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**The first meeting of the Regional Seas
Indicators Working Group**
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Draft Terms of Reference of the Regional Seas

Indicator Working Group

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Background:

UNEP Regional Seas Programme was launched in 1974. In each of the 18 regional seas (Black Sea, Wider Caribbean, East Africa, East Asia, ROPME sea area, Mediterranean, Northeast Pacific, Northwest Pacific, South Pacific, Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, South Asia, South East Pacific and West and Central Africa), a regional seas programme was established and is under implementation. Antarctic, Arctic, Baltic Sea, Caspian Sea and Northeast Atlantic are regional seas associated with the UNEP Regional Seas Programme. For each of these regional seas, an action plan serves as the basis for regional cooperation and regionally coordinated action to address the issues related to and prioritised in the marine and coastal environments of these seas. Many of the regional seas programmes continue to assess the state of the marine environment on a regular basis, and recently more effort has been made to connect the regional state of the marine environment reporting with the Global Ocean Assessment processes. Different regional seas carried out the state of the marine environment reporting based on different methodologies, and introduction of key indicators for the purpose of assessing the state of the marine environment is observed in some of the regional seas programmes.

A limited number of regional seas programmes clearly set the ecosystem-based objectives or in a limited number of cases regional targets, which the member countries collectively endeavour to achieve. In relation to the proposed approach: Ecosystem Approach to Regional Seas, UNEP is proposing to establish a set of indicators, from which the regional seas programmes can withdraw and decide in order to track down the chronological changes of the status of marine and coastal environment. The regional seas programmes are also urged to set their own regional ecosystem based management objectives or even targets to achieve through their collective efforts. In order to measure the progress in the achievements in the ecosystem-based objectives and targets, another set or the similar set of indicators may be used.

At the SDG Summit in September 2015, the UN member States agreed on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Transforming Our World: 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. How to measure the achievements through the indicators continues to be a subject of discussion. Many of the indicators already developed through some of the regional seas programmes would contribute to the discussion of the marine and ocean related SDGs monitoring.

UNEP launched a report: *Measuring Success: Indicators for Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans*, in which indicators used in different Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans have been compiled and presented. UNEP organised the Technical Workshop on Selecting Indicators for the State of Regional Seas (30 June – 2 July 2014, Geneva, Switzerland). In this workshop, the participants recommended to establish a regional seas indicator working group.

Based on the recommendations from the Geneva workshop, the current document is to outline the terms of reference of the Regional Seas Indicator Working Group (referred to hereinafter as the “Working Group”). The objectives of the Working Group are set as follows:

- (1) to develop a core set of indicators to be used by the Regional Seas and to develop additional indicators to be developed in conjunction with the core set of indicators;
- (2) to share information on necessary capacity to monitor developed indicators and arrange for global and regional datasets for use by the Regional Seas; and

- (3) to provide information on the regional seas indicator to global discussion, including, *inter alia*, discussion on SDG indicators, World Ocean Assessment, and Transboundary Water Assessment follow-up.

Membership:

The members of the Working Group are nominated by each of the 18 Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, which show interest in providing input to and using the results from the Working Group. UNEP DEPI will function as the secretariat for the Working Group. The Group will elect a Chair and he/she will continue until the objectives of the Working Group are met. UNEP DEWA will also participate to ensure these regional seas indicators are linked with the UNEP-Live and SDG indicator initiative. Any partners interested in providing technical contribution are invited to join.

Terms of reference:

The Working Group will carry out the following tasks:

1. Further to “*Measuring Success: Indicators for Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans*”, conduct a comprehensive review of existing regional seas indicators, their scientific background, and current data sources;
2. Review linkages of these regional seas indicators with the relevant Sustainable Development Goals, Aichi Targets, and any other global and regional targets/objectives that the Regional Seas member States need to fulfill and implement;
3. Prepare and recommend to the Global Regional Seas meeting a core set of indicators for the participating regional seas to adopt and report, and a supplemental set of indicators for some of the regional seas to adopt for their own reporting purposes. These sets of indicators should be accompanied with scientific backgrounds and possible available datasets on global, regional and national scales;
4. Ensure that future indicator monitoring will be linked with regional seas based information management systems, such as InforMEA and UNEP Live;
5. Conduct any other tasks identified by the Working Group and/or by the Global Meetings of Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans; and
6. Transmit the work and results of the Working Group, through UNEP, to the relevant global processes, such as SDG indicator discussion, World Ocean Assessment, TWAP follow-up, and others to be identified.

In principle, all meetings will be carried out through telephone conferences except for possible face-to-face meetings. UNEP has not secured budgets, but will explore possible donor funding for the work of the Working Group. Due to the time difference among the locations of the regional seas secretariats where the members are situated, all members may not participate in all meetings. Minutes will be prepared on all the meetings. As necessary and requested, the Working Group will send its report(s) to the Global Meetings of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans.