



PRESS RELEASE

Mercator Ocean International appoints Alain Arnaud as Director of Strategy and Digital

The newly created role places strategy and digital development at the executive level as Mercator Ocean prepares for its transition towards an intergovernmental organisation and the next EU long-term budget cycle.

Toulouse, 15 October 2026 - Mercator Ocean International has appointed Alain Arnaud as Director of Strategy and Digital, effective 1 October 2026. Reporting directly to Director General Pierre Bahurel, Alain will help define the organisation's strategic priorities as it prepares for the next EU long-term budget cycle (2028–2034) and moves towards becoming an intergovernmental organisation for digital ocean systems and information services.

The new role reflects the growing strategic importance of ocean information to Europe. A new generation of digital ocean capabilities is emerging, connecting observations from space and at sea with numerical models, digital twins and artificial intelligence to provide decision makers with trusted information to inform their decisions. Europe has built strong collective capabilities in space; the next step is to develop comparable capabilities for the ocean, strengthening Europe's resilience and autonomy.

Mercator Ocean contributes through its operation of the Copernicus Marine Service, which it has run on behalf of the European Commission for more than ten years, and through its role as a key developer of the European Digital Twin Ocean. The European Commission's OceanEye initiative will build on both of these capabilities to strengthen Europe's sovereign ocean observation infrastructure and support international efforts to observe and protect the ocean.

In his new role, Alain Arnaud will work with the Scientific Director and teams across the organisation to help define future ocean information services, including through Digital Twin technologies and artificial intelligence. As Mercator Ocean moves towards becoming an intergovernmental organisation governed by participating Member States, these services will be developed to address Members' priorities and serve their needs.

Alain Arnaud joined Mercator Ocean in 2017. He initially served as Head of Digital Programme before creating and leading the Digital Ocean department, where he helped spearhead the development of the European Digital Twin Ocean and worked with the European Commission on the development of Europe's Digital Ocean agenda, including through events such as the Digital Ocean Forum and the first Digital Ocean Week. His previous roles include CEO of Earth observation company Altamira Information S.L. and business development at the European Space Agency.



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Alain Arnaud, Director of Strategy and Digital, Mercator Ocean International