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Conventions and Action Plans  
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**Regional Seas Strategic Directions  
2013-2016**

## I. Introduction

Oceans, seas and coastal areas form an integrated and essential component of the Earth's ecosystem and are critical to sustaining its vital services.

Their importance has been stressed with relation to the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and seas and of their resources for sustainable development, including through their contributions to poverty eradication, sustained economic growth, food security and creation of sustainable livelihoods and decent work, while at the same time protecting biodiversity and the marine environment and addressing the impacts of climate change.

Within this context, for the past 40 years, the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans<sup>1</sup>, constitute a unique approach to the protection and sustainable management of the marine and coastal environment, as a means to alleviate poverty, sustain economic growth, foment food security and the creation of sustainable livelihoods.

The international community has over the past decade become increasingly concerned about many issues involving oceans and coasts as evidenced in the Rio+20 Outcome Document "The Future We Want" that calls for immediate actions on issues such as the sustainable management of depleting fish stocks, destruction of natural marine and coastal habitats, alien invasive species, conserving marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, ocean acidification and the impacts of climate change.

Similarly, concern has been expressed that the health of oceans and marine biodiversity are negatively affected by marine pollution, including marine debris, especially plastic, persistent organic pollutants, heavy metals and nitrogen-based compounds, from a number of marine and land-based sources, including shipping and land run-off.

It has also become evident that addressing these multitudes of issues needs a coordinated approach ranging from governments, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, academia, to the private sector. Furthermore, the international community acknowledges the need for strengthening international governance, including at the regional level, to address marine and coastal environment concerns.

In this sense, the 18 Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans fulfill an important role in implementing the international agenda on marine and coastal issues. In bringing together

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<sup>1</sup> As mandated by their member states, many established based on the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Governing Council decisions.

governments, the scientific community, intergovernmental organizations, and other stakeholders, the various Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans provide valuable regional frameworks for i) assessing the state of the marine environment; ii) addressing key developments (e.g. socio-economic activities, coastal settlements, land-based activities) that interact with the marine environment; and iii) agreeing on appropriate responses in terms of strategies, policies, management tools and protocols.

Also recognizing the need to strengthen collaboration on the development and application of ecosystem approaches for management of coral reefs, mangroves and seagrass beds, in order to protect and sustain their invaluable ecosystem services for food security and livelihoods, tourism revenue, shoreline protection as well as climate change adaptation and mitigation, and as a contribution to globally agreed targets including Aichi Targets<sup>2</sup> 10, 6 and 11 as well as the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) Call to Action.

A key element to value is the importance of the United Nations Secretary General's Oceans Compact as a framework for coordinated efforts by UN Agencies, International Financial Institutions (IFIs), civil society and the private sector, to address the rapid degradation of the marine and coastal environment.

The global strategic directions, as listed below, are formulated to continue and further enhance the Strategic Directions for 2008-2012, aimed at strengthening the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans at the global level.

## **II. Strategic Directions**

The Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans will aim to increase their effectiveness and outreach in the period of 2013-2016, through increasing country ownership, promoting the incorporation of the Convention and/or Action Plan and their protocols into national legislation, promoting compliance and enforcement mechanisms, involving civil society and the private sector, building capacities, ensuring viable national and international financial arrangements, as well as developing assessment/evaluation procedures where appropriate.

The Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans will:

1. Endeavor to effectively apply an ecosystem approach in the management of the marine and coastal environment<sup>3</sup> in order to protect and restore the

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<sup>2</sup> Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

<sup>3</sup> Ecosystem-based management (EBM)

health, productivity and resilience of oceans and marine ecosystems, and to maintain their biodiversity, enabling their conservation and sustainable use for present and future generations.

