

JOB AND TASK DESCRIPTION

Job Title: Adviser, Oceans Governance

Division: Climate Change and Oceans Directorate

Grade: F

Reports To: Head of Oceans

General Information

The Commonwealth Secretariat supports its member countries to build environmental, political and economic resilience. The Climate Change and Oceans (CCO) Directorate leads the Commonwealth Secretariat's work on environmental resilience. The Directorate brings together work on climate change and oceans.

Ocean Section

Environmental resilience and ocean conservation are prioritised in the Commonwealth Secretariat Strategic Plan 2025-2030, with outcomes 3.2 and 3.3 directly referencing the ocean.

The Ocean Section is charged with contributing to the Strategic Plan Outcomes 3.2 and 3.3. It delivers its work through four programmes:

- the Incubator, which provides grants of up to £50,000 per project directly to Commonwealth countries for ocean conservation;
- the six Blue Charter Action Groups, each championed by a Commonwealth country or countries, on climate change and ocean health, aquaculture and fisheries, marine ecosystems and livelihoods, marine protected areas, sustainable blue economy, and marine plastic pollution. The Blue Charter Action Groups translate high-level commitments into practical, country-led action enabling Commonwealth members to collaborate on shared ocean priorities.
- the Blue Finance Group, which we run in partnership with the Ocean Risk and Resilience Action Alliance (ORRAA), and which focuses on assisting Commonwealth countries in accessing blue finance; and
- confidential bilateral technical assistance projects on maritime boundaries negotiations and the design and development of ocean governance instruments, including the implementation of the BBNJ Agreement.

Job Summary

The post-holder will be responsible for the delivery of specialised strategic, policy, technical, economic advice, and/or legal advice to Commonwealth member governments on ocean governance, potentially including: the BBNJ Agreement, maritime boundaries, ocean policies and maritime transportation policies.

In particular, the post-holder will be responsible for:

- Managing technical assistance projects to Commonwealth member countries in the area of ocean governance, potentially including projects on: the BBNJ Agreement, maritime boundaries, ocean policies and maritime transportation policies
- Delivering strategic, policy, technical, economic advice and/or legal advice either alone or as part of a multi-disciplinary team, within their area of expertise.

The post involves frequent overseas travel.

Task Description

The post-holder shall:

- a.) Provide advice to Commonwealth member countries to assist them implement the BBNJ Agreement, determine maritime boundaries, develop ocean policies, and develop maritime transportation policies.
- b.) Undertake analytical work for Commonwealth member countries such as policy reviews, legal gap analysis, and drafting policies to assist countries with ocean governance, including implementing the BBNJ Agreement, determining maritime boundaries, and developing maritime transportation policies.
- c.) Manage technical assistance projects by:
 - i.) proactively managing relationships with relevant government officials and other stakeholders in those Commonwealth member countries that are receiving technical assistance from the Ocean section.
 - ii.) defining project parameters in response to government requests for assistance and obtaining project approvals.
 - iii.) developing and monitoring budgets for relevant technical assistance projects.
 - iv.) managing and reporting on project implementation and monitoring project performance.
 - v.) effectively working in multi-disciplinary project teams in the office and on mission.
 - vi.) defining, mobilising and supervising specialist legal, technical and other inputs to projects made by external consultants, as required.
- d.) Develop strategic partnerships and initiatives with multilateral and bilateral agencies in relation to the focus areas and maintain contacts with senior government officials, investors and other international agencies.
- e.) Contribute to international seminars, conferences, expert group meetings, ministerial meetings and similar as required.

- f.) Assist with organising events, conferences and similar on ocean governance
- g.) Provide technical inputs when needed to assist grants to countries on ocean governance.
- h.) Adhere to the Gender Equality values of the Commonwealth as enshrined in the Charter and Secretariat's Gender Equality Policy; and
- i.) Perform any other duties that may be required from time to time.

Person Specification

Required Educational Qualifications

A post-graduate degree in a relevant area of specialisation, such as ocean law, ocean governance, environmental economics, marine biology or similar.

Desired Educational Qualifications

A PhD, law degree, or post-graduate degree that is highly relevant to the work of the Ocean Section and included significant work on: the BBNJ Agreement, maritime boundaries, ocean policies and/or maritime transportation policies

Required Experience

The successful candidate will have:

- At least ten years of experience advising senior counterparts on ocean governance, including at least five years of experience working on at least one of the following: the BBNJ Agreement, maritime boundaries, ocean policies and/or maritime transportation policies.
- At least five years of experience managing technical assistance projects for developing countries and/or small island developing states in one of the following areas of ocean governance: the BBNJ Agreement, maritime boundaries, ocean policies and/or maritime transportation policies.
- Significant experience in an international context, gained in an international organisation, a government ministry, the private sector, or for a well-respected international non-governmental organisation, working on ocean governance matters.
- Experience working with Commonwealth governments and working in a developing country setting or with developing countries, particularly small island developing states on ocean governance.
- Significant experience drafting high-quality analytical work and demonstrated excellent writing skills, as evidenced through briefing notes, reports and/or academic publications in a relevant area of ocean governance.
- Demonstrated experience in building partnerships and networks across a range of sectors, including international organisations.

- The ability to work independently, under pressure and under time constraints.

Desirable Experience

- Significant and demonstrable experience of the BBNJ Agreement
- Significant legal experience or similar in a relevant area such as maritime boundaries and/or the BBNJ Agreement.
- A strong track record of publications on the BBNJ Agreement, maritime boundaries, UNCLOS or similar.
- A strong track record organising conferences, workshops and/or events on ocean governance.

Competencies

Respect for Diversity
Works effectively with people from all backgrounds. Treats all people with dignity and respect. Treats men and women equally. Shows respect and understanding of diverse points of view and demonstrates understanding in daily work and decision making. Examine own biases and behaviours to avoid stereotypical responses and does not discriminate against any individual or group. Challenges others to rectify biases in behaviour, systems & process
Communication
Mentors a number of employees at a senior level Recognises the talent in the Commonwealth Secretariat, seeking to develop, support, and grow it Directs the energy of the organisation towards a common goal Provides an example to others by demonstrating moral courage in the face of challenging circumstance
Planning & Analysis
Effectively assesses and advises on major programmes/activities at a divisional level Balances focus in order to deliver both Commonwealth Secretariat and member states' goals Ability to interpret incomplete and/or ambiguous information

Effectively analyses and assesses new or uncertain critical situations

Adapting & Innovating

Identifies opportunities to improve divisional operations and effectively gains buy-in

Evaluates impact of improvement initiatives

Remains receptive to and encourages innovative ideas from more junior colleagues

Initiates change that will enable programme/team to fulfil objectives in light of changing circumstances

Adhering to Principles & Values

Sets example and embodies Commonwealth Secretariat principles and values

Demonstrably protects the reputation of the Commonwealth Secretariat

Interprets and implements Commonwealth Secretariat principles and values

Ensures that division/programmes operate in a manner aligned to the values and principles of the organisation

Leadership & Development

Mentors a number of employees at a senior level

Recognises the talent in the Commonwealth Secretariat, seeking to develop, support, and grow it

Directs the energy of the organisation towards a common goal

Provides an example to others by demonstrating moral courage in the face of challenging circumstances

Provide top level professional advice in strategic issues at management committee, board of governor & EXCO level. Lead on strategic issues.

July 2026