



UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

*Environmental problems of
the marine and coastal area
of Sri Lanka: National Report*

UNEP Regional Seas Reports and Studies No. 74

PREFACE

The Regional Seas Programme was initiated by UNEP in 1974. Since then the Governing Council of UNEP has repeatedly endorsed a regional approach to the control of marine pollution and the management of marine and coastal resources and has requested the development of regional action plans.

The Regional Seas Programme at present includes ten regions^{1/} and has over 120 coastal States participating in it. It is conceived as an action-oriented programme having concern not only for the consequences but also for the causes of environmental degradation and encompassing a comprehensive approach to controlling environmental problems through the management of marine and coastal areas. Each regional action plan is formulated according to the needs of the region as perceived by the Governments concerned. It is designed to link assessment of the quality of the marine environment and the causes of its deterioration with activities for the management and development of the marine and coastal environment. The action plans promote the parallel development of regional legal agreements and of action-oriented programme activities^{2/}.

In May 1982 the UNEP Governing Council adopted decision 10/20 requesting the Executive Director of UNEP "to enter into consultations with the concerned States of the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) to ascertain their views regarding the conduct of a regional seas programme in the South Asian Seas".

In response to that request the Executive Director appointed a high level consultant to undertake a mission to the coastal States of SACEP in October/November 1982 and February 1983. The report of the consultant on his mission was transmitted to the Governments of the South Asian Seas region in May 1983, and the recommendations of the Executive Director were submitted to the Governing Council at its eleventh session.

By decision 11/7 of 24 May 1983, the UNEP Governing Council noted "the consultations carried out in accordance with Council decision 10/20 of 31 May 1982" and requested "the Executive Director to designate the South Asian Seas as a region to be included in the regional seas programme, in close collaboration with the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme and Governments in the region, and to assist in the formulation of a plan of action for the environmental protection of the South Asian Seas".

^{1/} Mediterranean Region, Kuwait Action Plan Region, West and Central African Region, Wider Caribbean Region, East Asian Seas Region, South-East Pacific Region, South Pacific Region, Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Region, Eastern African Region and South Asian Seas Region.

^{2/} UNEP: Achievements and planned development of UNEP's Regional Seas Programme and comparable programmes sponsored by other bodies: UNEP Regional Seas Reports and Studies No. 1. UNEP, 1982.

As a first follow-up activity to decision 11/7 of the Governing Council, the Executive Director convened, in co-operation with the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP), a meeting of national focal points of the States of the region in order to seek their views on how to proceed in developing a comprehensive action plan for the protection and management of the marine and coastal environment of the South Asian Seas region (Bangkok, Thailand, 19-21 March 1984).

The meeting discussed the steps leading to the adoption of an action plan and reached a consensus on the items to be considered for further development of the action plan^{3/}.

The meeting recommended that the Governments, with the assistance of UNEP and other organizations as appropriate, should initiate the preparation of country reports reviewing their:

- national environmental problems defined as priority areas of regional concern;
- activities which may usefully be carried out under the action plan to resolve or mitigate these problems; and
- national institutional and manpower resources which are, or may be, involved in dealing with these problems, including the identification of the need to strengthen their capabilities.

It was also recommended that UNEP prepare in cooperation with SACEP, and other organizations as appropriate:

- a draft overview report, based on the country reports, reviewing the environmental problems of the region defined as priority areas;
- a document addressing the essential legislative aspects relevant to the action plan; and
- a draft action plan reflecting the conclusions of the country and regional reports.

The present document is the country report on environmental problems in Sri Lanka prepared by experts designated by the Government of Sri Lanka. The assistance of a consultant, A.H.V. Sarma, was provided to the Government of Sri Lanka to facilitate the preparation of this report. The authors' contributions are gratefully acknowledged.

^{3/} Report of the meeting of national focal points on the development of an action plan for the protection and management of the South Asian Seas region, Bangkok, 19-21 March 1984 (UNEP/WG.105/5).

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INTRODUCTION

Sri Lanka lies off the Southern tip of peninsular India between 5°55' and 9°51' North and 79°41' and 81°54' East. The island covers an area of 640,000 sq km and is separated from the Indian sub-continent by a narrow strip of sea, which at its narrowest is about 40 km wide. The Bay of Bengal lies to the North with no land mass right down to the South Pole. The island is 435 km long with a maximum width of 225 km. The central part of the Southern half of the island is mountainous with several isolated hills arising abruptly from the Eastern plain; the rest of the country is flat and is known as the coastal plain.

The island has a coastline of 1700 km, of which nearly 9/10 consists of sandy beaches. In the country's coastal areas are located a multiplicity of human activities vital to the life of the nation. The capital city as well as most of the major urban centres are located along the coastline.

One of the features of the coastal environment is the presence of extensive fresh and saltwater lagoons along both Eastern and Western coasts, at the Northern extremity of the island and to a limited extent on the Southern coast. Along the greater part of the South-western and Eastern shoreline, beaches are located between rocky headlands and many of the beaches are backed by lagoons and estuarine deltas, and marshes indicating progradation. High cliff formations are rare. Coral reefs are found scattered along the Northern, South-western and South-eastern coasts. A considerable part of the South coast is fringed by a shallow reef of sedimentary sandstone. Along the Northwestern coast, deposits of sedimentary limestone of miocene origin is found.

A variety of coastal resources (finfish, shellfish and a variety of other invertebrate fauna, coastal vegetation including seaweeds and coastal minerals, beaches etc.) provide the resource base for a number of economic activities such as fisheries, mining, coastal recreation and tourism, the construction industry and coconut-based industries.

The most prominent feature of the marine environment of Sri Lanka is the continental shelf which extends for a distance varying from 8 to 40 km. and at an average depth of 65 m. below sealevel. The outer edge of the shelf is a comparatively steep shelf (the continental slope) falling to 1,800 m or more, and taking 20 km to reach the general level of the Indian Ocean. Notched into this cliff are several submarine valleys, where deep water occurs within a few kilometers of the coast near Tricomalee, Kumana, Matara and Panadura (Cooray 1967).

预览已结束，完整报告链接和二维码如下：

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