

# OCEANS AND COASTS BRAINSTORMING

Background Information Package

**OCEANS AND COASTS  
RELATED PROGRAMMES  
IN UNEP  
and in other  
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS  
AND PROCESSES**

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## Executive summary

This report serves as a background information document, containing an inventory of all current UNEP activities as well as other international organizations and processes; as they relate to oceans, coasts and islands. It is a useful consideration for the two-day brainstorming meeting aiming at the development of a comprehensive and integrated strategy for all UNEP Oceans, Coasts and Islands-related programmes. The meeting will review and discuss UNEP's programmes and activities addressing the marine and coastal environment, and contribute to UNEP's Medium Term Strategic Framework.

UNEP has been given a lead role in environmental issues as they relate to the sustainable development of oceans and coasts. The Regional Seas Programme, the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA), support to Small Island Developing States (SIDS) within the framework of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS and the Mauritius Strategy, and attention to coral reef issues, are currently implemented and operate under the aegis of DEPI. Other UNEP Divisions also carry out important coastal and ocean-related programmes. It is therefore crucial to create maximum synergies and complementarities among these programmes and activities and discuss possible directions for coordination, coherence and consistency.

Chapter one dwells on the UNEP **Division of Environmental Policy Implementation (DEPI)** and its role in implementation of environmental policies and management practices. The division carries out a range of activities on oceans and coasts through the Regional Seas Programme (RSP), the global programme of action for the protection of the marine environment from land-based activities (GPA), Coral Reef Unit (CRU), and the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) programme.

The first section of this chapter outlines the history of the **Regional Seas Programme** since its formation in 1974 by the UNEP GC and the milestones it has achieved to-date, highlighting the development of regional programmes, conventions and action plans. It also highlights synergies with international processes over many years of programme implementation and wraps up with the history of the annual Global Meetings of the Regional Seas secretariats.

The section goes further to elaborate on the major tasks and objectives of the Regional Seas conventions and action plans and how the current six strategic directions (2004-2007) aim at strengthening the regional seas programme at the global level while complementing the implementation of work programmes of individual RS conventions and action plans. The main focus areas within the strategic directions encompass partnerships, Multi-lateral Environmental Agreements (MEA's), financing advice, legal advice, marine and coastal biodiversity, marine litter/debris, Large Marine Ecosystems (LME's), and ecosystem approach as well as outreach and awareness.

Some of the challenges that RSP aims to address in future include: further strengthening of individual RSP's; provision of financing and legal advice for sustainability; development and implementation of the global initiative on marine litter, and the development of new RSP's in areas that are not covered with the programme.

Under the auspice of the Regional Seas Programme, the section goes further to highlight the development of six regional seas programmes and offices that are directly administered by UNEP and elaborates on the important work of Regional Coordinating Units (RCU's) in supporting the implementation of the priority project activities in these regions. These Regional Programmes include: East Asian Seas (**COBSEA**), North-West Pacific Action Plan (**NOWPAP**), Mediterranean Action Plan (**MAP**), **Nairobi Convention**, **Abidjan Convention**, and the Caribbean Environment Programme (**CEP**). For each RSP, the history, major tasks and objectives, current situation and future challenges is mentioned in detail.

The second section delineates the **Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from land-based activities (GPA)**. The GPA was adopted in 1995 by 108 governments and the European commission and is designed to be a source of conceptual and practical guidance to prevent, reduce, control or eliminate marine degradation resulting from land-based activities. It explicitly addresses the linkages between freshwater, coastal and marine environments. Its implementation is the task of national governments and UNEP facilitates its implementation at the international, regional and national levels. The 1<sup>st</sup> intergovernmental review meeting (IGR-1) held in 2001 was instrumental in shifting focus from planning to action and developing the GPA as a tool for furthering ecosystem approaches to coasts, oceans and island management. The 2<sup>nd</sup> intergovernmental review meeting (IGR-2), 2006 reinforced the catalytic role of the GPA

and its crucial role in promoting the GPA at all levels and strengthening the RSP and other regional mechanisms to facilitate its implementation. The IGR-2 discussed and reviewed problems encountered and lessons learned, and identified practical solutions that can be scaled up in other countries and at the regional and global levels. The key outcomes of IGR-2 were: (1) prioritizing focus on mainstreaming and integration, financing and legislative and institutional strengthening; (2) the need for the GPA to be flexible and innovative for adaptation to new challenges; (3) the partnership approach as key to success; (4) Beijing declaration which was endorsed by governments and gives a new direction with great emphasis on national and local-level action supported by a call for creating sustainable financial mechanisms, economic valuation of goods and services provided by oceans, coasts and watersheds, local participation and integrated approaches in particular linking freshwater and coastal management.

