

Subcommittee Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives  
11 December 2.30 - 6:00 p.m.  
United Nations Office at Nairobi Gigiri,  
Conference Room 4

**Background Document for Agenda Item 4:  
Secretariat briefing on the revision of the marine and coastal strategy for the UN  
Environment Programme**

The UN Environment Assembly adopted a resolution at its second session in 2016 on oceans and seas (UNEP.EA2/Res. 10), requesting “the Executive Director to assess the effectiveness of the United Nations Environment Programme’s 2011 marine and coastal strategy and, on the basis of that assessment, submit a proposal for its update, revision or replacement for consideration by the Environment Assembly at its next session” (paragraph 17).

In response to this request, the UN Environment Programme submitted an information note to the third session of the Assembly entitled “Proposal of the Executive Director on the revision of the United Nations Environment Programme 2011 marine and coastal strategy, pursuant to resolution 2/10 on oceans and seas” (UNEP/EA.3/INF/16), in which a framework for a revised strategy was presented following an evaluation of the effectiveness of the 2011 strategy.

Attached to this note, member States will find a draft Ocean and Coasts strategy for the UN Environment Programme, and three annexes, as a basis for further consultation and possible adoption at the next session of the Assembly. Member States are invited to submit comments in writing to the Secretariat by 14 December. Please note that this is an early draft, which will require further consultation both within the Secretariat and with member States before it is finalized.

DRAFT ver 10.3

# UN Environment – Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Strategy

---



One Ocean Map – Atlas of the World with Geophysical Boundaries, 1991

**Contents**

- 1. Introduction..... 4
- 2. Challenges and Drivers of Change..... 5
  - 2.1 The Ocean Faces Multiple Challenges .....5
  - 2.2 Drivers of Change for the Global Ocean .....6
  - 2.3 Mobilization around the Concept of the ‘Blue Economy’ .....7
- 3. Transformational Leadership – the UN Environment Mandate..... 7
- 4. UN Environment: Vision and Purpose..... 8
- 5. UN Environment’s Niche towards Sustainable Ocean..... 9
  - 5.1 Our Common Ocean: Strengthening the Regional Ocean Governance Framework .....9
    - 5.1.1. Supporting the regional networks of Marine Protected Areas .....10
  - 5.2 Increasing Ambition in the Battle against Marine Pollution.....10
  - 5.3 Ensuring Healthy Marine Ecosystems and the Protection of Marine Biodiversity .....12
    - 5.3.1 Addressing the Climate-Ocean Nexus .....13
    - 5.3.2 Ensure sustainable provision of ecosystem services by critical coastal and marine ecosystems .....13
    - 5.3.3 Addressing Fisheries Impacts on the Marine Environment.....13
  - 5.4 Sustainable Ocean financing – Investments for Healthy Marine and Coastal Ecosystems .....14
  - 5.5. Science Policy Interface.....15
- 6. Roles and Responsibilities to ensure a Healthy Marine Environment..... 16
  - 6.1 The Role of UN Environment: Consensus, Capacity and Unity Builder .....16
  - 6.2 The Role of Governments: Decision-Making and Accountability .....16
  - 6.3 The Role of Other Stakeholders: Partnerships, Finance, and Public Mobilization .....17
- 7. Communications ..... 18

## 1. Introduction

A healthy ocean is essential to life on Earth: from the smallest plankton to the largest marine mammals, and ultimately to humans. It is estimated that three billion people rely on the bounty of the ocean for their livelihoods, and for many, their very survival. The sustainable use of ocean resources is central to maintaining vibrant national and local economies, and not only in countries with coastlines. The critical role of the ocean in mitigating climate change means that every country, indeed every person in the world has a stake in shoring up its resilience.

With the adoption in 2015 of the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the international community has an agreed set of goals and objectives for long-term ocean protection and sustainable use. Upon the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the United Nations Environment Programme made a resolution in 2016 on Oceans and Seas (Resolution 2/10), to urge, inter alia, the United Nations Environment Programme and member States in contributing to the achievements of these goals, and Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Particularly the Resolution requested “*the Executive Director to assess the effectiveness of the United Nations Environment Programme’s 2011 marine and coastal strategy and, on the basis of that assessment, submit a proposal for its update, revision or replacement for consideration by the Environment Assembly at its next session*”. For the subsequent session of the Assembly in 2017, UN Environment submitted the information note on proposal of the Executive Director on the revision of the United Nations Environment Programme 2011 marine and coastal strategy, pursuant to resolution 2/10 on oceans and seas, in which a framework for a revised strategy was presented following the evaluation of the effectiveness of the 2011 strategy.

The present strategy aims at setting strategic directions for the next ten years for the United Nations Environment Programme, regional seas programmes, and the activities funded by the Global Environment Facility and Green Climate Fund for the next ten years. The strategy was developed based on and further to the UN Environment Programme Medium-term Strategy 2018-2021 and the Programmes of Work 2018-2019 and 2021-2022. There are clear linkages to thematic areas, e.g. Freshwater Operational Strategy, Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2017-2021, Biodiversity Strategy, Climate Change Strategy and other UN Environment’s thematic strategies, which are connected closely with the UN Environment Programme of Work.

