

152<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives  
19 November 2020  
1:00 p.m. to 3.00 p.m. and 3.30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.  
Online meeting

**Update on the implementation of UNEP's Marine and Coastal Strategy  
2020-2030**

This note, entitled “Update on the implementation of UNEP’s Marine and Coastal Strategy 2020-2030”, is made available as a follow-up to the request by the Committee of Permanent Representatives for additional information on UNEP’s Marine and Coastal Strategy under agenda item 3, “Programme performance review of UNEP’s Programme of Work 2020-2021” at the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Subcommittee held on 12 -16 October 2020, as referenced in the [Chair’s summary](#).

The present progress report provides an update on the implementation of UNEP’s Marine and Coastal Strategy 2020 - 2030 towards achievement of its overall Vision, “Healthy and climate-resilient marine and coastal ecosystems underpin human well-being and benefit present and future generations”.

## Update on implementation of UNEP's Marine and Coastal Strategy 2020-2030

### Background

In the Ministerial Declaration of the Fourth Session of United Nations Environment Assembly, Member States notes, "We will undertake actions to restore and protect marine and coastal ecosystems, noting that the United Nations Environment Programme's Marine and Coastal Strategy can contribute to our collective efforts in this area". The proposed strategy was presented in UNEP/EA.4/INF/7<sup>1</sup>, which was referred to in the Declaration. UNEP's Marine and Coastal strategy 2020-2030 sets out the following overall Vision: Healthy and climate-resilient marine and coastal ecosystems underpin human well-being and benefit present and future generations. Four strategic objectives are defined to deliver this overall vision:

- Strategic Objective 1: Establish knowledge-base on marine and coastal ecosystems to inform policies on human activities affecting their functions
- Strategic Objective 2: Build circularity in economies and promote sustainable consumption & production approaches to address marine pollution and resource use
- Strategic Objective 3: Support policies and strategies enabling integrated management and sustainable use of marine and coastal ecosystem services
- Strategic Objective 4: Innovate financing instruments and initiatives facilitating Sustainable Blue Economy transition

### Actions to support implementation of UNEP Marine and Coastal Strategy as per October 2020

This report briefly updates on progress on actions contributing to delivery of each Strategic Objective of the Strategy. Additional detailed information is available upon request.

## **Strategic Objective 1: Establish knowledge-base on marine and coastal ecosystems to inform policies on human activities affecting their functions**

### **(a) Integrated ecosystem assessments and ecosystem services valuation**

- In implementing **UNEA Resolution 4/12 on Sustainable Management for Global Health of Mangroves**, UNEP is collaborating with UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) to produce an analysis of the change of mangrove ecosystem cover extent globally over the last few decades, and the impact of these changes on mangrove-associated biodiversity and the delivery of ecosystem services. WCMC is collaborating with the World Mangrove Alliance and the Global Mangrove Watch to build on the latest satellite imagery from the Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency in order to evaluate changes in mangrove extent at global, regional, national and sub-national scales. The analysis will be concluded and made available by February 2021.
- In implementing **UNEA Resolution 4/13 on Sustainable Coral Reef Management**, UNEP has worked closely with the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) and the Regional Seas Programmes to support the development of a global report on the status of coral reefs, which will be presented to UNEA-5 as an Information Document. This is a milestone global report based on the largest coral reef dataset ever assembled and the first time that global

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<sup>1</sup> [UNEP/EA.4/INF.7: Proposal for a new marine and coastal Strategy of United Nations Environment Programme for the period 2020–2030](#)

coral cover will be calculated in a standard and quantitative manner. To develop the global report UNEP has supported regional data collection and reporting on the status of coral reefs in the Pacific, the Western Indian Ocean and the Caribbean; and regional workshops bringing together scientists to share their coral reef data-sets such as in the Eastern Tropical Pacific (workshop in Galapagos), the ROPME Sea Area (workshop in Oman), and Southeast Asia (workshop in Bangkok).

- UNEP has established the International Seagrass Expert Network through which knowledge products have been or are being produced on seagrass ecosystems (“Out of the Blue: the value of seagrasses to the environment and to people”, “Protecting Seagrass Through Payments for Ecosystem Services: A Community Guide”, and “Opportunities and Challenges for Community-Based Seagrass Conservation”).
- Under UNEP MTS 2018 – 2021, the activities related to these UNEA Resolutions (4/12 and 4/13) contribute to Expected Accomplishment SP3 EA (a), “the health and productivity of marine, freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems are institutionalized in education, monitoring and cross-sector and transboundary collaboration frameworks, at the national and international levels”.