Section three discusses the **Coral Reef Unit (CRU)** which was established in the year 2000 to serve as focal point on all matters related to coral reefs within the UN system. CRU implements UNEP Governing Council (GC) decisions on coral reefs and from 2003-onwards, has initiated and coordinated UNEP's work on deep waters and high sea biodiversity and ecosystems (including cold-water corals).

The major tasks and objectives of CRU include: (a) activities in tropical, warm-water reefs, where main activities involve provision of policy support and facilitation of site-based activities and work of UNEP and UNEP partners. Some of its major achievements in this area include: representation of UNEP within ICRI, ICRAN and GCRMN; review of international coral reef policies and frameworks within and outside the UN system; administration of annual US counterpart contributions; response to the South Asia Tsunami and activities in South Asian coral reefs. (b) Activities in cold-water coral reefs include: publication of several reports i.e. "Cold-water Coral Reefs: Out of sight – no longer out of mind", "Ecosystems and Biodiversity in Deep Waters and High Seas", "Seamounts, Deep Sea Corals and Fisheries"; production of a TV documentary "Cold Coral Deep"; development of the Global Cold-water Coral Database and GIS; and is in partnership with UNEP in "Hotspot Ecosystems Research in the Margins of European Seas (HERMES)" project.

CRU like other entities faces the challenge of lack of stability and continuity of work and non-guaranteed maintenance of partnerships as they don't have enough funds for staff but only for activities and projects. One area that presents a window of opportunity for CRU is provision of answers on how human activities have impacted the deep waters and high seas including the effects of climate change.

It should be noted that the current discussions within the UN GA and other intergovernmental organizations show that there is yet no consensus between governments on the areas of responsibility and legal competence of the various organizations within and outside the UN system regarding high seas issues.

The last section of this chapter is a summary of the **Small Island Developing States (SIDS)** programme which was adopted by UNEP's GC 22 in decision 22/13 which called for the strengthening of institutional capacity of SIDS through provision of dedicated technical and financial support and the provision of support for the development and execution of partnership initiatives as well as requesting for increased funding for activities related to SIDS. Resolution 23/5 of UNEP/GC 23 requested UNEP ED to strengthen UNEP's activities in SIDS on a tailored and regional basis and to ensure that these contribute to the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. Relevant regional offices including ROAP, ROA and ROLAC are currently delivering activities in SIDS. UNEP needs to strengthen its presence in SIDS in order to ensure its credibility and visibility in these areas.

The major UNEP task as regards SIDS is to contribute to internalize the Mauritius Strategy within its programme of work and contribute to its implementation. The main challenge is to ensure that UNEP activities take into consideration SIDS vulnerabilities and tailors its activities to SIDS specificities.

Chapter 2 highlights other UNEP Divisions which also undertake significant activities in the areas of oceans, coasts and small islands. These include the **Division of Early Warning and Assessment (DEWA)** whose water unit is water unit is responsible for the assessment of the world's water resources where it carries out comprehensive assessments of world's freshwater and coastal/marine water resources in an integrated manner in collaboration with partners, UN collaborators, NGOs, universities, governments etc. **GRID-Arendal**, provides analysis and supports communication on issues such as climate change, environment and poverty, environment and security, the urban environment and sustainable development through education. They lead the UNEP Shelf Programme, which aims to help developing States and SIDS with data and other related aspects of Article 76 of the Convention of the Law of the Sea. The programme deals with coastal states in need of establishing the outer limits of their continental shelf. **UNEP-WCMC** has been addressing marine and coastal biodiversity issues for over twenty years, from the Polar region to the tropics, and from coastlines to the shallow and deep seas.

Its One Ocean Programme seeks to synthesise, analyse and disseminate marine and coastal biodiversity knowledge which not only provides the basis for decision making, but advances the understanding and debate regarding the sustainable use and development of marine and coastal goods and services.; **Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (DTIE)** whose mission is to encourage decision makers in government, local authorities and industry to develop and implement policies, strategies and practices that are cleaner and safer, make efficient use of natural resources, ensure environmentally sound management of chemicals, reduce pollution and risks for humans and the environment, enable implementation of conventions and international agreements, and incorporate environmental costs.; **Division of Environmental Conventions and Law (DELIC)**, whose freshwater and marine law and governance unit is newly established, and has therefore not developed a costed workplan. However the activities herein will form the basic framework of the work of DELIC relating to environmental law, governance and negotiations.; **Division of Global Environment Facility Coordination (DGEF)** coordinates UNEP's unique role and activities in the Global Environment Facility; **Division of Regional Cooperation (DRC)**, is mandated to strengthen regionalization while ensuring a central coordinating role of headquarters. The Coordination Office together with the six regional offices constitutes the Division for Regional Cooperation (DRC).

