Press Release
Thursday, June 11th

THE MONACO OCEAN PROTECTION CHALLENGE (MOPC) REWARDS FOUR INNOVATIVE BUSINESS IDEAS FOR OCEAN PRESERVATION!

– 9th Edition –

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On Thursday, June 11, 2026, four winning teams of the Monaco Ocean Protection Challenge (MOPC) - co-organized by the International University of Monaco, the Oceanographic Institute, Prince Albert I of Monaco Foundation, Monaco Impact, and the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation - were awarded during the Grand Finale held at the Oceanographic Museum of Monaco in the presence of numerous guests. Created in Monaco - a major player in Ocean preservation - this high-level international competition is dedicated to students and young entrepreneurs from around the world. Its objective is to concretely support the creation and development of startups capable of demonstrating a positive impact on Ocean protection and the sustainable management of its resources, in the short or medium term.

A record-breaking edition: an international competition gaining even greater reach and visibility!

No fewer than 215 projects, representing 67 leading schools and universities across 58 countries, had been submitted by the close of the call for projects on March 3, 2026. This marks a significant increase compared to the 135 projects received during the previous edition.

Press contacts:
Oceanographic Institute – Carla Debaste – cdebaste@oceano.org – +377 93 15 36 45
International University of Monaco – Carolina Bracco – cbracco@ium.monaco.edu
Monaco Impact – Marine Jacq-Pietri – marine@monaco-impact.org
Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation – Nadège Massé – nmasse@fpa2.org

From mid-January to the end of May 2026, participating teams worked on developing business plans proposing innovative entrepreneurial solutions for a more sustainable Ocean.

In response to this growing enthusiasm, an initial jury composed of 32 international experts — including marine specialists, entrepreneurs, investors and incubators — was mobilized to evaluate the applications and select the finalists.

Following two rounds of selection, 10 finalist teams were invited to Monaco to take part in the Grand Finale: four in the "Business Concepts" category, four in the "Startups" category, as well as the winners of the special "Spotlight on Africa" and "CFM Indosuez Coup de Cœur" awards. Their presence in the Principality already represents an achievement in itself, with the organization covering a large part of their travel and accommodation expenses.

The Grand Finale: a celebration of excellence and diversity

The finalists pitched before a prestigious jury composed of leading personalities gathered in the Conference Room of the Oceanographic Museum of Monaco. Once again this year, the international dimension of the competition was strongly reflected in the diversity of the participants: the 27 project leaders present in the Principality represented 14 different nationalities (Canada, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Morocco, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden and the United States).

Beyond the competition: supporting tomorrow's solutions

Beyond rewarding the most promising projects, the MOPC is committed to supporting its laureates over the long term, helping them transform their ideas into concrete and scalable solutions. With this objective in mind, several winners from previous editions were invited to participate in the two editions of the Blue Economy and Finance Forum (BEFF), organized in Monaco in June 2025 alongside the UN Ocean Conference (UNOC), and again in May 2026. This represented a unique opportunity for them to increase their visibility, connect with investors, develop new partnerships and accelerate the deployment of their solutions.

The Blue Economy and Finance Forum (BEFF) - Co-organized by the Oceanographic Institute, the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation and the Princely Government, under the Presidency of H.S.H. Prince Albert II of Monaco, the 2nd edition of the Blue Economy and Finance Forum (BEFF) brought together, at the Grimaldi Forum on May 28 and 29, more than 400 leading changemakers and architects of the new blue economy. Participants represented all key stakeholders from the finance and insurance sectors, businesses and innovators, as well as experts and decision-makers from around the world. The 2026 edition notably featured dedicated "pitch sessions" highlighting innovative projects and technologies contributing to the transition toward a regenerative and sustainable blue economy. The MOPC and the BEFF are closely connected and together form a continuum designed to foster both the emergence and the scaling-up of innovative solutions for the blue economy.

A challenging mission for the six members of the final jury!

