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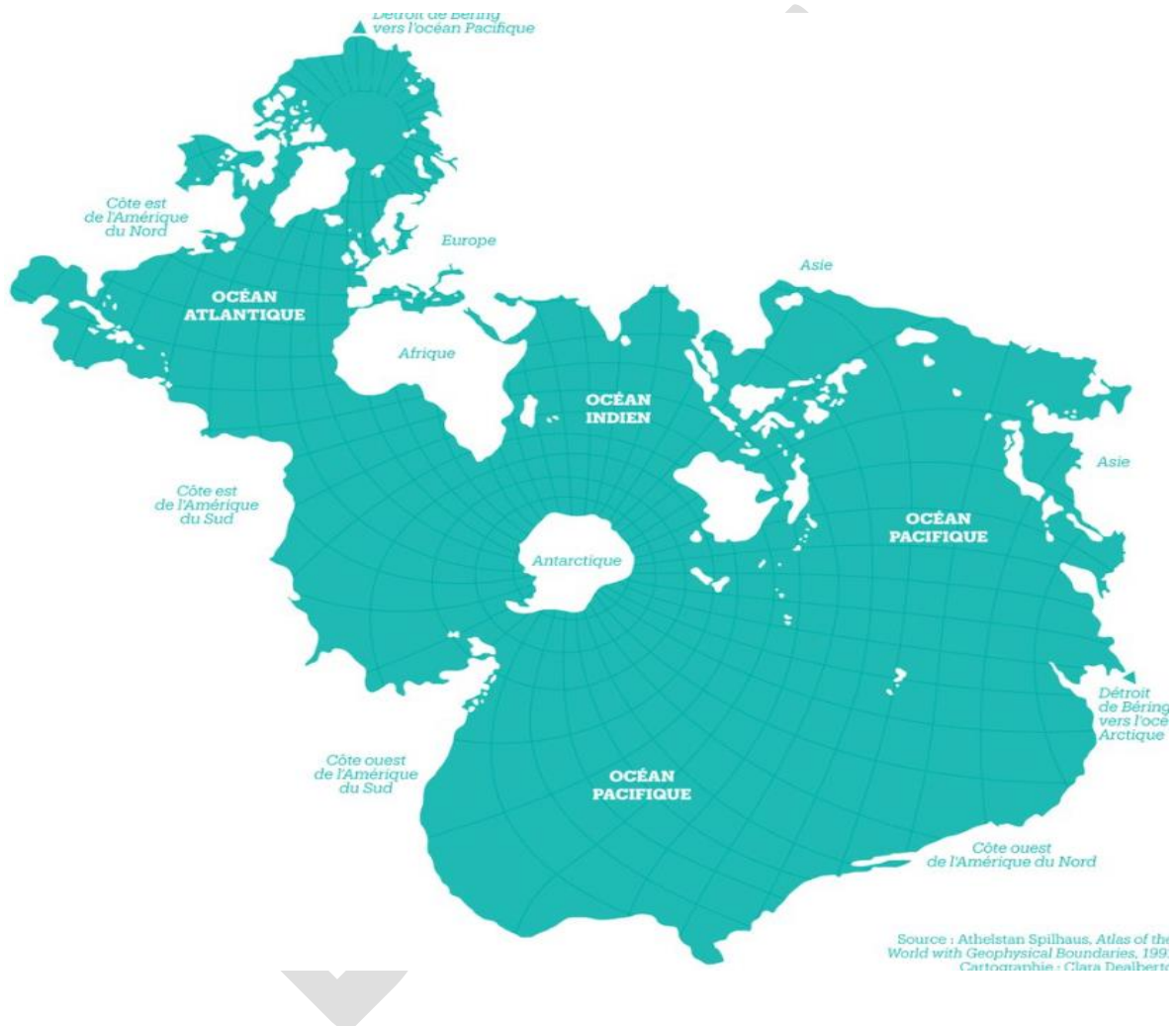
Conference Room 1

**Agenda Item 7: Consideration of resolutions adopted at the third session of the UN  
Environment Assembly**

**Status of Implementation: UNEP/EA.2/Res.10 “Oceans and Seas”**

Annexed is a draft Marine and Coastal Strategy for the implementation of UNEA-2 Resolution 2/10: Addressing water pollution to protect and restore water-related ecosystems (UNEP/EA.2/Res. 10) serves as a background document for discussions under agenda Item 7d.

# UN Environment Programme's Marine and Coastal Strategy



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# 1. Introduction

By 2050, the planet will need to provide food, health, jobs and energy to sustain a population of 9 billion people. Realizing the full potential of oceans and coasts to contribute to these objectives will require widespread changes in how we manage our economic activity in and around coastal and marine areas. This need for change is especially clear as the impacts of over-exploitation, pollution, coastal development and climate change on oceans and coasts become increasingly visible.

A healthy ocean is essential to life on Earth: from the smallest plankton to the largest marine mammals and is the underpinning of ecosystem and human well-being. It is estimated that some 40% of the global population live within coastal communities (UNEP, 2018) and 3 billion people rely on the ocean for their livelihoods. The sustainable use of ocean resources is central to maintaining vibrant national and local economies, for both countries with coastlines and land-locked countries. The critical role of the oceans in mitigating climate change means that every country and person in the world has a stake in ensuring its health and resilience. With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the international community has set important goals and targets to achieve in the long-term healthy oceans through conservation and sustainable use.

**The Marine and Coastal Strategy** sets strategic directions over the short, medium and long-term, coinciding with Agenda 2030, guiding and enabling the achievement of objectives laid out in the four-year Medium-Term Strategy and bi-annual Programme of Work of the United Nations Environment Programme as concerns sustainable management and conservation of marine and coastal ecosystems. This strategy identifies and builds internal and external synergies to address cross-cutting issues pursued in other thematic strategies guiding UN Environment's work, including the Freshwater Strategy 2017-2021, Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2017-2021, an emerging Biodiversity Strategy, and Climate Change Strategy, to ensure overall efficiency and impact in delivery UN Environment's Programme of Work.

The implementation of the strategy will enhance UN Environment's capacity to effectively support countries and constituents in their national and regional actions to sustainably use marine and coastal ecosystem services while reducing adverse human impacts. It will support global innovation and delivery of normative services. UN Environment will deliver its work through existing mechanisms, such as the Regional Seas Programmes and the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA)<sup>1</sup> and contribute to an enhanced coordination of actions in collaborative frameworks addressing marine and coastal issues. This includes contributing the important global processes, such as the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, Implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement, and the Post-2020 Biodiversity Agenda.

The strategy intends to operationalize and communicate UN Environment's role and contributions in its support to countries in achieving healthy and resilient marine and coastal ecosystems globally. This ranges from identifying actions to assist national and regional-level transitions towards sustainable blue economies to effective nature-based solutions that ensure long-term ocean-based sustainable development.

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<sup>1</sup> The future operational modalities of the Global Programme of Action are under review by countries pursuant to the 4<sup>th</sup> Intergovernmental Review of November 2018, for consideration by the United Nations Environment Assembly. Regardless of the outcome of the review, UN Environment will continue to play a leading role on land-based sources of marine pollution.

## 2. Challenges and Drivers of Change

### 2.1. Challenges and Barriers

Oceans face severe threats from human activities and suffer from adverse impacts on their ecosystems. Intensive negative processes in the environment, such as global warming, ocean acidification, oxygen depletion from eutrophication, depletion of biodiversity and other natural resources, are exacerbated by plastic proliferation, oil spills and other forms of pollution, unsustainable resource use, further over-exploitation of natural resources. The degradation of marine and coastal biodiversity, habitat and entire ecosystems are rooted in the underlying drivers of global population growth and increasing demand for resources.

There are some critical barriers that are impeding the development and implementation of effective policy responses and solutions to address the challenges facing the ocean environment. Such barriers include; **(i)** Gaps in understanding and capacity to effectively address the drivers causing ecosystem degradation, for example, lack of good understanding of dynamic and interacting factors impacting ecological, social and economic systems under environmental change; **(ii)** Limited access to solutions and incentives to enable and encourage resource-use efficiency, particularly with respect to reducing polluting flows to the marine environment; **(iii)** Inadequate governance and management systems to address the complexity of issues impacting oceans. Ocean governance mechanisms are often fragmented and management practices vary across a checkerboard of overlapping jurisdictions and territorial boundaries. Today, most existing frameworks to support ocean policy, governance and management at global, regional and national levels, including on shared or transboundary resources, are typically sectoral in nature; **(iv)** Insufficient public and private financing for development and implementation of sustainable blue economy policies, strategies and solutions.

### 2.2. Growing Ambition Towards Ocean Sustainability

Notwithstanding the challenges, there are many drivers of change and positive trends and opportunities around the ambition and engagement by various actors for the global ocean. The adoption of the dedicated Sustainable Development Goal 14 for oceans presents an important signal that ocean is a priority in the global political agenda. There is a realization at local, national, regional, and global levels of the interconnectedness of issues affecting the ocean, as well as an increase in number of initiatives to curb the negative trends.

The expanding global ambition is reflected in stepped-up commitments on action. At the close of 2018, there were more than 1,500 registered commitments under the UN Oceans Call for Action addressing ocean sustainability issues. This presents excellent ground for UN Environment through its strategic approach to support countries and stakeholders in meeting these commitments. At both regional and national levels, new policies, legislative instruments, fiscal incentives and protocols are emerging along with innovative implementation strategies and support mechanisms through the work of the many partners engaged on the issue. The increased attention to the need for cross-sectoral collaboration and processes is coupled with advancement in technologies to tackle threats facing the ocean. There has been increased engagement across various levels of government, the business community and civil society on the issue, and are making demands for support ranging from capacity building to investment in solutions to address the challenges.

### 3. UN Environment's Vision and Mission on Oceans and Coasts

Informed by UN Environment's overall vision, the management drivers and mandates given by countries, the vision for the Marine and Coastal Strategy is:

**Vision:** Healthy and climate-resilient marine and coastal ecosystems underpinning human well-being into the future.

**Mission:** UN Environment will play a catalytic role in transformational and behavioral changes of current marine and coastal management systems and institutional frameworks. This includes application of ecosystem and science-based management approaches, which effectively support societies in generating environmental, economic, and social benefits for all, whilst minimizing adverse impacts on the marine and coastal environment.

To this end, UN Environment will strengthen its work to develop and implement innovative and sustainable solutions in partnership with countries and stakeholders including leaders from governments, business, civil society, academia, media, and the science community, to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Goals.

**Taking an integrated approach to ocean and coastal sustainability:** By linking environmental, economic and social disciplines, UN Environment will assist countries to transform knowledge into effective decision-making processes, sound policies and implementation of solutions to aid in more sustainable and equitable use of marine and coastal ecosystem services within ecological limits, balancing economic, environmental and social priorities. This includes addressing trade-offs between single sector benefits vis-à-vis their cumulative environmental and social impacts and enhancing circularity in sustainable blue economy policies and sector approaches.

More specifically, this means supporting a sustainable blue economy transition by helping the design of macro-economic policy (investment, consumption, production, distribution), national and regional governance and local management solutions that ensure ocean-based sustainable development by factoring in: (a) uncertainty and vulnerability at the land-sea interface; (b) assessing the circularity potential of coastal and marine based economic activity to reduce both waste and unsustainable resource use; (c) fostering responsible consumption and production of coastal and marine resources through economic policies; (d) working with the finance, insurance and ocean-based industries to promote investments in green practices; (e) adopting an integrated assessment and ecosystem based approach to addressing coastal and marine pollution, resource use and other human impacts; through (f) ecosystem valuation work to improve decision making, implemented via (g) local, national or transboundary cross-sectoral sustainable blue economy policies and strategies.

## 4. The basis for Action

### 4.1. External Frameworks that Guide the Strategy

**4.1.1. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** adopted by the global community sets the overall context for the Strategy and directs UN Environment, within its mandates, to deploy its resources to assist countries meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Strategy

provides a guiding framework to ensure that Goal 14, “*Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development*” will be comprehensively addressed in collaboration with partners. The Strategy also recognizes that ocean-related issues are not restricted to Goal 14, but integral to the full range of SDGs, particularly those related to food security, freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems, poverty reduction, clean water, good jobs, economic growth, sustainable consumption and climate resilience. UN Environment will assist strengthening national and regional capacities to identify and utilize synergies across ocean-related issues, goals and targets, which can realize significant time and cost savings in SDG delivery, monitoring and reporting. The Strategy thereby responds to needs expressed by the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development for capacity building for national delivery of the SDGs, including preparation of development planning and implementation.

**4.1.2. United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)** sets forth the wider global commitment on sustainable management of marine resources and several provisions which this Strategy fully considers in its strategic outlook. Particularly important are Parts V and VII of the Convention relating to management obligations of countries within exclusive economic zones and the high seas with respect to conservation and utilization of living resources. Part XII of the Convention makes provision for the protection and preservation of the marine environment with countries actions to implement measures to prevent, reduce and control pollution of the marine environment, reduce risk due to introduction of alien species, fostering global and regional cooperation and investment in research and exchange of information and data. Numerous resolutions in advancement of the Convention have been adopted by countries that provide important implementation directives for countries.

Under remit of the UNCLOS, the *Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea* provides a platform for addressing issues and improving coordination and cooperation between States and strengthening contributions to the General Assembly on oceans and the law of the sea. The *Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment*, including Socioeconomic Aspects had led to the first World Ocean Assessment, an important informational basis for directing strategic action.

**4.1.3. The SIDS Accelerated Modalities Of Action (SAMOA) Pathway** is an outcome of the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States in September 2014, that provides connection to the strategic response as pertains to vulnerabilities of island states. On the topic of *Oceans and Seas* the integrated ecosystem approach to ocean-related activities is recognized to optimize opportunities and should be based on the best available science, with regard to conservation efforts and precautionary approaches. Countries are urged to implement fully and effectively the Regional Seas Programmes, address marine pollution by developing effective partnerships, including through the development and implementation of relevant arrangements, and invest in urgent action to protect coral reefs and other vulnerable marine ecosystems through the development and implementation of comprehensive and integrated approaches for enhancement of their resilience to withstand pressures.

## **4.2. UN Environment’s Framework that Guides the Strategy**

**4.2.1. UN Environment Assembly Resolutions:** The strategy responds to specific resolutions adopted by Member States on topics of special concern that requires focus attention. These resolutions are embedded within the Medium-Term Strategy and Programme of Work for action through resource commitment and reporting to States on implementation progress. Although a large majority of the adopted resolutions are relevant to marine and coastal issues and are interconnected, key resolutions that fall within the remit of this Strategy include:

- UNEP/EA.1/Res.6 Marine plastic debris and microplastics
- UNEP/EA.2/Res.10 Oceans and seas
- UNEP/EA.2/Res.4 Role, functions and modalities for UNEP implementation of the SAMOA Pathway as a means of facilitating achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals
- UNEP/EA.2/Res./5 Delivering on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- UNEP/EA.2/Res./8 Sustainable consumption and production
- UNEP/EA.2/Res.11 Marine plastic litter and microplastics
- UNEP/EA.2/Res.12 Sustainable coral reefs management
- UNEP/EA.2/Res./13 Sustainable management of natural capital for sustainable development and poverty eradication
- UNEP/EA.3/Res.7 Marine litter and microplastics
- UNEP/EA.3/Res.10 Addressing water pollution to protect and restore water-related ecosystems

**4.2.2. Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) 2018-2021 and Programme of Work:** UN Environment executes its mandate within the scope of its *Medium-Term Strategy* and *Programme of Work* that is drawn on the directions laid out in the external frameworks described above that is endorsed by the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), the overall governance mechanism of UN Environment. The Medium-Term Strategy and Programme of Work is informed by the strategies and plans of multilateral environmental agreements and other internationally agreed environmental goals. In the framework of the Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) 2018-2021 and Programme of Work (PoW), UN Environment supports countries to adopt an integrated approach in their efforts to become more environmentally sustainable, also ensuring achievement of economic and social dimensions of sustainable development. In delivering on its vision for 2030 in alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UN Environment aims to reduce environmental risks and increase the resilience of societies and the environment as a whole and in this regard, UN Environment is uniquely positioned to provide an environmental lens through which to view, understand and provide advice on sustainable development.

The MTS and PoW response to marine and coastal issues is executed through UN Environment's seven **Sub-programmes**, however those with most direct relevance to service delivery to countries and stakeholders include 'Healthy and Productive Ecosystems', 'Chemicals, Waste and Air Quality', 'Climate Change', 'Resource Efficiency' and 'Environment Under Review'. The expected accomplishments associated with the sub-programmes are key metrics for assessment of delivery which the Strategy emulates.

***UN Environment Sub-programme objectives and main expected accomplishments most closely related to the marine and coastal strategic outlook***

Sub-programme and objective	Programme expected accomplishments
<p><b>Healthy and productive ecosystems</b></p> <p><b>Objective:</b> Marine, freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems are increasingly managed through an integrated approach that enables them to maintain and restore biodiversity, ecosystems' long-term functioning and supply of ecosystem goods and services</p>	<p>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; Policymakers in the public and private sectors test the inclusion of the health and productivity of ecosystems in economic decision-making</p>



Sub-programme and objective	Programme expected accomplishments
<p><b>Chemicals, waste and air quality</b></p> <p><b>Objective:</b> Sound management of chemicals and waste and improved air quality contribute to a healthier environment and better health for all</p>	<p>Policies and legal, institutional and fiscal strategies and mechanisms for sound chemicals and waste management developed or implemented in countries within the framework of relevant multilateral environmental agreements</p>
<p><b>Resource efficiency</b></p> <p><b>Objective:</b> Countries transition to sustainable development through multiple pathways, including inclusive green economy and trade, and the adoption of sustainable consumption and production patterns, increasingly decoupling economic growth from unsustainable resource use and environmental impacts while improving human well-being</p>	<p>Science-based approaches that support the transition to sustainable development through multiple pathways, including inclusive green economy and sustainable trade, and the adoption of sustainable consumption and production patterns at all levels</p>
<p><b>Environment under review</b></p> <p><b>Objective:</b> Governments and other stakeholders are empowered with quality assessments and open access to data and information to deliver the environmental dimension of sustainable development</p>	<p>Governments and other stakeholders use quality open environmental data, analyses and participatory processes that strengthen the science-policy interface to generate evidence-based environmental assessments, identify emerging issues and foster policy action</p>
<p><b>Climate change</b></p> <p><b>Objective:</b> countries increasingly make the transition to low-emission economic development, and enhance their adaptation and resilience to climate change</p>	<p>Countries increasingly advance their national adaptation plans which integrate ecosystem-based adaptation</p>

## 5. Strategy guiding principles

This strategy will apply the following operating and guiding principles; enhancing ecosystem-based management, promoting source-to-sea approaches in management of land-based pollution, expanding sustainable consumption and consumption patterns, fostering natural capital considerations in resource management and strengthening the science to policy interface. These principles are well enshrined across SDGs.

### 5.1. Integrating Ecosystem-Based Management Approaches

The strategy will promote the principle of Ecosystem-Based Management (EBM), which aims to manage in an integrated manner human uses and cumulative impacts at a scale that encompasses its impacts on marine and coastal ecosystem function, rather than scales defined by jurisdictional boundaries. In embracing the principles of EBM within the strategic objectives outlined in this strategy, the priorities for maintaining the integrity of marine and coastal ecosystems, while taking into account management of freshwater ecosystems and terrestrial landscapes will be integrated. Adopting this approach will address the shortfalls of traditional single-sector approaches and provide a comprehensive, integrated approach to the management of human-ecosystem interactions.

## **5.2. Promoting the Source-to-Sea Approach to Curb Marine Pollution**

Unsustainable activities and poor land management practices results in pollution, degrades freshwater ecosystems, and marine and coastal ecosystems in receiving waters. The strategy advocates the application of source-to-sea or ridge-to-reef management principles to mitigate pollution and maintenance of water quality from points of origin to zones of discharge within the marine environment. This approach is based on river basin system management, addressing cause and effect linkages between degradation of upstream and downstream ecosystems, considering the river basin as the spatial management unit. Source-to-sea management fosters coordination of action across all sectors in pollution mitigation. It should be noted that sea-based sources also must be considered within the scope of strategic response to marine pollution and impacts to ecosystems.

## **5.3. Expanding Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns**

The strategy will contribute to the decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation in the marine environment by applying lifecycle-thinking approaches, taking all phases of resource use into account based on use of fewer resources, including energy and water, to produce less waste and pollution. The principle of Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) cuts across all different sectors hence requires a holistic approach and wide engagement of stakeholders. Adoption of the principle extends through responsible production to support to consumers to move towards sustainable consumption choices.

## **5.4. Fostering the Valuation of Natural Capital**

This principle is based on the fact that nature provides innumerable services that underpin food security, human well-being and indeed, the global economy. These services, as are often the case in the marine environment, are rarely valued in terms that can be entered into national economic accounts and national planning processes and, in lacking visible or equivalent monetary value, they are often traded away inappropriately. The biodiversity and ecosystem services within marine and coastal environments must be incorporated into policy and decision-making processes, and better described in terms that decision makers can understand and use.

## **5.5. Strengthening the Science to Policy Interface**

A critical underpinning of the strategy and at the core of the mandate of UN Environment is to provide scientific evidence on the status and value of ecosystems to trigger policy reform at national and regional levels that will lead to improved ecosystem-based management and more sustainable consumption and production patterns. Better understanding of the science behind the stressors and implications for ecosystem functioning enhances design and implementation of adaptive measures to increase ecosystem resilience, a highly important consideration as the global climate changes.

## **6. UN Environment's Comparative Advantage**

UN Environment is the leading authority that sets the global environmental agenda as mandated by the UN Environment Assembly, having an impartial convening role to foster policy dialogue and implementing numerous global environmental conventions and commitments, which include the

sustainable management of marine and coastal resources. UN Environment's work is built around enabling the governments, business and civil society across all levels to better integrate the foundational principles of ecosystem-based management into social and economic development through an extensive partnership network, in association with governments and hundreds of organizational affiliates.

Key areas of expertise and global normative work of UN Environment include research, synthesis and application of ocean-related sciences, integrated environmental assessments, risk assessments and vulnerability analyses and the operationalization of ecosystem-based management principles and solutions, including nature-based solutions to climate change. Other core areas of expertise relevant to oceans include green economy, circular economy and sustainable consumption and production principles and approaches.

UN Environment serves as a key interlocutor for the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAPs) in the advancement of sustainable marine and coastal environmental management, protection and development. These Programmes are, in fact, action-oriented platforms, in most cases underpinned by strong legal multi-lateral frameworks in the form of regional conventions and associated protocols to address specific problems, particularly related to biodiversity conservation and protected areas management and control of marine pollution from different sources. UN Environment hosts seven of the Regional Seas programme secretariats, thereby, creating a direct means, through which the agency promotes and enhances regional integration and cooperation ranging in many areas from science-to-policy translation, to facilitating coordination in governance of shared coastal and marine ecosystems resources in the multi-lateral partnership arena.

UN Environment plays a lead role in assisting countries address land-based pollution through its hosting of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA). The Global Programme of Action promotes the source-to-sea approach in mitigating marine pollution from land-based sources, directly addressing the links between terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems through consideration of more sustainable consumption and production pathways to reduce discharges of wastes to the environment. The work under the GPA is expanded through the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management, the Global Partnership on Marine Litter and the Global Wastewater Initiative.

## 7. Implementation framework

The multi-layered and multi-sectoral nature of management of marine and coastal resources calls for collaboration across all parts of UN Environment, extending beyond the organization to UN Environment collaborating centers, other UN agencies and external partners. Implementation will be within the context of the Mid-term Strategy and Programme of Work of the UN Environment, augmented through the UNEA resolutions in the context of specific commitments.

**Global level collaborations** will serve as important avenues to advance the work of UN Environment, where they will be catalytic in development and application of innovative approaches and will deliver solutions to enhance sustainable marine and coastal resource management. The following is a non-exhaustive account of some of the key initiatives that UN Environment is centrally positioned to contribute to strategy execution. In the area of **resource assessment and ecosystem services valuation**, these include the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and the Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) for Oceans. On **resource efficiency and sustainable consumption and production**, the International Resource Panel, the One Planet Network (10-Year Framework of Programmes on SCP) and the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE) will be among key alliances.

For **science-to-policy support**, the Group of Experts on Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Global Environment Outlook (GEO) process are among the primary collaborative frameworks. On **financing**, the Sustainable Blue Economy Finance Principles will become part of a new sustainable blue economy finance initiative under the auspices of the UN Environment Finance Initiative. On the topic of **pollution**, the GPA and its affiliated partnerships, the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management (GPNM), the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML) and the Global Wastewater Initiative (GW<sup>2</sup>I) will be front-line contributors.

UN Oceans is an inter-agency mechanism that seeks to enhance the coordination, coherence and effectiveness of competent UN organizations including UN Environment, with shared mandates for marine and coastal management within the framework of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. Also under UN Oceans in the scope of SDG14, the Communities of Ocean Action has been established to encourage commitment to action among the global community and track progress to meet the various targets under the goal. UN Environment contributes to supporting stakeholders meet commitments under SDG14.

Related to strategic leadership within the scope of the SDGs, UN Environment is a custodian agency for ecosystem integrity targets related to its mandate under SDG Goal 14, specifically Target 14.1 *By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution*, Target 14.2 *By 2020, sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration in order to achieve healthy and productive oceans* and Target 14.5 *By 2020, conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information. In this regard UN Environment has responsibility, along with partner agencies in assisting countries in target assessment, reporting and translation to policy reform and management response*. In its role as the custodian agency, UN Environment will work with partner agencies in advancing development and adoption of methodologies associated with the goal targets that are in turn linked to technical and policy support to facilitate execution of actions to meet the targets.

**Regional level collaboration** and intergovernmental cooperation will be primarily through RSCAPs. These frameworks will serve as conduits for delivery of decision-support tools, guides and assessments built around ecosystem-based approaches. The Regional Seas Programmes include within their frameworks extended networks of indigenous regional institutions that contribute to the generation and analysis of scientific and policy options to enhance decision making from national level toward regional integration.

**National level collaborations** will continue its expansion on a demand-driven basis depending on specific areas of interest of Member States, in keeping with local to national mandates in sustainable marine and coastal management. Direct technical and policy support will be rolled-out in close collaboration with the Regional Seas mechanisms to ensure complementarity and building synergies with wider efforts.

## **8. Theory of Change - Towards Ocean-Based Sustainable Development**

The Marine and Coastal Strategy is designed in alignment with SDG targets, UN Environment's overall mandate, and specific goals and issues related to marine and coastal ecosystems. The

Strategy is intended to facilitate positive, measurable and substantive change at global, regional and national levels.

The main problem to be addressed is the accelerating loss of ecosystem services due to deteriorating ocean and coastal health caused by intensive coastal development, pollution, inefficient resource use and climate change, undermining long-term sustainable development. **Four critical barriers** have been identified in addressing this problem: **(1)** Inadequate knowledge and scenarios of drivers impacting ecosystem health and services to inform effective policy-making and management; **(2)** Inadequate solutions and incentives to enable and encourage resource-use efficiency; **(3)** Ineffective sector and cross-sector policies, cooperation, governance systems; and **(4)** Insufficient public and private financing for development and implementation of sustainable blue economy policies, strategies and solutions.