#### **(b) Enhanced scenarios on ecological, socioeconomic and climate-related drivers**

- UNEP has worked with partners including at SymbioSeas and the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to update an analysis of downscaled climate projection data to predict coral bleaching events around the world. These projections will be useful for coral reef managers to understand the bleaching risks to coral reefs in different regions of the world and to make informed decisions regarding investments in coral reef management, restoration and protection. The report is currently in the final stages of publication and will be publicly available by end of 2020.

#### **(c) Sustainable Development Goal indicator support**

- Regional seas Programmes have initiated revitalization of the Regional Seas Indicators working group. The working group consists of experts from all 18 Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans aiming to align Regional Seas monitoring, reporting and assessments with relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 14 and its related targets; harmonize indicator development and standardized reporting of 22 Regional Seas indicators in line with the SDGs; develop guidelines to ensure that data and information from Regional Seas contribute to Voluntary National Reporting and SDG databases; and contribute to UNEP global reporting on SDG 14 - Indicators 14.1.1 and 14.2.1 (in particular indicator 1 on Chlorophyll-a concentration as an indicator of phytoplankton biomass; indicator 3 on Quantification and classification of beach litter items; and indicator 22 on National Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) guidelines and enabling legislation adopted).
- UNEP sub-regional Office for Pacific through a regional GEF project with Science Division have supported all 14 Pacific Island Countries to establish national Environment databases/portals that are used to collect, manage and analyse environmental information for more effective national planning, monitoring and reporting and to support MEA, SDGs and Samoa Pathway reporting. Project commenced in 2016 and will finish end 2021. This include indicators for oceans and coastal marine environment.

## **Strategic Objective 2: Build circularity in economies and promote sustainable consumption & production approaches to address marine pollution and resource use**

### **(a) Sustainable consumption and production and source-to-sea solutions to address land-based and sea-based pollution**

- Addressing marine pollution, the Marine and Coastal Strategy is implemented through the ongoing UNEP PoW Project 522.4 “Protecting the Marine Environment from Land-Based Pollution through Strengthened Coordination of Global Action”. This aims to strengthen responses to land-based pollution, enhance cooperation and foster action to tackle the issues related to wastewater pollution, nutrient management, and marine litter applying the Source-to-Sea (S2S) approach, which is one of the guiding principles of the Marine and Coastal Strategy.
- On marine pollution policy support, UNEP has contributed to development of nutrient management strategies, for example in the Caribbean, and in the application of the Ecosystem Health Report Cards (EHRC) in the Philippines and India. Efforts have been made to replicate the EHRC in Naivasha, Kenya.
- Other examples include the Ad Hoc Open-Ended Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastics, and the recent Group of Experts on Scientific Aspects of Marine Environment Protection (GESAMP) report on Monitoring and Assessment of Ocean Plastic, and the Wastewater and Sanitation Atlas of Africa. The latter, a flagship result of a four-year project implemented jointly by UNEP, GRID-Arendal, and the African Development Bank (AfDB), aims to help policymakers and the wide public to address current gaps and opportunities in relevant sectors.
- On marine litter and microplastics, four marine litter resolutions have been adopted by the UN Environment Assembly to date namely **1/6: Marine plastic debris and microplastics (2014)**; **2/11: Marine plastic litter and microplastics (2016)**; **3/7: Marine litter and microplastics (2017)**; and **4/6 Marine plastic litter and microplastics (2019)**. At the third UN Environment Assembly (UNEA 3) in 2017, the world’s environmental ministers agreed on a vision to eliminate the discharge of litter and microplastics to the oceans over time. Activities in support of these are included in Programme of Work 522.4.

Key actions taken include the development of regional and national action plans on marine litter in cooperation with the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (12 existing regional action plans and 4 more in draft); state of knowledge compilation; identification of governance gaps and options to address these and the establishment of an Ad hoc open ended expert group whose mandate was renewed through resolution UNEA 4/6 in 2019.

Three meetings have been held so far, and further guidance for the intersessional period was provided at the third meeting held in November 2019. The fourth session will be held on 9-13 November 2020, and the outcome will be submitted to UNEA-5 for further consideration of continued work. The invitation to the fourth meeting has been circulated to encourage active participation. All relevant information on the AHEG can be found at <https://environmentassembly.unenvironment.org/expert-group-on-marine-litter>

- A number of other activities support the implementation of the resolutions including the massive open online courses on marine litter (new version online on 26 October in 10 UN languages), Training of trainers on the monitoring and assessment of plastic in the ocean, the

Clean Seas Campaign, national source inventories approach for national action plan development etc.

