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**Implementation of the Regional Seas Strategic Directions
(2017-2020)**

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Implementation of the Regional Seas Strategic Directions (2017-2020)

I. Introduction

The Regional Seas Strategic Directions (RSSD 2017-2020)¹ was adopted at the 17th Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans held in Istanbul, Turkey, 20-22 October 2015. The new RSSD (2017-2020) will respond to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The RSSD (2017-2020) has two core goals and thematic strategies on four areas: pollution, climate change, extraction of living and non-living, and governance.

UNEP will submit RSSD (2017-2020) to all the governing bodies of the Regional Seas programmes as requested by Member States through resolution 2/10 on Oceans and Seas of the United Nations Environment Assembly of May 2016. The governing bodies of the Regional Seas programmes may consider the strategic elements of the RSSD (2017-2020) in developing future programmes of work.

As described in the Discussion Paper on the Regional Seas Strategic Directions (2017-2020) (UNEP/WBRS.17/2), commitments both from UNEP and the Regional Seas programmes are necessary to produce meaningful impacts through the implementation of the RSSD (2017-2020).

In order to facilitate the implementation of the RSSD (2017-2020), the discussion paper proposes the following:

1. Form a network of Regional Seas professionals for the four thematic strategies (**Section 2**);
2. Set common targets under the strategic directions (**Section 3 and 4**);
3. Set clear monitoring and review cycle (**Section 5**).

II. Recommended items for discussion

Based on the discussion paper below, the participants of the 18th Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans are invited to consider the following questions:

- a. Do you agreed to formulate a network of Regional Seas professionals for the four thematic strategies (**Section 2.6**)?
- b. Do you agree on the proposed targets and suggested regions for the activities (**Section 3 and 4**)? Will your Regional Seas programmes be interested in being pilot regions for the proposed activities? (**Section 3**)
- c. Do you agree on the proposed review cycle (**Section 5**)?

¹ UNEP/WBRS.18/INF8 Regional Seas Strategic Directions (2017-2020)

Discussion on the implementation of the Regional Seas Strategic Directions (2017-2020)

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1. Background

Since 2004, the Regional Seas programmes have formulated collective Regional Seas Strategic Directions (RSSD) that lasted for four years. The first Regional Seas Strategic Direction (2004-2007) was developed based on the resolution 22/2 III A of the UNEP Governing Council, which requested the UNEP Executive Director to encourage and support Regional Seas programmes to incorporate strategic elements.

The aim of the first Regional Seas Strategic Directions was to strengthen the Regional Seas Programme (RSP) at global level, to complement the implementation of the programme of work of the individual Regional Seas programmes, and to improve efficiency through cooperation between Regional Seas programmes².

Subsequently, the RSSD (2008-2012) and RSSD (2013-2016) were adopted to strengthen the previous RSSDs. These three RSSDs have several recurrent themes such as the implementation of the ecosystem-based management and cooperation amongst Regional Seas programmes³. Unfortunately, however, the level of implementation of the RSSDs and the level of progress towards the original aims are not well understood.

Celebrating its 40 years anniversary since the establishment of the UNEP Regional Seas Programme, the Regional Seas programmes conducted visioning exercises of its future direction at the two occasions: the visioning workshop held in Geneva, Switzerland, 3-4 July 2014, and the 16th Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans held in Athens, Greece, 29 September – 1 October 2014. Four key themes were identified from the visioning process: (1) Pollution, (2) Climate Change and Ocean Acidification, (3) Extraction of living and non-living resources; and (4) Governance.

² UNEP(2003) Regional Seas Strategic Directions for 2004-2007

³ For further detail please see UNEP/WBRS.17/2

Based on the four key themes, the Regional Seas programmes drafted and adopted the next RSSD (2017-2020)⁴ at the 17th Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans held in Istanbul, Turkey, 20-22 October 2015. The new RSSD aims to strengthen the Regional Seas Programme at the global level in response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Two core goals and four thematic strategies were identified as the new RSSD (2017-2020):

“The two core goals of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans across four key thematic strategies are to:

- *Promote and facilitate ratification, adoption and implementation of Regional Seas Conventions, Action Plans and Protocols, working in concert with other Regional Seas Organisations.*
- *Strategically work in collaboration with international and regional organizations, including Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) and other relevant stakeholders.*

The Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans will therefore aim to:

- 1. Reduce marine pollution of all kinds in line with the SDG Goal 14.1.*
- 2. Create increased resilience of people, marine and coastal ecosystems, and their health and productivity, in line with the SDG Goal 13 and decisions made at the UNFCCC COP21.*
- 3. Develop integrated, ecosystem-based regional ocean policies and strategies for sustainable use of marine and coastal resources, paying close attention to blue growth.*
- 4. Enhance effectiveness of Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans as regional platforms for supporting integrated ocean policies and management. ”*

In 2017, UNEP and the Regional Seas programmes will start the implementation of the RSSD (2017-2020) and will conduct the final review of its implementation by the 22nd Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans.

2. Proposed process for the implementation of the RSSD (2017-2020)

In 2015, UNEP prepared a discussion paper on the RSSD (2017-2020)⁵ and highlighted nine problems with the implementation of the previous RSSDs: (1) No commitments on the sides of RSCAPs and UNEP on the implementation of the RSSDs; (2) No additional resources were allocated for the implementation of the RSSDs; (3) No clear records and analyses exist which show whether each RSCAP has brought the RSSDs to the Governing Body; (4) Some of the RSCAPs recognise that RSSDs do not bind them; (5) No formal reporting mechanism existed for the RSCAPs with regards to the achievement of the RSSDs; (6) No profound evaluation and analysis existed before formulating the next strategy; (7) The action points

⁴ UNEP/WBRS.18/INF8 Regional Seas Strategic Directions (2017-2020)

⁵ UNEP/WBRS.17/2 Discussion paper on the RSSD 2017-2020

are obscure and any activities could easily fall under several action points; (8) The strategic directions might not be reflected in the Programme of Work of each RSCAP or UNEP; and(9) Progress on each strategic point is not measurable because no clear quantifiable goals have been set.

The discussion paper formulated several recommendations to address the identified problems including setting clear targets and indicators, and setting clear reporting mechanism. In the following sections, these recommendations are further elaborated to facilitate the implementation of the RSSD (2017-2020).

2.1 Submission of the RSSD to the Governing Bodies of the Regional Seas

One of the problems with the previous RSSDs was that the Strategic Directions were not necessarily communicated to the governing bodies of the Regional Seas programmes and they were not well integrated into the programmes of work (PoW) of the respective Regional Seas programmes.

Based on paragraph 10 of the Resolution 2/10 on Oceans and Seas of the United Nations Environment Assembly of May 2016 which “[n]otes the document on the Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2017–2020 and requests the Executive Director to communicate the Strategic Directions to conferences of the parties, intergovernmental meetings or other governing bodies of the relevant regional seas conventions and action plans”, the UNEP Executive Director will submit the RSSD (2017-2020) to all the upcoming meetings of the Regional Seas governing bodies as requested by the United Nations Member States (Member States).

It is suggested that the Secretariats of the Regional Seas programmes draw attention of the participating countries to the RSSD (2017-2020). By doing so, each governing body may consider whether it will consider the RSSD (2017-2020) for the development of PoW and activities of the Regional Seas programmes.

The UNEP-administered Regional Seas programme that have a legally binding instrument (Abidjan Convention, Barcelona Convention, Cartagena Convention, Nairobi Convention and Tehran Convention) may consider developing mutually supportive PoW with UNEP PoW using the RSSD (2017-2020) pursuant to paragraph 7 of the Resolution 2/18 Relationship between the United Nations Environment Programme and the multilateral environmental agreements for which it provides the secretariats, of the United Nations Environment Assembly of May 2016.

“7. Requests the Executive Director, when invited to do so by the governing bodies of the UNEP-administered multilateral environmental agreements, to foster mutually supportive programmes of work between the United Nations Environment Programme and the multilateral environmental agreements in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and make available relevant scientific information important to their work”

It should be noted that the decision would need to be made by each governing body of the Regional Seas programmes. Further discussion on the potential synergies between the PoWs of Regional Seas

programmes and UNEP PoW based on the seven subprogrammes⁶ can be found in the Chapter 2 of the Discussion paper on the RSSD 2017-2020 (UNEP/WBRS.17/2).

2.2 Incorporation of RSSD (2017-2020) in the UNEP Marine and Coastal Strategy

Paragraph 17 of the resolution 2/10 on Oceans and Seas of the United Nations Environment Assembly of May 2016 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*”.

Based on this request, UNEP plans to undertake an assessment and update of the UNEP Marine and Coastal Strategy⁷. The current strategy does not explicitly reflect the RSSD (2013-2016) and this may have contributed to the limited implementation of action items under the RSSD (2013-2016) that are not well incorporated within the UNEP PoW⁸.

For the new UNEP Marine and Coastal Strategy, therefore, it is proposed that the RSSD (2017-2020) be further considered to leverage the work of the UNEP Regional Seas Programme and to show UNEP’s commitments to the implementation of the RSSD (2017-2020). Through the strategy, UNEP may formulate ways to work more strategically through the UNEP Regional Seas Programme.

