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Compilation of the resolutions of the Second Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, which are relevant to the Regional Seas programmes

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United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme
Second session
Nairobi, 23–27 May 2016

2/4. Role, functions and modalities for United Nations Environment Programme implementation of the SAMOA Pathway as a means of facilitating achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations Environment Assembly,

Reaffirming General Assembly resolution 70/202 of 1 December 2015, which reaffirmed the Declaration of Barbados[1] and the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States,[2] the Mauritius Declaration[3] and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States,[4] the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway[5] and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg Plan of Implementation),[6] including chapter VII, on the sustainable development of small island developing States,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 66/288 of 27 July 2012 on the outcome document of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want," in which the General Assembly, among other things, called for the convening in 2014 of a third international conference on small island developing States,

Taking into account that Member States called for the strengthening of the United Nations system to support small island developing States in keeping with the multiple ongoing and emerging challenges faced by those States in achieving sustainable development,[7]

Reaffirming General Assembly resolution 69/15 of 14 November 2014, in which the General Assembly endorsed the SAMOA Pathway, adopted at the third International Conference on Small

[1] *Report of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Bridgetown, Barbados, 25 April–6 May 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.I.18 and corrigenda), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

[2] Ibid, annex II.

[3] *Report of the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Port Louis, Mauritius, 10–14 January 2005* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.05.II.A.4 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

[4] Ibid., annex II.

[5] Resolution 69/15, annex.

[6] *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August–4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 2, annex.

[7] "The future we want", para. 179.

Island Developing States, which inter alia reaffirms that "small island developing States remain a special case for sustainable development in view of their unique and particular vulnerabilities and that they remain constrained in meeting their goals in all three dimensions of sustainable development" and recognizes "the ownership and leadership of small island developing States in overcoming some of these challenges", while stressing that, "in the absence of international cooperation, success will remain difficult",

Recalling the outcome document of the ministerial segment of the first United Nations Environment Assembly for the institutional strengthening of the United Nations Environment Programme,

Recalling also General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015 adopting the outcome document of the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development",

1. *Expresses* its gratitude to the Government and the people of Samoa for hosting the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States in Apia from 1 to 4 September 2014 and for providing all necessary support;

2. *Acknowledges* the implementation of Governing Council decision 27/2 on the strengthening of the regional presence of the United Nations Environment Programme through the establishment of new Programme subregional offices for the Caribbean and for the Pacific, and encourages further efforts in that respect;

3. *Encourages* Member States to support, both actively and effectively, the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway, particularly through partnerships in North-South, triangular and South-South cooperation on issues of importance to small island developing States such as financing, trade, technology transfer, capacity-building and institutional support;

4. *Also encourages* the United Nations Environment Programme, within its mandate, to contribute as appropriate to the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway, and requests the Executive Director:

(a) To incorporate into the medium-term strategy and its ongoing programme of work, and clearly identify, actions that assist small island developing States in the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway, with an emphasis on partnerships, technology transfer, capacity-building, institutional support, monitoring, reporting and evaluation;

(b) To enhance the provision of strategic and targeted support in areas covered by the environmental dimension of the SAMOA Pathway, including, inter alia, sustainable tourism;

(c) To facilitate learning, exchange of information, and North-South and South-South cooperation between small island developing States, regions and other developing countries, particularly with regard to how they have adapted and implemented approaches such as sustainable consumption and production patterns and resource efficiency;

(d) To build national and subregional capacity for reporting against the SAMOA Pathway and the Sustainable Development Goals, linking it to United Nations Environment Programme international environmental reporting platforms such as UNEP-Live and utilizing the Programme Indicator Reporting Information System for reporting under multilateral environmental agreements and the Sustainable Development Goals;

5. *Requests* the Executive Director to support small island developing States in actions to implement the SAMOA Pathway that will also contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals;

6. *Recognizes* that it and its subsidiary bodies can serve as an important forum for facilitating, and sharing information on, the implementation of the environmental dimension of the SAMOA Pathway by highlighting areas that need more action and directing attention and resources towards them as well as contributing to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development;

7. *Requests* the Executive Director to report to it on progress in the implementation of the present resolution, with an emphasis on programme activity outputs and impacts.