The Strategy centers on supporting countries to overcome these barriers to progressively improve the state of their marine and coastal ecosystems and resources so that threatened ecosystems become well managed, healthy and climate resilient and able to sustain services for human well-being. By addressing the drivers that negatively impact the marine and coastal environment today, successful implementation of the strategy will create conditions for ocean-based sustainable development into the future.

The Theory of Change (Figure 1) is therefore built around **four linked Strategic Objectives** to lower these barriers, enabling transitions towards sustainable blue economies underpinning ocean-based sustainable development.

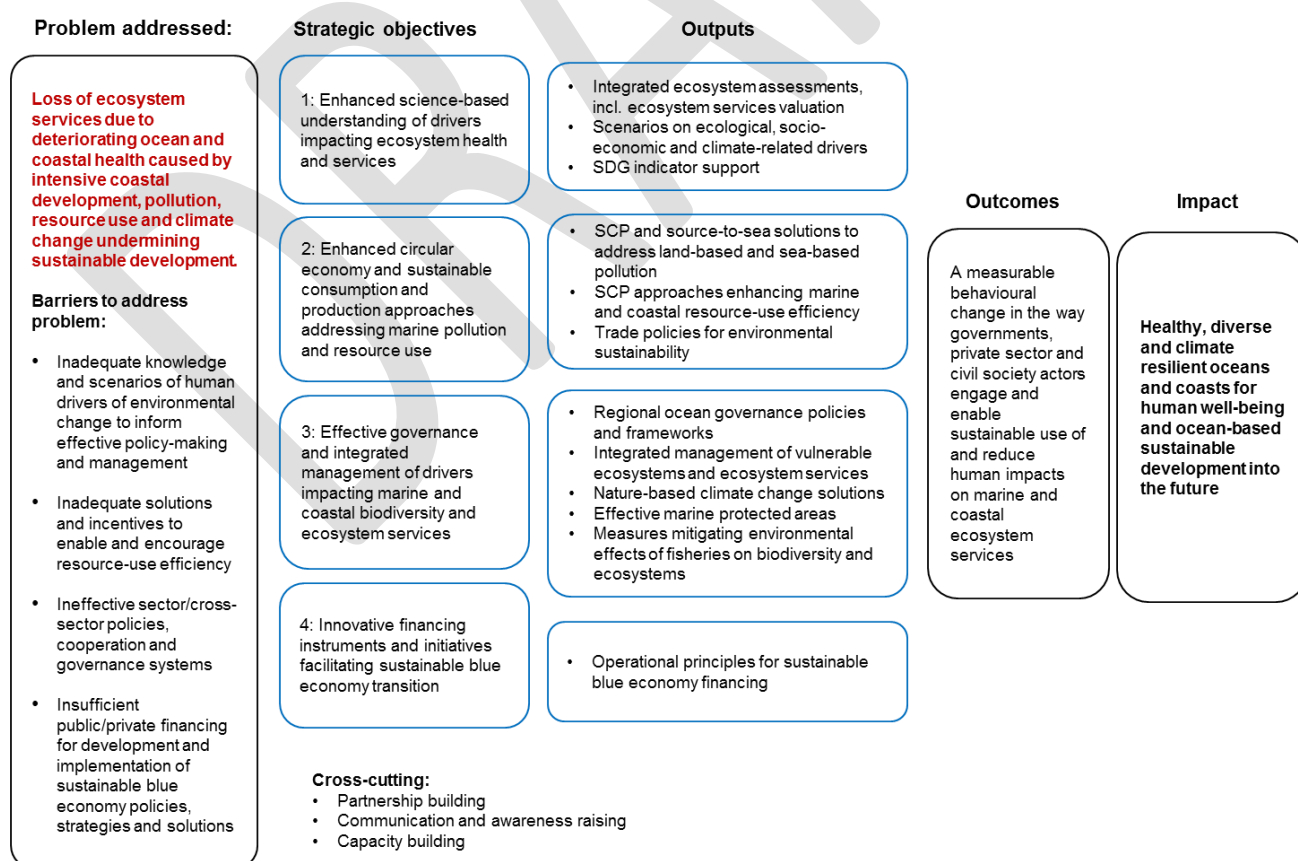


Figure 1: Theory of Change - Towards ocean-based sustainable development.

## 9. Strategic Delivery and Core Outputs

The Strategy consolidates UN Environment's expertise and experience across relevant disciplines in a concerted effort to assist countries and regions tackle complex economic and social drivers that impact coastal and marine ecosystems and their ability to provide ecosystem services. The four strategic objectives of the Theory of Change are translated into four corresponding work streams, as follows:

**Strategic Objective 1:** Enhanced science-based understanding of drivers impacting ecosystem health and services.

**Strategic Objective 2:** Enhanced circular economy and sustainable consumption and production approaches addressing marine pollution and resource use.

**Strategic Objective 3:** Effective governance and integrated management of drivers impacting marine and coastal biodiversity and ecosystem services.

**Strategic Objective 4:** Innovative financing instruments and initiatives facilitating sustainable blue economy transition.

Specific focus areas of each strategic objective are summarized below, along with main outputs that will support transitions towards long-term sustainable blue economies and ocean-based sustainable development.

### 9.1. Strategic Objective 1: Enhanced Science-Based Understanding of Drivers Impacting Ecosystem Health and Services

Understanding the drivers impacting the health and functions of marine and coastal ecosystems is essential in development and implementation of effective policies and integrated management responses. UN Environment will work through strategic partnerships and collaborations, including the Regional Seas Programmes and the World Ocean Assessment process, to collect and synthesize science-based information on ecosystem health, values and socio-economic drivers. UN Environment has a mandate to periodically prepare and publish reports of the status of the marine environment globally and regionally. The focus of UN Environment will be to address in particular, regional reporting on the state of the coastal and marine environment, through the Regional Seas Conventions based on established monitoring and assessment programmes. This will be complementary to the Regular Process and World Ocean Assessment, conducted in close communication with UNDOALOS and the IOC-UNESCO, tied to processes under the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. The regional assessments will be indicator-based so that chronological changes in ecosystem health can be tracked, in alignment with the SDG and post 2020 biodiversity indicators. To achieve this, UN Environment will support coordination and further harmonization of monitoring and assessment methods as well as enhancing political support, in partnership with science based organisations, such as IOC-UNESCO, International Council of Scientific Unions, International Society on Mangrove Ecosystems, among others.

UN Environment will deliver the following core outputs and services:

- **Integrated ecosystem assessments, including ecosystem services valuation:** UN Environment will move towards integrated marine ecosystems assessments, reviewing all functioning elements of the ecosystems and their interaction, involving human activities

and their impacts, ecosystem services and their values, and the impacts of climate change. Specifically, **UN Environment will:** (i) establish a partnership for mapping, assessment and valuation of marine and coastal ecosystems and their services to enhance the knowledge-base on marine and coastal ecosystem services to support sustainable blue economy transition planning at national and regional levels. This includes knowledge-generation, application of standards in line with the United Nations' Statistics of Environmental Economics and Assessment, translation of data in the form of blue natural capital accounts and development of information systems to support it; (ii) operationalize marine and coastal climate change scenario, ecosystem vulnerability and risk assessment tools to inform sustainable blue economy cost-benefit analysis and investments; (iii) establish and maintain networks of scientists and experts on key marine and coastal ecosystem processes and drivers, their services and benefits to human well-being to enhance the knowledge-base for sustainable blue economy transition planning and actions.

- **Scenarios on ecological, socio-economic and climate-related drivers:** Climate change influences are dramatically increasing vulnerabilities of marine and coastal ecosystems to degradation; coupled with anthropocentric influences such as unsustainable resource extraction and pollution will hasten the process of loss of essential environmental and economic services. Coral reefs are among the highly vulnerable ecosystems of concern. It is essential that countries have the capacity to track the health of their marine and coastal ecosystems through the application of assessment tools to better understand impacts and to forecast future scenarios to support planning and implementation of mitigative and adaptation measures. UN Environment, including through the work of its Science Division, will strengthen the science-policy interface for decision makers through assessments and analyses in conjunction with expert networks and scientific bodies such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), IOC-UNESCO and the Intergovernmental and Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in enhancing national capacities in responding to shifts on the health status of marine and coastal ecosystems through implementation of adaptive strategies. **UN Environment, along with partners will:** (i) generate knowledge and information on the stored and sequestered carbon in the key marine and coastal ecosystems, so that the member countries can incorporate such carbon accounting (blue carbon) into their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in the context of the Paris Agreement; (ii) analyze current and future trends and forecast environmental impacts and cost-benefits of possible mitigation and adaptation scenarios and measures so that the Member States can make informed decision on their national actions.
- **SDG indicator support:** In the advancement of science-to-policy for the ocean space, UN Environment plays a key role as the 'custodian agency' for three Sustainable Development Goal indicators under Goal 14; specifically (i) 14.1 on marine pollution, (ii) 14.2 on ecosystem-based management application in EEZs and (iii) 14.5 marine protected area coverage. In this regard the agency has responsibility, along with partner agencies, to assist national capacities in reporting on the indicators and for translation of progress on the indicators into policy reform and management responses. This will be achieved in close collaboration with the Regional Seas Programmes with the aim of ensuring coordination at a global level and taking advantage of assessment and reporting mechanisms within the scope of UN Environment's remit. **UN Environment, along with co-custodian and other technical partners will:** (i) contribute to development and adoption of the SDG 14 target indicator methodologies, drawing on and augmenting existing indicator frameworks already in use by regional seas programmes; (ii) guide and assist countries in data collection,

reporting and dissemination for incorporation into national accounts and reporting within the UN high-level political forum for SDG implementation, **(iii)** support awareness raising of stakeholders on processes on indicator methodology development and internalization within national accounting frameworks; **(iv)** enhance harmonization and inter-connection to other relevant SDG target indicators within the responsibility of UN Environment as custodian agency.

## **9.2. Strategic Objective 2: Enhanced Circular Economy and Sustainable Consumption and Production Approaches Addressing Marine Pollution and Resource Use**

In the context of sustainable marine and coastal resource management the strategy will augment UN Environment's wider efforts in supporting the transition to sustainable development through multiple pathways, ensuring long-term sustainable blue economy opportunities, sustainable trade, and the adoption of sustainable consumption and production patterns at all levels. This will encourage the decoupling of economic growth from unsustainable resource use and negative environmental impacts such as pollution, while improving human well-being. Governments will be supported in the design of policy and fiscal incentive frameworks to enhance the investment in circular economy approaches to enhance efficiency of resource use. Private sector along value chains reliant on coastal and marine resources and whose activities may impact the integrity of downstream marine ecosystems will be assisted to implement sustainable management and cleaner production practices and to increasingly invest in circular technologies. Civil society will be encouraged to transition into sustainable lifestyles and consumption patterns through educational and awareness-raising campaigns including the Clean Seas, Beat Pollution and Sustainable Lifestyles campaigns and other initiatives, thus influencing the demand for sustainable products.

UN Environment will deliver the following core outputs and services:

- **Sustainable consumption and production and source-to-sea solutions to address land-based and sea-based pollution:** Support will be extended to public and private sector partners in provision of policy and technological options and capacity development across sectors and value chains, including assessments and technical assistance on life cycle-based approaches, green investment, adopting sustainable consumption and production patterns, sustainable management practices and disclosing sustainability performance. **UN Environment will (i)** support evidence-based management and reduction of for example, problematic products causing marine litter and micro-plastics pollution as well as, wastewater and nutrients pollution through life cycle approaches, incorporating the work within collaborative frameworks such as the Global Partnerships on Marine Litter, Nutrients and Wastewater, the One Planet Network that is implementing the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (10YFP) and the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE) and other relevant initiatives such as the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) where relevant; **(ii)** support countries in baseline-setting and the implementation of source-to-sea good practices whereby governments, businesses and civil society make considerable changes in their policies, strategies and action plans to tackle pollution caused by marine litter, wastewater and excessive nutrients that leads to an eventual measurable reduction in the influx of pollutants to coastal waters as a result of upstream actions within relevant multilateral environmental agreements and commitments under UNEA resolutions, in alignment with sustainable development goal targets 6.3 and 14.1;



(iii) expand use of available monitoring and assessment tools and methodologies to enhance national and regional capacities in the context of meeting the SDG targets related to fresh and marine pollution.

- **SCP approaches enhancing marine and coastal resource-use efficiency:** UN Environment will support the further mainstreaming of sustainable consumption and production into marine and coastal ecosystem resource use, building on existing initiatives, with emphasis on the Regional Seas Programmes as primary avenues. Experiences will be drawn from application of SCP approaches under the Mediterranean Action Plan (among others) to facilitate replication to other regional seas programmes. The work will require a multi-disciplinary effort in association with *inter-alia* the One Planet Network, the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE) and key UN partner agencies such as FAO and UNIDO. In addition to governments, core targets for uptake of SCP approaches will be manufacturers and retailers working through respective industry associations. Sectors of interest will include fisheries, aquaculture, extractives and the hospitality sector. **UN Environment, in collaboration with partners will (i)** provide advisory support services on innovative decision-support tools, policies, regulatory and fiscal instruments designed around life-cycle management approaches that contribute to conservation and sustainable management of marine biodiversity and ecosystems; **(ii)** support strengthening of capacities of private sector stakeholders, government, other policy-setting entities, financing agents and civil society to facilitate and implement SCP solutions in resource-efficient utilization of marine and coastal resources through exchange of best practices and raising awareness.
- **Trade policies for environmental sustainability:** Current unsustainable trade practices contribute to vulnerabilities and undermine the optimal and sustainable use of ecosystem services. Instead, trade and trade-related policies should support and enable the sustainable use of ecosystem services and the reduction of vulnerabilities. This can be achieved for example through promoting sustainable trade in seafood and other ocean resources and supporting services and the development of related sectors, such as ecotourism; and through supportive trade policies such as subsidy reform (eliminating harmful fisheries subsidies, reinvesting those subsidies in ecosystem management), and trade-related policies like certification and standards. **UN Environment will: (i)** work with the Food and Agriculture Organization and the UN Conference for Trade and Development to help countries reform, design and implement trade related policies and practices towards supporting healthy oceans. This include support to States to design and implement trade-related policies towards fulfilling their commitment under SDG 14 to eliminate harmful fisheries subsidies and provide market access to small-scale and artisanal fisheries.

### **9.3. Strategic Objective 3: Effective Governance and Integrated Management of Drivers Impacting Marine and Coastal Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services**

Marine and coastal ecosystem services are declining due to increasing and often competing human activities exacerbated by uncoordinated sector policies, governance and management arrangements. There are often trade-offs between the benefits of different human activities and their cumulative impacts on marine and coastal ecosystem health. Integrated governance and management is required across sectors to ensure sustainable use of the system overall, balancing

ecosystem service provision to different users at appropriate spatial scales. Ecosystem-based coastal and marine planning and management is promoted by UN Environment as a useful approach to ensure long-term ecosystem service delivery and resilience to environmental change. UN Environment will support countries and regions develop and implement sustainable blue economy strategies and action plans applying ecosystem-based management principles, paying particular attention to cross-sector policy-making and governance arrangements. This will include uptake of knowledge on ecosystem services and human drivers in sustainable blue economy transition pathways, and design and implementation of nature-based solutions to climate change, collectively ensuring sustainable use, protection, overall resilience and adaptive capacity of marine and coastal ecosystems and dependent human communities.

UN Environment will deliver the following core outputs and services:

- **Regional ocean governance policies and frameworks:** The sustainable use of shared marine ecosystem services and resources requires stronger governance mechanisms and increased cooperation and dialogue among sector authorities and stakeholders. Four important governance frameworks are considered in this regard; (i) regional seas programmes, (ii) regional fisheries bodies, (iii) large marine ecosystems projects and (iv) regional and sub-regional economic commissions/communities. UN Environment, the FAO, and UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission are working to enhance cooperation between these frameworks. Cooperation among them was highlighted through the global dialogues processes including the Sustainable Ocean Initiative of the Convention on Biological Diversity as well as the Cape Town regional ocean governance conference (November 2017). UN Environment will contribute towards strengthened regional ocean governance frameworks through capacity building and collaboration among regional actors. Specifically, **UN Environment will:** (i) provide capacity support for regional and national authorities to apply ecosystem-based management principles in governance of shared ocean resources, (ii) support development of cross-sector regional ocean governance frameworks applying sustainable blue economy principles enabling marine conservation and sustainable resource use, and (iii) engage in innovative partnerships to develop and implement transboundary and regional-scale sustainable blue economy strategies and action plans.
- **Integrated planning and management of vulnerable ecosystems and ecosystem services:** Integrated management of cumulative impacts of human activities and climate change on valuable ecosystem services can ensure sustained economic and social benefits from the marine and coastal ecosystems, underpinning sustainable blue economies. **UN Environment will:** (i) develop decision-support frameworks to help identify transition pathways for national and regional sustainable blue economy planning and implementation strategies, (ii) enable effective uptake of integrated ecosystem assessments and ecosystem service valuation information and knowledge in cross-sector policy-making, trade-off analysis, vulnerability- and risk-projections, marine spatial planning and integrated management through capacity building and communication, and (iii) roll out integrated Coastal Zone Management and Marine Spatial Planning as ecosystem-based management tools to support implementation of sustainable blue economy transition strategies and action plans through, *inter-alia*, the regional seas frameworks.
- **Nature-based climate change solutions:** Ocean and coastal carbon has not been fully incorporated into national actions on climate change mitigation, and nature-based adaptation measures have not been fully implemented under the national action plans on

adaptation. UN Environment will continue to promote nature-based solutions, such as ecosystem-based mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. More concretely, **UN Environment will:** (i) develop ecosystem-based adaptation measures and demonstrate when they are more cost-effective and effective in addressing climate change impacts; (ii) enhance capacities of countries to protect vulnerable habitats such as seagrass, mangroves, tidal marshes and coral reefs, which are important blue carbon sinks or provide adaptation services, but also highly vulnerable to climate change impacts; (iii) generate knowledge and information on climate change-related ecosystem services (blue carbon and resilience to natural disasters); (iv) develop good practices including supporting an enabling policy environment for the management and restoration of these ecosystems, so that these can be appropriately addressed in marine spatial planning and integrated coastal zone management mechanisms and (v) engage with the Convention on Biological Diversity post-2020 Biodiversity Framework and the “New Deal for Nature” to ensure that targets for critical coastal ecosystems are included.

- **Effective marine protected areas:** Marine protected areas are essential and powerful tools for the conservation of important marine and coastal biodiversity and ecosystems, while ensuring sustainable livelihoods for populations dependent on these. Under the Regional Seas conventions, particularly under their Specially Protected Areas Protocols, regional coordinated networks of marine protected areas have been established. **UN Environment will:** (i) develop science-based assessments of ecological connectivity and regional representativity to support design of marine protected area networks that maximize ecological connectivity and representation of ecological uniqueness in target regions; (ii) further develop and apply tools and guidance on marine protected areas governance to enhance management effectiveness and ensure equitable distribution of marine protected area costs and benefits among relevant stakeholders; (iii) provide targeted capacity building through regional networks of MPA managers, facilitating peer-to-peer exchanges of knowledge and good practices and (iv) work through the UN Environment-World Conservation Monitoring Centre to continually monitor the coverage and effectiveness of marine protected areas, introducing ecological effectiveness and management performance in the global statistics.
- **Measures mitigating environmental effects of fisheries on biodiversity and ecosystems:** UN Environment is expanding its collaboration with the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations on issues related to environmental aspects of fisheries and formulation of tools and guidance to support blue economic growth/sustainable blue economies. In this regard, **UN Environment will** (i) support assessment of environmental impacts of fisheries on marine and coastal ecosystems and explore innovative ways to reduce these impacts. Cooperation frameworks between the regional seas and regional fisheries bodies will be important platforms to realize this; (ii) promote wise use of the conservation measures for fisheries benefits (e.g., fisheries refugia within wider spatial planning) and explore means to engage fishing communities in implementing marine and coastal ecosystems conservation tools to aid in recovery of fish populations and maintenance of trophic structures; (iii) promote sustainable consumption and production approaches to address environmental issues by applying whole fish value chain approaches through, *inter-alia* partnership with industries and private sectors within the value chain and (iv) assist development of trade policies promoting environmental sustainability with a focus on sustainable fisheries and addressing subsidy issues.