In formulating such a strategic approach, UNEP envision to conduct a mapping excessive on its marine work across thematic issues. Currently, UNEP’s work with the Regional Seas programmes is not well coordinated across different thematic issues and arrangements are made as requests emerge. In order to coordinate different thematic activities, it is proposed that the priority regions be identified for thematic issues in order to streamline the engagement of UNEP with the Regional Seas programmes on different thematic issues. Existence of UNEP’s current activities with Regional Seas programmes on different thematic areas is demonstrated in **Table 1** as the baseline for the prioritization.

⁶ The 7 subprogrammes are: Climate Change, Disasters and Conflicts, Ecosystem Management, Environmental Governance, Chemical and Waste, Resource Efficiency, and Environment under Review

⁷ http://www.unep.org/esm/Portals/50159/docs/em_water/UNEPs_Marine_Coastal_Strategy_Executive_Summary.pdf

⁸ UNEP/WBRS.18/7 Final report of the implementation of RSSD (2013-2016)

Table 1: Indicative mapping of UNEP's current activities with the Regional Seas programmes

Theme	ABC	NBC	PERSGA	MAP	BSC	OSPAR	HELCOM	SACEP	ROPME	Tehran	NOWPAP	COBSEA	SPREP	CEP	CPPS	NEP	PAME	CCAMLR
RS-RFB	x	x		x		x			x					x				
Indicators	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			
Marine Litter	x	x		x				x	x		x	x	x	x	x			
Nutrient	x	x						x			x	x		x				
Waste water			x															
EBM tools	x							x	x			x		x				
Coral reef			x					x				x	x	x				

* X: Existence of any activities including projects, preparation of reports.

** This list is not exhaustive and based on the available information as of 15 September 2016

2.3 Incorporating RSSD (2017-2020) in the SDG implementation outlook

The Regional Seas implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UNEP/WBRS.18/2) described recommended actions for UNEP and Regional Seas programmes for better assisting the participating countries with delivering the SDGs. As the new RSSD (2017-2020) aims to respond to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, it is important that the RSSD (2017-2020) is integrated in when planning the Regional Seas engagements in the SDG implementation.

For the integration of the RSSD (2017-2020), it is proposed that the targets and actions for the Regional Seas programmes be integrated into the regional SDG implementation outlook, if the Regional Seas programmes agreed to prepare such a SDG implementation outlook.

2.4 Setting Joint Targets

In order to make concrete progress based on the RSSD (2017-2020), it is proposed that UNEP and the Regional Seas programmes create common targets to be achieved by 2020. By making the targets clear and measurable, it would be possible to evaluate the progress of implementation. The proposed targets are described in **Section 3**.

2.5 Planning Implementation in line with PoWs

As no additional funds are available specifically for the implementation of the activities under the RSSD (2017-2020) in UNEP or in the Regional Seas programmes, a practical approach to implement RSSD would be to conduct activities which would also contribute to the PoWs of the Regional Seas programmes, UNEP PoW and the RSSD (2017-2020).

As both UNEP and the Regional Seas programmes would continue assisting participating countries with achieving the SDGs, those activities would be aligned with the proposed activities that are planned for the Regional Seas engagements with the SDGs as is described in UNEP/WBRS.18/2. By doing so, the activities to achieve the RSSD (2017-2020) could be integrated in the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs. Therefore, proposed actions under UNEP/WBRS.18/2 are incorporated as proposed targets under the RSSD (2017-2020) as detailed in **Section 3**.

2.6 Joint monitoring of the implementation

The progress of implementation of the RSSD (2017-2020) should be jointly monitored by UNEP and the Regional Seas programmes to make sure progress are made. The proposed review cycle is described in **Section 4**.

One of the limitations of the previous RSSD (2013-2016) was that there was no systematic exchange of lessons learnt⁹. Information exchange at technical level on thematic issues has been largely lacking among the Regional Seas programmes. Information and knowledge exchange between the Regional

⁹ UNEP/WBRS.18/7 Final report of the implementation of RSSD (2013-2016)

Activity Centres (RACs) have been severely limited even though many work on similar issues such as Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and oil emergency response.

With this regard, it is proposed that for each of the four thematic direction of the RSSD (2017-2020), a **network of technical professionals of the Regional Seas programmes** is organised, headed by one region which is known to have strength and experience on the thematic area. The participation of RACs will be encouraged.

The networks may meet through electronic means to exchange information, best practices and lessons learnt on thematic areas. UNEP would coordinate such meetings of the networks together with the lead region. It is envisioned that these lessons learnt identified in the network will be shared on a Regional Seas Knowledge Portal site, which is to be launched by 2020 (**Section 3 T4.3**).