- The Global Partnership on Marine Litter serves as a key platform for improved coordination and cooperation for marine litter prevention and UNEA-3 requested UNEP to strengthen its contribution to the partnership (3/7/7) with the most recent resolution taking note of its framework document. UNEP works closely with the International Maritime Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization through the GPML to also address sea-based sources of marine litter and microplastics.
- UNEP is further finalizing a number of activities as part of the last resolution on marine plastic litter and microplastics including and assessment on sources, pathways and hazards of litter including plastic litter pollution amongst other things.
- UNEP has supported the creation and continuous application of tools such as the wastewater technology matrix; the nutrient management toolbox, and prevention of water pollution from plastics and microplastics for better pollution prevention and management. The project has supported the implementation of demonstrations projects, including, among others, one in Malaysia aimed at addressing water pollution by wastewater in and around the Sabah Marine National Park where certain coastal settlements have no access to the sewerage system and in Morocco, where a green belt using treated wastewater has been built around the city of Ouarzazate.
- UNEP has organized a range of webinars addressing nutrient management, wastewater and marine litter. The most recent examples include events focusing on the issue of sargassum, the Water-Energy-Food Nexus, wastewater and COVID-19 and marine litter in the Mediterranean Sea. Additionally, the project has supported the development and roll out of Massive Open Online Courses, such as “From Source-to-Sea to Sustainability”, focusing on wastewater and nutrient management, and one on marine litter. Finally, the project is implemented through three global partnerships, the Global Partnership on Marine Litter, the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management and the Global Wastewater Initiative for which UNEP acts as a Secretariat, and together with the Regional Seas Programmes (RSPs), and other key stakeholders, all engaged in addressing the issue of marine and coastal pollution from the source to the sea. The RSPs support the project as regional implementation mechanisms through e.g. the LBS protocols. They promote the uptake of tools and policies with the counterparts and facilitate the adoption of approaches to mainstream pollution mitigation and national and regional levels.
- A Pacific Regional Marine Litter Action Plan has been formulated with SPREP, Pacific countries and partners. The Plan was endorsed in 2018 and its implementation has commenced, primarily through the Australian funded ‘Pacific Ocean Litter Project’, which is being implemented through SPREP.
- The first annual SEA of Solutions partnership week on marine plastic pollution prevention was held in November 2019 hosted by UNEP and the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA). The event brought together over 500 participants from governments, businesses, science, UN agencies and community groups from more than 40 countries to share solutions for plastic pollution, renew commitments and create new partnerships for collaboration. The Sea of Solutions event is part of the regional marine litter project ‘SEA circular’, implemented by UNEP and COBSEA with support from the Government of Sweden over a timeframe of four years (August 2018- February 2023).

- The COBSEA and the National University of Singapore launched an online catalogue of marine litter policy frameworks and a database on marine litter research, based on review of nearly 400 scientific publications on marine plastic pollution in ASEAN+3 countries. These online catalogue supports the development of an East Asian Seas Regional Node of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter, by providing a foundation for regional knowledge management and networking to catalyse collaborative research.
- COBSEA, the Global Partnership on Marine Litter, the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA) and the Government of Indonesia held a Training of Trainers on Monitoring and Assessment of Marine Plastic Litter and Microplastics to build government capacity for improved national monitoring and assessment programmes. As a follow-up, a National Source Inventory Workshop for COBSEA countries was organized by COBSEA, GPA and Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML) in late 2019. The workshop presented and promoted a national source inventory approach in national marine litter planning and monitoring.
- The 24th Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA (IGM 24), held in June 2019, encouraged Indonesia to further develop the Regional Capacity Center for Clean Seas (RC3S) founded in Bali in 2019 toward establishing it as a COBSEA Regional Activity Centre at the 25<sup>th</sup> Intergovernmental Meeting in 2021. The RC3S is working with COBSEA to provide capacity building activities on marine litter toward achievement of COBSEA's Regional Action Plan for Marine Litter (RAP MALI), adopted in June 2019.
- The COBSEA Secretariat in collaboration with the Working Group on Marine Litter and regional partners, is developing an East Asian Seas Regional Node of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GMPL) for consideration at IGM 25, to provide knowledge management and networking services on marine litter policy, science and capacity building toward delivery of the RAP MALI.
- The NOWPAP Member States agreed at the 23rd Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM) in 2018 to develop a Regional Action Plan on Marine and Coastal Biodiversity Conservation (RAP BIO). The plan will be designed to envisage a common understanding of the future directions of work of NOWPAP, to coordinate individual activities of each of the four NOWPAP's Regional Activity Centers (RACs), and to guide more effectively future marine biodiversity conservation efforts.
- The NOWPAP Special Monitoring and Coastal Environmental Assessment Regional Activity Centre (CEARAC) published the Report of National Actions on Marine Microplastics in the NOWPAP Region. The report presented actions taken by the NOWPAP member states to fight against microplastics. These include national legislation, strategies, and actions monitoring actions, prevention and removal activities and awareness-raising and engagement with the wider public. The report presents actions taken by central governments, but also - by other stakeholders such as local governments, academia and research institutes, Non-Profit Organizations/Non-Government Organizations (NPOs/NGOs), and, finally, private companies.
- UNEP/Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) was the first Regional Sea Programme to approve a legally-binding Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean in December 2013. The Plan provides for a set of programmes of measures and implementation timetables to prevent and reduce the adverse effects of marine litter on the marine and coastal environment as well as regular assessment, monitoring and promotion of collaboration and involvement of regional actors.

