

A NEW CHAPTER OF GLOBAL ECOPS ACTION

| By Frank Mirobo



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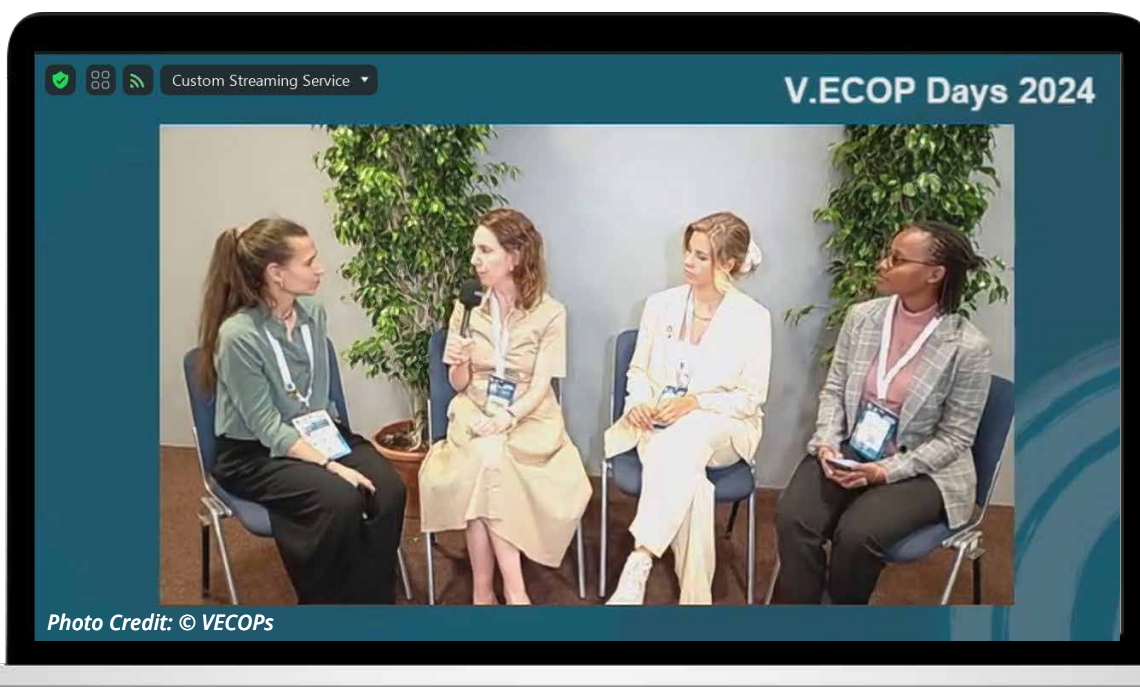
Focussing on pivotal questions of the Ocean Decade, the conference delved into the major milestones achieved since its inception and the critical areas requiring action over the forthcoming three to five years, marking the fourth year of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030).

The Western Indian Ocean Early Career Scientists Network (WIO-ECSN) is recognized as one of Africa's vibrant youth networks and has collaborated closely

with the Tidal Wave programme of Black in Marine Sciences to highlight the pivotal role of Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPS) in spearheading the advancement of the UN Ocean Decade Agenda 2030, with a keen focus on Africa and the WIO region.

Following the UN Ocean Conference, WIO-ECSN in collaboration with various partners will embark on the "Many Faces Programme." This initiative is dedicated to fostering diversity, inclusivity and innovation among African youth in tackling the ten challenges of the UN Ocean Decade and promoting ocean literacy. This endeavour aims to forge connections between ECOPS across Asia and Africa, fostering a collaborative approach to ocean conservation and sustainability.

VIRTUAL ECOPS DAYS 2024 | *By Susana Kihia*



Running alongside the UN Ocean Decade conference in Barcelona, Spain, the virtual Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPS) Days 2024 engaged a global audience for a livestream event from 9 to 11 April 2024. The three-day event gathered over 500 attendees and showcased more than 100 ongoing science-based actions from 56 countries contributing to ocean sustainability.

The African and Western Indian Ocean region was represented in the virtual ECOPS Days proceedings with a range of speakers' presentations centred on marine ecosystem restoration, food security, marine pollution and ocean literacy. To integrate the livestream with on-site conference proceedings, the unique programming of the virtual ECOPS Days also included a range of interviews with conference delegates with journalists.

As a journalist, I interviewed several ocean researchers, leaders and professionals at satellite events and the main conference, among them Dr Arthur Tuda, Dr Nadeem Nazurally, Dr Jacqueline Uku, Shamin Nyanda and Frank Mirobo.

Some of the notable skill sets ECOPs can leverage in the Ocean Decade that I identified during the interviews included ocean awareness raising, strategic ocean science communication, marine entrepreneurship, ocean diplomacy and leadership and the innovative adoption of technology.



READ ABOUT THE VIRTUAL ECOPS DAYS:

[Available here](#)

RIDE THE WAVE: A TIDAL WAVE OF FELLOWSHIP FOR BLACK VOICES IN MARINE SCIENCE | *By Frank Mirobo*

The Tidal Wave programme is a cornerstone of the core initiatives of Black in Marine Sciences dedicated to amplifying black voices within marine science. This transformative programme extends a distinctive opportunity to individuals of colour, granting them access to premier global conferences without financial burden and nurturing professional advancement, forging valuable connections and cultivating a diverse scientific community on an international scale.