The proposed steps are as the following:

1. Identify a lead region for the four themes (Pollution, Climate Change, Extractives, Governance);
2. Each Regional Seas programme nominates a technical person for each of the four thematic group (Pollution, Climate Change, Extractives, Governance);
3. The groups meet at least twice a year for information exchange;
4. Every year, a thematic group will present the findings / summary to the Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans;
5. The information collected will be posted on a Regional Seas Knowledge Portal site once it becomes available.

The proposed schedule is as below:

Time	Action
September 2016	Identification of the lead region for the four thematic areas
November 2016	Nomination of representative from each Regional Seas programmes, including RACs
January 2017 – June 2016	Under the coordination of the lead region and UNEP, first network meetings will be organised for the four themes
June 2016	Network on pollution presents its intersessional work at the 19 th Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions
June 2016 – September 2016	Under the coordination of the lead region and UNEP, second network meetings will be organised for the four themes

3. Measuring the implementation

As presented in the Discussion Paper on the Regional Seas Strategic Directions (2017-2020) (UNEP/WBRS.17/2), it is recommended to set clear targets to make the RSSD (2017-2020) actionable. By setting measurable targets, it will become possible to measure the progress and conduct evaluation of the implementation at the end of the period.

Both UNEP and the Regional Seas programmes will implement actions in order to achieve the set targets. Below, suggested targets by 2020 as well as UNEP's action and Regional Seas actions are provided for consideration by the Regional Seas programmes. It should be noted, however, that the proposed items are subject to the availability of financial resources.

	Agreed action item	No	Target by 2020	Proposed RS for the activity	UNEP's action	Regional Seas action	SDG target	UNEA 2 resolution
Core Strategy								
Core goal 1: Promote and facilitate ratification, adoption and implementation of Regional Seas Conventions, Action Plans and Protocols, working in concert with other Regional Seas Organisations.	N/A	C1.1	At least 2 Regional Seas programmes initiate revision/updates of the Action Plans	To be identified	Provide assistant for revision based on the mapping exercise	Assess the implementation of the Action Plan	-	
		C1.2	ABNJ is covered by at least 2 additional Regional Seas programmes	ABC, NBC	Provide support to the revision of Convention	Revise the Convention text	-	2/10 OP 13
		C1.3	At least 3 non-participating countries participate in the Regional Seas meetings as an observer	COBSEA, CEP, ABC	Send letters to non-participating countries inviting participation in regional seas activities	Invite non-parties to meetings as an observer	14.c	2/10 OP12
		C1.4	Ratification of the Antigua Convention	NEP	Organise regional meetings to accelerate ratification	-	14.c	

	Agreed action item	No	Target by 2020	Proposed RS for the activity	UNEP's action	Regional Seas action	SDG target	UNEA 2 resolution
Core goal 2: Strategically work in collaboration with international and regional organizations, including Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) and other relevant stakeholders	N/A	C2.1	At least 2 new regions documented cooperation framework including MOU At least 2 new regions start dialogue with RFBs	ROPME, NBC NOWPAP, SPREP	Provide assistance to Regional Seas programmes upon requests to further develop / initiate dialogues with RFBs Facilitate dialogue through organisations of meetings	Further develop / initiate dialogues with RFBs based on discussion at the CBD SOI meeting Identify possible RFBs that could work with in the region	14.2	OP 5
		C2.2	At least 1 agreement is made with species-based agreements	ROPME	Facilitate dialogue with relevant secretariats upon request	Initiate discussion with the relevant secretariats		
Thematic Strategies								
1. Reduce marine pollution of all kinds in	Enhance data, information management,	T1.1	At least 3 regions adopt core regional seas indicators	To be identified	Coordinate the Regional Seas indicators	Bring the indicators to the governing bodies	14.1	OP6

	Agreed action item	No	Target by 2020	Proposed RS for the activity	UNEP's action	Regional Seas action	SDG target	UNEA 2 resolution
line with the SDG Goal 14.1	monitoring and assessment at national and regional level through development of guidelines, baselines, regional indicators, and monitoring		At least 2 regional-sea based assessments are prepared and published in line with WOA2	ROPME, to be identified	working group Assist the preparation of the report upon request	for discussion Prepare regional-sea based assessments		
	Raise the visibility of relevant pollution issues at all levels and facilitate science-policy interactions emphasizing socio-economic impacts and promoting relevant practices, tools, technologies and measures	T1.2	UNEP and Regional Seas programmes jointly engage in at least 1 global awareness raising campaign (marine litter campaign)	All	Implement marine litter global campaign	Implement marine litter global campaign	14.1	
	Raise issues at global level and	T1.3	At least 5 regions develop regionalised	To be identified	Provide technical	Develop regional implementation	14.1	

	Agreed action item	No	Target by 2020	Proposed RS for the activity	UNEP's action	Regional Seas action	SDG target	UNEA 2 resolution
	facilitate regionalization of outcomes of the GPA IGR4 and mandated global partnerships		implementation plan of the outcomes of the GPA IGR4 and incorporate to the SDG implementation outlooks		assistance to prepare implementation plan of the IGR4 upon request	plan of the outcomes of the IGR4		
2. Create increased resilience of people, marine and coastal ecosystems, and their health and productivity, in line with the SDG Goal 13 and decisions made at the UNFCCC COP21	Support mainstreaming of climate change into regional and national policies and institutional frameworks	T2.1	At least 2 regions revise their Action Plan, incorporating climate change	To be identified	Support the process of revising the Action Plans	Revise Action Plan incorporating climate change	13	
	Assess the impacts of climate change and the resilience of people, society and ecosystems in marine and coastal areas to propose adaptation of strategies	T2.2	At least 3 regions adopt the GCRMN monitoring standard for Coral Reefs	To be identified	Prepare GCRMN regional reports	Adopt the GCRMN monitoring standard for regional monitoring	13, 14.3	

	Agreed action item	No	Target by 2020	Proposed RS for the activity	UNEP's action	Regional Seas action	SDG target	UNEA 2 resolution
	Create or support climate research, policy networks and inter-regional knowledge exchange towards a better understanding of climate impacts on the marine and coastal environment	T2.4	At least 2 regions incorporate ocean acidification aspects in regional monitoring or strategies	To be identified	Obtain global data set on ocean acidification	Incorporate regional monitoring points on ocean acidification for monitoring purpose	14.3	OP11
		T2.5	A study on policy instruments on coral reef will be prepared	All	Prepare the report	Provide inputs to the report	14.3, 14.c	
	Facilitate access to instruments for climate financing at national and regional levels	T2.6	Access to climate financing through Blue Financing on a pilot bases	To be identified	Develop pilot projects with Regional Seas programmes upon request	Develop pilot projects for Blue Financing	13	
3. Develop integrated, ecosystem-based regional ocean policies and strategies	Promote application of guidelines, rules and regulations for exploitation	T3.1	At least 2 regions develop regional ecosystem-based policy / strategy	To be identified	Develop tools and provide guidance on ecosystem-based management	Initiate the dialogues with relevant sectors to create regional EBM strategy	14.2	

	Agreed action item	No	Target by 2020	Proposed RS for the activity	UNEP's action	Regional Seas action	SDG target	UNEA 2 resolution
for sustainable use of marine and coastal resources, paying close attention to blue growth”,	and exploration of living and non-living resources within Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans and develop such instruments, where necessary, based on the ecosystem approach	T3.2	A global guideline for extraction of oil in marine and coastal environment is developed	-	A global guideline for extraction of oil in marine and coastal environment is developed	Develop regional guideline		
4. Enhance effectiveness of Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans as regional platforms for supporting integrated ocean policies and management”,	Support science-policy dialogue, science-based decisions and provision of regional guidelines	T4.1	Develop mechanisms for science-policy dialogue in the regions where it does not exist ¹⁰	To be identified	Provide models for science-policy dialogue (e.g. RACs)	Examine possible models and accommodate the science-policy dialogue in its institutional framework	14.2	
	Support member states with	T4.2	At least 2 new regions develop integrated regional ocean	African Ocean Governance	Provide technical assistance to	Initiate process for the development of	14.2	

¹⁰ To be identified

	Agreed action item	No	Target by 2020	Proposed RS for the activity	UNEP's action	Regional Seas action	SDG target	UNEA 2 resolution
	developing integrated ocean policy and improve relevant national legislation to enhance chronological consistency and coherency across sectors		management/ governance strategy	(MAP, NBC, ABC, PERSGA)	Regional Seas for the development of regional strategies	regional strategies		
	Enhance information exchange and interregional cooperation towards common goals	T4.3	An information exchange platform for the UNEP Regional Seas Programme is launched with participation of at least 15 Regional Seas	All	Develop a Regional Seas information exchange portal	Share information on the Regional Seas portal on climate change	-	OP11
	Encourage multi-stakeholder participation including NGOs and the private sector to promote compliance with Regional	T4.4	Increased participation of the Regional Seas programmes in global multi-stakeholder partnerships which UNEP leads (Annex 1)	All	Introducing the UNEP convened or supported global multi-stakeholder partnerships to regional seas programmes.	Consider establishing regional node or sub-partnership under the global partnerships	-	

	Agreed action item	No	Target by 2020	Proposed RS for the activity	UNEP's action	Regional Seas action	SDG target	UNEA 2 resolution
	Seas instruments, existing guidelines and regulations of ocean management							
	Ensure the highest standards of Secretariat performance in support in administration of the Conventions and Action Plans	T4.5	At least 5 regions conduct voluntary self-effectiveness review	To be identified	Develop a guidance document for self-effectiveness review	Conduct self-effectiveness review using the guidance prepared by UNEP	-	

4. UNEP's approach to achieve the proposed targets

For each of the proposed targets, UNEP's strategy for the implementation is described below.