The final jury was composed of renowned personalities from the worlds of finance, business, startup incubation and acceleration: Ms. Céline Lapaian, Secretary General and Executive Committee Member at CFM Indosuez Wealth Management; Ms. Chloé Boscagli, Director of Monacotech; Prof. Davide Staedler, CEO of Daxtachem SAM; Ms. Birgit Liodden, Founder of The Ocean Opportunity Lab (TOOL); Ms. Danielle McCaffrey, Editorial Director of *Science & Vie*; and Ms. Nina Jensen, marine biologist, former CEO of REV Ocean and former Secretary General of WWF Norway.

AND THE GRAND WINNERS ARE...

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Winner in the "Business Concepts" category

SEADS (Germany) – Project presented by Emily Hannah Purnell, Simona Toepfer, Matz Hueffner and Jonas Pfitzner (Germans), University of Münst. SEADS' mission is to restore seagrass meadows at scale through autonomous AI-powered technology. By developing a system capable of efficiently harvesting, cultivating and replanting seagrass seeds, SEADS addresses one of the main barriers to marine ecosystem restoration. Restored seagrass meadows help store CO_2, protect coastlines and enhance ocean biodiversity.

Prize Package: €4,000 cash prize offered by Beefbar and Star Clippers, along with a mentorship program valued at €6,000 offered by C4C Business Valuation and Analysis, as well as "Pass Explorations" memberships offered by the Association of Friends of the Oceanographic Museum of Monaco (each member of the winning team will receive unlimited access to the Oceanographic Museum of Monaco).

Winner in the "Startups" category

CalX (France) – Project presented by Mr Quentin Germe (French). CalX's mission is to develop low-carbon marine construction materials that help restore ocean ecosystems. Through Oysteria X, a material made from recycled oyster shells and natural mineral binders, CalX offers a sustainable alternative to conventional marine concrete. Developed in partnership with IFREMER and CNRS, the solution promotes underwater biodiversity while meeting the needs of coastal and offshore infrastructure.

Prize Package: €7,000 cash prize offered by Monaco Impact Association and Dietsmann, along with an acceleration program valued at €12,000 offered by C4C Business Valuation and Analysis, as well as "Pass Explorations" memberships offered by the Association of Friends of the Oceanographic Museum of Monaco (each member of the winning team will receive unlimited access to the Oceanographic Museum of Monaco).

Winner of the "CFM Indosuez Coup de Coeur Prize"

Bend&Snap (India) - Project presented by Kanskhi Dodia, (Indian). Bend&Snap's mission is to accelerate coral reef restoration through an innovative, biodegradable and microplastic-free solution designed to simplify and industrialize coral attachment. Addressing the growing gap between reef degradation and restoration efforts, Bend&Snap has developed a 3D-printed anchor that reduces coral attachment time from 10 minutes to just 20 seconds. Made from sustainable materials that mimic natural calcification processes, the technology lowers restoration costs, enables large-scale deployment, and supports the regeneration of marine ecosystems.

CFM INDOSUEZ WEALTH MANAGEMENT, Lead sponsor of the Monaco Ocean Protection Challenge. A leading banking institution and a pioneer in responsible finance in Monaco, CFM Indosuez Wealth Management joined the circle of companies supporting the Monaco Ocean Protection Challenge in 2023, becoming its lead sponsor from that date.

CFM Indosuez awarded the "**CFM Indosuez Coup de Coeur Prize**" to **IZALGUE**, a startup personally selected by the bank. This highly practical award includes tailored business acceleration support, offered by CFM Indosuez and delivered by one of its partners, with a value of €3,000.

Winner of the "Spotlight on Africa" Prize

Blue Field Company (Morocco) – Project presented by Mr Amine Koubaa (Moroccan). Blue Field Company's mission is to restore the health of the Marchica Lagoon marine ecosystem through a combination of sustainable seaweed aquaculture and environmental monitoring technologies. By cultivating seaweed capable of absorbing excess nutrients and reducing coastal pollution, the project improves water quality while creating new local economic opportunities. The solution combines technological innovation, ecological restoration and sustainable coastal community development.

