

UNEP Regional Seas SDG 14 Gap Report 2020

Context and aim

The Regional Seas Programme, a UN Environment flagship programme promotes the use of regional mechanism for the conservation of the marine and coastal environment since its establishment in 1974. It focuses on promoting regional ocean governance to deliver the global oceans agenda and respond to emerging issues, new policies and initiatives. This approach makes the Regional Seas Programme unique as it provides an opportunity for global issues to be addressed at a manageable regional scale hence its region-specific activities.

As such, UNEP Regional Seas are in a unique position to facilitate progress towards achieving national, regional and global targets that are required to meet the CBD Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework. Acting as convening and coordinating bodies, Regional Seas can help develop and implement solutions that are tailored to specific regional challenges, build capacity across a region and support action at national and regional levels. The coordinating role of the Regional Seas is particularly relevant considering the connectivity of the ocean and the resulting interdependencies between countries and different marine sectors.

The Regional Seas SDG 14 Gap Report aims to:

- a. Using best available scientific information, illustrate the progress made towards achieving SDG 14 Life Below Water (and other relevant global targets) and explore the role of Regional Seas in supporting progress. The report will focus primarily on **SDG Target 14.2.1** on proportion of national exclusive economic zones managed using ecosystem-based approaches, **SDG Target 14.5.1** on coverage of protected areas in relation to marine areas, and also **Aichi Biodiversity Target 11** to conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas by 2020.
- b. The report will provide a framework for measuring progress towards ecosystem-based management at a Regional scale, exploring the use of different area-based management measures, including Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). The degree of overlap between MPAs and critical habitats or key biodiversity features will be analysed to better understand the contribution of MPA towards ecosystem-based management. Additionally, the extent to which marine and coastal habitats and area-based management measures feature within national and regional commitments or submissions to global or regional MEAs will be explored to assess current efforts and highlight further action by Countries and/or Regional Seas to support further progress towards SDG (and other) Targets. This information may be used to contribute towards the formulation of future targets, and also serve to illustrate the important role/utility of the Regional Seas.
- c. It will explore and assess the main obstacles or challenges to Countries or Regions achieving the desired state under the SDG Targets by 2030. In particular, assessing gaps in data and information, policy and management. The report will aim to catalyse discussion relating to gaps in funding, recognising that at present, available information is limited. The main purpose of highlighting such gaps is to propose recommendations, based on the best-available scientific evidence, relating to the establishment of further commitments from Countries and Regions, for example, to enhance knowledge and information sharing through partnerships.

- d. The report will serve to support the discussion at the 2020 High-Level UN Conference to Support the Implementation of SDG 14 (life below water) in Lisbon, Portugal whose overarching theme is ‘Scaling Up Ocean Action Based on Science and Innovation for the Implementation of Goal 14: Stocktaking, Partnerships and Solutions’. The report will demonstrate the important contributions of the Regional Seas Programme to multiple programs such as the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (GPA) etc. and in supporting national actions within regional frameworks, that address regional priorities and contribute to achieving global goals and targets.

Proposed contents

The UNEP Regional Seas SDG 14 Gap Report will synthesise available scientific information and peer reviewed literature on sustainable management and protection of marine and coastal ecosystems. The literature review will focus on **area-based management measures currently applied within Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs)**, (including, but not limited to, Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), to identify key elements of their application in relation to ecosystem-based management and to what extent these measures are contributing to SDG Targets 14.2.1. Information on the **coverage of MPAs in relation to important marine and coastal areas or habitats** will also be provided, for example the degree of overlap of MPAs and EBSAs or VMEs or the overlap of MPAs with critical habitats such as seagrasses. Information will be provided at national-scale and aggregated up to regional scale to be relevant from a Regional Seas perspective. Such information will be used to help determine the extent to which Member States are contributing towards SDG target 14.5.1 and additional efforts required to meet the desired state by 2030. Where appropriate, recommendations relating to the protection of important habitats or ecosystems can then be formulated.

