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**United Nations Environment contribution to:
The Secretary-General's background note for the preparatory meeting of the United
Nations Conference to Support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14**

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Conference to Support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14**

18 November 2016

Introduction

Healthy oceans are integral to our life-support system at many levels. They provide wide-ranging social and economic benefits, and are crucial in targeting poverty-reduction for millions of people. Thriving oceans can ensure food and energy security, and are closely interlinked with maritime security, peace and prosperity. Healthy and resilient oceans regulate climate and provide adaptation pathways to climate change.

Nevertheless, oceans face unprecedented decline due to increasing human uses and impacts. Marine litter and micro-plastic from consumer products combined with untreated wastewater and nutrients continue to pollute our oceans. Ocean acidification, warming and changing currents disrupt ecological processes and functions. Furthermore, enhanced technologies and capabilities, combined with lack of global governance, oversight and accountability, have brought human exploitation of living and non-living ocean resources to an unprecedented level.

The good news is that we have the potential to change the course of action by addressing the challenges ocean health face. By turning them into possibilities for sustainable blue growth it can support coastal communities, as well as land-locked countries, profiting from marine resources in generations to come. Well-managed oceans can support large and growing economies.

The UN is the only mechanism with a global mandate that can catalyze coordinated actions to bolster ocean sustainability and security for future generations. UN Environment plays a central role in fostering innovating partnerships, convening key actors, supporting governance and implement environmental policies through regional coordination. Global partnerships for healthy oceans will contribute to the restoration of international peace and security, promoting human rights by addressing illegal fisheries, secure economic growth and decent jobs.

UN Environment proposes two themes for the partnership dialogue. Firstly, the fundamental theme of “regional ocean partnership”. Secondly, UN Environment further suggests “the Partnership for Land Based Pollution”.

Ecosystem based approach of marine environment The international community recognizes the ecosystem approach as the basis for sustainable management of marine environment and resources. The approach signifies that the assessment, management and governance would be based on the defined ecosystems. Goods and services emanating from functioning of these ecosystems will be sustainably used for human economic and social benefits, thus contributing

to sustainable blue economy or growth. Some of the ecosystems in the world are considered to be rich in biodiversity and high in their values for their services. These ecosystems include mangroves, coral reefs, seagrass beds, coastal tidal marshes, sea mounts, thermal vents, cold water corals, etc.

The Partnership for Regional Ocean Governance It is strongly believed that regional ocean partnership frameworks should be effectively used for the implementation and review of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Regional Seas Programme is a results-oriented ocean governance mechanism. It is recommended that the regional level implementation and follow-up should be given attention for harmonized and ecosystem-based implementation of national action for SDG14, through the existing regional inter-governmental mechanisms, such as Regional Seas programmes and regional fisheries bodies. Furthermore, the Regional Seas Programmes should be seen as a platform for wider engagement with relevant initiatives, e.g. Large Marine Ecosystems, science-policy interface, enhanced ownership from contracting Parties, and private sector engagement. Regional Bodies should be used as an implementing tool for ocean related partnerships for e.g. marine spatial planning and development of blue economy, including measuring and reporting progress towards ocean related sustainable development goals. All policy making should apply an ecosystem based approach.

The Partnership for Land Based Pollution The Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA) was adopted in 1995. The Programme provides an inter-governmental framework to assist countries in implementing their obligation under international law. The purpose is to preserve and protect the marine environment from land based pollutions, such as sewage, physical alterations and the destruction of habitat, nutrients, sediment mobilisation, persistent organic pollutants, oils, litter, heavy metals and radioactive substances.

The Programme offers technical and policy guidance, through multi-sectoral partnerships. It focuses on marine pollution in relation to three source categories; nutrient, litter and waste water. All three partnerships, the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management (GPNM), the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML) and the Global Wastewater Initiative (GW²I) have advisory capacity and engage in science-policy interface. .

The partnerships function as catalysators and platform to enhance network and further engage with relevant stakeholders, from private sector, NGOs, academia and media. Areas that need further research and policy development are in field of emerging pollutants such as micro-plastics, endocrine-disrupting compounds, and harmful algal blooms. Many of those areas require multi-disciplinary approaches, where multi-sector partnership is crucial. The future

direction for the GPA will be discussed at the 4th Intergovernmental Review Meeting in Indonesia in the second half of 2017.

APPENDIX

For each of the 10 targets under SDG:

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

Current activities towards the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources, including capacity building activities

In the area of aquaculture development UNEP under the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (GPA) is engaged in active research collaboration with IOC-UNESCO and other partners on nutrient loading from aquaculture under the GEF-Global Nutrient Cycling Project. The Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAPs) have adopted two indicators of environmental status particularly relevant to pollution from aquaculture as part of the Regional Seas Core Indicators Set. In the area of pollution from shipping some of the Regional Seas Programmes e.g. the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR) and Action Plan for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Northwest Pacific Region (NOWPAP) have developed action plans that includes monitoring and management of marine debris and other forms of pollution from shipping and fisheries activities. UNEP is actively engaged at the global level with engagement of partners on combating marine litter. The primary delivery mechanism is through the Global Partnership on Marine Litter under the GPA that has been augmented by United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) resolutions on addressing marine litter. Key areas for action have included assessment on the scope and magnitude of the problem (focus on micro-plastics), development and implementation of regional action plans, assessment of effectiveness of relevant international, regional and sub-regional governance strategies the roll-out of a global campaign on marine litter and a marine litter innovation challenge and capacity building through massive open online courses. The Regional Seas Programmes have adopted an indicator to assist quantification beached marine debris and some programmes e.g. OSPAR regulates dredging and dumping in the convention area in conjunction with the London Convention and London Protocol. UNEP is closely collaborating with the FAO in addressing abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) in coastal areas and on the high seas.