Spotlight on Africa – an African startup once again rewarded! Part of the future of the Ocean will be shaped in Africa, where the potential for developing a truly effective and regenerative blue economy is immense. An African startup was therefore awarded the "Spotlight on Africa" Prize — a strong signal encouraging young entrepreneurs to engage in innovative projects contributing to Ocean preservation and the Sustainable Development Goals. The winning company and its founders will benefit from dedicated support provided by the organizers of the Monaco Ocean Protection Challenge.

Prize Package: Integration into the 1000 Ocean Startups platform, along with a €2,500 cash prize jointly offered by GH Advisory, Kroll and Dietsmann.

In addition to CFM INDOSUEZ WEALTH MANAGEMENT, the MOPC is supported by:

- DIETSMANN
- BEEFBAR
- STAR CLIPPERS
- MARRIOTT WORLDWIDE BUSINESS COUNCIL
- VITALE MONTE CARLO
- C4C BUSINESS VALUATION AND ANALYSIS
- GH ADVISORY
- KROLL
- LET'S BE SOLUTIONS
- ASSOCIATION DES AMIS DU MUSEE OCEANOGRAPHIQUE DE MONACO

About the organisers:

- **INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MONACO:** The International University of Monaco aims to prepare the next generation of managers and entrepreneurs to face today's and tomorrow's challenges. Key themes such as Entrepreneurship/Intrapreneurship, Innovation/Digital Transformation, and Social and Environmental Responsibility are integrated into all of its programs — from Bachelor's to Master's and MBA levels.
- **OCEANOGRAPHIC INSTITUTE, FOUNDATION ALBERT I, PRINCE OF MONACO:** The Oceanographic Institute was founded in 1906 by Prince Albert I, a passionate and visionary navigator. Recognized as a public-interest foundation, it has been working for more than a century toward the protection of the Ocean. It brings together political, scientific, economic and non-profit stakeholders, as well as the general public, with the mission to "know, love and protect the Ocean." Supported by its two establishments - the Oceanographic Museum of Monaco and the Maison de l'Océan in Paris - the Oceanographic Institute leads numerous

national and international initiatives (conferences, exhibitions, educational programs, etc.) aimed at promoting the sustainable management of the Ocean.

- **MONACO IMPACT:** Monaco Impact's mission is to promote Monaco as a global hub for philanthropy and social impact investment. As part of its agreement, Monaco Impact sponsors a competition involving IUM students, rewarding the best project aimed at developing social media tools to engage and raise awareness among Gen Z about the importance of protecting the Ocean.
- **PRINCE ALBERT II OF MONACO FOUNDATION:** Founded by HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco, the Foundation is an international non-profit organization committed to advancing planetary health for present and future generations. Through its 13 ongoing initiatives and more than 800 supported projects, the Foundation addresses major global challenges including climate change, ocean preservation, biodiversity protection, water resource management and deforestation. The Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation actively promotes innovative and regenerative initiatives, supporting stakeholders developing long-term solutions for the benefit of the planet — and particularly the Ocean. Its objectives include empowering the next generation of leaders, supporting innovative entrepreneurs, directing investment toward sustainable solutions and protecting natural ecosystems, while promoting ethical and responsible business models. Through its Blue Solutions Hub - notably bringing together the Ocean Innovators Platform and the ReOcean Fund - the Foundation combines ecology and economics to accelerate the transition toward a New Blue Economy.

Partner Organizations:

The Monaco Ocean Protection Challenge relies on numerous partners to promote the competition on an international scale.