In addition, where information is available, a **high level overview of management effectiveness** will be provided for each region. This work will use information from Regional Seas and the UNEP-WCMC Protected Area Management Effectiveness (PAME) database currently in development as primary resources. However, it is recognised that at present, there may be data limitations. The extent of these limitations or challenges will be identified and recommended actions (for example setting of new targets, identification of funding to support data collection, or the creation of partnerships for sharing information) will be proposed to begin work to narrow data and information gaps. These could include recommendations to begin tracking management effectiveness as a dedicated target. Information on existing methods for assessing management effectiveness, and proxies used, will be collected from regional seas (where possible) and reviewed to identify key information that can be used to support recommendations.

The report will also provide an **overview of the interactions between SDG targets 14.2. and 14.5 and other SDG targets** (for example, related to subsistence agriculture/fisheries, tourism, pollution and waste, etc.) at a global scale. **Case studies will be undertaken to review Regional Seas Convention text in 3 regions to assess the inclusion of blue economy strategies** and explore how they are being adapted to consider cross-sectoral and ocean accounting principles in line with sustainable blue economies. In line with this, a review of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) submitted by Countries to the CBD in relation to Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 will also be undertaken. The report shall further review Country submissions (and any other submissions) to the CBD on Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 (so called National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans-NBSAPs). The review will explore the **extent to which NBSAPs include marine and coastal targets feature** (e.g. in

Commented [RS1]: Case studies?

relation to a healthy and productive ocean) and will identify the proposed actions or measures in relation to such targets and provide **recommendations on how these could be supported by Regional Seas to further support progress towards SDG Targets 14.2.1 and 14.5.1**. In addition, submissions to other global Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) such as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the UNFCCC, CMS, and those submitted to **Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs)** will be reviewed in the same manner as above.

The literature reviewed will focus on the **18 Regions¹ covered by UNEP Regional Seas Programme**. However, relevant information from other regions not covered by the Regional Seas will be included as necessary.

The findings from published scientific assessments of peer reviewed literature including national and regional reports to relevant global and Regional MEAs and other submissions will be supported by case studies, interviews with the Regional Seas, and visual illustrations (maps, diagrams, infographics, etc.), in the below outline.

Proposed Outline

The document will be organised in three parts:

Part 1

Provides the context for the UNEP Regional Seas SDG 14 Gap report. This will include providing an overview of the status of SDG Targets 14.2.1 and 14.5.1 region by region with a summary of the global state. The report will adopt the definition of protected areas as defined by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN; Dudley 2008) and described in the SDG metadata for indicators, while for the National EEZ, the report will adopt the zone prescribed by the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

This section will also provide an overview of the interactions between SDG targets 14.2. and 14.5 and other SDG targets (for example, related to subsistence agriculture/fisheries, tourism, pollution and waste, etc.) at a global scale. Case studies will be undertaken to review Regional Seas Convention text in 3 regions to assess the inclusion of blue economy strategies and explore how they are being adapted to consider cross-sectoral and ocean accounting principles in line with sustainable blue economies. This section will emphasise the role of Regional Seas in supporting national progress towards global and regional targets.

Part 2

Will undertake an in-depth analysis to identify the main obstacles or challenges that may hinder Countries from achieving the desired state under SDG Targets 14.2.1 and 14.5.1 by 2030. This will include the identification of gaps in knowledge and information and proposed actions to bridge these gaps (i.e. aligning with those proposed at the beginning of the Decade of Ocean Science); and gaps in policy and management within the regions, highlighting different organisational roles, responsibilities and obligations or commitments. **Where information is available, and following further discussion with Regional Seas, consideration will be given to developing an approach to identify gaps in funding to support ecosystem-based management and to identify what opportunities may exist, for example in relation to the private sector. This will set the stage for further work under a second phase.**

¹ They are, namely, Antarctic, Arctic, Baltic, Black Sea, Caspian, Eastern Africa, East Asian Seas, Mediterranean, North-East Pacific, Northwest Pacific, Pacific, Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, ROPME Sea Area, South Asian Seas, South-East Pacific, Pacific, Western Africa and Wider Caribbean.

