you. I particularly thank

Canada for co-hosting this event. And I am very happy to hand over to the Prime Minister of Canada, Mark Carney.

Thank you

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