- UNEP Resources and Markets Branch (RMB) developed a global roadmap for implementing circular economy for plastics. UNEP RMB has further developed a methodology and tools to guide countries and cities to map their hotspots and developing solutions for reducing plastic pollution.
- UNEP RMB delivers to **UNEA4 Resolution 9 (UNEP/EA.4/Res.9)** on Addressing Single-Use Plastic Products (SUPP) Pollution, to provide information to support Member States' actions to address SUPP pollution, based on Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) studies. To date, several meta-studies compiling LCA of single-use plastic products and their alternatives have been published, with a webinar series attracting over 1800 people from over 65 countries.
- The One Planet Network set up a network-wide plastics initiative focusing on plastic packaging and the use-stage of the plastic value chain, and its Programmes have developed the following activities:
  - The Consumer Information Programme published a report to assess sustainability information (standards, labels, claims) found on plastic packaging and developed five recommendations.
  - The Sustainable Lifestyles Programme developed the report 'Reducing Plastic Pollution: Campaigns That Work' to effectively communicate to people. The tool kit Anatomy of Action highlights daily actions on 'ditching disposables' and better buying with less packaging.
- UNEP launched the Global Tourism Plastics Initiative, which unites the tourism sector and stakeholders under a common vision to address plastic pollution towards circularity. The Global Tourism Plastics Initiative launched the 'Recommendations for the tourism sector to continue taking action on plastic pollution during COVID-19 recovery'
- UNEP leads the engagement with government signatories of the New Plastics Economy Global Commitment including annual progress reporting from governments, and providing them with suggested instruments/tools to support the delivery of their commitments.
- UNEP supported national partners in developing, implementing and monitoring policy frameworks to encourage the switch towards SCP and CE in south Mediterranean countries through SwitchMed programme, to prevent and reduce pollution

**(b) Sustainable consumption and production approaches enhancing marine and coastal resource-use efficiency**

- UNEP has launched the '*Sustainable Blue Economy Initiative*' to support decision-makers and planners develop and implement Sustainable Blue Economy policies and enabling frameworks tailored national/regional context and needs. A '*Sustainable Blue Economy Decision-Support Framework*' and learning package is under development to identify and navigate policy pathways and practical options for implementation. An internal, cross-cutting Sustainable Blue Economy Coordination Group has been formed to connect disciplines and UNEP work streams in a concerted effort to evolve a strategic approach to sustainable, climate resilient and inclusive blue economy. It links up ecosystem assessment and management, natural capital valuation and ocean accounting, green economy approaches, circular economy and resource efficiency, ocean governance, climate change and green financing elements. By applying the Decision Support Framework, countries and Regional Seas can develop and implement tailored policies that ensure the environmental sustainability of blue economies generating economic, social and environmental benefits from oceans. The prototype decision-

support framework and guidance will be delivered by June 2021, followed by pilot-testing and learning support in countries and regions.