## 9.4. Strategic Objective 4: Innovative Financing Instruments and Initiatives Facilitating Sustainable Blue Economy Transition

Traditional investments in the ocean economy have often resulted in negative impacts and externalities, damaging the health of marine and coastal ecosystems. For investments to be considered truly “green,” maintaining healthy and resilient ocean and coastal ecosystems must be a core priority. UN Environment will play an important role in facilitating innovative financing for sustainable oceans and coasts through a new ‘Sustainable Blue Economy Financing Initiative’, working in close collaboration with a range of partners and leading finance institutions. Ambition is to stimulate sustainable businesses built on healthy coastal and marine ecosystems through fostering nature-based solutions that sustain blue natural capital. Long-term investments in climate change mitigation and adaptation can safeguard resources and services provided by healthy and productive marine and coastal ecosystems toward job creation, business development and sustained economic growth overall. Through sustainable banking, insurance and investment practices, the intent is to drive a shift across ocean-based sectors to address the widely documented decline in ocean ecosystems and support development along the most sustainable pathways possible.

UN Environment will deliver the following core outputs and services:

- **Operational principles for sustainable blue economy financing:** With partners, **UN Environment will (i)** evolve and operationalize the ‘Sustainable Blue Economy Financing Principles; **(ii)** serve as institutional host for these Financing Principles through the ‘Sustainable Blue Economy Financing Initiative’ working in close collaboration with a range of partners and leading finance institutions; **(iii)** engage with the Regional Seas programmes, governments, private sector, and relevant stakeholders to identify and support Sustainable Blue Economy projects, business case identification and pipelining; **(iv)** develop business models for sustainable coastal and marine production and consumption (e.g. sustainable fisheries, eco-tourism, offshore renewable energy among others); **(v)** explore ways of mobilizing climate finance and other financing mechanisms to aid sound ecosystem-based management and restoration of vulnerable habitats; **(vi)** facilitate links to public agents, including local governments and public marine management bodies, influencing and enabling implementation of the identified and targeted projects; and **(vii)** support raising of operational grant or commercial investment funding utilizing innovative mechanisms for financing measures that enable sustainable marine and coastal resource management.

## 10. Partnerships

The scale and extent of marine and coastal management issues is beyond the resources and expertise of a single agency. Currently, agencies worldwide are working in partnership to achieve various marine and coastal management goals. In achieving the outcomes of the UN Environment Marine and Coastal Strategy, UN Environment will work both within and outside of the UN system to maintain and development new, complementary partnerships and programmes in order to move forward with the implementation of recommendations. Three types of partnerships are envisaged for the UN Environment Marine and Coastal Strategy: Operational (UN-based); Operational (Other); and Financial.

Achieving specific expected outcomes will require further cooperation from specific agencies. UN Environment will also continue working with and through national government environmental and

other agencies to achieve national activities. Building and strengthening partnerships with research institutes and non-government agencies across international, regional and national levels will also be a priority.

### **10.1. UN-based Operational Partnerships**

Through the implementation of the UN Environment Marine and Coastal Strategy, UN Environment anticipates existing partnerships, particularly within UN marine agencies participating in UN Oceans, to be strengthened. UN Oceans is a coordinating mechanism within the UN system working to strengthen cooperation of UN activities on oceans and coasts. UN Environment, who has partnered with organizations within UN Oceans on several initiatives to date, also coordinates its activities with these agencies to complement activities, optimize resources and leverage funding. Extending current partnerships to other UN agencies such as UNFCCC is also anticipated through implementation of the Strategy.

UN Environment is core member of UN-Water, which brings together over 30 UN organizations to deliver coordinated responses to the world's water-related challenges. The nexus between coastal and marine ecosystem management and the mandate of UN Water lies particularly in the delivery by UN Environment of a range of technical activities around Integrated Water Resources Management-based initiatives and SDG monitoring and reporting to assist countries combat water quality and pollution issues, restore freshwater ecosystems and their services that positively benefits to downstream ecosystems in coastal and marine environments.

### **10.2. Other Operational Partnerships**

A number of organizations outside the UN system also have marine mandates. Depending on the scale of the organization, the marine sector may comprise one of the mandates of larger national and international organisations. For the purposes of implementing the Strategy and other specific projects, UN Environment will extend existing multi-stakeholder partnerships and create new partnerships as required. Often local, national and regional organizations can provide critical implementation support, allowing UN Environment to deliver results.

### **10.3. Financial partnerships**

Global financial institutions, such as the World Bank and other development banks, have in the past provided significant financial support to marine and coastal management initiatives. Multilateral funds, such as the GEF, have been significant partners. Bilateral donors, for example governments who donate either through targeted funds or within the Environment Fund, as well as philanthropic foundations, have a specific interest in marine and coastal issues and have historically provided financial support. It is anticipated the Strategy implementation will provide opportunities to deepen and extend existing financial partnerships and create new partnerships as required.

## **11. Communications**

Effective partnerships, campaigning and public communications will drive progress toward achieving strategic goals.

## **11.1. Communication on Implementation of the Strategy**

Experiences, lessons and challenges encountered during the implementation of the strategy will be communicated to key partners, donors and Member States, such communication is considered a critical factor for the strategy. For donors and Member States, communication around the results of UN Environment's interventions is also key in order to show the Organization's added value and focus on impact.

## **11.2. Communication with the Public and Awareness-Raising**

Examples of the UN Environment's campaigns such as Clean Seas, Wild for Life, the recently launched coral reef campaign, as well as the #BeatPollution initiative, play important roles in building awareness, inspiring people to join the cause, and changing destructive practices and behavior across all sectors. Central to the campaigns is multimedia storytelling and activations to mobilize people around the issue and the solutions – where possible, showcasing the impact of UN Environment's interventions. Capacity building initiatives including training-of-trainers, master classes, along with massive online open courses, with specific focus on oceans and coastal ecosystems, have increased capacities, networking and experience-sharing during the past years.

UN Environment is tasking itself with developing and implementing a publication approach to communicate the activities and outcomes of the strategy. Monitoring of SDG targets will be strengthened by communicating the monitoring findings through a range of media and fora.

Apart from campaigns, publications, other awareness-raising activities could be achieved through training/outreach and setting up knowledge-sharing platforms.

## **12. Monitoring and Reviewing the Strategy**

An adaptive management approach will be utilized in monitoring and revising the marine and coastal strategy. The strategy is intended as a 'living document', which will be revised through regular internal review processes every two years. In these reviews the accomplishments, lessons learned, challenges, and evolving global dynamics of leadership in the marine and coastal environmental sphere will be considered. This will allow the strategy to be adapted to major environmental or political changes occurring globally. Regular reviews of achievements and challenges will not only provide an opportunity to evaluate progress, but will also allow provide communication opportunities to tell the story of UN Environment's leadership on marine and coastal environmental issues. Monitoring and revision of the marine and coastal strategy will draw on the regular Programme of Work reporting of the various marine-related Projects that have been approved by UN Environment and that lay out specific activities, outputs and outcomes in logical frameworks.