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Conventions and Action Plans**

Bangkok, Thailand, 5th - 8th October 2009

Regional Seas Communications Task Force (RSCTF)

Draft Terms of Reference

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Background:

1. The implementation of the Marine and Coastal Strategy of UNEP relies on the strengths of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAPs) to effectively address the growing degradation of the marine and coastal environment and the priorities set by their member states. A number of projects and activities are successfully implemented under the Regional Seas umbrella in the different regions yet there is an emerging perception that other initiatives from governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, think tanks and other groups, are more efficient. ***There is a need to enhance the visibility of the RSCAPs through common strategies in priority areas that affect the marine environment, and communicate the impact that the Regional Seas Programmes have in their respective regions.***
2. RSCAPs, guided by their respective governing bodies, are major mechanisms and platforms that could help deliver a shared vision that addresses the drivers degrading the marine and coastal environment, therefore fulfilling 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 assessing the quality of the marine environment; identifying emerging issues and agreeing on appropriate responses in terms of strategies, policies and management tools. ***Strengthening the communicational capacities of the Regional Seas Programmes network is a key pillar to improve the knowledge management and expanding the community of practice. It also raises the profile of the Regional Seas Programmes within relevant regional and international forums and various target groups.***

Enhance the visibility of the Regional Seas Programmes:

3. Component III of the project/programme “Strengthening the institutional and governance support to the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans” aims to improve the knowledge management and communicational framework of the Regional Seas Programmes to allow exchange of information, common strategies, outreach activities and access to global policy forums.
4. Proposed activities to enhance the visibility of the Regional Seas Programmes are:
 - Development of a Regional Seas Communications Task Force (RSCTF) (See draft Terms of Reference for discussion – Annex 1);
 - Dissemination of regular reports on the state of the marine environment and implementation of the RSCAPs;
 - Development of policy papers / rapid assessments on common topics affecting the regions i.e. pollution from land-based activities; physical alteration and destruction of habitats (including through aquaculture); impact of climate change on oceans and coasts; marine and coastal biodiversity (including deep seas).
5. General outcomes and results of this component would include increased visibility of the Regional Seas Programmes and relevance in regional and international forums while specific outputs would be:
 - Policy papers /rapid assessments on emerging issues that affect the marine environment i.e. pollution from land-based activities; physical alteration and destruction of habitats (including through aquaculture); impact of climate change on oceans and coasts; marine and coastal biodiversity (including deep seas), amongst others.

Note: The establishment of a RSCTF would offer an opportunity for all RSP’s to e.g. share experiences relating to communications/outreach activities, identify areas for collaboration or where assistance can be provided to RSP’s to enhance knowledge management capacities, and develop common strategies for addressing priority areas such as land-based sources of pollution and biodiversity.

Regional Seas Communications Task Force (RSCTF) Draft Terms of Reference

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Purpose

To provide a consultative forum to improve knowledge management and communicational framework of the Regional Seas Programmes to allow exchange of information, common strategies, outreach activities and access to global policy forums

2. Members

Members of the RSCTF will be Communications Focal Points from all Regional Seas Programmes.

2.1 Focal Points will be appointed by each individual RSP.

2.2 Internal or external persons may be invited to attend the meetings at the request of the Chairperson on behalf of the RSCTF to provide advice and assistance where necessary.

2.3 Recommendations will be made by individual RSP's in accordance with their mandates.

3. Chairperson

The Chairperson shall be elected by the RSCTF for a period of X months. Responsibilities include:

- Scheduling meetings and notifying committee members;
- Inviting specialists to attend meetings when required by the committee;
- Guiding the meeting according to the agenda and time available;
- TBD

4. Co-chair

The role of the Co-chair is to:

- Prepare agendas and issuing notices for meetings, and ensuring all necessary documents requiring discussion or comment are attached to the agenda.
- Taking notes of proceedings and preparing minutes of meeting.
- TBD

5. Meetings

Meetings shall be held once a year for a period of X days pending funding availability. In addition, brief telephone conference could be held on a regular basis or upon request by members.

6. Functions

6.1 Functions of the RSCTF (TBD):

- a) To facilitate exchange of information between RSCAPs to strengthen knowledge management and increase synergies;
- b) To enhance the visibility of the RSPs through the development of common strategies in priority areas;
- c) To assist in the identification of emerging issues affecting the health of the marine and coastal environment;
- d) To assist in the development, review and distribution of policy papers /rapid assessments on emerging issues that affect the marine environment;
- e) To evaluate/discuss strengths and weaknesses of RSP's communication efforts and identify areas in which capacity building/assistance can be provided to address weaknesses and effectively communicate the impacts of the RSP's and the value of a healthy marine and coastal environment;
- f) To keep under review developments in the field of marine and coastal environment; and
- g) To assist in the formulation and/or dissemination of information.

7. Amendments

The terms of reference shall be reviewed annually from the date of approval. They may be altered to meet the current needs of all RSCTF members, by agreement/consensus.

*These TOR are to be used as basis for discussion-
the final TOR should be agreed upon by the RSCAP's*