

IDWiM 2025 – Speakers' Bios and Photos

Mr. Karanvir Singh Nayyar



Karanvir Singh Nayyar is a Sailing Officer (2nd Officer) with 10 years of experience at sea. But beyond the bridge, he is also a digital creator and storyteller, building a 600K+ strong global community across social media. Through his content, he brings the maritime world closer to aspiring seafarers, industry professionals, and anyone curious about life at sea. From sharing real-life experiences to hosting insightful podcasts, his mission is simple — to revolutionize maritime media and make industry knowledge more accessible than ever.

Captain Josephine Clark



Captain Josephine Clark is the current President of the Australasian Marine Pilots Institute (AMPI) and an unlimited pilot at Port Kembla, Australia. She has worked as a marine pilot for 19 years across two ports. This includes responsibilities as a Check & Training pilot at Port Kembla and Harbour Master/Pilot at Eden on the NSW south coast. Her earlier career commenced in 1989 as a deck officer cadet on bulk carriers, LNG Tankers and general cargo ships. After 14 years at sea, she was promoted to Master served with Inco Ships P/L. Between 2000 – 2002, Josephine worked a two-year career diversion in Chartering Operations with

BHP Billiton in Melbourne and The Hague. Her interests in pilotage are training standards, simulator use in training and developing alternative pathways.

Ms. Mariam Al Shaikh



Dr. Mariam Al Shaikh is a Deck Cadet with Bahri Ship Management and is completing her BSc in Maritime Transport at Sharjah Maritime Academy, where she will earn her Officer of the Watch certificate. With a foundation in navigation, ship handling, maritime law, and SOLAS/MARPOL safety regulations, she has honed her skills through bridge watches, mooring operations, cargo handling, and emergency drills aboard VLCCs. Dr. Alshaikh excels in teamwork, situational awareness, and process-driven planning within multicultural crews. Committed to lifelong learning, she aspires to advance as a licensed deck officer

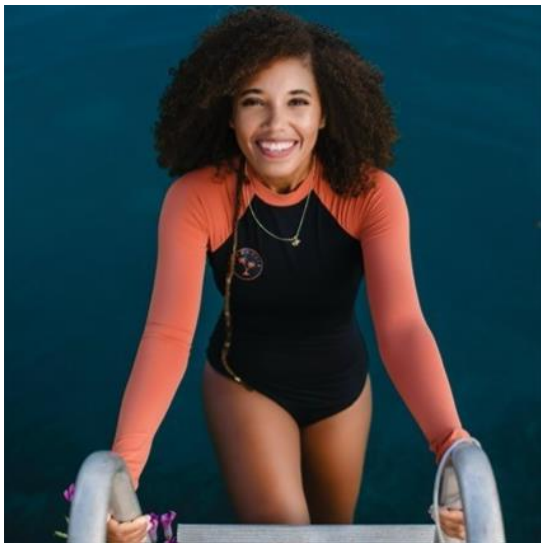
and mentor future seafarers while championing safety, innovation, and sustainability in global shipping

Ms. Karen McVeigh



Karen McVeigh is a senior reporter for *The Guardian* newspaper, working on the Seascope series. The series focuses on the health of our oceans, covering pollution, overfishing, and how industrial processes at sea, such as deep-sea mining, industrial fishing, and other extractive industries, impact coastal communities and the human rights of fishers and seafarers at sea.

Ms. Alannah Vellacott



Alannah Vellacott is a Bahamian marine ecologist, science communicator and ocean advocate with 17 years of experience in research, conservation, and education across The Bahamas and the Caribbean. She began her career in 2008 with a BESS Scholarship and shark-conservation internship at the Cape Eleuthera Institute. As a PADI Ambassador diver and scuba instructor, she has led field and outreach projects for BREEF, Bahamas National Trust, The Nature Conservancy and OceanX, and served as Community Development Lead at Coral Vita, spearheading coral husbandry and micro-fragmentation techniques to restore

climate-resilient reefs. Alannah's advocacy has been featured on PBS Nova, Discovery Channel's Shark Week, the "Enslaved" documentary, and in *Essence* magazine. She leverages a 27K-strong social media following and sponsorships from GoPro, PADI, and SUUNTO to bring ocean science to diverse audiences. An active member of Black in Marine Science and an accomplished free diver, she partners with underwater photographers to create imagery that highlights ocean conservation.

