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# OUT OF THE BLUE

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**THE VALUE OF SEAGRASSES  
TO THE ENVIRONMENT AND TO PEOPLE**

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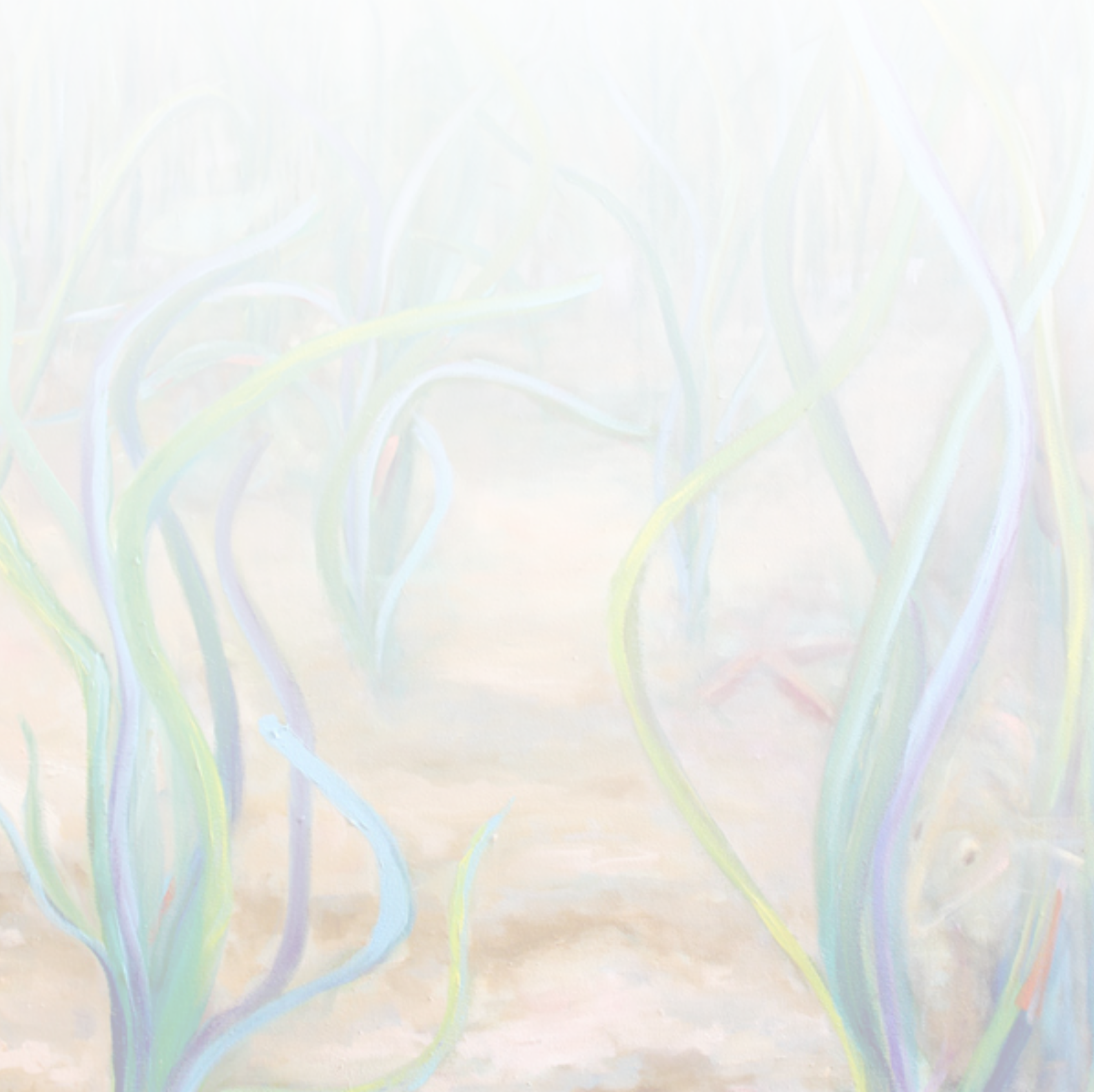
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# Foreword

Seagrasses are one of the most valuable coastal and marine ecosystems on the planet, providing a range of critical environmental, economic and social benefits.

They provide food and livelihoods to hundreds of millions of people, and they support rich biodiversity, with their sediments constituting one of the planet's most efficient stores of carbon.

However coastal development and population growth, rising pollution and climate change, are threatening the survival of this vital ecosystem. This global synthesis report, which is the first of its kind, aims to improve our understanding of the value of seagrasses and provide recommendations to protect and manage them.

One billion people live within 100km of seagrass meadows and 20 per cent of the world largest fisheries depend on these ecosystems. Emissions from loss of seagrass are estimated to contribute up to 299 Tg carbon to the atmosphere per year.

At a time of climate emergency, the worrying decline of global seagrass area, estimated to be about 30 per cent since the late nineteenth century, requires a range of actions and policies that recognize the multiple benefits of seagrass ecosystems.

Maintaining the health of seagrass ecosystems is important for healthy marine life and for healthy people around the world. In doing so, they represent powerful nature-based solutions to the climate challenge and sustainable development.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Inger Andersen'. The signature is stylized and cursive.

**Inger Andersen**  
Executive Director

United Nations Environment Programme

# Preface: Seagrasses – their health, our wealth

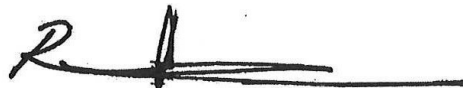
Seagrasses are the forgotten ecosystem, despite being ubiquitous along coastlines worldwide and found in 159 countries on six continents, covering an area over 300,000 km<sup>2</sup>. Swaying gently beneath the surface of the ocean, seagrasses are too often out of sight and out of mind, overshadowed by colourful coral reefs and mighty mangroves. When seagrasses are noticed, they are sometimes regarded as a nuisance, though in fact they offer huge value to humankind.

Seagrass meadows are of fundamental importance to nature and people. For some 100 million years, they have protected coastal waters, the creatures that live there, and more recently us, humans. Seagrasses are among the most productive natural habitats on land or sea: they purify water, they protect us from storms, they provide food to hundreds

of millions of people, and they support rich biodiversity, with their sediments constituting one of the planet's most efficient stores of carbon.

In light of everything seagrasses do for people and nature, protecting and restoring them is vital. Seagrass ecosystems can help us fulfil many of the international environmental commitments that are necessary to save our planet, from the Sustainable Development Goals to the Paris Agreement to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

It is time to boost the profile of this underappreciated marine ecosystem and shine a spotlight on the many ways that seagrasses can help us solve our biggest environmental challenges.



**Ronald Jumeau**

Permanent Representative to the United Nations and  
Ambassador for Climate Change, Republic of Seychelles

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