

Meeting report of the second meeting of the Regional Seas Indicators Working Group

Background

In 2014, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) organised the Technical Workshop on Selecting Indicators for the State of Regional Seas from 30 June to 2 July 2014 in Geneva, Switzerland. In this workshop, the participants recommended to establish a regional seas indicator working group.

Based on the recommendation, the First Meeting of the Regional Seas Indicators Working Group was organised on 23 October 2015 in Istanbul, Turkey. At the meeting, the Regional Seas Indicators set was adopted¹. Subsequently, UNEP requested Regional Seas Convention and Action Plans to provide further information on the indicators including monitoring methods, data coverage, and data sources. Using the responses provided on the indicators, UNEP compiled information on the Regional Seas Indicator 1 on Chlorophyll-a and Indicator 3 on Marine Litter.

The second meeting of the Regional Seas Indicators Working Group was held on 15 May 2016 in order to review the progress of the compilation work by UNEP and to discuss possible way forward as the indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are finalized through the 47th Session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC). The working group members were invited to discuss future directions of its work on the Regional Seas Indicators in relation to the SDG indicators.

Morning Session

1. Mr. Takehiro Nakamura, UNEP, asked Regional Seas' opinion on how we should proceed with the Regional Seas Indicators set and the SDG Indicators set. He stressed that some of the proposed Regional Seas indicators are different from what are discussed at the UNSC. Recalling the paper on "Regional Seas engagement in the implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)²", he highlighted that Regional Seas Programme could be an important regional monitoring mechanism for SDGs, providing regional coordination mechanisms for Member States. He added that it should be noted that the SDGs should be implemented primarily at the national level.
2. Mr. Alexander Tkalin, NOWPAP, stated that his proposal is to continue working on the proposed Regional Seas Indicators set while developing ways to integrate the SDG indicators in the future. He stressed that current work at NOWPAP will certainly contribute to achieving the SDGs. For example, Special Monitoring and Coastal Environmental Assessment Regional Activity Centre (CEARAC) is working on an interactive eutrophication map. This will clearly contribute to the Goal 14.1 even though the currently proposed indicator 14.1.1 is a bit different.
3. Ms. Johanna Laurila, HELCOM, also supported the proposal to start with the Regional Seas indicators and gradually develop ways to incorporate the SDG indicators.
4. Mr. Takehiro Nakamura appreciated NOWPAP's proposal while explaining further that currently proposed indicator for the Target 14.1 on eutrophication will be based on a model called NEWS. This

¹ UNEP/EARS/WG.2/5 (Annex 4)

² UNEP/WBRS.17/3

model will require three parameters: dissolved phosphorus, dissolved nitrogen and Chlorophyll-a. The modelling results, thus, could be different from in-situ measurements. This could have potential implications.

5. Referring to Target 14.2 (ICZM), UNEP explained that the current national reporting mechanisms to the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans could contribute to the monitoring on this target. Different terminologies are used such as Integrated Coastal Zone Management and Maritime Spatial Planning in different Regional Seas programmes but regardless of the term, these instruments could contribute to the Target.
6. Asked to clarify whether NOWPAP currently has a national reporting mechanism, Mr. Tkalin stated that there is no national reporting mechanism. However, three of the participating countries to NOWPAP are member to PEMSEA, which provides own reporting mechanism, and those data could be used. In terms of floating marine litter, NOWPAP countries organise the first joint research cruise in 2016, which could contribute to the monitoring of Target 14.1.
7. UNEP clarified that each Regional Seas programme can define where to obtain data and how it will be reported.
8. With regards to harmonization of methodologies of the Regional Seas Indicators, Mr. Nakamura stated that currently UNEP thinks that there is no need to unify the methodology although some kind of inter-regional comparison would be useful. He stressed that the main objective of the development of the Regional Seas Indicators is for each region to monitor its state of the marine and coastal environment.
9. For the Target on Ocean Acidification, Mr. Warren Lee, SPREP, suggested to use global data set such as NOAA's data. He pointed out that in the Pacific region, data are patchy and SPREP often rely on global data sets.
10. UNEP welcomed the information on data availability and encouraged SPREP to submit the questionnaires, highlighting challenges and capacity development needs.
11. UNEP stated that there is a possibility for UNEP to make an agreement on behalf of different Regional Seas Convention and Action Plans to obtain global data sets if there is an interest from the Regional Seas programmes. Currently individual Regional Seas programmes have agreements with data providers, but collective arrangement could be considered. It was noted that handling of global data may require accompanied capacity development.
12. In order to align different indicators, Mr. Lee stated that SPREP can tag different SPREP indicators as Regional Seas Indicators or SDG indicators.
13. HELCOM posed a question on thresholds and targets for each Regional Seas Indicators. Mr. Nakamura responded that at this stage it is difficult to set common target values.
14. Ms. Laurila, HELCOM, stated that the next Holistic Assessment of the Ecosystem Health of the Baltic Sea (HOLAS II) will be ready by 2018, which could contribute to the second cycle of the World Ocean Assessment. For the second cycle of the Regular Process, UNEP would like to emphasize the contribution of regional assessments to the global assessment as well as the use of indicators to monitor chronological change.