.....

Professor Richard Thompson



Richard is a Professor of Marine Biology and Director of the University of Plymouth, Marine Institute. He is a world expert on [plastic pollution](#). In 2004, he published the [first paper](#) describing the accumulation of microscopic fragments of plastic in the environment, naming them 'microplastics'. His [team](#) have been at the forefront of research describing the distribution and impacts of plastic debris in the environment. This pioneering work was pivotal in recognition of microplastic contamination in policy, such as Marine Strategy Framework Directive. Increasingly his work focuses on evaluating the efficacy of solutions to this global

environmental challenge. Richard was awarded an OBE for services to Marine Science in 2018 and his team were awarded the Queens Anniversary Prize for their pioneering work on microplastics in 2020. He was elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society in 2021.

.....

Dr. Renis Auma Ojwala



Dr. Renis Auma Ojwala is a Post-doctoral Research Associate at the World Maritime University (WMU), specializing in seafarer sustainability and gender equality in ocean science. With a diverse academic background, she is dedicated to advancing gender equality in maritime and aquatic sciences, as well as in addressing climate change. She contributed to several projects at WMU, including the Deep Dives Project, the Ocean-ICU, and the "Empowering Women for the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development" (2019–2023). Currently, she is part of the pool of experts contributing to the Third World

Ocean Assessment report, co-chair of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) task team under ECOPs (Early Career Ocean Professionals), and a member of the (informal) UNESCO-Gender Expert Working Group. Dr. Ojwala holds a PhD in Maritime Affairs from WMU, a Master's in Limnology and Wetland Management from BOKU University Austria, Egerton University in Kenya, and UNESCO-IHE Delft in the Netherlands, and a Bachelor's in Applied Aquatic Science from Egerton University

.....

Ms. Nicole Fisher



Nicole Fisher is a Senior Lecturer at Solent University's Warsash Maritime School, specialising in navigational mathematics and ship stability. A certified OOW, and working towards chief mate certification, she brings over seven years of sea and shore-based experience from the cruise and dredging industries. Nicole is actively engaged in promoting gender equality at sea, having supported the development of the Warsash Women's Group into a cadet-led network, now offering mentorship, peer support, and development opportunities.

.....

Ms. Michelle Bentubo



Michelle Bentubo joined Virgin Voyages in 2016 and was named Chief Operating Officer in October 2023. Over her 30-year career in travel and operations, she built Virgin Voyages' shipboard and shoreside technology platforms as VP of Technology & Operations, then drove service excellence and digital innovation, launching the Sailor App and in-cabin smart features as SVP of Service Excellence, Travel Operations, Crew Training & Experience. As COO, Michelle now oversees service delivery, port and marine operations, customer service, digital platforms, and business transformation across 100+ ports on more

than 45 global routes. She also leads the Scarlet Squad initiative to recruit, support, and mentor female talent for leadership roles. Before Virgin Voyages, she held executive roles at Bank of America, Walt Disney World, and Disney Cruise Line—making her one of the few women in cruising to helm full operational functions, including marine and technical aspects.

Mr. Dominic Pattinson



Dominic Pattinson is the Executive Secretary of the OSPAR Commission. He was appointed in June 2020 with the remit to support the 16 Contracting Parties to deliver the objectives of the OSPAR Convention for the protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic. Prior to joining OSPAR, he worked for the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) where he worked on domestic and international policy development and implementation. For the last eight years of his career with Defra he focussed on marine environment protection policies at a national, European, and international level. This

included development of the UK's Marine Strategy, marine litter policies, environmental aspects of deep-sea mining and the UK's Global Ocean Alliance and 30by30 initiatives.