### *Sustainable Development Goals’ Targets Most Relevant for Ocean Conservation*

**Sustainable Development Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all**

6.3 By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally

**Sustainable Development Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns**

12.5 By 2030, substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse

**Sustainable Development Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts**

13.1 Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries

## **Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development**

- 14.1 by 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, particularly from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution
- 14.2 by 2020, sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration, to achieve healthy and productive oceans
- 14.3 minimize and address the impacts of ocean acidification, including through enhanced scientific cooperation at all levels
- 14.4 by 2020, effectively regulate harvesting, and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and destructive fishing practices and implement science-based management plans, to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield as determined by their biological characteristics
- 14.5 by 2020, conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on best available scientific information
- 14.6 by 2020, prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, and eliminate subsidies that contribute to IUU fishing, and refrain from introducing new such subsidies, recognizing that appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing and least developed countries should be an integral part of the WTO fisheries subsidies negotiation\*
- 14.7 by 2030 increase the economic benefits to SIDS and LDCs from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism
- 14.a increase scientific knowledge, develop research capacities and transfer marine technology taking into account the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission Criteria and Guidelines on the Transfer of Marine Technology, in order to improve ocean health and to enhance the contribution of marine biodiversity to the development of developing countries, in particular SIDS and LDCs
- 14.b provide access of small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets
- 14.c ensure the full implementation of international law, as reflected in UNCLOS for states parties to it, including, where applicable, existing regional and international regimes for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by their parties

## **2. Challenges and Drivers of Change**

The ocean needs good governance and management. Despite decades of efforts, the prognosis of ocean health is currently poor. However, there are positive recent trends that can curb the environmental degradation of the ocean that are currently taking place a national, regional and global level.

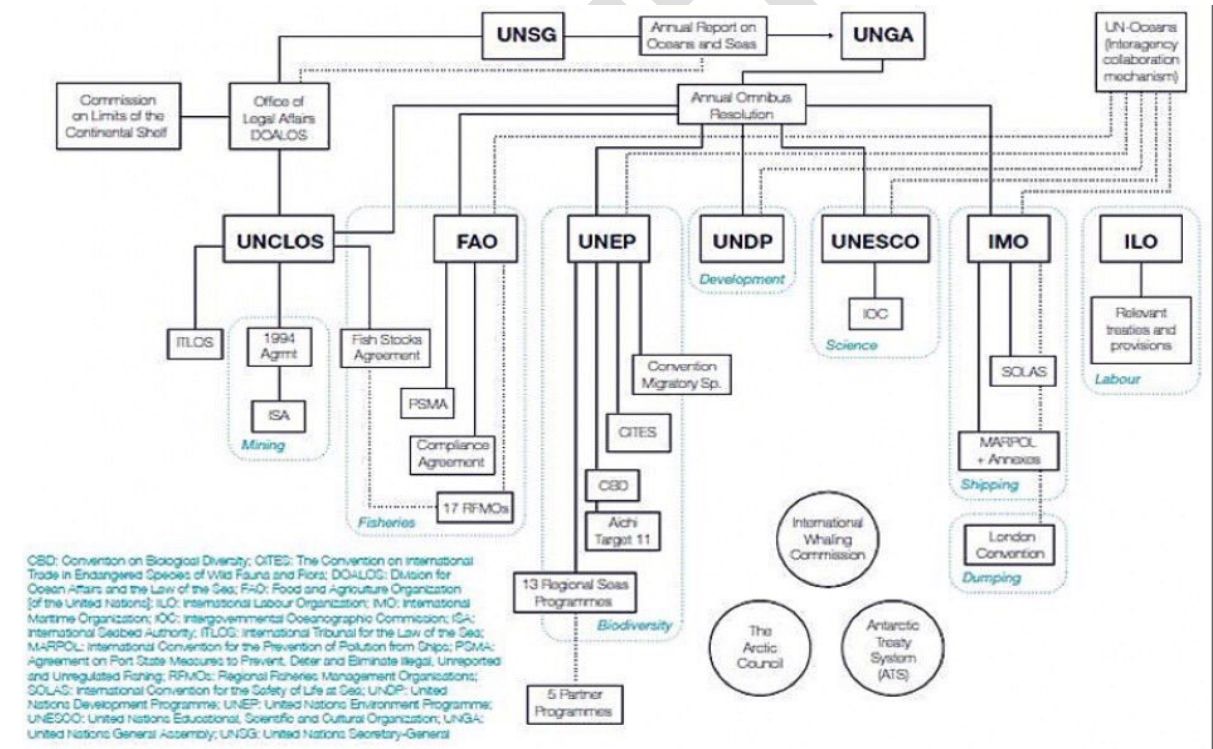
### **2.1 The Ocean Faces Multiple Challenges**

Threats facing the ocean are numerous and include, among others: warming seas, ocean acidification, oxygen depletion, eutrophication, plastic proliferation, oil spills and other forms of pollution, infrastructure development as well as depleted fish stocks. Entire ecosystems are affected by serious degradation and destruction as the global population and demand for resources continues to grow.

Apart from environmental issues and problems, there are challenges facing the ocean in terms of governance and management or lack thereof. Ocean governance is fragmented and management practices vary across a checkboard of overlapping jurisdictions and territorial boundaries. Further, most frameworks available for developing policy on ocean governance and management at the

international, regional and national level, especially on shared or transboundary resources, are sectoral in nature. There is no clear leading entity, nor a mechanism or policy approach in place to enhance cooperation and coordination in a comprehensive way. Neither is there a framework to effectively address the cumulative impacts of multiple sectoral ocean uses on marine and coastal ecosystems. Lack of awareness and engagement of communities and individuals poses another challenge.

The adoption of the SDGs in 2015, and in particular SDG14, presented an important step forward. No institution can provide an exclusive “home” for oceans within the UN, and consequently, there is need for a strategy around which to build partnerships and cooperative arrangements among the many actors in the ocean space. UN Environment’s strategy provides a mechanism for the UN agency to ensure that the SDG14 will be addressed comprehensively.



### 2.2 Drivers of Change for the Global Ocean

Despite there being multiple challenges facing the ocean and its governance, there are many drivers of change and positive trends for the global ocean. Among others, ocean issues have moved up the political agenda. There is a realization on local, national, regional and global level of the interconnectedness of issues affecting the ocean as well as an increase in initiatives to curb the negative trends.

As many of the pressures on ocean are transboundary in nature, there is a need for cross-sectoral communication and collaboration. Examples on global level are the various meetings focused specifically on the ocean that have emerged over the years. An illustration of such gathering is the UN Ocean Conference, a series of meetings to be held every three years from 2017 to 2029 to review progress on SDG 14. The commitment-heavy annual Our Ocean Conference is another which brings

together governments, private sector, non-governmental organizations, academia and UN agencies. On regional and national level, new legislations, procedures and partnerships have emerged along with implementation strategies and follow-up mechanisms.

The increase of cross-sectoral collaboration and processes is coupled with advancement in technologies to tackle threats facing the ocean. Capacity building and awareness raising measures, such as campaigns and massive online open courses, with a specific focus on oceans and coastal ecosystems, have further increased during the past years. The activities indicate an increased interest for the ocean on different levels.

### 2.3 Mobilization around the Concept of the 'Blue Economy'

The concept of 'Sustainable Blue Economy' provides a useful approach to examine and address the relationship between ocean-based economic activity and the impact of a changing marine environment. The key opportunity is ensuring that economic activities in the ocean are undertaken without undermining the very ecological assets from which ocean wealth is derived.

The opportunities listed above are some of the many that can help curb the environmental and governance challenges facing the ocean. To further enhance an effective and comprehensive ocean and coastal management, there is a need for each actor to define their role in the ocean space.

- A group of Heads of State and government have created a High-Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy<sup>1</sup> to “catalyse bold, pragmatic solutions for the ocean”.
- In September 2018 the World Bank announced the creation of 'PROBLUE' a multi-donor trust fund to support SDG14, addressing marine pollution, overfishing, coastal erosion and sustainable growth of coastal economies.
- The UN Global Compact's “Action Platform for Sustainable Ocean Business”<sup>2</sup> includes 35 of the world's largest companies, banks and investment funds, all of whom are leaders in the sectors in which they operate.

## 3. Transformational Leadership – the UN Environment Mandate<sup>3</sup>

UN Environment<sup>4</sup> is the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, that promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://sdg.iisd.org/news/heads-of-state-and-government-form-panel-to-support-sustainable-ocean-economy/?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=2018-09-27%20-%20SDG%20Update%20AE&utm\\_content=2018-09-27%20-%20SDG%20Update%20AE+CID\\_01f07018f6597500dc479b31b110422a&utm\\_source=cm&utm\\_term=Heads%20of%20State%20and%20Government%20Form%20Panel%20to%20Support%20Sustainable%20Ocean%20Economy](http://sdg.iisd.org/news/heads-of-state-and-government-form-panel-to-support-sustainable-ocean-economy/?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=2018-09-27%20-%20SDG%20Update%20AE&utm_content=2018-09-27%20-%20SDG%20Update%20AE+CID_01f07018f6597500dc479b31b110422a&utm_source=cm&utm_term=Heads%20of%20State%20and%20Government%20Form%20Panel%20to%20Support%20Sustainable%20Ocean%20Economy)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unglobalcompact.org/take-action/action-platforms/ocean>

<sup>3</sup> UN Environment's role and mandate, as described here, is set out in the Nairobi Declaration adopted by governments in 1997.

<sup>4</sup> UN Environment recently changed its name from United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) throughout this paper, we refer to UN Environment even in the historical context when UNEP would have been used at the time.

development within the United Nations, and that serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment. Its mandate includes:

- being an advocate for the global environment;
- analysing the state of the environment globally and regionally, including early-warning information on emerging threats;
- catalysing and promoting international cooperation, including in response to emerging environmental challenges; and
- advancing the implementation of agreed international norms and policies.