2. Contribute to the implementation of the Manila Declaration of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, especially in the core partnership areas of wastewater management, nutrients and marine litter. Furthermore, the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans will act on provisions related to the development and implementation of protocols addressing land-based pollution sources and activities affecting the marine environment.
3. Strengthen capacities at the national level on marine and coastal governance, in order to enable coordination and coherence with systems such as the Large Marine Ecosystem approach, Regional Fisheries Management Organizations and River Basin Organizations, as appropriate.
4. Support the provision of tools to decouple economic growth from environmental pressures in the marine and coastal environment by promoting resource efficiency and productivity, including assessing the value of the services provided by these key ecosystems.
5. Strengthen coordination and build necessary capacities at the regional and national levels to improve global knowledge and trends on the status of the marine environment, contributing to the World Oceans Assessment (Regular Process).
6. Strengthen collaboration mechanisms to address common regional objectives, partnerships and co-ordinated regional implementation of relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements, global and regional initiatives by United Nations Agencies, such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO, UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS), United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Global Partnership for Oceans of the World Bank, the UN Secretary General's Oceans Compact, and ICRI.

### **III. Implementation of the Strategic Directions**

In order to effectively implement these Strategic Directions, the 14<sup>th</sup> Global Meeting of Regional Seas Conventions and Actions Plans outlined a roadmap with actions to be undertaken by the Regional Seas Secretariats and UNEP.

These Strategic Directions should be elaborated by individual Regional Seas Conventions and Actions Plans before the 15<sup>th</sup> Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (as Annex I). Furthermore, these Strategic Directions should be collectively reviewed at a mid-term opportunity.

**1. Effectively apply an ecosystem approach in the management of the marine and coastal environment.**

<i>Action by Regional Seas Secretariats</i>	<i>Action by UNEP</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Contribute towards articulation of Sustainable Development Goal on oceans.</li> <li>- Utilise DPSIR approach<sup>4</sup>, including ocean acidification and the impacts of climate change.</li> <li>- Streamlining EBM into RSPs work programmes and their member states by sharing lessons learnt on ecosystem based approaches, including, Marine Spatial Planning (MSP), Integrated coastal area and river basin management (ICARM), Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and adaptation strategies (EBA).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify areas/indicators related to Sustainable Development Goal on oceans.</li> <li>- Build capacities on application of EBM principles at the Regional/National level.</li> <li>- Provide guidance on Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) implementation at local, national, transboundary level.</li> </ul>

**2. Contribute to the implementation of the Manila Declaration of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land Based Activities (GPA), in particular the partnerships on wastewater management, nutrients and marine litter.**

<i>Action by Regional Seas Secretariats</i>	<i>Action by UNEP</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support the implementation of the GPA through the Land-based Sources of Pollution (LBS/A) Protocols and its annexes.</li> <li>- Develop Regional Action Plans with respect to one or more GPA priorities and Regional partnerships.</li> <li>- Coordinate launches for regional chapters of the three Global Partnerships (Nutrients-Management, Marine Litter and Wastewater), as</li> </ul>	<p>Coordinate launches for regional chapters of the Global Partnerships on Nutrients, Marine Litter and Wastewater, as relevant to each region</p> <p>Work with Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAPs) to develop nutrient management plans.</p> <p>Support LBS/A Protocol ratification and implementation through resource mobilization,</p>

<sup>4</sup>DPSIR framework (Driving Forces-Pressures-State-Impacts-Responses)

<p>appropriate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitate support and awareness raising to civil society.</li> </ul>	<p>awareness-raising, capacity-building, sharing of lessons learned and on-the-ground activities (i.e. demonstrations projects)</p>
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**3. Strengthen capacities at the regional level and national level on marine and coastal governance.**

<i>Action by Regional Seas Secretariats</i>	<i>Action by UNEP</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strengthen relationships with Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs).</li> <li>- Formalising partnerships and demonstrating joint working relationships with relevant regional and organizations, such as river basin organizations, Large Marine Ecosystems (LME) projects, as appropriate.</li> <li>- Provisions of inputs into international processes.</li> <li>- Disseminating information, among members and parties, on joint actions promoting RSCAPs at all level and promoting these actions.</li> <li>- Identifying suitable financial mechanisms to implement RSCAPs and their Protocols.</li> <li>- Facilitate intra and inter-regional cooperation and support and/or initiate networks. (i.e. Marine Protected Area (MPA) networks)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enhance visibility of the RSCAPs in terms of its governance mandate and to communicate outcomes of the regional governance review.</li> <li>- Strengthen and facilitate inter-regional cooperation.</li> <li>- Facilitate partnerships between RSCAPs and RFMOs.</li> <li>- Identifying suitable financial mechanisms to implement RSCAPs and their Protocols.</li> <li>- Include RSCAPs inputs into international processes, i.e. (Barbados +20<sup>5</sup>)</li> <li>- Give further consideration to UNEP Governing Council Resolution of oceans and role of the RSCAPs vis-à-vis Rio+20<sup>6</sup></li> </ul>