Core goal 1:

Promote and facilitate ratification, adoption and implementation of Regional Seas Conventions, Action Plans and Protocols, working in concert with other Regional Seas Organisations.

C1.1 At least 2 Regional Seas programmes initiate revision/updates of the Action Plans

As is elaborated in the Ecosystem Approach to the Regional Seas (UNEP/WBRS.18/INF5), UNEP proposes to work with interested Regional Seas programmes to revise the Action Plans. While the level of progress on the Regional Seas Action Plans is not well known, it is generally understood that some of the Action Plans may not reflect the current regional priorities. In order for the work of the Regional Seas programmes to be aligned with the current national and regional needs, and with the SDGs, it is proposed that the revision of Action Plans is conducted. Envisioned steps are as following:

1. Mapping of current regional targets against the SDGs (in progress);
2. Identification of current regional priorities;
3. Development of SDG implementation outlook; and
4. Revision of the Action Plan text incorporating the above results.

C1.2 ABNJ is covered by at least 2 additional Regional Seas programmes

As called by Member States through paragraph 13 of resolution 2/10 of the United Nations Environment Assembly, it is proposed that the geographical coverage of the Regional Seas programmes be expanded to include ABNJ. In order to do so, the article on the geographical coverage of the convention texts would need to be revised and adopted by the contracting parties. This action item is further elaborated in the Regional Seas Programme and Marine Biodiversity in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (UNEP/WBRS.18/6).

C1.3 At least 3 non-participating countries participate in the Regional Seas meetings as an observer

As is encouraged by the General Assembly¹¹ and the United Nations Environment Assembly¹², Member States, who have not done so, are invited to participate in the Regional Seas programmes. It is proposed that several countries in COBSEA, Abidjan Convention, and CEP regions be invited to relevant meetings as observers. Such observers should be invited based on their respective rules of procedure.

C1.4 Ratification of the Antigua Convention

The Antigua Convention was prepared under the auspices of UNEP but it is not yet entered into force since its preparation in 2002. Therefore, UNEP will continue providing technical supports to accelerate ratification of the Antigua Convention and to revitalize the North East Pacific Regional Seas programme (NEP).

¹¹ For example, A/RSS/69/245 Paragraph 177 of 2015

¹² Paragraph 12 of resolution 2/10

Core goal 2:

Strategically work in collaboration with international and regional organizations, including Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) and other relevant stakeholders

C2.1 (i) At least 2 new regions documented cooperation framework including MOU; (ii) At least 2 new regions start dialogue with RFBs

UNEP's approach for the cooperation between the Regional Seas programmes and Regional Fisheries Bodies (RFBs) is to use the successful model between OSPAR and the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC)¹³. Through the technical cooperation from OSPAR and NEAFC, various regions started dialogues with RFBs. Although the OSPAR-NEAFC model might not be applicable to other regions, UNEP aims to identify different models such as the cooperation of MAP and the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM).

Two levels of targets are set for this target:

1. Formalization of cooperation: At least 2 new regions documented cooperation framework including Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
Currently, the Nairobi Convention and the Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (SWIOFC) as well as ROPME and the Regional Fisheries Commission (RECOFI) are interested in formalizing their cooperation through MOU. Within the framework of cooperation between UNEP and FAO, technical support will be provided for the preparation of such MOUs.
2. Initiation of dialogues: At least 2 new regions start dialogue with RFBs
Several regions have not started formal dialogues with the relevant RFBs. In these regions, it is proposed that UNEP facilitate the creation of platform for dialogue to identify areas of mutual interests.

C2.2 At least 1 agreement is made with species-based agreements

UNEP has been working to enhance synergies between multilateral environment agreements (MEAs) under the subprogramme on Environmental Governance. It is proposed that Regional Seas programmes make a cooperation arrangement such as through MOU with species-based agreements. The experience between MAP and the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic area (ACCOBAMS) can be used to formulate such arrangements.

Thematic Strategy 1: Reduce marine pollution of all kinds in line with the SDG Goal 14.1

T1.1 (i) At least 3 regions adopt core regional seas indicators; (ii) At least 2 regional-sea based assessments are prepared and published in line with WOA2

¹³ Information paper on the process of Forming a Cooperative Mechanism Between NEAFC and OSPAR

As is elaborated in the discussion paper on the Regional Seas Indicators and Assessment (UNEP/WBRS.18/3) and the Ecosystem Approach to the Regional Seas (UNEP/WBRS.18/INF5), it is proposed that the Regional Seas programmes use common set of core indicators. Based on such indicators, regional assessments can be prepared and fed into the Second Cycle of the Regular Process in a more coordinated manner. HELCOM's work on indicators is the leading model for this activity.