Chapter 3 briefly outlines the **UN Division of Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS)**, and the important processes that have been initiated under it including the **annual reports of the Secretary General on the Law of the Sea** which provide the GA with a comprehensive overview of developments relating to the Law of the Sea. These reports are usually considered by the **Open-ended Informal Consultation Process (UNICPOLOS)** who facilitate the annual review by the GA of developments in ocean affairs and who also suggest particular issues for consideration by the GA with an emphasis on identifying areas for coordination and cooperation at the intergovernmental and interagency levels. The **UN Ad-hoc Open Ended Informal Working Group** studies issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of National jurisdiction.

Chapter 4 describes UN specialized agencies and programmes, that undertake activities relevant to marine and coastal affairs. **UN Water** is an important UN mechanism for follow-up of the water-related decisions reached at the 2002 WSSD and the MDG's and provides support to member states in their efforts towards achieving progress in these aspects. On the other hand, **UN-Oceans** (previously referred to as Oceans and Coastal Areas Network) serve to establish an effective, transparent and regular inter-agency coordination mechanism on ocean and coastal issues within the UN system.

The **Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC)** of UNESCO, founded in 1960, works to promote international cooperation and coordination of programmes in research, services and capacity building in oceans and coastal areas and to apply that knowledge for the improvement of management, sustainable development, the protection of the marine environment, and the decision-making processes of its member states; alongside collaborating with international organizations concerned with the work of the commission.

**International Maritime Organization (IMO)** is mandated with the main task of "providing machinery for cooperation among Governments in the field of governmental regulation and practices relating to technical matters of all kinds affecting shipping engaged in international trade; to encourage and facilitate the general adoption of the highest practicable standards in matters concerning maritime safety, efficiency of navigation and prevention and control of marine pollution from ships". The Organization is also empowered to deal with administrative and legal matters related to these purposes. The **Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC)** is IMO's senior technical body on marine pollution related matters. The "Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter 1972", the **"London Convention"** for short, aims to protect the marine environment from human activities by promoting the effective control of all sources of marine pollution and to take all practicable steps to prevent pollution of the sea by dumping of wastes and other matter.

The **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** leads international efforts to fight hunger by acting as a neutral forum for negotiation and policy debate between member states and is specifically mandated to raise levels of nutrition, improve agricultural productivity, better the lives of rural populations and contribute to the growth of the world economy. FAO has broad expertise in global fisheries and aquaculture ranging from information and statistics to economics and policy to management and conservation to products and industry.

The **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** is UN's global development network which advocates for change and connects countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help build a better life. By having a resident representative in each country office, UNDP seeks to ensure most effective use of the UN and international aid resources, as their representative also serves as the resident coordinator of development activities for the UN system as a whole.

The **United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA)** houses the **UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)**, which was established in 1992 by the UN General Assembly to ensure effective follow-up of United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as the Earth Summit. The commission is responsible for reviewing progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 and the RIO Declaration on Environment and Development; as well as providing guidance to follow up the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) at the local, national, regional and international levels.

The **World Bank** with its capacity to combine policy dialogue at the highest level with specific investments is well placed to work with international agencies and analytically with governments in key fishing nations to assist in reaching the goals of effective sustainable fisheries management mainly through the biological, economic, and social domains. The bank has established a new Global Program on Fisheries (PROFISH), a programming and funding partnership between key fishery sector donors, international financial institutions, developing countries, stakeholder organizations, and international agencies.

The **Global Environment Facility (GEF)** is an international financing mechanism that addresses global environmental issues while supporting national sustainable development initiatives. Recently, GEF has formulated a new strategy which aims at boosting funding, supporting programs (not projects), and supporting a regional approach.

Chapter 5 mentions the various conventions and agreements that exist including those directly administered by UNEP and other marine related ones. The **Convention on Biological Biodiversity (CBD)** is a legally binding commitment, ratified by majority of countries; to conserve biological diversity, to sustainably use its components and to share equitably the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources. Parties to the convention agreed on the “**Jakarta Mandate on Marine and Coastal Biological Diversity**”, a program of action for implementing the convention.