**4. Support the provision of tools to decouple economic growth from environmental pressures in the marine and coastal environment by promoting resource efficiency and productivity, including assessing the value of the services provided by these key ecosystems.**

<i>Action by Regional Seas Secretariats</i>	<i>Action by UNEP</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Raise awareness, promote and implement, as appropriate, economic valuation of marine and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Raising awareness on the utilization of market-based instruments and economic valuation to support</li> </ul>

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Programme of Action on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 20-22 June 2012 (Rio+20)

<p>coastal ecosystem services to support management decision making and policy settings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Foster key partnerships on specific green economy actions between governments, private sector and civil society.</li> <li>- Develop regional policies on resource efficiency, in support to the 10-year framework programme for sustainable consumption and production (SCP), as appropriate.</li> </ul>	<p>management decision making and policy settings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Technical assistance through regional/national workshops related to resource efficiency, with particular emphasis on identification of fiscal policies that promote green sectoral transformations related to the marine and coastal environment.</li> <li>- Technical assistance at the national level in the preparation of scoping studies related to sectoral transformative policies in the marine and coastal environment (enabling conditions, identifying and capturing value, and sectoral transformation/reform).</li> <li>- Disseminate methodologies for economic valuation of marine and coastal ecosystem services, in-line with The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) for Oceans, in the RSCAPs through regional workshops.</li> </ul>
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**5. Strengthen coordination and build necessary capacities at the regional and national levels to improve global knowledge and trends on the status of the marine environment, contributing to the World Oceans Assessment (Regular Process).**

<b><i>Action by Regional Seas Secretariats</i></b>	<b><i>Action by UNEP</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Planning and implementing, regional monitoring and assessment activities, as appropriate.(i.e. State of Marine Environment / Status reports or their equivalent)</li> <li>- Technical assistance to member states on integrated assessment in the marine and coastal environment, including support to World Oceans Assessment, as appropriate.</li> <li>- Assist in building capacities at the national/regional level on integrated assessments on the marine and coastal environment, with particular emphasis to aligning as appropriate to regional priority issues as identified by the outline of the World Oceans Assessment.</li> <li>- Support the Group of Experts, including regional</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assist in building capacities at the regional level on integrated assessments on the marine and coastal environment, with particular emphasis on regional priority issues as identified by the outline of the World Oceans Assessment.</li> <li>- Technical assistance to RSCAPs in the organization of workshops on the World Oceans Assessment.</li> <li>- Support the Group of Experts of the World Oceans Assessment.</li> <li>- Promote the coordination of regional chapters of the World Oceans Assessment through the platform of the RSCAPs.</li> </ul>

<p>and national experts, as appropriate, of the World Oceans Assessment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promote the coordination of regional chapters of the World Oceans Assessment through the platform of the RSCAPs.</li> <li>- Strengthen mechanisms to sustain environmental data at regional and national level, capitalizing on strategic synthesis efforts (WOA).</li> </ul>	
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**6. Strengthen collaboration mechanisms with relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), UN Agencies and International Financial Institutions (IFIs)**

<i>Action by Regional Seas Secretariats</i>	<i>Action by UNEP</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mapping existing and potential partnerships with relevant MEAs, UN Agencies and IFIs.</li> <li>- Initiate and operationalise Inter and Intra Regional collaborations.</li> <li>- Support and streamline reporting with relevant MEAs, UN Agencies and IFIs.</li> <li>- RSCAPs engagement in the Coral Reef Partnership and Blue Carbon Partnership, carrying out regional policy assessments, as appropriate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fundraising to support integration through partnership demonstration projects.</li> <li>- Identifying opportunities for RSCAPs in global initiatives (private sector, Global Partnership for Oceans, Oceans Compact, etc.)</li> <li>- Demonstrating, promoting and communicating contributions of the RSCAPs to global initiatives, MEAs and relevant partners.</li> <li>- Coordinate blue carbon policy assessments by developing a common approach.</li> <li>- Coordinate Coral Reef Partnership</li> </ul>