T1.2 UNEP and Regional Seas programmes jointly engage in at least 1 global awareness raising campaign (marine litter campaign)

Under the Global Partnership of Marine Litter (GPML)¹⁴, a global awareness-raising campaign on the issue of marine litter is planned. UNEP propose that all 18 Regional Seas programmes take part in the global campaign to collectively raise awareness on the issue of marine litter. It is further suggested that all Regional Seas programmes, which have not done so, to participate in the GPML in order to exchange lessons learnt among stakeholders including academic institutions, civil society and the private sector.

T1.3 At least 5 regions develop regionalised implementation plan of the outcomes of the GPA IGR4 and incorporate to the SDG implementation outlooks

UNEP proposed that the Regional Seas programmes prepare implementation outlook of the SDGs (UNEP/WBRS.18/2). As SDG 14.1 focuses on pollution, the outcomes from the Fourth Intergovernmental Review (IGR4) of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA) should be incorporated in the SDG implementation outlook, if the Regional Seas programmes agreed to develop such implementation outlook. By doing so, the outcomes of IGR4 will be regionalized at the Regional Seas level and be in line with the SDGs implementation.

Thematic Strategy 2. Create increased resilience of people, marine and coastal ecosystems, and their health and productivity, in line with the SDG Goal 13 and decisions made at the UNFCCC COP21

T2.1 At least 2 regions revise their Action Plan, incorporating climate change

As described in C1.1, UNEP will assist interested Regional Seas programmes with the process of revising their Action Plans. Some of the Action Plans do not specifically list climate change related issues as a regional priority. If the participating countries identify climate change and its related issues as a current regional priority, the Action Plans may be revised so that climate change aspects can be included. The ongoing mapping exercise of regional targets against SDGs may serve as a tool to identify the gap.

T2.2 At least 3 regions adopt the GCRMN monitoring standard for Coral Reefs

Pursuant to paragraph 14 of resolution 2/12 Sustainable coral Reefs Management of the United Nations Environment Assembly, UNEP will support Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) on the development of indicators. It is proposed that interested Regional Seas programmes adopt the GCRMN monitoring standard and prepare regional GCRMN reports.

¹⁴ <http://unep.org/gpa/gpml/gpml.asp>

T2.4 At least 2 regions incorporate ocean acidification aspects in regional monitoring or strategies

An indicator on ocean acidification was adopted under the core set of Regional Seas indicators (UNEP/WBRS.18/INF9). UNEP plans to obtain global data sets on ocean acidification so that the Regional Seas programmes can utilize such dataset. It is further proposed that the monitoring points for ocean acidification in respective regions be incorporated into the regional monitoring scheme, if such monitoring points exist in the region.

T2.5 A study on policy instruments on coral reef will be prepared

As requested by Member States through paragraph 13 of the resolution 2/12 of the United Nations Environment Assembly, UNEP will conduct an analysis of global and regional policy instruments and governance mechanisms related to the protection and sustainable management of coral reefs. The Regional Seas programmes will be invited to contribute to the preparation and review of the study.

T2.6 Access to climate financing through Blue Financing on a pilot bases

Blue finance mechanism has been used in the Caribbean region. UNEP proposes to replicate this experience in other regions on a pilot bases. As Blue Finance mechanism is for the national level, UNEP would work with interested countries through the Regional Seas programmes.

Thematic Strategy 3. Develop integrated, ecosystem-based regional ocean policies and strategies for sustainable use of marine and coastal resources, paying close attention to blue growth”

T3.1 At least 2 regions develop regional ecosystem-based policy / strategy

In 2016, ROPME has started formulating a Regional EBM Strategy for the ROPME Sea Area in cooperation with RECOFI¹⁵. Based on this model and experience, UNEP propose that other interested regions start preparing such a regional strategy with relevant sectoral organisations.

T3.2 A global guideline for extraction of oil in marine and coastal environment is developed

Several Regional Seas programmes have prepared environmental guidelines on the activities related to extraction of oil and gas¹⁶ in the marine and coastal ecosystems. But there is no global guideline on the extraction of oil and gas in the offshore. UNEP thus proposes to prepare a global guideline based on the existing regional guidelines to facilitate elaboration of similar guidelines in other regions.

Thematic Strategy 4. Enhance effectiveness of Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans as regional platforms for supporting integrated ocean policies and management”

T4.1 Develop mechanisms for science-policy dialogue in the regions where it does not exist

¹⁵ For more detail, please visit: http://ropme.org/551_EBM_EN.clx

¹⁶ For example, OSPAR Guidelines for Toxicity Testing of Substances and Preparations Used and Discharged Offshore.