Evening Session

15. UNEP asked whether the Regional Seas programmes would like to begin with the Regional Seas Indicators set or start working on integration of the SDG indicators set.
16. Ms. Irina Makarenko, BSC, stated that BSC would like to start with the agreed Regional Seas Indicators set.
17. Ms. Virginie Hart, MAP, stated that the SDGs will be monitored at the national level. Clarifying the role of Regional Seas, Mr. Nakamura stated that Regional Seas can provide support to the participating countries through regional monitoring programmes. Capacity development can also be provided to the countries.
18. Referring to the SDG indicators, Mr. Chris Corbin, CAR, stressed that it is strategically important for the Regional Seas programmes to work with the SDG indicators. Different SDG Goals such as Goal 6 and Goal 13 are also relevant to the Regional Seas and it is important to examine how these could be complemented.
19. Mr. Corbin further stated there is a concern in his region that through the One-UN system, different indicators that are not the Regional Seas Indicators or SDG indicators are adopted. He added that in the Caribbean, the SDGs are priority of the governments.
20. Ms. Hart, MAP, stated that in the Mediterranean, the Mediterranean Sustainable Strategy Development (MSSD) for 2016-2025 has recently been adopted. Indicators for the MSSD in line with the SDG's are about to be developed with the first meeting to be held at the end of March. This process could inform and inspire other regions of potential ways of incorporating the SDGs.
21. With regard to the way forward, Mr. Nakamura stated that we are not going to harmonize different methodologies for each indicator. UNEP will continue finalizing the compilation of the Regional Seas Indicators set based on the responses to the questionnaire Regional Seas have provided. In order to include as much information from different regions in the compilation, UNEP encouraged those Regional Seas that have not submitted the questionnaire to do so as soon as they can.
22. Ms. Makarenko, BSC, and Mr. Corbin, CAR, promised to make an effort to submit the responses to the questionnaire.
23. UNEP is working closely with the FAO and FAO will provide information on fisheries-related Regional Seas Indicators. There could be an option to conduct a joint regional monitoring on ocean-related SDG goals between Regional Seas Convention and Action Plans and Regional Fisheries Bodies.
24. Ms. Alice Newton, DEVOTES, informed the participants that EU is conducting a review on Chlorophyll-a calibration at EU level as well as Regional Seas level. This inter-calibration of different methods may allow normalization of methodologies. She promised to report back to the working group members.
25. Ms. Hart, MAP, questioned about the data availability referring to the MedPOL database which are for the time being not publically available. Mr. Nakamura responded that UNEP does not need to centralize the data for global assessments. Each Regional Sea can host own database. On the other hand, UNEP could provide support by providing global data set such as through UNEP-Live.
26. Mr. Nakamura added that many of the Regional Seas programmes will suffer from lack of data for some indicators and it will be important to identify the data gaps.

27. Requested by the participants, UNEP promised to circulate the final SDG indicators list as soon as they become adopted.

Conclusion of the meeting

28. The Participants agreed that Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans will continue working on the Regional Seas indicators, while start analysing the SDGs indicators once they are adopted.
29. UNEP encouraged Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans which have not yet submitted the questionnaire on the indicators to do so as soon as possible. SPREP, CEP and BSC promised to submit their inputs as soon as they can.
30. Ms. Hart, MAP, will inform the Working Group on the analysis of the SDGs indicators within the framework of the MSSD.
31. Ms. Newton, DEVOTES, will report back to the Working Group on the outcome of the EU's inter-calibration exercise for Chlorophyll-a measurement methods.
32. As agreed in the terms of reference of the Working Group³, the members are invited to nominate a Chair for the Working Group.
33. UNEP will continue the compilation of information on Regional Seas Indicators and send out to the Working Group members for further comments.
34. UNEP will circulate the final list of SDG indicators to the Regional Seas Convention and Action Plans once they are adopted.