- UNEP has assessed environment impacts on tourism value chains in SIDS, and developed country roadmaps and recommendations for conservation and sustainable management of marine ecosystems, and pollution prevention.
- In Pacific, UNEP has introduced sustainable blue economy approaches and many Pacific Countries now have in place Oceans Policies advocating sustainable oceans management. Some Pacific countries have also put in place enabling management arrangements. A draft Regional Sustainable Blue Economy Strategy has been drafted and UNEP and SPREP are in process of formulating a GEF7 International Water Programme (with UNDP and ADB) that will facilitate regional consultations on the draft to enable endorsement by Pacific Island Countries and the implementation of enabling and pilot activities.

### **Strategic Objective 3: Support policies and strategies enabling integrated management and sustainable use of marine and coastal ecosystem services**

#### **(a) Regional ocean and coastal governance, cross-sector policy dialogue and coordination frameworks**

- Development of new Strategic directions 2021-2024 for the Regional Seas Programme is under way, informed by the mandates of the Regional Seas conventions and action plans, relevant UNEP strategies, policies and processes, including UNEP's medium term strategy, scientific assessments from Intergovernmental Science-policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Global Environment Outlook (GEO) and others. The process provides a valuable opportunity to raise visibility and recognition of the Regional Seas as a dynamic implementation platform for MEAs and other relevant international instruments. The Strategic directions will also highlight areas of work where the regional level plays an important role in communicating national needs to the international policy processes and decision-making fora and vice versa.
- In Pacific, Phase 3 of the EC-funded ACP Project with UNEP Law Division was launched in 3rd quarter of 2020. It includes a budget of USD 2M towards strengthening capacities for implementation of the Noumea Convention.
- In Pacific, UNEP is assisting strengthening invasive species management capacity in Pacific countries including marine species through regional GEF Invasive Species Management Project with Ecosystems Division.
- Contracting Parties to the Nairobi Convention agreed (in March 2019) on the final text for the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) Protocol. The protocol includes the ICZM objectives of promoting the sustainable use of resources, conserving the integrity and value of ecosystems, and preventing and mitigating the effects of natural and human threats to coastal and marine environments in the WIO. The protocol provides a framework to promote regional and national ICZM and enhance cooperation for sustainable development in the region. The protocol will now move to the Convention's Conference of Plenipotentiaries for formal adoption prior to the next CoP in April/May 2021.
- UNEP/MAP has been applying the Ecosystem Approach throughout all its activities, in synergy and coherence with the European Union's Marine Strategy Framework Directive principles. The process has facilitated cooperation between the different actors and assisted the



establishment of a very ambitious Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria (IMAP) in 2016. IMAP describes the strategy, themes, and products that the Contracting Parties are aiming to deliver in order to achieve a homogeneous and wide assessment of the status of the Mediterranean Sea and coast, as a basis for further measures. As a result, the first Mediterranean Quality Status Report was delivered in 2018 and a new, more ambitious, and IMAP-based one will be produced in 2023.

- With financial support from the Cooperation Agreement between UNEP and the Italian Ministry for Environment, Land and Sea Protection (IMELS), UNEP/MAP is currently supporting twinning activities between MPA/SPAMI from different Contracting Parties (Italy, Albania, Algeria, Slovenia and Tunisia). This cooperation is formalized through Twinning Agreements and focuses on sharing best practices on management and monitoring; strengthening capacities of MPA/Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMI) managers; enhancing civil society engagement; and supporting the set-up of collaborative platforms for existing or future MPA/SPAMI. It is the intention of the Secretariat to continue and further expand this type of cooperation among MPA/SPAMIs in the next biennium.
- Further under the MAP framework, Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) is a process receiving increasing interest from the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, as also expressed in their two last COP meetings. A Conceptual Framework for MSP in the Mediterranean was adopted in 2017 with the objective to introduce MSP as the main tool/process for the implementation of ICZM in the marine part of the coastal zone (as defined in the ICZM Protocol) and provide a common context with guiding elements and concrete steps for the implementation of a GES-oriented MSP contributing to sustainable development. MSP-related activities are expected to be continued and upscaled/ expanded in the next biennium.
- Feasibility studies examining the possibility of designating the Mediterranean Sea, or parts thereof, as sulphur oxides (SO<sub>x</sub>) emission control area (ECA) indicate that a Mediterranean ECA would result in significant health and environmental benefits, fewer cases of respiratory and cardiovascular diseases and premature deaths avoided annually and favourable cost-effectiveness comparison for costs and health benefits. One of the studies also highlights the benefit of more ambitious measures for the reduction of NO<sub>x</sub> emission through a NO<sub>x</sub> ECA. The MAP system, through Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre of the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC), has been working on this International Maritime Organization-led process for several years.
- The Cartagena Convention recorded notable progress in the number of countries who have ratified their conventions and related protocols in the period 2017 to 2020. In 2018, Honduras became the latest country to ratify the Cartagena Convention and its related protocols while the Government of Barbados ratified the Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities (LBS) on 29th June 2019. The Governments of Guatemala, Mexico and Suriname also received technical support and advice to assist them with the ratification processes of the LBS and SPAW Protocols (Guatemala, Mexico), as well as the Convention and all three Protocols (Suriname).
- The 15th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Cartagena Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region was held in June