The **Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)** aims to conserve terrestrial, marine and avian migratory species throughout their range. It is an intergovernmental treaty, concluded under the aegis of UNEP, concerned with the conservation of wildlife and habitats on a global scale. Under the auspices of the CMS, two regional agreements have been established: **ASCOBANS** (Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas) and Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area (**ACCOBAMS**).

The **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES)** is an international agreement between governments. Its aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. Among the marine organisms addressed under this convention include the endangered Hawksbill Turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) and Sturgeons which are among the world's most valuable wildlife resources.

The **Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal** is the most comprehensive global environmental agreement on hazardous and other wastes.

Among the other marine related conventions, we have the **RAMSAR Convention** which is an intergovernmental treaty which provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources and various IMO conventions i.e. the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as modified by the Protocol of 1978 relating thereto (**MARPOL 73/78**); International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-operation, 1990 (**OPRC**); and the **International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships Ballast Water & Sediments**.

Chapter 6 wraps up the programmes segment with brief descriptions of other related programmes, processes and declarations of essence to coastal and marine environment and resources. The **RIO Declaration on Environment and Development** and **Agenda 21** agreed in 1992 to establish the basic principles for sustainable development and endorsed the concepts of the precautionary approach and the polluter pays principles. In chapter 17 of Agenda 21, global leaders recognized the necessity of adopting an integrated, precautionary and ecosystem-based approach to oceans management. The **Johannesburg Declaration** recognized the leadership role of the United Nations as the most universal and representative organization in the world, which is best placed to promote sustainable development. The **World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)** aimed at achieving a number of specific goals and targets, inter alia, to reduce the rate of loss of biodiversity by 2010, encourage application by 2010 of the ecosystem approach and to establish representative networks of marine protected areas by 2012.

The **Global Forum on Oceans, Coasts and Islands** serves as a multi-stakeholder forum for cross-sectoral discussion, policy analyses, and mobilization of knowledge and other resources to achieve the full implementation of international agreements related to Oceans, Coasts, and Small Island Developing States by bringing together leading experts from governments, intergovernmental and international organizations, NGO's, private sector, and academic and scientific institutions.

In addition to the three processes mentioned earlier in Chapter 3 DOALOS, the **International Seabed Authority (ISA)** was established in 1982 to administer the seabed "Area" beyond national jurisdiction and its solid, liquid or gaseous mineral resources, which are recognized under UNCLOS as the "common heritage of mankind." The ISA is to oversee resource development, distribute the benefits arising from activities in the Area, and ensure that the marine environment is protected from any harmful effects which may arise during mining operations.

The **UN Atlas of the Oceans** is an internet portal providing information relevant to the sustainable development of the oceans. It is designed for policy-makers who need to become familiar with ocean issues and for scientists, students and resource managers who need access to databases and approaches to sustainability.

The **IUCN Global Marine Programme** provides vital linkages for the Union and its members to all the IUCN activities that deal with marine issues, including projects and initiatives of the regional offices and the 6 IUCN Commissions. Its co-ordination role is above and beyond the policy development and thematic guidance that it undertakes to provide to assist governments, communities and NGOs alike. In addition, IUCN, with leadership and support from the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) stages **World Park Congresses (WPC)** every 10 years for the benefit of the conservation community and the world at large. The Congress brings together the largest global assembly of protected area specialists, managers and experts to focus on the state of the planet's protected areas, the challenges they face and the opportunities before them.

To wrap up the document, there are four annexes attached at the end where **Annex 1** highlights achievements/progress attained by individual RSPs since the year 2002; **Annex2** outlines in detail the UNEP water policy and strategy while **Annex 3** briefly touches on the European Union marine strategy aimed at saving Europe's seas and oceans. **Annex 4** titled "Climate Change as a Global Challenge" is a summary note on the Informal Thematic Debate of the General Assembly.

Among the outcomes that the meeting aims to attain include: reaching a common understanding of the UNEP Oceans, Coasts and Islands-related programmes; recommendations for a coherent, synergistic and complementary framework to implement and deliver all of UNEP's programmes and activities in the field of oceans, coasts and islands, taking into account the conceptual and operational principles that inform the updated UNEP Water Policy and Strategy; and elements for the development of UNEP Strategy on Oceans, Coasts and Islands, which will constitute an input to UNEP's Medium Term Strategic Framework.

Indeed, this meeting is timely and it provides a unique opportunity for UNEP to strengthen its position and role as one of the key international organizations which provides governments and stakeholders with factual, objective and sound information and policy advice on coastal and marine issues.





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