Commented [RS2]: FAO might have useful information on this as well?

Commented [RS3]: With case studies demonstrating different aspects of each?

Commented [RS4]: Reflect on some of these considerations with the regional seas in October and see what information is available. We could then try to do this under a phased approach once we have more of an understanding on regional seas ambitions.

Fundamental questions that the report will seek to address include:

- *Which area-based management measures are more useful for supporting progress towards target 14.2.1?*
- *At the regional level, to what extent have MPAs contributed towards 14.5.1?*
- *What percentage of critical habitats or ecosystems are covered by MPAs?*
- *How effectively are MPAs being managed within the region?*
- *Based on the available information, are MPAs supporting progress towards EBM?*
- *What information is available to support assessments of progress towards SDG targets?*
- *How could information gaps be narrowed?*

Commented [RS5]: We could do a high level overview, but this would be based on protected area coverage. Could follow up with regional seas after October under a second phase.

Using available information, and recognising that there are likely data limitations, the report will aim to catalyse discussion in relation to funding to support EBM in each Region, the effectiveness of different area-based management approaches to support EBM.

[Part 3](#)

The final part of the report will identify shared challenges and best practices among Countries and/or Regions. It will outline modalities for sharing information and experience between different Countries and Regions, highlight opportunities for strengthening collaboration and enhancing shared benefits, and provide insight on how to national and regional action can be scaled up or replicated elsewhere.

The report will outline recommendations to support progress towards a healthy and productive ocean, with particular focus on SDG Targets 14.2.1 and 14.5.1. The purpose of such recommendations is to inform or catalyse concrete actions by Countries and Regional Seas, and the establishment of ambitious commitments to bring about the desired state by 2030, including through the formation of strategic partnerships.

Proposed summary outline

Part 1: Framing the context for the UNEP Regional Seas SDG 14 Gap report.

- Highlighting the important role of Regional Seas
 - Noting the connectivity of the ocean and interdependencies within and across regions;
 - Regional Seas as conveners, coordinators and catalysers of national and regional action;
 - Regional Seas as links between national and global goals, targets and indicators.
- Overview of status of SDG Targets 14.2.1 and 14.5.1 global summary and by region
- Interactions between SDG targets 14.2. and 14.5 and other SDG targets and blue economy strategies by region – 3 case studies.
- Summary using the traffic light system where possible (i.e. green for meeting the target, amber for on-track, and red for not on track) and recommendations.

Part 2: Analysis of key obstacles and challenges to achievement of SDG Targets by 2030

- This part will include a chapter on each gap
 - Policy and management gaps
 - Governance frameworks: institutional mandates, global, regional or national policies and plans, etc.
 - Recommendations
 - Data and information/knowledge gaps

- Status of data gaps, user needs (link to aspirations of UN Decade of Ocean Science and the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration)
- Data needs for effective monitoring and tracking progress towards achieving the set global targets.
- Data sharing mechanisms, partnerships, limitations etc.
- Recommendations
- Funding gaps
 - Identify approach to collecting information on— and analysis of— information on funding to support EBM, identify potential opportunities.
 - Recommendations

Part 3: Recommendations and conclusions

- Identification of shared challenges and best practices
- Modalities for sharing information and experiences between countries/regions
- Opportunities for strengthening collaboration and enhancing shared benefits and provide insight on how to scale up national and regional action.
- Summary of key recommendations, including ambitious actions by governments and other stakeholders to achieve the desired state by 2030.
- Next steps

Annex 1 – Regional Seas contributions to the SDG’s – their progress and commitments