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**Discussion Paper on
the Regional Seas Strategic Directions (RSSD) 2017-2020**

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Background

1. The Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAPs) have, since 2004, set collective Strategic Directions (RSSDs) lasting four years. However, there have been concerns over the effectiveness of the RSSDs. Through the analysis nine major problems have been identified: (1) No commitments on the sides of RSCAPs and UNEP on the implementation of the RSSDs; (2) No additional resources were allocated for the implementation of the RSSDs; (3) No clear records and analyses to show whether each RSCAP has brought the RSSDs to the Governing Body; (4) Some of the RSCAPs recognise that RSSDs do not bind them; (5) No formal reporting mechanism existed for the RSCAPs with regards to the achievement of the RSSDs; (6) No profound evaluation and analysis existed before formulating the next strategy; (7) The action points are obscure and any activities could easily fall under several action points; (8) The strategic directions might not be reflected in the Programme of Work of each RSCAP; (9) Progress on each strategic point is not measurable because no clear quantifiable goals have been set.
2. UNEP recognizes the issue and proposes to have a discussion on the future of RSSDs to make them more actionable for the RSCAPs, especially in the context of formulating the next RSSD (2017-2020).

Discussion points

3. The participants of the Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAPs) are kindly invited to take note of the attached discussion document and consider the following main questions:
 - a. How the future RSSDs should be to effectively facilitate the work of RSCAPs?
 - b. What elements should we include in the next RSSD (2017-2020)? (Please refer to Chapter 4)

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Chapter 1: Regional Seas Strategic Directions

Introduction

The second session of the UNEP Governing Council (GC) in 1974 established the UNEP Regional Seas Programme. Since then, fourteen (14) Regional Seas Conventions and Actions Plans (RSCAPs) have been created under the auspices of UNEP. UNEP currently administers seven (7) RSCAPs (Abidjan Convention, Barcelona Convention, Cartagena Convention, Coordinating Body of the Seas of East Asia, Nairobi Convention, Northwest Pacific Action Plan and Teheran Convention).

The first Regional Seas Strategic Directions (RSSD) was created for the period 2004 -2007. It was developed based on the Resolution 22/2 III A of the UNEP GC. The Governing Council requested UNEP Executive Director to incorporate the following strategic elements in the Regional Seas' programmes of work;

“1. Requests the Executive Director to encourage and support regional seas conventions and action plans to incorporate the following strategic elements in their programmes of work and bring those elements to the attention of their respective Member States through their governing bodies and other relevant forums:

- a) Use of regional seas conventions and action plans as an instrument for sustainable development, such as the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development of the Barcelona Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean;*
- b) Enhance countries' "ownership" over their respective regional seas conventions and action plans;*
- c) Increase participation of civil society and industry with the regional seas conventions and action plans in the development and implementation of programmes and partnerships;*
- d) Achieve financial sustainability;*
- e) Utilize the regional seas conventions and action plans as a platform for the regional implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and global programmes and initiatives;*
- f) Strengthen horizontal cooperation as well as possible twinning arrangements between regional seas conventions and action plans;*
- g) Strengthen cooperation between existing regional seas programmes and initiatives within or outside the United Nations system, seeking synergies among them, as appropriate;*
- h) Strengthen links, cooperation and coordination with such international organizations as the International Maritime Organization, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Convention on Biological Diversity, and support cooperation among multilateral environmental agreements;*
- i) Strengthen monitoring and assessment activities and ensure that regional seas secretariats are fully involved in the development of the process of establishment of the Global Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment and of the Global International Waters Assessment;*
- j) Continue the administrative support from the United Nations Environment Programme headquarters to regional seas administration;*
- k) Provide legal support upon request;*
- l) Develop outreach, information and public awareness;*

- m) *Contribute to the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States;*"

Thus, the first RSSD 2004 -2007 was developed in order to effectively address the priorities identified in UNEP GC Decision 22/2 III A, as well as to contribute to the relevant targets of Agenda 21, the World Summit on Sustainable Development Plan of Implementation and the Millennium Development Goals.

The original aim of the strategic directions was stated as following: *"The strategic directions... aims at strengthening the Regional Seas Programme (RSP) at global level. They are intended to complement the implementation of the programme of work of the individual Regional Seas, as well as the decisions of the governing bodies of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Programmes. They provide an opportunity to improve efficiency, individually and collectively, in the RSPs, increase cooperation, and incorporate new elements in future programme of work"*¹.

The following two periods (2008-2012 and 2013 - 2016) explained that the aim of the RSSDs is to strengthen the previous RSSD, stating as follows: *"The global strategic directions...are formulated to continue and further enhance the strategic directions for 2004 – 2007, aimed at strengthening the Regional Seas Programmes at the global level"*² and *"The global strategic directions...are formulated to continue and further enhance the Strategic Directions for 2008 – 2012, aimed at strengthening the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans at the global level."*³ To date, it is not well reported whether the three RSSDs have met their objective of strengthening RS programmes at the global level.