- **L'incubateur Sciences & Vie**
- **Ocean Hub Africa**
- **1000 Ocean Startups**
- **Index Blue Tech – Cluster Maritime Français**
- **Monaco Tech**
- **Clear Reef Social Funds**
- **Global Seaweed coalition**
- **Searious Business**

Before reaching the Grand Finale on May 14, 2025, candidates had to go through a selection round in mid-April, assessed by a first jury composed of the following members: Adrien Vincent (Albatros Advisory), Alessandro Romano (Ocean Twist Biotechnology), Bertrand Charron (Aquaculture Stewardship Council – ASC), Céline Dubreuil-Degortes (Oceanographic Institute, Prince Albert I of Monaco Foundation), Claudia Van der Vorm (C4C Business Valuation and Analysis), Clément Hochart (SCOBY Collective), Cyrille Poirier-Coutansais (Centre for Strategic Studies of the French Navy), Déborah Pardo (Impact Scientist & Environmental Speaker), Dominique Benzaken (Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security), Franck Guarnieri (Centre de recherches sur les risques et les crises, Mines ParisTech), François Simard (Marine Conservation Expert), Frédéric Durand (CFM Indosuez Wealth Management), James Nikitine (Island Conservation), Jean-Charles Tonelli (Grogenics), Laurent Faure (Dietsmann), Magnus Frohmann (Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation), Nicolas Pascal (Blue Alliance), Paola Furla (Université Côte d'Azur), Philippe de Lacaze (Clear Reefs), Pierre-Yves Paslier (Notpla), Rachid Benchaouir (Coraliotech), Runa Ray (Kelptex), Samuel Dupont (Biocéanor), Thomas de Williencourt (Pure Ocean), Véronique Raoul (Expert, Former Inalve Executive).

Projects eligible for the "Spotlight on Africa" Prize were evaluated by a panel of experts specialized in blue economy issues in Africa: Peter Kutemann, Cesare Canevese, Alberto Ruggieri, Ionut Enescu and Mihai Plopeanu (Dietsmann), Alexis Grosskopf (Ocean Hub Africa), Hervé Martin (Académie de la Mer),

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Ofek Liepaz and Lucretia Chopera (Katapult Ocean), Manon Aminatou (Alliance des Communes et Territoires Engagés), and Marie Furtado (French Committee of the IUCN).

The other finalists competing in the Grand Finale of this 9th edition

« Business Concepts » category

- **BluePrint Reefs (France) – Projet présenté par Anastasija Stefanović, Université Sorbonne Panthéon Paris 1.** La mission de BluePrint Reefs est d'accélérer la restauration des récifs coralliens grâce à des récifs modulaires bioprintés en 3D. En utilisant une technologie propriétaire associant carbonate de calcium recyclé et bio-stimulateurs, BluePrint Reefs développe des structures capables d'attirer naturellement les larves de coraux et de favoriser la régénération de la biodiversité marine. Cette approche innovante vise à rendre la restauration des récifs plus rapide, scalable et efficace. ***BluePrint Reefs (France) – Project presented by Anastasija Stefanović, Université Sorbonne Panthéon Paris.*** *BluePrint Reefs' mission is to accelerate coral reef restoration through 3D-bioprinted modular reefs. Using a proprietary technology combining recycled calcium carbonate and bio-triggers, BluePrint Reefs creates structures designed to naturally attract coral larvae and foster marine biodiversity recovery. This innovative approach aims to make reef restoration faster, more scalable and more effective.*

- **BlueReturn (Allemagne) – Projet présenté par Anvi Gowda, Malena Merkel, Kamar Haidar, et Jana Cisewski, Hamburg School of Business Administration.** La mission de BlueReturn est d'encourager la collecte des déchets dans les zones côtières grâce à un système de stations intelligentes connectées à une application mobile. Alimentées par l'intelligence artificielle, ces stations permettent le tri des déchets tandis que l'application récompense les utilisateurs pour leurs actions en faveur de la protection des océans. En transformant des gestes individuels en impact collectif visible, BlueReturn sensibilise et mobilise les citoyens autour de la préservation marine. ***BlueReturn (Germany) – Project presented by Anvi Gowda, Malena Merkel, Kamar Haidar, and Jana Cisewski, Hamburg School of Business Administration***. *BlueReturn's mission is to encourage waste collection in coastal areas through a network of AI-powered cleanup stations connected to a mobile application. The stations enable proper waste sorting while the app rewards users for their contribution to ocean protection. By turning individual actions into visible collective impact, BlueReturn raises awareness and mobilizes citizens around marine preservation.*

