

## Remarks on the Regional Seas Programme

- The UNEP Regional Seas Programme provide inter-governmental frameworks to address the degradation of the oceans and seas at a regional level,
- This is through 18 established legally binding and voluntary mechanism for protection of the marine environment initially focusing on pollution at sea, such as oil spills and movement of hazardous waste, as well as land-based sources of pollution, for example plastics, wastewater and excess nutrients.
- The Programme has now embraced the ecosystems approach to managing marine resources and have protocols on protected areas, marine litter, combating oil spills, pollution from ships, transboundary movement of waste including their disposal, integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) and land-based sources of pollution (LBS) through which disaster reduction, climate change adaptation and sustainable consumption and production issues can be addressed.
- The focus is on promoting regional oceans governance to deliver the global oceans agenda and respond to emerging issues, new policies and initiatives such as the Blue Economy.
- Representatives from the Regional Seas Programme has actively participated in the regional consultations on the preparation of the post 2020 global biodiversity framework.
- The Programme offers a wealth of experience on regional approach to management of marine biodiversity through implementation of the regional legally binding protocols on marine biodiversity.
- The Programme recognizes that their member States are making progress in the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity.
- A regional seas scale is the appropriate ecosystem scale to make assessment of ecosystem status and functions and to jointly manage, among the littoral countries, the shared ecosystem resources and services for benefits of involved stakeholders.
- The governance mechanisms (institutional, legal/policy and financial frameworks) have been established.
- Under the regional seas programmes, many regions already included biodiversity related regional objectives and targets and there have been coordinated national action to achieve them.
- These regional objectives and targets are closely linked, and in many regions aligned, with the global targets and goals such as the Biodiversity Strategy: 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets relevant to marine and coastal biodiversity and Sustainable Development Goal 14.
- In response to the United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 2/10 on Oceans and Seas, UNEP developed a new Marine and Coastal Strategy for 2021-2030. Within this strategy, the regional seas programmes are recognised as a mechanism to advance global marine environmental agenda and implement global norms and action.
- UNEP recognizes that the regional seas programmes contributed to harmonised and ecosystem-based action to achieve marine biodiversity related objectives. At the global level under the Convention on Biological Diversity, Parties made effort to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets relevant to marine and coastal biodiversity and reported their effort in the national level reporting, which is the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan. UNEP carried out a quick review of the CBD national reporting and found that the well-coordinated national effort under the regional seas programmes have not been represented in them despite the fact that some

regional seas programmes aligned their action with the CBD related objectives and targets. There is a gap in defining clearly the role of the regional seas programmes in consolidating, supporting and harmonising their member States' national efforts and in actually using them as the vehicle for reporting and follow-up of global objectives and targets.

- The problem was caused by the following elements: (1) limited understanding of the roles of the regional seas programmes in achieving their marine and coastal biodiversity objectives which at the same time contributed to their member States in achieving the global targets and objectives; and (2) limited communication of the actual contribution of the regional seas programmes on marine and coastal biodiversity and on possible roles of the regional seas programmes in the regional level coordination of stakeholder action to achieve global biodiversity targets and objectives.
- The effects of the problem were: (1) activities and information under the regional seas programmes were not properly considered in the follow-up and review of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets; and (2) lost opportunity for the CBD Parties to take advantage of the regional seas programmes in harmonising their reporting on global targets with the regional seas level national reporting.
- The United Nations Environment Assembly at its second session made a resolution on Oceans and Seas where the Assembly invited "Member States and regional seas conventions and action plans, in cooperation, as appropriate, with other relevant organizations and fora, such as regional fisheries management organizations, to work towards the implementation of, and reporting on, the different ocean-related Sustainable Development Goals and associated targets, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets" (resolution 2/10, Operational Paragraph 5).
- In response to this resolution, UNEP through the completed European Commission funded GPGC project "Integrated Management and Governance Strategies for Delivery of Ocean-related Sustainable Development Goals produced conceptual guidelines on regional seas follow-up and review of the Ocean related Sustainable Development Goals (<https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/27295>). One of the recommendations in the terminal evaluation of this project was that the regional level reporting and follow-up of the global targets should lead to improved national level reporting and follow-up through the participation of the regional seas member states in the regional level follow-up and review.
- The actual levels of different regional seas programmes in achieving marine biodiversity related targets and objectives were not established or communicated within and under the CBD. Possible input of the regional seas programmes into the current discussion of the post 2020 Biodiversity Framework and potential future role of the regional seas programmes in coordination, follow-up and review of the post 2020 Biodiversity Framework has not been well identified or considered.

