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**Ninth Global Meeting of the Regional Seas
Conventions and Action Plans**

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**DRAFT ELEMENTS
FOR THE REGIONAL SEAS STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS 2008-2012**

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I. Background and rationale

1. The international community has over the past decade become increasingly concerned about many issues involving oceans and coasts. The issues of concern include depleting fish stocks, destruction of natural marine and coastal habitats, pressure of urbanisation and tourism on coastal regions and pollution from maritime and land-based activities.
2. Lately, issues such as the impact of climate change on oceans and coasts, the deep-sea biodiversity, the conservation and sustainable use of the high seas and the exploitation of the seabed, have raised the profile of marine issues even further. All these issues have generated a host of new initiatives from governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, think tanks and other groups.
3. The international community (i.e. World Summit on Sustainable Development -WSSD, UN General Assembly, UN agencies, governments, environmental NGOs, and a multitude of other stakeholders) appears to increasingly acknowledge the need for strengthening international governance, including at the regional level, to address marine and coastal environment concerns.
4. In response to a request by its Governing Council, UNEP is adopting a more structured approach to coastal and marine issues with the preparation of a Medium-Term Strategy (2010-2013), which incorporates an ecosystem management component.
5. The UNEP Regional Seas Programme, which comprises the 17 Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, fulfils an important role in implementing the international agenda on marine and coastal issues. In bringing together governments, the scientific community, intergovernmental organisations, and other stakeholders, the various Regional Seas programmes provide valuable regional frameworks for *i)* assessing the quality of the marine environment; *ii)* identifying key developments (e.g. socio-economic activities, coastal settlements, land-based activities) that affect the marine environment; and *iii)* agreeing on appropriate responses in terms of strategies, policies and management tools.
6. Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAP), guided by their respective governing bodies, are major mechanisms for carrying out the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Regional Seas programmes also contribute to the implementation of decisions adopted by global intergovernmental forums like the United Nations General Assembly (e.g. in respect of resolutions related to the marine environment and marine biodiversity under the "Oceans and the Law of the Sea") or UNEP (e.g. the 2006 Beijing Declaration adopted at the Second Intergovernmental Review Meeting of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities – IGR-2).
7. Taking the above into consideration and recognising the successful implementation of the Strategic Directions 2004-2007, agreed by the representatives of the RSCAP at their 5th Global Meeting in Nairobi (26-28 November 2003), which were further endorsed by the Chairpersons of the Conferences of the Parties (COPs) and Intergovernmental Meetings (IGMs) at the 6th Global Meeting of the RSCAP in Istanbul (30 November-2 December 2004), the following Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2008-2012 aim at strengthening the Regional Seas Programme and the individual RSCAP as valuable instruments for the sustainable development of oceans, coasts and islands. They are intended to underscore that the Regional Seas Programme and the individual RSCAP are well-suited to respond to the new challenges facing the marine and coastal environment.

II. Strategic Directions

8. Strengthen the scientific component of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans through *i)* the development of monitoring networks; *ii)* the identification of pollution sources, such as point and non-point sources, river inputs, nutrients, atmospheric deposition, marine litter, etc); *iii)* the periodic assessment of marine pollution, marine biodiversity, and coastal zone development; *iv)* the contribution to the UN "global reporting and assessment of the state of environment, including socio-economic aspects" as well as to the UNEP GEO process; *v)* the active collaboration with the marine-related Multilateral Environmental Agreements; and *vi)* cooperation with UNESCO/IOC and its various scientific programmes related to the marine and coastal environment.
9. Promote the use of integrated approaches such as ecosystem management and coastal zone management at the global, regional and national levels.
10. Address the impact of climate change on the marine and coastal environment by assessing and addressing the potential social, economic and environmental impacts and consequences on fisheries, tourism, human health, marine biodiversity, coastal erosion, and small islands ecosystems. Promote cooperation for formulating regional climate change adaptation strategies.

11. Contribute to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, especially the provision related to the "development and implementation of protocols addressing land-based pollution sources and activities". Adopt or update strategic action plans to control pollution from land-based activities and ensure their effective implementation. Enhance current actions in sanitation and urban wastewater treatment (under the Millennium Development Goals) and promote efforts to reduce marine pollution from non-point sources and inputs from rivers.

12. Intensify regional activities in support of the WSSD Plan of Implementation and the Jakarta Mandate of the Convention on Biological Diversity, notably by identifying critical issues of marine biodiversity, protecting its major components, and promoting its sustainable use; more specifically, focusing on:

- Regional cooperation towards the establishment of marine and coastal protected areas and the designation of important wetlands under the Ramsar Convention;
- Addressing the protection of *i*) marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction; and *ii*) deep-sea biodiversity at the regional scale;
- Cooperation with FAO and regional fisheries management organisations (RFMO) to address environmental impacts of fisheries and promote an ecosystem management approach;
- Participation in the Coral Reef Initiative and the Small Islands Developing States Programme, as appropriate.

13. Develop regional cooperation and promote the effective implementation, as applicable, of Multilateral Environmental Agreements, in particular the Convention on Biological diversity and other biodiversity-related agreements.

14. Strengthen regional cooperation with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and promote the implementation, as pertinent, of the IMO conventions, such as those on marine pollution (MARPOL), oil pollution and chemicals preparedness (OPRC and OPRC-HNS), ballast water, and the London Convention and Protocol on dumping at sea.

III. Implementation of the strategic directions

15. In order to effectively carry out the Strategic Direction 2008-2012, RSCAP governing bodies will endeavour to:

- Strengthen their capacities in governance and sustainable financing mechanisms through, amongst others, the mobilization of external funding.
- Improve their scientific base and their capacity to follow scientific issues, undertake monitoring and assessments and plan results-oriented activities.
- Build on the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building to enhance regional and national technical, administrative and legal capacities related to the management of marine issues.
- Develop and strengthen reporting, and compliance and enforcement mechanisms; develop synergies with Multilateral Environmental Agreements.
- Publish and disseminate regular reports on the state of the marine environment and the implementation of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans; reports are to be reviewed by Parties.
- Raise public awareness on the importance of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, and draw in all appropriate regional stakeholders, economic sectors, academia and civil society in their promotion and implementation.
- Promote, develop and implement GEF-eligible projects in the context of the Large Marine Ecosystem approach.