Photo credit: © Tidal wave- BIMS

As a member of the inaugural cohort of the Tidal Wave fellowship from Africa, specifically the Western Indian Ocean region, this programme has not only fortified continental alliances beyond African borders but has also provided me with invaluable insights, shaping my career trajectory as a dedicated young researcher committed to championing diversity and inclusivity within the marine sciences field.

To enhance the representation and enrich the experiences of black marine scientists at international scientific gatherings, the programme has extended its support to over 50 students, as well as early and late-career ocean professionals from around the globe, including Africa.

This support has enabled these individuals to showcase their research endeavours at prominent events like the United Nations Ocean Decade Conference. Moving beyond the challenges of isolation and exclusion often faced by early career ocean professionals of African descent during conferences, the Tidal Wave Programme strives to instil participants with heightened confidence and a sense of inclusion. By equipping them with new skills, ample resources and a supportive cohort, the aim is to empower them to actively contribute to the co-design and innovation of inclusive ocean initiatives for all.

YOUNG OCEAN LEADERS AND EARLY CAREER SCIENTISTS ENGAGE WITH GLOBAL ECOPRENEURS AND OCEAN EXPERTS | *By Ailars David*

The Ocean Youth Leadership Summit in Athens, Greece, provided a platform for young ocean leaders and early career scientists to engage with global ecopreneurs and ocean experts, exchange ideas and develop innovative solutions to address the pressing challenges facing our oceans.



Focussing on areas such as sustainable tourism, green shipping, marine pollution reduction, marine protected areas and green transition in the Mediterranean, the summit aimed to empower youth to play an active role in shaping a sustainable future for our oceans.

Organized by the Sustainable Ocean Alliance (SOA) in cooperation with Our Ocean Greece and with support from the Ministry of the Environment and Energy of Greece, the event marked a significant milestone in my journey towards ocean conservation.

As a marine scientist and conservation warden in Tanzania, this event empowered me and other young

leaders to develop solutions for ocean conservation through meaningful discussions and collaborations. I gained valuable insights into different approaches to ocean conservation and learned about innovative initiatives taking place in various regions. I shared insights from my work at Mafia Island marine protected area (MPA), highlighting the country's innovative approaches to marine conservation.

One of the most inspiring aspects of the summit was the opportunity to connect with fellow delegates across the globe and reinforcing the need for immediate collective action in saving our oceans.

JAPAN TO PALAU: ECOPS TAKE PART IN OCEAN RACE

| By Mwesigwa Mbeikya

Early career ocean professionals (ECOPS) across the globe embarked on a 14-day journey from Yokohama in Japan to Malakal in Palau, crossing the Pacific Ocean as they participated in the Japan–Palau Goodwill Yacht Race from 10 to 25 March 2024 onboard the majestic ship *Miraie*.



This International Ocean Human Resource Development Project was organized by the Ocean Policy Research Institute of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation.

The journey was not only an adventure but also a pivotal step in fostering the next generation of maritime leaders when 20 enthusiastic young professionals from nine different countries were brought together to share knowledge and experiences. The programme was meticulously designed to blend practical sailing skills with in-depth oceanographic studies. We engaged in ocean-related lectures, sail handling and setting, while also delving deep into critical issues such as ocean acidification, marine plastics and declining fish stocks. This comprehensive approach

provided us with a practical learning experience that significantly enhanced my skills.

We were also able to conduct environmental monitoring protocols, adding a valuable scientific dimension to our voyage. Learning from Dr Mikuni Nariaki, a Japan International Cooperation Agency expert and chief advisor on sustainable practices and the significance of skipjack tuna, expanded my knowledge immensely.

There is a chance for other early career ocean professionals to attend the programme again this year. The Sasakawa Peace Foundation and the Ocean Policy Research Institute are committed to continuing this initiative, recognizing its impact on developing future leaders in ocean conservation.

WIO-ECSN MEMBERS APPOINTED TO YOUTH SOUNDING BOARD | *By David Ailars and Laurian Kaijage*

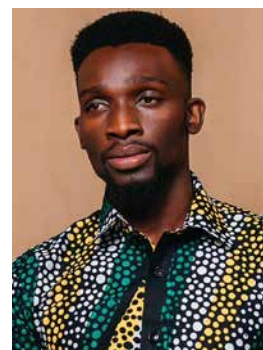
David Ailars

is a marine scientist and marine conservation warden at Mafia Island marine protected area is also the founder and hub leader of Sustainable Ocean Alliance (SOA) Tanzania and the current Tanzania country coordinator for the WIO-ECSN. He has played a pivotal role in engaging Tanzanian youth and local coastal communities in ocean conservation and promoting a sustainable blue economy.



Laurian Kaijage

is also a marine scientist, works with the Mwambao Coastal Community and is a hub leader at SOA Tanzania. Laurian's work in marine research and community engagement has advanced local conservation initiatives and fostered sustainable practices among coastal populations.



The two appointees will advise the EU Ambassador to Tanzania and the east African community on youth participation and empowerment in key areas, including the blue economy, human capital and employment and governance.

We congratulate David and Laurian on this significant achievement and look forward to the positive contributions they will make to the EU Youth Sounding Board.
