



## **A thunderous Voice of Youth and Indigenous People at the 5th International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC5) Vancouver, Canada.**

Our Founder & Director ACHARE Elvis AYAMBA represented Environment and Food Foundation (E2F) at the 5th International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC5) Vancouver, Canada and here is his report.



Welcome by Host First Nations - IMPAC5

I sincerely wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to **the Host First Nations —Musqueam (x̣ẉməθḳẉəỵəm), Squamish (Ṣḳẉx̣ẉú), and the Tsleil-waututh (ṣəḷilẉətạl) — the Province of British Columbia**, the Government of Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Parks Canada, International Union For The Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society and IMPAC5 team for generously hosting the **Fifth International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC5)**. My appreciation was also extended to the **3,900 participants from 123 countries** who joined either in-person in Vancouver or virtually and actively contributed to elevating and amplifying youth and indigenous voices, advancing the ocean conservation agenda **post-CBD COP 15 and the recently adopted Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework**.

I was also very appreciative to the **IMPAC5, Young Professional Committee (YPC) Members**. Special thanks to IMPAC5 YPC team manager; **KIMBERLEY ANTHONY** and IMPAC5 Young professional's engagement advisors; **PASCALE SYLVESTER** and **NOEMIE ROY**.

My 12 days in Vancouver, Canada was meaningful, impactful and insightful. I must confess here that this has been my most meaningfully engaged international event so far in my 06 years career as Early Career Ocean Professional (ECOP). My journey started at the IMPAC5 youth coastal connection, followed by IMPAC5 Indigenous Caucus, IMPAC5 (the congress) and finally IMPAC5 Leadership Forum.



I attended the Fifth International Marine Protected Areas Congress, (IMPAC5) as one of the 15th IMPAC5 young professional committee (YPC) members. As IMPAC5 YPC my principal role was to ensure the voices of youth are heard before, during and after the congress.



Coastal connection workshop



IMPAC5 Indigenous Caucus

It was indeed a time of learning, growth, sharing, exchange, exploring ocean innovation, best practices and best knowledges. It was also certainly a time of celebration of success stories, relaxation, fun and most importantly networking. From reflection, cultural, storytelling and knowledge sharing activities, keynotes, technical workshops, Ocean literacy, to Climate Finance sessions for Collaborative Marine Management Plans, Meaningful Intergenerational Engagement, and Community-led Ocean Regeneration Initiatives, to panel discussions, to personal presentations and talks, and finally speaking at the leadership forum, the congress was booming with a biodiverse range of rational thinkers, sessions, innovations and ideas, in which I was fully engaged in.



IMPAC5 YPC team



IMPAC5 YPC team, manager and advisers

Over seven days, indigenous people, youth, practitioners, scientists, policy and decision makers, funders, and more have come together to exchange knowledge, best practices and innovative ideas to ensure the full and effective implementation of the Kunming-Montreal

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Global Biodiversity Framework. I notably applauded the active engagement and key contributions of youth leaders voicing their concerns against deep seabed mining in the streets and in sessions alike. Indigenous leaders were clearly heard as they expressed the need to include traditional knowledge in the design, planning, and implementation of marine protection and conservation measures. I will always support the inclusion of youth and indigenous people voices in future dialogues, as only with them will we meet the world's ambitious ocean targets of 30x30. The congress was a unique opportunity to exchange knowledge, best practices and innovative ideas to ensure the full and effective implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Framework has been the beacon of this convening, and remains a guide for the ocean community. It reads:

**“Ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, recognizing indigenous and traditional territories, where applicable, and integrated into wider landscapes, seascapes and the ocean, while ensuring that any sustainable use, where appropriate in such areas, is fully consistent with conservation outcomes, recognizing and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities including over their traditional territories.”**

In connecting deeply with youth, indigenous people, indigenous elders, government officials, scientists, ocean professionals, water guardians, voyagers, policy and decision makers, here are my **top 6 takeaways**:

### **1) Indigenous People as the Leads**

A major success of IMPAC5 was the ability for Indigenous communities to lead many of the conversations and announcements. This includes significant indigenous partnership in the planning and delivery of the congress. Governments, civil society organizations (CSOs) and all actors must align with **indigenous values, rights and cultures** in order to have successful conservation programs in indigenous territories. Indigenous people should be the lead in the management, planning, designing of marine protected areas (MPAs).