2022 will mark the 50th anniversary of the first UN Conference on sustainable development, which was held in Stockholm in June 1972. As such it also marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UN Environment whose creation was a direct outcome of this process. Stockholm's "Only One Earth" motto very much included Only One Ocean, as ocean issues – including issues that the international community is still struggling with today (for example the protection of living resources in the high seas, or the land-based discharge of wastes into the ocean) – were explicitly part of the Stockholm Declaration and Action Plan.<sup>5</sup> In other words, ocean action was very much at the center of environmental governance in its infancy.

In the decade from 2006-2016, however, UN Environment did not emphasize its work on the ocean. Former Executive Director Achim Steiner commented upon his departure that he had a "deep sense of regret of not having been able to make UNEP part of putting a greater focus on the ocean and marine agenda. I think it was probably the biggest mistake I made..."<sup>6</sup> And during those years, the ocean agenda mushroomed, with many other organizations filling leadership roles. With its new strategy, UN Environment should reflect and build upon this rich history, and reclaim its leadership role with ambitions that reflect its mandate.<sup>7</sup>

#### **4. UN Environment: Vision and Purpose**

UN Environment aims to be a driving force to ensure that in 50 years' time, marine and coastal ecosystems are healthy, thriving, and resilient to a wide range of human impacts, including as a result of our changing climate. It implements action to maintain and strengthen marine and coastal ecosystem services in the context of a sustainable blue-economy to ensure access to food and energy for future generations, while contributing to poverty reduction and sustaining livelihoods.

---

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.un-documents.net/aconf48-14r1.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://vimeo.com/164372583>(Ocean comments from 54:40 through 1:01)

<sup>7</sup> United Nations Environment Assembly Resolution 2/10 requested the Executive Director "to assess the effectiveness of the United Nations Environment Programme's 2011 marine and coastal strategy, and on the basis of that assessment, submit a proposal for its update, revision or replacement for consideration by the Environment Assembly at its next session" (paragraph 17). UN Environment reported its findings to the third session of the Assembly, however there was no reaction from Member States during UNEA3 on the proposed recommendation to move ahead with a full fledged strategy. (UNEP/EA.3(INF/16). Following consultation with a range of stakeholders both within and outside the UN system, a draft proposal has been prepared for its updating, revision or replacement for consideration by the Environment Assembly at its next session.



To this end, UN Environment works to develop partnerships with key stakeholders and leaders from governments, business, civil society, the media, and the science community, guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.

## 5. UN Environment's Niche towards Sustainable Ocean

A cursory glance at the overview of ocean governance in Annex 1 reveals that the ocean conservation policy space has become very crowded. This can be viewed positively, reflecting the growing concerns of governments and citizens around the world. It also represents a challenge for UN Environment to assert a leadership role in this field. Even within the UN system, 24 different UN organizations participate in UN Oceans, the inter-agency coordination mechanism. Without a powerful, well-defined slate of priorities and targets, the voice of UN Environment will be indistinct above the background noise. Indeed, UN Environment is often perceived as having a diminished role compared with other agencies and organizations both inside and outside the UN system particularly when it comes to ocean issues. This is paradoxical at a time when all indicators of ocean sustainability are in the red.

Based on a review of the main existing arrangements for ocean conservation and management in Annexes 1 and 2, four strategic approaches are proposed that could help UN Environment establish a clearer niche for itself, and increase its profile in the field of ocean. It should also be noted that these would preferably not be siloed within the organization, but should be integrated into crosscutting conversations and initiatives around the blue economy, climate change adaptation, protection of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, the circular economy and so forth.

Based on the review of the main existing arrangements for ocean and coastal conservation and management (Annex 1 and 2), a new *Sustainable Blue Economy Initiative* is proposed to link up UN Environment expertise and experience across disciplines in a concerted effort to assist countries and regions tackle complex economic and social drivers impacting coastal and marine areas. It provides a coherent platform with four strategic work streams that will utilise UN Environment's comparative advantage to enable sustainable and resilient oceans and coasts.

### 5.1 Our Common Ocean: Strengthening the Regional Ocean Governance Framework

The sustainable use of marine ecosystem services and resources – particularly those shared by neighbouring countries – requires stronger governance mechanisms and increased cooperation and dialogue. This requires increased buy-in by member states, through the sorts of dialogues taking place as described in section 3 above.

Four important governance frameworks/projects should be considered in this regard: (1) Regional Seas Programmes; (2) Regional Fisheries Bodies; (3) Large Marine Ecosystems projects; and (4) regional and sub-regional economic commissions/communities.

UN Environment, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations and the UNESCO-Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, are working to enhance cooperation between the

regional seas programmes, regional fisheries bodies and the Large Marine Ecosystems. Cooperation among them was also highlighted through the global dialogues processes through the Sustainable Ocean Initiative of the Convention on Biological Diversity as well as the regional ocean governance conference (November 2017, Cape Town).

UN Environment aims could strengthen the regional ocean governance frameworks by enhancing collaboration among regional actors. The Regional Seas Framework provides an ideal setting for:

- Applying ecosystem-based management approaches towards governance of our common ocean;
- Ensuring regional strategies are designed to implement and enhance conservation and sustainable use (the blue economy).
- Developing innovative partnerships or governance mechanisms to realize sustainable regional blue economies; and
- Developing regional strategies for ocean governance, based on the sustainable blue economy principles and existing framework(s)

#### **5.1.1. Supporting the regional networks of Marine Protected Areas**

Marine Protected Areas are an essential and powerful tool not only for the conservation of important marine and coastal biodiversity, but also for ensuring sustainable livelihoods for the population related to these areas. Under the regional seas' conventions, particularly Specially Protected Areas Protocols, regional coordinated networks of marine protected areas have been established. UN Environment will continue to support such efforts to develop a regional network of marine protected areas. In order to furthering the efforts, UN Environment will move to develop science-based assessment of ecological connectivity and regional representativity, so that the network of the protected areas are ecologically connected and represent the uniqueness in the target region. UN Environment will continue to further develop and support marine protected areas governance enhancing management effectiveness and actual performance of designed areas, also ensuring equitable distribution of marine protected area costs and benefits among relevant stakeholders.

UN Environment, through its World Conservation Monitoring Centre will continue to monitor the coverage of the marine protected areas, and will introduce ecological effectiveness and management performance of these protection measures within the statistics.

#### **5.2 Increasing Ambition in the Battle against Marine Pollution**

Pollution impacting on oceans and coastal zones comes from human activities and poor management practices on land. As the Secretariat for the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (GPA)<sup>8</sup> UN Environment addresses the pollution linkages between the freshwater, coastal and marine environment.

Source to Sea Approach will be crucial to address land based activities and pollution. Fifty years ago, member states of the UN Environment Programme led the way in creating a regulatory framework to

---

<sup>8</sup> Without prejudice to the current discussions on the role and future of the GPA – regardless of the outcome of that discussion, UN Environment will continue to play a leading role on land-based sources of marine pollution.

prevent the deliberate dumping and discharge of certain substances into the marine environment (the so-called “black lists” incorporated in international conventions and protocols). In the wake of the Rio Earth Summit of 1992, UN Environment went a step further and contributed to the development of a practical way to reverse the burden of proof enshrined in the precautionary approach. This new approach, known as “reverse listing,” has been implemented successfully over the last twenty years to prevent marine pollution from ships (Barcelona Convention Protocol on Dumping, 1995, OSPAR Commission Annex on Dumping, 1992, London Convention Protocol, 1996). Instead of identifying substances and other matter that could not be dumped at sea, it did the opposite and identifies, recognizes and lists only those substances and other matter which are permitted to be discharged into the sea (thus reversing the burden of proof).

Half a century after the UN started to codify best practice to prevent marine pollution; the time has come to expand this approach to land-based sources of marine pollution. Together with progress on the circular economy and mandatory waste prevention audits, this would go a long way towards securing the aims of UN Environment’s Clean Seas campaign and the outcome from UNEA3 on a multistakeholder approach to target pollution.

Working in multistakeholder global platform dealing with pollution cross institutions and divisions in the UN Environment. This work needs to be scaled up, consolidate and strengthen the existing partnership dealing with pollution. The current partnerships under marine litter, nutrients and waste water and waste management should be further strengthened for economies of scale and secure real impact on the ground. A key aspect to consider is how partnerships are embedded in local context as to deliver concrete actions on the ground.

UN Environment could offer a global platform for stakeholders to engage and exchange best practice, As a convener, UN Environment could serve as a forum for multistakeholder dialogue on how to combat land based pollution. Furthermore, it could be a forum for global leaders to join hands and build momentum to take further action.

Nothing has captured public in the way that plastic pollution has done. It is therefore unsurprising that many initiatives to address the problem have been launched to address it.

- Global Partnership on Marine Litter (under UN Environment and the GPA)<sup>9</sup>
- UN Environment’s Clean Seas campaign.<sup>10</sup>
- Charlevoix Ocean Plastics Charter <sup>11</sup>
- G7 Marine Plastic Litter Innovation Challenge<sup>12</sup>
- Global Plastics Platform<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/oceans-seas/what-we-do/addressing-land-based-pollution/global-partnership-marine>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.cleanseas.org/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://g7.gc.ca/en/official-documents/charlevoix-blueprint-healthy-oceans-seas-resilient-coastal-communities/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://g7.gc.ca/en/g7-presidency/themes/working-together-climate-change-oceans-clean-energy/g7-ministerial-meeting/joint-chairs-summary/g7-innovation-challenge-address-marine-plastic-litter/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/press-release/nations-commit-fight-plastic-pollution-together-during-un-general>

- The New Plastics Economy Global Commitment<sup>14</sup>
- Commonwealth Blue Charter Action Group on Marine Plastics (aka 'Commonwealth Clean Oceans Alliance')<sup>15</sup>
- Communities of Ocean Action, implementation of SDG14.1 (marine pollution)<sup>16</sup>
- GPA Ad Hoc Open-Ended Expert Group on Marine Litter<sup>17</sup>
- European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy<sup>18</sup>

Working in partnership with key stakeholders to drive the action on pollution, support member states to take concrete action will be crucial to be able to address the urgency of the issue.

### 5.3 Ensuring Healthy Marine Ecosystems and the Protection of Marine Biodiversity

The marine and coastal ecosystems and biodiversity provide goods and services for human well-being. Conservation and sustainable use of these ecosystem services and associated resources will lead to sustained economic and social benefits from the marine and coastal ecosystems. The United Nations Environment Programme has been advocating an ecosystem approach or Ecosystem-based Management for the marine and coastal areas where ecosystem integrity and functions are maintained to provide sustained level of ecosystem services for human benefits. The Convention on Biological Diversity will adopt the post 2020 biological diversity framework, which will be comprised of a new set of targets and objectives. UN Environment will:

- Establish a partnership to support sustainable blue economy transition at national and regional levels. This includes mapping, assessment and valuation of marine and coastal ecosystems and their services. The partnership will develop standards for mapping, assessment and valuation in line with the United Nations' Statistics of Environmental Economics and Assessment, including possibly in the form of the blue natural capital accounts; will develop necessary data/information systems to support it; will develop a decision-support framework for blue economy transition incorporating ecosystem values in ocean and coastal policy-making, spatial planning and management; will collect and share good practices from using assessment and valuation in policy-making; and develop necessary communication and capacity building resources.
- Establish and maintain networks of scientists and experts on key marine coastal ecosystems and their benefits to human beings. Through the networks, necessary scientific knowledge will be generated and translated into policy recommendations.
- Roll out the Integrated Coastal Zone Management and Marine Spatial Planning as ecosystem-based management tools through, *inter alia*, the regional seas frameworks.
- Among the human sectors that have impacts on ecosystems health, the fishery sector will be a pilot sector to assess and mitigate the sector's impacts on the marine and coastal ecosystems and to promote a wise use of the conservation measures for fisheries benefits (e.g., fisheries refugia).

<sup>14</sup> <http://sdg.iisd.org/news/over-290-companies-sign-global-commitment-on-new-plastics-economy/>

<sup>15</sup> <http://thecommonwealth.org/commonwealth-blue-charter>

<sup>16</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=13&nr=2533>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.unenvironment.org/events/un-environment-event/first-meeting-ad-hoc-open-ended-expert-group-marine-litter>

<sup>18</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/plastic\\_waste.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/plastic_waste.htm)

- Turning the regional seas programmes to contribute to developing and achieving the post 2020 biodiversity framework on a regional scale.

### **5.3.1 Addressing the Climate-Ocean Nexus**

Ocean and coastal carbon has not been fully incorporated into the national action on climate change mitigation. Nature-based adaptation measures have not been fully implemented under the national action plans on adaptation. UN Environment will continue to promote ecosystem-based mitigation of and adaptation to climate change.

More concretely, UN Environment will generate knowledge and information on the stored and sequestered carbon in the key marine and coastal ecosystems, so that the member countries can incorporate such carbon accounting (blue carbon) into their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in the context of the Paris Agreement. With regard to adaptation, UN Environment will develop possible ecosystem-based adaptation measures and demonstrate that they are more cost-effective and effective in addressing climate change impacts. Environmental impacts of possible mitigation and adaptation measures will also be analysed so that the member States can make informed decision on their national action.

### **5.3.2 Ensure sustainable provision of ecosystem services by critical coastal and marine ecosystems**

Closely related to the interface between the climate and ocean, UN Environment has a key role to play in protecting critical coastal and marine ecosystems such as seagrass, mangroves, tidal marshes and coral reefs which are important blue carbon sinks, although highly vulnerable to climate change impacts. Within this strategy, four ecosystems are considered as critical to ecosystem services provision and thus with a direct bearing on human welfare: mangroves, coral reef, seagrass beds and tidal marshes.

UN Environment will work with key partners, such as the International Coral Reef Initiative, the International Society on Mangrove Ecosystems and the Global Mangrove Alliance to generate knowledge and information on the ecosystem services provided by critical coastal and marine ecosystems, particularly climate change related services (blue carbon and resilience to natural disasters). UN Environment will also develop best practices including supporting an enabling policy environment for the management and restoration of these ecosystems, so that these can be appropriately included in the Marine Spatial Planning and Integrated Coastal Zone Management mechanisms. UN Environment will further explore possible way of mobilising climate finance and other financing mechanisms to aid sound ecosystem-based management and restoration. UN Environment will engage with the Convention on Biological Diversity post-2020 Biodiversity Framework and the “New Deal for Nature” to ensure that targets for critical coastal ecosystems are included.