2019, as well as the 4th and 10th Meetings of the Contracting Parties to the Protocols Concerning Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities (or Pollution Protocol) and Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (or Marine Biodiversity Protocol), respectively, hosted by the Government of Honduras in Roatan. Some of the meeting's notable achievements included the:

- Adoption of the region's first State of Marine Pollution Report; State of the Convention Area Report (SOCAR) is the first of its kind on marine pollution in the WCR and is intended to assist Contracting Parties to fulfil their reporting obligations under the Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities (LBS Protocol).
- Adoption of new marine protected areas and endangered species under the Marine Biodiversity Protocol. The total number of listed species has now increased to 256 following the addition of the Largetooth sawfish (*pristis pristis*) and the Silky shark (*Carcharhinus falciformis*). The Mount Scenery National Park of Saba Island in the Caribbean Netherlands, as well as the National Natural Reserve of Kaw-Roura and the National Natural Reserve of Amana, both in French Guiana, were incorporated into the Protocol's list of protected areas. The list now has 35 protected areas.
- The Convention for Cooperation in the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Atlantic Coast of the West, Central and Southern Africa Region (Abidjan Convention) held its Conference of Plenipotentiaries in July 2019 and its Contracting Parties adopted four additional legally binding protocols:
  - The Malabo Protocol on Environmental Standards and Guidelines for Offshore Oil and Gas Activities.
  - The Pointe Noire Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management,
  - The Grand-Bassam Protocol on Pollution from land-based sources and activities; and
  - The Calabar Protocol on Sustainable Management of Mangroves.

The Integrated Coastal Zone Management protocol, when it comes into force, will promote integrated planning, coordinated development and maintain the integrity of the coastal zone including insular belts and river basins. The mangroves protocol will harmonize principles and set modalities for managing mangrove ecosystems and establish rules for environmental protection and conservation of mangroves within the Abidjan Convention area. The oil and gas and Land-based Sources and Activities protocols will also play an important role in the implementation of SDG14 in the Abidjan Convention area.

- COBSEA Secretariat hosted a webinar series on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, providing a platform for dialogue on how COBSEA can be leveraged to support countries during the development, delivery and tracking of the framework. The webinars targeted COBSEA countries, in particular COBSEA National Focal Points and contact persons as well as national biodiversity focal points or their representatives. Webinars took stock of and discussed the process for development of the framework, including SBSTTA, SBI and Bern-II meetings, UNEP's role in the process including its work with and through Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, as well as other relevant initiatives e.g. the International Coral Reef Initiative's (ICRI) work on promoting integration of coral reef aspects in the framework, and will inform further efforts through COBSEA including through an Intergovernmental Meeting in 2021.

**(b) Integrated planning, decision-support and management of vulnerable ecosystems and ecosystem services**

- UNEP is collaborating with International Coral Reef Initiative to revitalize the Global Coral Reef Partnership with the Regional Seas Programmes, formed in 2014. The Partnership was initially developed to support countries to adopt and apply an ecosystem approach in coral reef planning and management, and to support countries in delivering internationally agreed coral reef commitments. To strengthen the Partnership, it will more closely integrate regional processes with global processes as mandated by UNEA Resolution 4/13. This includes supporting the Regional Seas Programmes in coordinating and delivering on their role in the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network, supporting the Regional Seas Programmes in accessing the Global Fund for Coral Reefs, developing tools and guidelines for the sustainable management of coral reefs, and mutually supporting and benefitting from communications efforts related to coral reefs and awareness-raising. The Steering Committee of the Partnership will meet regularly to review work plans and progress.
- A regional capacity building effort on marine and coastal spatial planning in the East Asian Seas region has been initiated by COBSEA in collaboration UNEP and the *Blue Solutions Initiative* (a partnership between UNEP, GIZ, GRID-Arendal and IUCN, funded by the German Ministry of Environment). A week-long virtual training exercise has been developed using interactive practical exercises to examine different elements of an ecosystem-based marine and coastal spatial planning process, in particular for protecting blue economy assets and their climate resilience. The first series of trainings have been held in November 2020, which will also support the establishment of a community of practice across COBSEA countries, providing a collaboration platform for further technical support and knowledge-sharing.
- The Regional Seas Programme undertook a review of SDG 14 and developed a *Global Outlook Report on Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans contribution to healthy oceans*. The global outlook report highlights the significant role of Regional Seas in supporting contracting parties to deliver on SDG 14. Drawing upon a series of case studies, the report showcases the important role of Regional Seas in convening and coordinating countries and institutions, and in undertaking ecosystem-based planning and management to progress towards a healthy ocean and healthy people.

**(c) Nature-based climate change solutions supporting sustainable blue economies**

- Through the GEF Blue Forests Project executed by GRID-Arendal, UNEP has successfully supported the launch of mangrove carbon ('blue carbon') market projects in Kenya with the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute and the Kenya Forest Service, and in Madagascar with Blue ventures, which cover the protection and restoration of almost 2000 hectares of mangrove, supported the livelihoods of at least 20,000 people. These innovative projects provide a template for collaboration and replication of mangrove carbon market projects around the world. UNEP is also currently supporting the expansion of these activities to seagrass ecosystems adjacent to the mangroves, and has provided guidance as well as technical and financial support to develop a seagrass carbon project in Kenya.

**(d) Effective marine protected areas**

- UNEP has launched the guide Enabling Effective and Equitable Marine Protected Areas – Guidance on Combining Governance Approaches to support countries and Regional Seas in enhancing marine protected area effectiveness. Drawing on insights and lessons from 35

practical case studies from around the World, it provides a guiding framework for planners and managers in participatory marine protected area (MPA) design and implementation. In short, it shows how integrated governance can combine the roles of national governments, local communities, and market schemes to enhance the effectiveness of marine protected areas and equitable sharing of costs and benefits.

- UNEP is developing a global MPA capacity building effort to enable effective and equitable marine protected areas. It forms part of UNEP's broader strategic approach to integrated, ecosystem-based ocean and coastal management and nature-based solutions for sustainable, resilient and inclusive blue economies. Main elements include a new MPA toolbox and problem-solving approach to support decision-makers, planners and practitioners in MPA visioning, design, development, and monitoring and evaluation of MPAs. By Dec 2021, the MPA Toolbox will provide tools, guidance and practical solutions to common barriers and enabling factors during planning and implementation. Thematic areas include: Managing for climate change and 'future-proofing' MPAs; MPA financing, business planning and benefit sharing; along with more themes to be determined, e.g. guidance on MPAs under post-COVID19 recovery, application of different types of MPAs (e.g. Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures) in the context of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.
- The Nairobi Convention Secretariat developed a *Regional Outlook on Marine Protected Areas* and a *Regional Outlook on Critical Habitats* intended to inform policymaking regarding enhanced coastal and marine conservation in the in the Western Indian Ocean region. These two publications will feed into a third publication on recommendations for strengthening marine conservation in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region, aimed at supporting contracting parties to meet their obligations, specifically under SDG Targets 14.2 and 14.5 and Aichi Target 11, and also under other SDGs. The Regional Outlook on MPAs will provide a baseline assessment of existing coastal and marine conservation efforts in the region such as areas and habitats currently under protection, and effectiveness of the protection measures in place across the region.
- Through the IMAP-MPA project funded by the European Union UNEP/MAP has launched an assessment of MPA effectiveness through the implementation of the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP) adopted by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols in 2016 during COP 19 (Decision IG.22/7). The project seeks to demonstrate environmental status differences between MPAs and areas which are under high-pressure because of human activity by assessing "Pollution and Marine Litter", "Biodiversity and Non-Indigenous Species", and "Coast and Hydrography" Clusters. Through this project UNEP/MAP is providing support to the beneficiary countries in enhancing their relevant capacities, including through targeted trainings, exchange of specific best practices, and undertaking of pilots in new areas of monitoring of IMAP, in MPAs and outside with a focus on the sub-regional level.

**(e) Measures mitigating the environmental effects of fisheries on biodiversity and ecosystems**

- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention Secretariat and the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM). The MoU between UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention and GFCM addresses the following five areas of cooperation: 1. Promotion of ecosystem-based approaches for the conservation of marine and coastal environment and ecosystems, and the sustainable use of marine living and other

natural resources; 2. Mitigation of the impact of fisheries and aquaculture on the marine habitats and species by the use of best available techniques in fisheries and the development of sustainable aquaculture; 3. Identification, protection and management of marine areas of particular importance in the Mediterranean (hot spots of biodiversity, areas with sensitive habitats, essential fish habitats, areas of importance for fisheries and/or for the conservation of endangered species, coastal wetlands); 4. Integrated maritime policy with a special emphasis on marine and coastal spatial planning, and integrated coastal zone management, and other integrated zoning approaches, with a view to mitigate cumulative risks due to reduced access and availability of space affected by multiple and increasing conflictive uses; 5. Legal, institutional and policy related cooperation.

- The UNEP/MAP-GFCM partnership has proven as a fruitful instrument to support the delivery of SDG 14 in a coordinated manner at the regional level in the Mediterranean. This partnership has been widely recognized as a best practice of regional cooperation through the following achievements: 1. bilateral meetings and mutual participation in meetings of relevance; 2. collaboration between the respective Compliance Committees; respective contribution to assessment studies and monitoring process; 3 sub-regional pilot for the monitoring of the non-indigenous species related to fisheries in the Eastern Mediterranean; 4. preparation of a “Joint Cooperation Strategy on Spatial-based Protection and Management Measures for Marine Biodiversity Among the Secretariats of ACCOBAMS, GFCM, IUCN-Med and UNEP/MAP”; 5. FAO-GFCM recommendations to ensure compatibility with the Barcelona Convention SPA/BD Protocol.
- The Mediterranean Action Plan also formalized a joint Cooperation Strategy on Spatial-based Protection and Management Measures for Marine Biodiversity among the Secretariats of ACCOBAMS, GFCM, and IUCN-Med submitted for discussion at the MAP Focal Points Meeting (Athens, Greece, 10-13 September 2019) for possible signing during the 21st Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (COP21 – Naples, Italy, 2-5 December 2019).
- Nairobi Convention has concluded an MoU with the Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (SWIOFC) in March 2019 to provide a framework of cooperation and facilitate collaboration with the Nairobi Convention in areas of common concern and interest. The Convention also expects to conclude MoUs with Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Southern African Development Community (SADC) among others.
- Cartagena Convention also signed MoU with the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) for mutual development and implementation of several strategies including precautionary and ecosystem-based approaches, fisheries management and recovery plans for commercially important marine species, etc.

#### **Strategic Objective 4: Innovate financing instruments and initiatives facilitating Sustainable Blue Economy transition**

##### **(a) Operational principles for sustainable blue economy financing**

- UNEP has joined a collaboration with the UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund, UNDP, UNCDF, Vulcan, Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation and BNP Paribas to create the Global Fund for Coral Reefs. The Fund aims to attract blended finance to facilitate the uptake of innovative financing

mechanisms, including private market-based investments focused on coral reef conservation and restoration, and to unlock financing for coral reef-related climate adaptation through the Green Climate Fund, Adaptation Fund, and multilateral development banks.

- UNEP Financing Initiative, in collaboration with EC, WWF, European Investment Bank and World Resource Institute, is hosting the '*Sustainable Blue Economy Financing Principles*' to help close the financing gap for actions towards ocean sustainability. Fourteen voluntary Principles have been developed to promote the implementation and achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 14, including to help ensure that ocean-related investment delivers long-term value without damaging marine ecosystems, increasing carbon emissions, or eroding the livelihoods and nutrition of communities depending on oceans and their resources. Guidance on the application of the 14 financing principles are under preparation in context of UNEP's evolving Sustainable Blue Economy Decision-Support Framework.
- The joint UNEP - UNDP Poverty environment Action for SDGs is preparing a joint report with Asian Development Bank on financing a blue economy in Asia Pacific. The report will cover: mapping the blue economy; measuring success; identifying investments with good gender-environment-poverty benefits; quantifying the financing gap; and recommendations for follow up work by UNEP, PEA and ADB. Draft report for review is expected end of 2020.

### **Recommendation**

In view of the emerging 'build back better' agenda of UNEP, also considering the upcoming UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030, UN Decade on Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030 and the CBD Post-2020 Framework, it is recommended to revisit the scope of the UNEP Marine & Coastal Strategy 2020-2030, in close consultation with Member States, to effectively respond to the transformational agenda set out in UNEP's Medium Term Strategy 2022-2025 at a future session of the United Nations Environment Assembly.

9 November 2020, Nairobi