³ UNEP/EARS/WG.2/2

Annex 1: Meeting agenda

1. Election of a Chair
2. SDG indicators adopted
3. Progress in the development of Regional Seas indicators
 - a. Marine Litter
 - b. Chlorophyll –a
 - c. others (under development)
4. How to relate the RS indicators with the SDGs: way forward
5. Any other business

Annex 2: List of Participants

1	<p><u>Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution (Black Sea)</u> Ms. Irina Makarenko <i>Pollution Monitoring and Assessment (PMA) Officer</i> Permanent Secretariat Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution Bucharest Convention Maslak Mahallesi, Büyükdere Caddesi, No 265, Şişli Istanbul, 34398, TURKEY Tel: +90 212 299 2940/+90 212 299 2946 Email: irina.makarenko@blacksea-commission.org, iryana.makarenko79@gmail.com</p>	2	<p><u>Nairobi Convention</u> Mr. Dixon Waruinge <i>Head</i> Nairobi Convention Division of Environmental Policy Implementation (DEPI), P. O. Box 30552, Nairobi, Kenya Email: dixon.waruinge@unep.org</p>
3	<p><u>Northwest Pacific Action Plan</u> Dr. Alexander Tkalin <i>Coordinator</i> Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP) Regional Coordinating Unit (RCU) 5-5 Ushijimashin-machi Toyama City 930-0856, Japan Email: alexander.tkalin@nowpap.org</p>	4	<p><u>Helcom</u> Ms. Johanna Laurila <i>Information Secretary</i> Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) Katajanokanlaituri 6 B FI-00160 Helsinki, Finland Email: Johanna.laurila@helcom.fi</p>

5	<p><u>Helcom</u> Ms. Marta Ruiz Associate Professional Secretary, Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) Katajanokanlaituri 6 B FI-00160 Helsinki, Finland. E-mail: marta.ruiz@helcom.fi</p>	6	<p><u>Barcelona Convention</u> Ms. Virginie Hart <i>Programme Officer</i>, Monitoring and Assessment Barcelona Convention Secretariat 48 Vassileos Konstantinou Avenue P. O. Box 18019, 116 35 Athens, Greece Email: virginie.hart@unepmap.gr</p>
7	<p><u>Cartagena Convention</u> Mr. Christopher Corbin <i>AMEP Programme Officer</i> Caribbean Environment Programme Regional Co-ordinating Unit (CAR/RCU) (Cartagena Convention) 14-20 Port Royal Street Kingston, Jamaica Email: cjc@cep.unep.org</p>	8	<p><u>NILU-Norway and University of Algarve-Portugal</u> Ms. Alice Newton NILU-IMPEC Postboks 100 2027 Kjeller Norway Email: Alice.Newton@nilu.no</p>
9	<p><u>SPREP</u> Mr. Warren Lee Coastal and Marine Advisor <i>Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)</i> P.O. Box 240 Apia, Samoa E-mail: warrenl@sprep.org</p>	10	<p><u>Abidjan Convention</u> Mr. Abraham Grass-Sessay <i>Ocean Governance Officer</i> Abidjan Convention Rue Harris Memel Foteh, 2 Plateaux-Vallons / 01 BP 1747 Abidjan 01 Côte d'Ivoire Email: Abraham.Grass-Sessay@unep.org</p>
11	<p><u>UNEP/DEPI</u> Mr. Takehiro Nakamura <i>Chief</i> Marine & Coastal Ecosystems Unit Division of Environmental Policy Implementation PO Box 30552, 00100 Nairobi, Kenya Email : Takehiro.nakamura@unep.org</p>	12	<p><u>UNEP/DEPI</u> Ms. Kanako Hasegawa <i>Associate Programme Officer</i> Regional Seas Coordination Unit, Division of Environmental Policy Implementation PO Box 30552, 00100 Nairobi, Kenya Email: kanako.hasegawa@unep.org</p>