### **5.3.3 Addressing Fisheries Impacts on the Marine Environment**

Among the human productive sectors impacting on and benefiting from the coastal and marine ecosystems, the fisheries and aquaculture sectors are considered to have elevated level of impacts. UN Environment will foster a partnership with the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the

United Nations and other fisheries sector organisations to assist the greening of the sector. More concretely UN Environment will assess and explore measures to reduce negative environmental impacts, particularly from trawlers and industrial fishing efforts from the perspective of the impacts on the bottom ecosystems and by-catch. A main platform to realise this will be the cooperation frameworks between the regional seas and regional fisheries bodies. UN Environment will explore means to engage fishing communities in marine and coastal ecosystems conservation for their own benefits (fish stock recovery, maintenance of trophic status). To support Sustainable Consumption and Production, environmental issues in the whole fish value chain will also be addressed through, *inter alia* partnership with industries and private sectors within the value chain. Guidance and capacity building will be provided to countries to assist development of trade policies promoting environmental sustainability with a focus on sustainable fisheries and addressing subsidy issues.

## 5.4 Sustainable Ocean financing – Investments for Healthy Marine and Coastal Ecosystems

Traditional investments in the ocean economy have often resulted in negative impacts and externalities, damaging the health of marine and coastal ecosystems. For investments to be considered truly “green,” maintaining healthy and resilient ocean and coastal ecosystems must be a core priority. UN Environment will play an important role in facilitating innovative financing for sustainable oceans and coasts through a new ‘Sustainable Blue Economy Financing Initiative’, working in close collaboration with a range of partners and leading finance institutions. Ambition is to stimulate sustainable businesses that enables healthy coastal and marine ecosystems. A particular focus will be fostering nature-based solutions that sustain blue natural capital. Long-term investments can secure necessary resources and wider services provided by healthy and productive marine and coastal ecosystems, including climate change mitigation and adaptation. This can further generate economic return, sustained economic growth, business development and job creation. Through sustainable banking, insurance and investment practices, the intent is to foster a shift across ocean-based sectors to address the widely documented decline in ocean ecosystems and support development along the most sustainable pathways possible.

With partners, UN Environment will:

- Evolve and operationalise the ‘Sustainable Blue Economy Financing Principles’<sup>[1]</sup>
- Serve as institutional host for these Financing Principles through the ‘Sustainable Blue Economy Financing Initiative’, working in close collaboration with a range of partners and leading finance institutions.
- Engage with Regional Seas networks, national and local governments, universities and research centres, relevant stakeholders and key partners to identify and support Sustainable Blue Economy project and business case identification and pipelining.
- Develop business models for sustainable coastal and marine production & consumption (e.g. sustainable fisheries, eco-tourism, offshore renewable energy, others).

---

[1] <https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/befp>

- Facilitate links to public agents, including local governments and public marine management bodies, influencing the implementation of the identified and targeted projects.
- Support the raising of operational grant or commercial investment funding utilising innovative mechanisms for financing measures that enable sustainable oceans and coasts.
- Provide ongoing regional coordination support through UN Environment administered Regional Seas programmes to support development and implementation of candidate sustainable blue economy projects.

## 5.5. Science Policy Interface

A critical part of the mandate of UN Environment is to translate scientific evidence on the status and value of ecosystems so as to trigger policy reform at country level that will lead to more sustainable use, consumption and production patterns. This mandate has transitioned into strategic response in addressing management of ocean resources and maintaining the value of ecosystem services, which is enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals. The approach advanced under The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) will continue be built upon in the ocean space as 'TEEB-for-Oceans' that aims to marry science-based assessments on ecosystem health, to management policy and fiscal enabling instruments that enhances blue economy opportunities while conserving critical ecosystems. In the advancement of science-to-policy for the ocean space, UN Environment plays a key role as 'custodian agency' for several Sustainable Development Goal indicators under Goal 14 and in this regard has responsibility, along with partner agencies in assisting countries in target assessment, reporting and translation to policy reform and management response. This will be done in close association with the Regional Seas Programmes with the aim of ensuring coordination at a global level taking advantage of assessment and reporting mechanisms within the scope of UN Environment's remit.

UN Environment was given a mandate to periodically prepare and publish reports of the status of the marine environment globally or on a regional seas basis. Given that the initiation of the regular process or World Ocean Assessment, a focus of the UN Environment moves to the regional seas based state of the coasts or marine environment reporting. In this endeavour, UN Environment will move towards integrated marine ecosystems assessments, reviewing all functioning elements of the ecosystems and their interaction, involved human activities and their impacts, ecosystem services and their values, and impacts of climate change. UN Environment will move towards indicator-based marine assessments so that chronological changes in the ecosystems' health can be tracked. These indicators should be aligned with the SDG indicators and post 2020 biodiversity indicators. In order to achieve this, UN Environment will seek partnership with science based organisations, such as Inter-governmental Oceanographic Commission, International Council of Scientific Unions, International Society on Mangrove Ecosystems, etc. Data/information systems should also be established which should be attached to the regional seas programmes and connected with each other.

## 6. Roles and Responsibilities to ensure a Healthy Marine Environment

No single government, organization or entity acting on its own has the power to reverse the tide of destruction in the marine environment; nor will individual action by governments, or by business, or by the public achieve the desired results. Restoring the health of the ocean will require collective action by a range of sectors, and each has a unique part to play.