A talk on values of Indigenous people

Panel Discussion: Ocean x Indigenous people

## 2) Youth at the Centre and meaningfully engaged

Youth engagement at IMPAC5 started at a two days Coastal Connections hosted by Ocean Wise at Camp Elphinstone. This was aimed to empower and connect over 100 youth from all corners of the earth, through workshops, reflection and cultural activities.

Without question the highlight has been the centering of youth at this important congress. IMPAC5 team was committed to having youth participate in the conversations rather than watching from the sidelines. Youths were very engaged in all sessions of the congress even during the leadership forum. However there were still some gaps to be filled to ensure a better meaningful youth engagement in future IMPAC5. Some of this gaps include

- (1) Fully fund more youth in attending future IMPACs and other high level Ocean/MPAs related events.
- (2) Reduce the registration cost for future IMPACs
- (3) Compensate youth with funding of their initiatives and connect youth to funding organizations and mentors to help build their initiatives.



IMPAC5 YPC delivering closing speech



Closing remarks at Youth pavillion



### **3) Ocean Literacy;**

The Canadian Ocean Literacy Coalition (COLC) hosted the Ocean Literacy Dialogues 3rd Edition at IMPAC5, in collaboration with the Marine Social Sciences Network and Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC-UNESCO). I was invited to share my journey as an ocean-climate advocate with elementary schools around the world, through the COLC-led LIVE from IMPAC5: Ocean Conservation 4 Schools side-event in partnership with Exploring by the Seat of Your Pants and the All-Atlantic Blue Schools Network. This was joined by over 500 incredible students, listening to my story, learning about various ocean solutions like community-building for ocean action, and asking inquisitive questions with their unbridled curiosity.



Live from IMPAC5: Ocean Conservation 4 Schools

### **4) We need Sustainable (durable) financial mechanism;**

Of particular note, a prominent funding announcement was made. The Government of Canada announced the first major financial contribution of 30M CAD to protect and restore Ocean ecosystems in developing countries, including the Western Indian Ocean. This includes the IUCN Great Blue Wall initiative, which involves Nature-based Solutions for adaptation, an important aspect of which is marine protected areas in the Western Indian Ocean. Canada, which boasts the longest coastline in the world, also announced it was working with Indigenous Peoples to protect 25% of its land and oceans by 2025 and at least 30 per cent by 2030. This was a great bold step taken by Canadian government and we need other countries to do same. Most funding mechanisms are not sustainable. I am calling for an independent funding mechanisms for the indigenous people and youth.

### **5) Science and innovative technology;**

The Ocean Expo at IMPAC5 provided a lot of science and innovative technologies for Ocean conservation and monitoring. Such Scientific and innovative technologies are vital for us to achieve the 30x30 targets. I visited the booths of companies and organizations at the Ocean expo where I learned a lot about their scientific and innovative technologies. We must learn to use both scientific and indigenous knowledge in our conservation actions.

### **6) We need Global Network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs):**

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We need a connected global network of MPAs for future and people,

## **Two Barriers to the Work Ahead**

### **Fund it with passion;**

MPAs can be effective tools to protect nature, and increase productivity throughout the Ocean. But, only if they are well designed and well managed. For this to happen we need to fund ocean conservation like our lives depend on it, because they do. Currently SDG 14 (Life under water) is critically underfunded. Less than 0.01% of all SDG funding goes towards the Ocean. Most MPAs are still not effective, at least partly because management and enforcement aren't funded.

Designation of MPAs is a critical first step, but unless government commit resources for management and enforcement, all we get is paper parks.

There is an urgent need to strengthen independent funding mechanisms for indigenous-led conservation actions and youth-led actions. We must establish indigenous community trust funds and youth trust funds to fuel their conservation efforts.

### **We are already running out of TIME;**

IMPAC5 was an important gathering for building off of COP15 and setting pathways to protect 30% of the ocean by 2030. But, we need to move fast...and I mean FAST! If we are going to hit this target we need to designate 11 million km<sup>2</sup> per year, every year between now and 2030.

We've never designated that much in a year, yet alone multiple years in a row. The need to hit these targets will encourage speed over rigour. While I hope we can work quickly together, and achieve protection like never before, it is important that we do not sacrifice quality for speed.



## Message of hope

IMPAC5 has provided yet another wake-up call regarding the reality faced by many local communities around the world currently suffering and adapting to climate change. Through this Congress, we have learned and witnessed the extraordinary resilience, and innovation grounded in local and traditional knowledge.