- **PEARL (Monaco) – Projet présenté par Amy Dzikowski, Nathalie Falck, Rebecca Sidalova, et Anne Marie Medema, International University of Monaco.** La mission de PEARL est de protéger les écosystèmes marins contre la prolifération du poisson-lion invasif grâce à un véhicule sous-marin autonome piloté par intelligence artificielle. Capable d'identifier et de capturer précisément cette espèce sans endommager les récifs ni les espèces locales, PEARL propose une solution durable pour préserver la biodiversité marine. Le projet associe impact écologique et valorisation économique des captures afin de favoriser un déploiement à grande échelle**.** ***PEARL (Monaco) – Project presented by Amy Dzikowski, Nathalie Falck, Rebecca Sidalova, and Anne Marie Medema, International University of Monaco***. *PEARL's mission is to protect marine ecosystems from the spread of invasive lionfish through an AI-powered autonomous underwater vehicle. Designed to precisely identify and capture lionfish without damaging reefs or native species, PEARL offers a sustainable solution to preserve marine biodiversity. The project combines ecological impact with the economic valorization of captured lionfish to support large-scale deployment.*

« Startups » category

- **Sealevä (Finlande) – Projet présenté par Mohamed Elamir, Botond Kiss, Coleman Piburn, and Sini Kanerva.** La mission de Sealevä est de transformer les déchets industriels d'algues en matériaux biosourcés haute performance pour remplacer les plastiques conventionnels. Grâce à des granulés moulables et des filaments d'impression 3D contenant jusqu'à 100 % d'algues, Sealevä développe des alternatives à faible empreinte carbone, sans utilisation d'eau douce ni de terres agricoles. Le projet valorise les ressources marines tout en soutenant une économie circulaire durable. ***Sealevä (Finland) – Project presented by Mohamed Elamir, Botond Kiss, Coleman Piburn, and Sini Kanerva.*** *Sealevä's mission is to transform industrial seaweed waste into high-performance bio-based materials that can replace conventional plastics. Through injection-moldable pellets and 3D printing filaments containing up to 100% seaweed, Sealevä develops low-carbon alternatives that require neither freshwater nor agricultural land. The project promotes marine resource valorization while supporting a sustainable circular economy.*

- **Seavium (France) – Projet présenté par Adrien Barrau et Adeline Bouvet.** La mission de Seavium est de réduire l'empreinte environnementale des opérations offshore grâce à une plateforme d'intelligence artificielle qui optimise en temps réel les déplacements des navires. En connectant chaque besoin opérationnel au navire le plus proche et le plus adapté, Seavium diminue les distances parcourues, la consommation de carburant et les émissions du secteur maritime. Déjà adoptée par plus de 118 entreprises et cartographiant plus de 20 000 navires, la solution combine impact environnemental et efficacité opérationnelle à grande échelle. ***Seavium (France) – Project presented by Adrien Barrau and Adeline Bouvet***. *Seavium's mission is to reduce the environmental footprint of offshore operations through an AI-powered platform that optimizes vessel movements in real time. By matching each offshore need with the closest and most suitable vessel, Seavium reduces transit distances, fuel consumption and emissions across the maritime sector. Already engaging more than 118 companies and mapping over 20,000 vessels, the solution combines environmental impact with large-scale operational efficiency.*