#### **EC Funded project – Led by Takehiro Nakamura**

#### **UNEP DG ENV GPGC PCA: Regional Seas Biodiversity under the Post 2020 Biodiversity Framework**

The **objective** of the project is to convince the CBD Parties to include the roles of the regional seas programmes in the post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

### **Expected outputs**

**Output:** The mechanism for the regional seas programmes contribution to achieving of biodiversity related objectives and targets are elaborated and proposed by UNEP and the regional seas secretariats and CBD Parties are informed of the proposed roles of regional seas programmes and conventions in the post 2020 Biodiversity Framework.

### **Activities**

Activity 1: Collection of information from the regional seas programme secretariat on the achievement of the Regional Seas programmes in meeting their regional targets and objectives, which are linked with the marine related Aichi Biodiversity Targets. The secretariats may contact their member states to establish such status of contribution. Their experiences in their endeavour to achieve them and monitoring of their achievements will also be documented. The collected and collated information will be included in a publication. Each of the 18 regional seas programmes are requested to produce their case studies to UNEP. A focus will be placed on four themes: sustainable fisheries (Aichi Biodiversity Target 6); pollution and water quality (Aichi Biodiversity Target 8); coral reef and other vulnerable ecosystems (Aichi Biodiversity 10); and marine protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (Aichi Biodiversity Target 11). Based on the compiled information, a desk top analysis will be conducted about the actual roles of the regional seas programmes for achieving the global marine biodiversity objectives and targets and their level of contribution. A short global summary of the achievements of the Regional Seas programmes together with the analysis of their contribution will be prepared and used for communicating and with the CBD Parties and other UN member States.

Activity 2: A desk top study will be carried out on the gaps of the regional seas programme biodiversity related activities in the CBD national reporting and in the CBD national reporting. Based on this desk top study, a set of recommendations will be drawn up on possible future roles of the regional seas programmes in the post 2020 Biodiversity Framework. The recommendations will be discussed among the regional seas programmes at their annual global meeting or through their monthly meetings. It is expected that each regional seas programme will bring the recommendations to its governing body to adopt the recommendations within it.

Activity 3: Based on the results of Activity 1-1 and 1-2, a three-day meeting will be organized to share their experiences among themselves and their partners. A preliminary list of items of the meeting discussion is: (1) regional targets related to marine and coastal biodiversity; (2) level of achievements vis-à-vis the set baselines; (3) a set of measures implemented and modalities of monitoring of achievements; and (4) experiences. The meeting will also discuss existing gaps in the regional seas in following up and review of the marine biodiversity related targets and objectives set under the regional seas programmes, as well as, inputs for the revision of the targets as well as tangible and measurable indicators based on their knowledge of information and work in the sea-basin region.

Activity 4: Communication materials will be produced based on the results of Activities 1-1, 1-2 and 1-3. Particularly the level of regional seas programmes' contribution to the global biodiversity agenda will be presented in a graphic form.

Activity 5: Input on the possible roles of the to the CBD organised Open ended Expert Group and Subsidiary Body meeting as well as the thematic Workshop on marine biodiversity (November 2019) will be made. Communications will also be made to regional seas processes and other regional processes such as Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific.