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From hundreds to tens of thousands: FVON commits to an ocean data revolution

(BUSAN – April 28, 2025) Ahead of the 10th Annual Our Ocean Conference (OOC), the Fishing Vessel Ocean Observing Network (FVON) announced an ambitious commitment to scale its transformative ocean data initiative from hundreds to tens of thousands of fishing vessels. This pledge could redefine how scientists, policymakers, and coastal communities understand and respond to a rapidly changing ocean.

The announcement comes as the OOC turns its spotlight on "digital oceans," a special agenda focused on closing critical ocean data gaps that limit our ability to predict hurricanes, monitor marine heatwaves, and safeguard coastal communities.

FVON's model is simple but powerful: empower fishers to collect ocean data and decide how that data can best serve their own communities. The method is game-changingly cost-effective, and it has already been proven to safeguard the lives, livelihoods, and food security of hundreds of fishers—including industrial and Indigenous—around the world.

In Italy, FVON data is used to protect thriving populations of fish that are crucial to the local diet and economy. In The Bahamas, the data improves forecasting models for the catastrophic hurricanes that spiral through the Caribbean.

In just five years, FVON has committed to expanding these benefits to *tens of thousands* of fishers, laying the foundation for an ocean data revolution. The implications are tremendous. Such a scale would deliver an unprecedented leap in global data coverage—providing essential insights to fuel sustainable fisheries, strengthen disaster preparedness, and support emerging sectors like offshore wind energy and marine carbon dioxide removal, which depend on accurate, localized ocean information.

To meet this bold target, FVON is pioneering financial innovation in ocean observing. By communicating the economic value of ocean data for national governments, the private sector, and coastal communities, FVON aims to unlock sustained and scalable funding mechanisms that return benefits back to the hands of fishers.

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“We’re working on a future where governments and private companies don’t just consume ocean data—they invest in it,” said Cooper Van Vranken, Co-Chair of the FVON Steering Committee. “That means valuing the people who gather it: fishers.”

The initiative is already generating strong enthusiasm among fishers globally, who want the chance to create tangible benefits they see in their own communities. “We’ve met with fishers from Ghana to New Zealand, and they’re not just willing—they’re excited,” said Van Vranken. “They know the ocean is changing, and they want to be part of the solution. They see how this data protects their families, supports their economies, and amplifies their voice in national and international decision-making.”

With growing recognition from international institutions like the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the FVON method of fishing for data is poised to reshape science-based decision-making on a global scale.

As the world races to adapt to changing oceans, FVON’s commitment marks a hopeful turning point—one where inclusive, community-driven data collection creates a more informed and resilient future.

With support from the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), the Fishing Vessel Ocean Observing Network (FVON) is an interdisciplinary initiative dedicated to advancing ocean observing through partnerships with fishers, globally. Operating in the US, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Italy, The Bahamas, Ghana, Tanzania, and still growing, FVON transforms fishing vessels into vital platforms for collecting ocean data. By bridging the gap between coastal communities and science, FVON advances climate monitoring, sustainable fisheries, and coastal resilience worldwide.