### 6.1 The Role of UN Environment: Consensus, Capacity and Unity Builder

UN Environment is the leading global voice on the environment. It provides leadership and encourages partnerships in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations. UN Environment works with governments, private sector, civil society, as well as with other UN entities, international influencers, and across the world. It positions itself as a consensus-builder that brings together all of the relevant players on any given issue to build unity. It does so through:

- Creating synergies with relevant UN Bodies
- Facilitating engagement and capacity building of relevant stakeholders
- Mobilizing partnerships
- Building the capacity of relevant stakeholders
- Focusing on strategic issues
- Communications, and public engagement

### 6.2 The Role of Governments: Decision-Making and Accountability

UN Environment takes its direction from the UN Environment Assembly, and in turn, exerts its leadership by steering environmental policy through the Assembly. For many environmental issues, however, environment ministers do not have the final say: finance, trade, foreign affairs, energy, health, agriculture and fisheries ministries, for example, often have different priorities which may conflict with environmental goals and objectives. This dichotomy is also found to some extent among different intergovernmental organizations with a stake in some of the issues UN Environment touches upon. When ocean conservation and resource management is addressed from within government silos, coastal and marine ecosystems tend to suffer. Leadership at the national level is critical to overcoming sectoral thinking. This makes the SDGs, including SDG14, all the more important as the roadmap which has been endorsed by all.

For issues that require major changes by business and industry, public/private partnerships can speed up action in the short-term. In the long term, however, it is governments that create the enabling environment, necessary incentives and level the playing field (through tax policy, laws, regulatory measures, and so forth) for business and industry to go beyond what they would likely commit to voluntarily.

For this reason, the strategy assumes that in addition to working in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, in some areas new financial instruments, business models or agreements will be proposed through intergovernmental processes, or adopted and implemented at the national or regional level



### 6.3 The Role of Other Stakeholders: Partnerships, Finance, and Public Mobilization

SDG17 emphasizes the importance of working in public-private partnership to mobilize finance, enhance knowledge and capacity building, and secure the adoption, implementation and sharing of innovative technologies (amongst other things) to promote sustainable development. Developing and engaging in such partnerships is a core function of UN Environment. Key stakeholders include:

- **The private sector:** UN Environment will engage with producers, consumer goods retailers, banking and fund managers, tourism operators, the fishing industry, the insurance industry and many other actors from the private sector to leverage funding and create viable business models and initiative to sustain the health of health of our marine and coastal ecosystems. The private sector has capital resources that none of the other stakeholders have, and can take risks, develop and implement innovative technologies and designs in service to the circular economy. They have expertise and resources to create new business models and invest in large-scale projects, using direct financing among others. Their PR and advertising budgets, including celebrity endorsements, can dramatically influence public perception.
- **Academia:** UN Environment will boost the partnership with scientists, legal and policy experts, economists and so forth to jointly provide the scientific knowledge, brain trust and tools (when possible) for monitoring the state of ocean and coastal ecosystems, conducting risk assessments, developing and evaluating the most effective policy measures for conservation, and evaluating the costs and benefits (including external costs to nature) of different actions.
- **Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):** NGO's are key actors to formulate and implement solutions to environmental issues both at the international and local level. UN Environment will enhance partnerships with both large and smaller international organizations to reach out to the broadest audience possible including targeting community members.
- **Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGOs)** GOs within and outside the UN system tend to reflect the lowest common denominator of governments. UN Environment will partner with these institutions to develop, maintain, and reinforce a common level playing field.
- **The philanthropic and donor community:** Public and private donors play an important role in getting new ideas off the ground by providing seed funding, or by creating traction for the novel, as well as innovative approaches by bringing (or funding) key players together around the table. UN Environment will team up with the donor community to demonstrate that concrete results can and will be achieved.

**Advocates and Goodwill Ambassador:** Advocates and Goodwill Ambassadors can bring attention to environmental issues and act as key figures to increase the visibility of campaigns and projects, spreading core messages and results. Engaging with Advocates and Goodwill Ambassadors will allow UN Environment to reach out to the broadest audience possible, raise awareness and highlight good environmental practices and lessons learned with regards to our oceans.

With its universal government membership, its core mandate to advocate for the environment, its extensive national, regional and international networks and its critical convening power, UN Environment is uniquely placed to leave these strands together to restore the health of the ocean.

## 7. Communications

This ocean strategy will be supported by communication activities to help UN Environment's main goal of increasing its leadership in the ocean governance space. The communication activities will be integrally linked to the overall framework and will be a vital component in achieving its objectives.

Communication is more than simply the dissemination of information, it is about empowering, educating and inspiring change. To help do so, UN Environment will prioritise creating and strengthening strategic alliances with key players within the UN system, civil society organizations and groups, private sector, governments, and the international development community.

Effective partnerships, campaigning and public communications drive progress toward achieving strategic goals. Examples of the UN Environment's campaign initiatives, such as #BeatPollution, Clean Seas, and the recently launched coral reef collaboration play an important role in building awareness and capacity, inspiring people to join the cause, and changing destructive practices and behaviour across all sectors.