I and our **Organization Environment and Food Foundation (E2F)** committed to continue to address the many conservation and climate challenges in order to achieve our ambitious targets. This commitment includes working with Indigenous communities, governments, private sector partners, and civil society to sustainably restore, protect, and conserve coastal, freshwater and marine ecosystems.

Finally, I am looking forward to working with Senegal, the newly announced host nation for IMPAC6. We are confident that between then and now the commitments from this IMPAC5 will have been made into actions by all nations to protect the Ocean.



IMPAC5 Leadership Forum



IMPAC5 Leadership Forum

**WRITTEN BY: ACHARE Elvis AYAMBA**

**FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND FOOD FOUNDATION (E2F)**

**IMPAC5 YOUNG PROFESSIONALS COMMITTEE MEMBER**

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Achare Elvis Ayamba  
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Dear Ayamba,

On behalf of the Government of Canada, I would like to extend our gratitude for your valuable support and contributions to the *Fifth International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC5)*, that took place in Vancouver, February 3-9, 2023.

Canada was honoured to co-host this significant and forward-looking Congress, and to demonstrate its commitment and leadership in this extremely critical area of work. It was also a pleasure to have the opportunity to highlight the voices of Indigenous Peoples and Young Professionals from around the world, which enriched and enhanced the experience for all participants.

IMPAC5 was an important part of the global efforts to restore the health of our planet and the environment we will leave for generations to come. The Young Professional Committee played a vital role in ensuring we delivered an impactful event. We are especially grateful for your role as a presenter in the Youth Welcome Event, a moderator for the Youth Lightning Talks, a Storyteller for the workshop Learning from Our Stories, a member of the Youth Pavilion, Pre-Congress, and Intergenerational Knowledge Exchange Program Subcommittees, and a speaker at the Leadership Forum. Thank you for being a part of IMPAC5, and for helping make this congress a resounding success.

For your interest, we invite you to read the News Release ([Fifth International Marine Protected Areas Congress \(IMPAC5\) Chairs' Statement \(dfo-mpo.gc.ca\)](https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca)) issued by the Government of Canada at the close of the IMPAC5 Leadership Forum. As well, please see the [5th International Marine Protected Areas Congress \(IMPAC5\) | IISD Earth Negotiations Bulletin](#) which provides some highlights and video of the Congress and Leadership Forum.

With sincere thanks,

Kimberley Anthony, Pascale Sylvester, and Noémie Roy  
Youth Engagement Team  
IMPAC5  
Government of Canada

Canada





IMPAC 5

LEADERSHIP  
FORUM  
DE LEADERSHIP

Elvis Achare Ayamba  
Founder & Executive Director (E2F)  
Environment and Food Foundation  
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Dear Elivis Achare Ayamba,

On behalf of the Government of Canada, we would like to extend our gratitude for your active participation in the roundtable discussions at the *Fifth International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC5) Leadership Forum*, that took place in Vancouver on February 9, 2023.

Canada was honoured to co-host this significant and forward-looking Congress, and to demonstrate its commitment and leadership in this extremely critical area of work. It was also a pleasure to have the opportunity to highlight the valuable voices of Indigenous Peoples and Young Professionals from around the world, which enriched and enhanced the experience for all participants.

The perspectives shared in the Leadership Forum allowed us to collectively discuss key areas of opportunity for marine conservation as we work to reach our shared global ambition of 30 per cent ocean protection by 2030. In the discussions on Indigenous-led conservation, conservation financing, protecting biodiversity through marine protected area management and industry contributions, we heard the collective acknowledgement that reaching the targets will require an all-in collaborative effort. In the closing plenary on multilateral cooperation, leaders focused on how global partnerships can achieve results for conservation and explored key areas for action.

For your interest, we invite you to read through the News Release ([Fifth International Marine Protected Areas Congress \(IMPAC5\) Chairs' Statement \(dfo-mpo.gc.ca\)](#)) issued by the Government of Canada at the close of the Leadership Forum. As well, please see the [5th International Marine Protected Areas Congress \(IMPAC5\) | IISD Earth Negotiations Bulletin](#) which provides some highlights and video of the congress and Leadership Forum.

We look forward to continued collaborations in marine conservation and protection for the benefit of our future generations, and the health of our planet.

With sincere thanks,

Canada