- **ClimaFund (Singapour) – Projet présenté par Mme Maria Innocentia Ratri, Tsamara Tsabita.** La mission de ClimaFund est de rendre la conservation côtière économiquement durable en associant restauration des mangroves, technologies de suivi environnemental et inclusion des communautés locales. Grâce à une plateforme de surveillance satellitaire alimentée par l'IA et à un système de traçabilité blockchain pour les produits de la mer, ClimaFund protège les écosystèmes côtiers tout en générant de nouvelles opportunités économiques pour les pêcheurs. Déjà déployée en Indonésie, la solution contribue à renforcer la résilience climatique et la préservation des océans. ***ClimaFund (Singapour) – Project presented by Ms Maria Innocentia Ratri, Tsamara Tsabita***. *ClimaFund's mission is to make coastal conservation economically sustainable by combining mangrove restoration, environmental monitoring technologies and community inclusion. Through an AI-powered satellite monitoring platform and a blockchain-based seafood traceability system, ClimaFund protects coastal ecosystems while creating new economic opportunities for fishing communities. Already operating in Indonesia, the solution contributes to climate resilience and ocean preservation.*

Success stories of the MOPC laureates from previous editions

molluSCAN-eye (finalist of the Monaco Ocean Protection Challenge 2025) deploys a unique continuous biosurveillance technology that turns oysters and mussels into connected sentinels of water quality. This approach enables real-time detection of pollution, anticipation of environmental risks, and direct contribution to the health of the ocean and coastal ecosystems. Since last year, the company has accelerated its trajectory with its solution already commercially deployed since 2023, reference partnerships with SUEZ, the Port of Bordeaux, and other major aquaculture players, and strengthened international recognition through the CES Innovation Awards 2025 and the Solar Impulse Efficient Solution Label in 2026. molluSCAN-eye is now preparing future deployments with the Ports of Strasbourg and Douala, working with SUEZ on monitoring applications in French Polynesia, notably around the Bora Bora lagoon, and holding advanced discussions in aquaculture. The Monaco Ocean Protection Challenge has played a real accelerator role by providing molluSCAN-eye with strategic visibility and facilitating new exchanges with the Monegasque ecosystem, particularly around the monitoring of marine protected areas.

Cool Equity (winner of the Monaco Ocean Protection Challenge 2025, "Business Concepts" category) develops decentralized cooling solutions intended for artisanal fishing communities. Through the use of phase change materials, these solutions help better preserve seafood after harvest, reduce losses, overfishing, bycatch, and marine pollution. Thanks to the €4,000 prize received at the Grand Final, the pilot study conducted in Rameshwaram (India) in 2025—combining scientific and technical trials with an ethnographic study—validated the technical feasibility of the concept and its suitability for the needs of artisanal fishers operating small boats. These fishers welcomed the solution, considering it a promising and beneficial alternative to support their livelihoods. In 2026, Cool Equity entered its research and development phase, aiming to improve the design of its decentralized cooling system based on feedback from fishers. The Monaco Ocean Protection Challenge played a decisive role in accelerating the project by providing financial support, mentorship, visibility, and ongoing guidance, enabling Cool Equity to continue its mission toward more sustainable and equitable fishing.

Acquaden (winner of the Monaco Ocean Protection Challenge 2025, "Spotlight on Africa Award") contributes to the development of a more sustainable aquaculture sector in Kenya by improving access to high-quality fingerlings and supporting climate-smart fish farming practices. By enabling fish farmers to produce more fish through aquaculture, Acquaden contributes to food security while helping reduce pressure on wild fish stocks and aquatic ecosystems. Since receiving the award, Acquaden has attracted an international investor, expanded its hatchery operations, and increased its production capacity by 50%. The company has strengthened its support for fish farmers, deepened its partnerships, and continued its mission to make sustainable aquaculture more accessible and economically viable across Kenya. The Monaco Ocean Protection Challenge has provided Acquaden with valuable international visibility, enabling it to connect with a broader network of investors, innovators, and ocean-focused stakeholders. The company notably participated in the Blue Economy and Finance Forum held in Monaco in June 2025. This recognition has strengthened its credibility and created new opportunities for collaboration and growth, allowing it to increase its impact while contributing to food security, improved livelihoods, and the long-term preservation of aquatic ecosystems.

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