Also through the GPA UNEP and the Regional Seas Programmes through their Land-based Sources and Activities (LBSA Protocols) other pollution sources are addressed. Under the GPA two other pollution source categories, namely nutrient and wastewater loadings are also addressed. Under the GPA framework some 98 countries have prepared National Plans of Action and/or relevant national plans/strategies to address land-based pollution. UNEP has widened technical cooperation and advocacy on marine pollution through the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management (GPNM) and the Global Wastewater Initiative (GW2I). Under these partnership platforms that include governments, international agencies, private sector and academia, work has been advanced in demonstration of best practices on wastewater management in Egypt, Morocco, Tanzania, Georgia and the Caribbean,

improved nutrient management and pollution control in target areas in India and the Philippines, collaborative research, best practice and policy support and capacity development through application of tools. The GPA is engaging with countries for the convening of the 4th Inter-Governmental Review in 2017 that will set the strategic directions for the programme over the next five years. The Regional Seas Programmes have adopted indicators relevant to land-based sources of pollutions put in place comprehensive assessment and monitoring programmes in place. UNEP through the GESAMP has supported knowledge contributions on mercury in the marine environment for the Minamata Convention.

Challenges to the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development (e.g., areas where gaps exist, where more action is needed)

In the area of marine debris pollution there is a general absence of adequate scientific research, assessment, and monitoring with few reliable or accurate estimates of the nature and quantities of material involved which poses difficulties in designing and implementing cost-effective measures to reduce inputs to large marine ecosystems (LMEs). While some work has been initiated, there are gaps in scientific research to better understand the sources, amounts, fates, and impacts (specie, ecosystem and human health) of marine debris especially plastic. Data collection protocols on assessment of marine debris tend to be very different, preventing comparisons and harmonization of data across regions or timescales. There are gaps in availability of appropriate technologies and methods to detect and remove accumulations of marine debris in critical ecosystems. There are information gaps about the scale and nature of dumping of waste and other matter at sea which is further compounded by the absence of information and/or substantial under-reporting about dumping under the control of States which are subject to any formal reporting system under the London Convention and the Protocol. There are challenges in the assessment of the SDG indicator on floating marine litter and requires further development and refinement of the methodology along with building of requisite capacity. Wastewater and nutrient load pollution is still a major threat to the ocean. New wastewater treatment technologies and processes developed may have the ability to minimize problems, but there can be gaps in the capacity to apply these newer processes, often because of the costs involved. This is particularly true in developing countries. Information is lacking on the fate of heavy metals and other hazardous substances that are sometimes mixed in with wastewater discharges. There are gaps in the educating farmers, and industry and other stakeholders on more sustainable practices that reduce the waste discharges and nutrients to the environment. In many parts of the world there is absence of any form of regular, systematic assessment of the impact of land-based inputs. Where assessments do occur they tend to be 'one-off', and not in forms which enable them to be assembled into a wider, continuous assessments. Many of the Regional Seas programmes have adopted protocols for land-based sources of pollution and related action plans however the level of implementation of these protocols is not well-known in many regions.

Opportunities (e.g. interlinkages of SDG14 with other relevant SDGs)

The issue of pollution has direct linkages to several of the SDGs. In consideration of the connectedness of the terrestrial to marine ecosystems in terms of pollution, the nexus between land-based activities and developmental agendas are highly relevant. SDG2 that incorporates elements of sustainable production of food has connections to sustainable nutrient management, use efficiency and reduction of nutrient pollution. SDG6 incorporates minimization of pollution of freshwaters which convey pollutants to marine environment. SDG12 on sustainable consumption and production is highly relevant to incorporation of circular economy principles and practices that touch on higher resource use efficiency, recycling and minimization of harmful discharges to the environment. Climate change influences in the scope of SDG13 are important as pollution entering the marine environment may introduce compounding challenges to marine ecosystems associated with changes in ocean chemistry in terms of rising acidity and temperatures. The emphasis will be on building more resilient eco-systems based adaptation measures but also incorporation of mitigation measures. SDG17 on building partnerships continues to be of paramount importance. In this area, UNEP emphasizes south-south cooperation with transfer of relevant technology solutions to areas of need through the myriad of partnerships the agency is engaged with.

Development of partnerships (Stocktaking of existing partnerships and opportunities for synergies and collaboration, new partnerships to address gaps, in particularly capacity gaps)

The main partnership mechanisms for addressing marine pollution will be through the GPA in close association with the Regional Seas Programmes. The GPA Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML) will be a front-line avenue for bridging the science-policy interface and assist catalyze innovation in addressing marine litter. The GPA-GPML will continue to assist in the formation of national and regional action plans for marine litter embedded within the Regional Seas Programmes that will augment land-based sources of pollution protocols where they exist. Cooperation between UNEP and FAO in respect to addressing ALDFG worldwide will continue. Wider partners and partnerships and will include IMO and Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI) among others. Cooperation will continue with IOC-UNESCO in the development of methodologies of associated with the SDG target 14.1 indicator on floating marine debris particularly at the LME scale in transboundary waters to augment existing national measures such as indices of washed-up marine debris. The GPA Global Partnership on Nutrient Management (GPNM) will continue support work to look at the fate of reactive nitrogen and phosphorus in the marine

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