In 2013, the UNEP GC Decision 27/6 on Oceans further emphasized the role of RSSD and requested the Executive Director to coordinate the Regional Seas' work within the RSSD 2013 – 2016, stating as follows:

" 2. Invites member States of existing regional seas conventions and action plans:

- (a) To take a more proactive role in all stages of the implementation of the programmes of work of their respective regional seas conventions and action plans and to develop "ownership" of those conventions and action plans;*
- (b) To utilize the regional seas conventions and action plans as platforms for the regional implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and global programmes and initiatives;*
- (c) To strengthen the capacity necessary for the effective implementation of the existing regional seas conventions and action plans;*
- (d) To foster cross-sectoral governmental participation through the involvement of all relevant national ministries;*

¹ UNEP (2003) Regional Seas Strategic Directions for 2004 - 2007

² UNP(DEPI)/RS.9/6 Global Strategic Directions For The Regional Seas Programmes 2008-2012: Enhancing The Role Of The Regional Seas Conventions And Action Plans

³ UNEP (2013) Strategic Directions 2013 - 2016

3. Requests the Executive Director to further encourage and promote the United Nations Environment Programme’s work on oceans and to incorporate the work of the existing regional seas conventions and action plans into the wider framework of the mid-term strategy 2014–2017 and its work programme;

4. Requests the Executive Director, as appropriate and within available resources and within the mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme and with due respect for the autonomy of the decision-making bodies of the existing regional seas conventions and action plans to coordinate their work, **as contained in the regional seas strategic directions 2013–2016**” (emphasis added)

However, there have been some concerns that the current RSSDs have not been effective to guide the programme of work of RSCAPs. Thus, the future RSSDs need to be more actionable and relevant to the work of Regional Seas in order to be able to serve their purpose.

Historical development of RSSD

Three periods of RSSD

There have been three periods of RSSDs: (i) 2004-2007; (ii) 2008 – 2012; and (iii) 2013 – 2016. The Annex 1 summarises the main strategic items described in the RSSDs of each period.

Except for the period 2008 -2012, detailed actions points were defined both for the RSCAPs and UNEP. During 2008 -2012, actions points were defined for the RSCAPs and governing bodies. The first period (2004 – 2007) described action points assigned to Chairs of COP/IGM in addition to the RSCAPs and UNEP action points. The Table 1 described the parties to which each RSSD assigned action points.

The RSSDs set collective goals toward which UNEP and RSCAPs in support of their respective governing bodies work together. However, each RSP formulates its programme of work which is adopted by respective contracting parties. The RSSDs were, thus, meant to be a guiding document in formulating future RSCAP programmes of work to achieve the common goals identified.

	RSCAPs	UNEP	Chair of COP / governing body
2004 – 2007	+	+	+
2008 – 2012	+	-	+
2013 – 2016	+	+	-

Table 1: Action points assigning to each party during the three periods of RSSD (+: action points assigned, -: No action points assigned)

Progress reports

UNEP has produced progress reports on the action points assigned by the RSSDs as is shown in Table 2. However, the reports have focused on the completion of each action point assigned to UNEP and thus overall analyses on the achievement of the RSSDs have not been provided. As a result, it is not clear to what extent UNEP has contributed to the achievement of each RSSD and what could be done to improve the situation to achieve the original objective of strengthening RSCAPs' presence at the global level.

On the other hand, there have been no formal progress reports from the 18 Regional Seas except the annual presentations made at Global Meetings. Therefore, the degree of achievements by individual Regional Seas with regards to the action points specified in RSSDs is hardly documented. In addition, it is not clear to what extent the RSCAPs coordinated their activities within the RSSD 2013-2016 as requested by the UNEP GC 27/2.

RSSD period	Name of the progress report
2004 – 2007	UNEP (2005) (2006) Progress in Implementing the Global Regional Seas Strategic Directions
2008 – 2012	Unidentified
2013 – 2016	UNEP (2014) Progress in the implementation of the Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2013-2016

Table 2: Progress reports of the implementation of RSSDs

Recurrent issues in the three RSSDs

As it can be observed from Annex 1, that over time the RSSDs have shifted away from the original strategic components defined in UNEP GC decisions 22/2 and incorporated UNEP's priority areas of work such as the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA) and Green Economy. It reflects the shift in focused thematic areas over time both in UNEP and RSCAPs.

On the other hand, several issues recurrently appeared in RSSDs (Table 4). For example, ecosystem-based management has always been listed as a strategy over the three periods. However, it is not clear whether each consecutive period was an incremental step towards improved implementation of ecosystem-based management due to a lack of specific targets and milestones and an evaluation of progress.

Theme	2004 - 2007	2008 - 2012	2013 - 2016
Sustainability of Regional Seas Programme	Strategy 2	Strategy 1	-
Visibility of Regional Seas Programme	Strategy 3	Strategy 9	-
Ecosystem-based management	Strategy 6	Strategy 5	Strategy 1
Implementation of GPA	-	Strategy 2	Strategy 2
Blue economy	-	Strategy 8	Strategy 4
Cooperation amongst RS programmes and	Strategy 5	Strategy 7	Strategy 6

with other MEAs and UN agencies			
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Table 3: Recurrent themes in the RSSD over the three periods

Problems of the previous RSSDs

The following nine major problems of the RSSDs over the three periods were identified through the above analysis:

1. No commitments on the sides of RSCAPs and UNEP on the implementation of the RSSDs
2. No additional resources were allocated for the implementation of the RSSDs
3. No clear records and analyses to show whether RSCAPs have brought the RSSDs to the Governing Bodies
4. Some of the RSCAPs recognise that RSSDs do not bind them
5. No formal reporting mechanism existed for the RSCAPs with regards to the achievement of the RSSDs
6. No profound evaluation and analysis existed before formulating the next strategy
7. The action points are obscure and any activities could easily fall under several action points
8. The strategic directions might not be reflected in the Programme of Work of each RSCAP
9. Progress on each strategic point is not measurable because no clear quantifiable goals have been set

These problems led to concerns over the effectiveness of RSSDs. As it has been over ten (10) years since the initial creation of the RSSD in 2004 and the situation surrounding the RS programmes has changed, it is valuable to examine these problems and consider future actions.

预览已结束，完整报告链接和二维码如下：

https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/云报告?reportId=5_11719