6th plenary meeting
27 May 2016

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2/10. Oceans and seas

The United Nations Environment Assembly,

Recognizing that the marine environment, including the oceans, seas and adjacent coastal areas, forms an integrated whole that is an essential component of the global life-support system and an asset presenting important opportunities for sustainable development,

Gravely concerned about threats to the health of our oceans, coastal areas, wetlands and islands, as reflected, inter alia, in the first global integrated marine assessment (World Ocean Assessment I) of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects, acknowledged in United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/235, the fourth *Global Biodiversity Outlook* report[1] and chapter 30 of the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change,[2] and about their probable increase in the foreseeable future,

Recalling that General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015 calls for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources, as recalled in paragraph 158 of "The future we want",

Recalling also the adoption by the General Assembly of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and welcoming the inclusion therein of Sustainable Development Goal 14 and its commitment on the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, while recognizing also the connections between healthy and productive oceans and other Sustainable Development Goals,

Recalling further General Assembly resolution 70/226 of 22 December 2015, entitled "United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development", and welcoming in particular the decision therein to convene the high-level conference in Fiji in June 2017,

Recognizing the contribution in accordance with international law of the regional seas conventions, regional action plans and regional fisheries management organizations to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 14 and other relevant related Sustainable Development Goals at the regional level, as well as to regional follow-up and review, including through the regional monitoring and reporting mechanisms to be developed for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda,

[1] Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, *Global Biodiversity Outlook 4: A Mid-Term Assessment of Progress towards the Implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020*, Montreal, 2014.

[2] *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*. Working Group II Contribution to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, New York, Cambridge University Press.

Recognizing also the important contribution of many multilateral environmental agreements to delivering on the oceans-related Sustainable Development Goals and contributing to their follow-up and review processes,

Recalling that the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want", reaffirmed the commitment contained in Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 on area-based conservation measures, including marine protected areas, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information as a tool for the conservation of biological diversity and sustainable use of its components,[3] and that target 14.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals calls for the conservation, by 2020, of at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas,

Recalling also the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and noting with concern the assessment in the fourth *Global Biodiversity Outlook* report, that, while there is significant progress towards meeting some components of the majority of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the rate of progress in most cases will not be sufficient to achieve the targets by 2020 unless additional action is taken,

Recalling further Governing Council decision 27/6 on oceans, which urged countries to take the necessary steps to implement relevant and existing commitments, as well as commitments made at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, to protect and restore the health, productivity and resilience of oceans and marine ecosystems, maintain biodiversity, and effectively apply an ecosystem approach and the precautionary approach in their management, in accordance with international law, of activities having an impact on the marine environment, in order to deliver on all three dimensions of sustainable development,

Acknowledging the United Nations Environment Programme contribution to tackling emerging issues and activities adding to pressure on the marine environment, and to increasing knowledge on issues such as marine litter, ocean acidification, hypoxia, and marine and coastal carbon sinks and reservoirs,

Recognizing the contribution of area-based management measures for the conservation of biological diversity and sustainable use of its components under international instruments, such as particularly sensitive sea areas established by the International Maritime Organization, vulnerable marine ecosystems identified by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the work on marine protected areas under the regional seas conventions and action plans and other area-based management measures taken by regional fisheries management organizations, to reaching the target of Sustainable Development Goal 14 to, by 2020, conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas consistent with national and international law and based on best available scientific information, and acknowledging related scientific and technical work on ecologically or biologically significant marine areas under the Convention on Biological Diversity and other global initiatives,

Welcoming the Paris Agreement adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change as a crucial step towards limiting the climate-change-related impacts of warming and acidification of the oceans and of sea level rise and reducing the adverse consequences for marine and coastal ecosystems and coastal residents worldwide, including for small island developing States and other vulnerable States,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 69/292 of 19 June 2015 on the development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction,

Taking into account the contribution which the United Nations Environment Programme can make, upon request by the concerned States, to assist them in the protection and preservation of the marine environment, including in helping to achieve their objectives under relevant international law,

Acknowledging the challenges involved in enhancing cooperation and coordination among international organizations and forums relevant to marine issues, and highlighting the value of the cooperation and coordination of the United Nations Environment Programme with these organizations and forums to contribute to coherent delivery of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

Recalling the three priority source categories for work (nutrients, marine litter and waste water) under the 2012 Manila Declaration on Furthering the Implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities,

[3] General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex, para. 177.

Noting the Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2017–2020 adopted at the seventeenth Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans,

1. *Request*s the Executive Director to include oceans-related aspects of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets in United Nations Environment Programme activities, in cooperation and coordination with relevant global and regional forums, agreements and organizations, consistent with international law, and to report on that work to the Environment Assembly at its next session;

2. *Calls* for continued cooperation and coordination on marine issues among all relevant global and regional forums and organizations, including the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Maritime Organization, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, the International Seabed Authority, the International Whaling Commission and the United Nations Environment Programme, in order to deliver coherently on Sustainable Development Goal 14 and its interrelated targets;

3. *Invites* the Executive Director to provide the necessary input for the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and Sustainably Use the Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources for Sustainable Development, to be organized in June 2017, as appropriate;

4. *Calls on* Member States that have not yet done so to consider acceding to the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments, to promote its rapid entry into force;

5. *Invites* Member States and regional seas conventions and action plans, in cooperation, as appropriate, with other relevant organizations and forums, such as regional fisheries management organizations, to work towards the implementation of, and reporting on, the different ocean-related Sustainable Development Goals and associated targets, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets;

6. *Requests* the United Nations Environment Programme to step up its work, including through its Regional Seas Programme, on assisting countries and regions in the application of the ecosystem approach to managing the marine and coastal environment, including through enabling intersectoral cooperation in integrated coastal zone management and marine spatial planning;

7. *Also requests* the United Nations Environment Programme to provide, upon request by the Member States, technical advice on the designation, establishment and active management of marine protected areas and on the application of other spatial management measures in cooperation with competent international and regional forums and organizations, including, as appropriate, multilateral environmental agreements and regional fisheries bodies;

8. *Encourages* Member States, individually and jointly and also within regional bodies, to designate and actively manage marine protected areas and take other effective area-based conservation measures, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information, with a view to achieving the related global targets, in particular where significantly less than 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas are so far being conserved, or where protected areas lack effective and equitable management, connectedness or ecological representativeness;

9. *Also encourages* the United Nations Environment Programme to continue to participate in the process initiated by the General Assembly in its resolution 69/292 on the development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of the marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction;

10. *Notes* the document on the Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2017–2020 and requests the Executive Director to communicate the Strategic Directions to conferences of the parties, intergovernmental meetings or other governing bodies of the relevant regional seas conventions and action plans;

11. *Requests* the Executive Director, through the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Seas Programme, to reinforce cooperation, coordination, communication and sharing of best practices and information among the existing regional seas conventions and action plans across different geographical areas, in line with the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2017–2020;

12. *Invites* Member States that have not done so to consider becoming parties to and/or members of regional seas conventions and action plans, and encourages the United Nations Environment Programme, through its Regional Seas Programme, to support initiatives by such Member States in that regard;

13. *Encourages* the contracting parties to existing regional seas conventions to consider the possibility of increasing the regional coverage of those instruments in accordance with international law;

14. *Acknowledges* and expresses support for the strategic partnership between the United Nations Environment Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization in the context of the 2030 Agenda, particularly for the implementation of the Sustainable Food Systems Programme of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns;

15. *Supports* the United Nations Environment Programme contribution to marine ecosystem restoration activities, and in particular to ecosystem management and restoration in coastal regions, nature-based solutions to climate adaptation and the creation of sustainable jobs and livelihoods in coastal regions, including through multi-stakeholder partnerships;

16. *Encourages* the United Nations Environment Programme to provide scientific support, in cooperation with relevant organizations, programmes and forums, to increase understanding of – and thus help in avoiding – abrupt, accelerating or irreversible environmental changes with potentially significant global consequences – for example, thawing of the permafrost of the seabed and melting of sea ice and glaciers;

17. *Requests* the Executive Director to assess the effectiveness of the United Nations Environment Programme 2011 marine and coastal strategy and, on the basis of that assessment, submit a proposal for its updating, revision or replacement, for consideration by the Environment Assembly at its next session.

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2/11. Marine plastic litter and microplastics

The United Nations Environment Assembly,

Recalling the concern reflected in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want", that the oceans and marine biodiversity are negatively affected by marine pollution, including marine litter – especially plastic – persistent organic pollutants, heavy metals and nitrogen-based compounds, from numerous marine and land-based sources, and the commitment to reduce such pollution,

Recalling also the Manila Declaration on Furthering the Implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, which highlighted the relevance of the Honolulu Strategy and the Honolulu Commitment for the prevention and management of marine debris and called for the establishment of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter, which was subsequently launched at the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and hosted by the Global Programme of Action,

Noting the increased knowledge regarding the levels, sources, negative effects of and possible measures to reduce marine plastic debris and microplastics in the marine environment, as summarized in, among other sources, the 2016 study "Marine plastic debris and microplastics: global lessons and research to inspire action and guide policy change", on marine plastic debris and microplastics, the preparation of which was mandated by the Environment Assembly in its resolution 1/6,

Noting also that the report of the First World Ocean Assessment points to the emerging issue of the smallest microplastic particles, which are nano-sized, and expresses concern about the ability of microplastics to enter marine food chains and the potential risk for the environment and human health,

Noting with concern that plastic and microplastics may be transported through freshwater

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