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Regional Seas and Marine Litter

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UNEP's Global Initiative on Marine Litter

In response to the global challenge posed by marine litter, UNEP's Regional Seas Coordinating Office and the GPA Coordination Office have embarked on the development of a '*global initiative on marine litter*'. Although marine litter is found in all oceans and sea areas of the world, this proposed initiative would concentrate, among others, on the establishment and development of pilot regional activities in regions that are particularly affected. The global initiative would also provide a global platform for the establishment of partnerships, co-operation and co-ordination of activities for the control and sustainable management of marine litter.

The problem of marine litter was recognised by the UN General Assembly, which in its Resolution A/60/L.22 - Oceans and the Law of the Sea - of 29 November 2005, articles 65-70 call for national, regional and global actions to address the problem of marine litter: This resolution notes the lack of information and data on marine debris; encourages States to develop partnerships with industry and civil society; urges States to integrate the issue of marine debris within national strategies dealing with waste management; encourages the development of appropriate economic incentives to address this issue; and encourages States to cooperate regionally and subregionally to develop and implement joint prevention and recovery programmes for marine debris.

In the framework of the Global Initiative, UNEP/RSP and GPA have been developing and implementing a number of activities on the management of marine litter, among others:

- A document "Marine Litter: an analytical overview" was published in 2005 (*available online i.e. http://www.unep.org/regionalseas/Publications/Marine_Litter.pdf*);
- A leaflet on marine litter "Tightening the noose" was published in 2005;
- The problem of the management of marine litter was reported as a part of the UNEP's contribution to the Secretary General's report on "Oceans and law of the sea" to the sixty-first session of the General Assembly (Nov. 2005);
- A MoU was developed between UNEP and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) for the review of available relevant information and the preparation of a document on "Marine Litter and Abandoned/Lost Fishing Gear";
- The problem of the management of marine litter was presented in number of international meetings, including UNICPOLOS (June 2005);
- A series of 11 regional actions on marine litter in several Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans are being initiated and developed; and
- A GEF Medium Sized Project "Development of a Global Framework for Marine Litter Reduction" is being prepared, however its submission to the GEF is postponed until the finalization of more regional activities in the various Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans;

- Establishment of a global partnership on marine litter during the Second Intergovernmental Review Meeting of the GPA (Beijing, 16-20 October 2006). UNEP/GPA and the Regional Seas Programme would like to facilitate the creation of a new Marine Litter Partnership that could, by joining forces contribute to the coordinated implementation of the GPA especially as related to its source category of marine litter.

Most of these activities have been developed by UNEP/RSP in consultation and, where appropriate, in co-operation with UN Agencies, including IMO, IOC of UNESCO, FAO and the Basel Convention. Internal consultations and plans for co-operation were held also with the GPA and the UNEP Division of Technology Industry and Economics (DTIE).

Other activities planned to be developed within the framework of UNEP's Global Initiative will include:

- The development of substantive guidelines and recommended policies on harmonizing monitoring and assessment systems of marine litter;
- The management of abandoned and lost fishing gear;
- Promotion of reception facilities for marine garbage and waste;
- The development of economic instruments to better control the problem;
- Addressing the tourist and diving sectors and industries;
- Cooperation with global and regional beach clean up campaigns;
- The development of outreach and educational material; and -
- Other activities that will be identified as priority issues.

UNEP's Activities in Regional Seas

Regional actions on marine litter are being developed in the following Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans: Black Sea; Caspian Sea; East Asian Seas; Mediterranean; East Africa; Northwest Pacific (NOWPAP); Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (PERSGA); South Asian Seas (SACEP); South East Pacific (CPPS); and Wider Caribbean. In addition the Regional Seas Programme (RSP) is supporting regional activities on marine litter in the Baltic Sea (HELCOM).

Regional activities in the Black Sea; Caspian Sea; East Asian Seas; East Africa; Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (PERSGA); South Asia Seas (SACEP); South East Pacific (CPPS); and Wider Caribbean are arranged through an agreement (MOU or other agreement) concluded between the Regional Organisation and UNEP/RSP on the management of marine litter in the region. The NOWPAP region developed, in cooperation with RSP, a regional marine litter management programme (MALITA). In the Mediterranean, RSP provided financial support to the Mediterranean Coordinating Unit, which signed MoUs with three NGOs from Greece. For the Baltic Sea, a MoU was signed between HELCOM and the RSP for the preparation of a regional review on the state of the Baltic Sea relevant to marine litter.

The objective of an agreement or MoU in this case is to outline the development of a "Regional Action Plan on the Sustainable Management of Marine Litter in the Region".

Although each region has its own regional specificities, the main activities and outputs of a standard agreement with the relevant regional organisation are: (A) Preparation of the Review

Document on Marine Litter in the region; (B) Preparation of proposals for national and regional monitoring and evaluation programmes; (C) Organization of a regional meeting of national authorities and experts on Marine Litter; (D) Mobilization of the countries in the region to participate in a Regional Cleanup Day, within the framework of the International Coastal Cleanup Campaign; (E) Based on the products of activities (A) to (D) preparation of a regional action plan, or a regional strategy that should include, amongst others, and when feasible, the following activities: (a) Building ownership and partnerships; (c) Information and outreach; (d) Sectoral activities; and (e) Fundraising.

Eventually, these regional strategies will be incorporated into the programme of work and the legal instruments of the respective RSCAPs and become a 'normal' and sustainable part of the RS programmes.

Work on the implementation of MoUs in Regional Seas is progressing and it is envisaged that by the end of the year 2006, majority of the MoUs will be completed.