UNEP plans to identify different existing models for science-policy dialogues in the Regional Seas programmes. Current models include: Ad-Hoc Committee on Science and Technology under the Abidjan Convention¹⁷; MOU between OSPAR and the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES); and cooperation between NOWPAP and the North Pacific Marine Science Organisation (PICES). Based on the identified models, UNEP will assist interested Regional Seas programmes in developing a science-policy interface mechanism.

T4.2 At least 2 new regions develop integrated regional ocean management/ governance strategy

Currently CPPS and the African region (Abidjan Convention, Barcelona Convention, Nairobi Convention and Jeddah Convention) are in the process of preparing an integrated ocean governance strategy. UNEP plans to continue facilitating the process for the development of Integrated Ocean Governance Policy in the CPPS region and the African Ocean Governance Strategy in the African Continent¹⁸.

T4.3 An information exchange platform for the UNEP Regional Seas Programme is launched with participation of at least 15 Regional Seas

Based on the lessons learnt from the Regional Seas Strategic Directions (2013-2016)¹⁹, UNEP propose to establish a Regional Seas portal where lesson learnt, case studies, best practices and information are exchanged between Regional Seas programmes. If the four networks for the implementation of thematic strategic directions are established, information collected during the intercessional period will be compiled and shared on the portal.

T4.4 Increased participation of the Regional Seas programmes in global multi-stakeholder partnerships which UNEP leads

UNEP proposes that the Regional Seas programmes engage stakeholders through the participation in the global partnerships which UNEP leads. For example, Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML) has regional nodes and the Global Partnership on Waste Management (GPWM) have regional nutrient platforms, which the Regional Seas programmes play a key role. Depending on the capacity and availability of resources, the Regional Seas programmes may host such a regional node / platform for the global partnerships. They may also decide to participate only in the discussions organised through these partnerships without hosting regional platforms.

T4.5 At least 5 regions conduct voluntary self-effectiveness review

Based on the experience of the Performance Review of the Regional Fisheries Bodies²⁰, UNEP will prepare an assessment tool for self-effectiveness review. Interested Regional Seas programmes will be invited to conduct self-effectiveness assessment, using the assessment tool prepared by UNEP. The

¹⁷ Established by COP 9 of the Abidjan Convention

¹⁸ Afrfrican Ministerial Conference on the Environment devided to develop such as governance strategy though the Cairo Declaration in 2015. For more details, please visit

<http://www.unep.org/ecosystemmanagement/water/regionalseas40/Meetings/AfricanOceanGovernance/tabid/1060488/Default.aspx>

¹⁹ UNEP/WBRS.18/7 Final report of the implementation of RSSD (2013-2016)

²⁰ Performance Reviews by Regional Fishery Bodies, Available at: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/015/i2637e/i2637e00.pdf>

identification of strengths and weakness is expected to contribute to the future planning to increase the effectiveness of the Regional Seas programmes.

5. Reporting and Review

The reporting of the implementation of RSSDs (2017-2020) will be voluntary unless it is agreed to make it obligatory through the Global Meetings of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans.

While the reporting and compilation of the previous RSSDs has been occasionally conducted, it is suggested to formalize the review process as (1) mid-term review and (2) final review. By conducting two reviews during the implementation period, it will reduce reporting burden of Regional Seas programmes to the Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans.

For the reporting of the RSSD (2017-2020), the following two reviews are suggested:

- Mid-term review: 20th Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans in 2018
- Final review: 22nd Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans in 2020

For the implementation review, UNEP will compile inputs from the Regional Seas programmes and from different units of UNEP and submit to the Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans. Based on the report, UNEP and the Regional Seas programmes may discuss future actions in order to achieve the targets set for the RSSD by 2020.

If the Regional Seas programmes agreed to organise a network for each thematic strategy as proposed in **Section 2**, it is proposed that the representatives from the four networks present the lessons learnt to the Plenary at the following meetings:

Theme	Presentations at the meeting
Pollution	19th Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans
Climate Change	20 th Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans
Extractives	21 st Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans
Governance	22 nd Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans

Annex 1 : List of global partnerships

Regional Seas Programme (RSP)
Global Coral Reef Partnership
Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML)
Global Partnership on Waste Management (GPWM)
Global Partnership on Nutrient Management (GWNM)
Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE)
10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production
Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN)
Clean Air and Climate Coalition (CACC)
Blue Carbon Initiative
10x20 Initiative
Strategic Approach to Integrated Chemicals Management
Global Partnership on Mercury
Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA)
Ozone Action
Global Adaptation Network
Partnership for Regional Ocean Governance
BLUEOCEANS
Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN)
International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI)
Global Wastewater Initiative (GW2I)