



UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

*Environmental management
problems in resource utilization
and survey of resources in the
West and Central African Region*

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PREFACE

Ten years ago the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm, 5-16 June 1972) adopted the Action Plan for the Human Environment, including the General Principles for Assessment and Control of Marine Pollution. In the light of the results of the Stockholm Conference, the United Nations General Assembly decided to establish the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to "serve as a focal point for environmental action and co-ordination within the United Nations system" (General Assembly resolution (XXVII) of 15 December 1972). The organizations of the United Nations system were invited "to adopt the measures that may be required to undertake concerted and co-ordinated programmes with regard to international environmental problems", and the "intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations that have an interest in the field of the environment" were also invited "to lend their full support and collaboration to the United Nations with a view to achieving the largest possible degree of co-operation and co-ordination". Subsequently, the Governing Council of UNEP chose "Oceans" as one of the priority areas in which it would focus efforts to fulfil its catalytic and co-ordinating role.

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 eleven 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 combating 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/}.

At the third session of UNEP's Governing Council (1975), a number of West and Central African States requested UNEP to study the problems of marine and coastal pollution of their region. As a result of that request, UNEP's exploratory mission visited fourteen States of the region during 1976. The mission's report identified the major environmental problems of the region and recommended the development of a regional action plan for the protection and development of the marine environment and coastal areas of the region.

After considering the report of the mission, the fifth session of the Governing Council (1977) decided that "steps should be undertaken for the development of an action plan and a regional agreement to prevent and abate pollution" in the West and Central African region.

^{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, East African Region, South-West Atlantic Region and South Asian Region.

^{2/} 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.

The preparatory work on the development of the action plan and the regional agreement included several expert group meetings, missions and surveys^{3/} leading to the Conference of Plenipotentiaries on Co-operation in the Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the West and Central African Region (UNEP/IG.22/7) convened by UNEP in Abidjan, 16 - 23 March 1981 as the final stage of the preparatory work leading to the adoption of the (a) Action Plan for the protection and development of the marine environment and coastal areas of the West and Central African Region, (b) Convention for the Co-operation in the Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the West and Central African Region, (c) Protocol concerning co-operation in combating pollution in cases of emergency, and (d) a set of conference resolutions.

This document is one of the surveys prepared as a contribution to the development of the Action Plan.

3/ For details see:

- Report of the Executive Director on preparatory activities for an action plan for the protection and development of the marine and coastal environment in the West African Region. UNEP/IG.22/4. UNEP, 1981.
- UNIDO/UNEP: Survey of marine pollutants from industrial sources in the West and Central African Region. UNEP Regional Seas Reports and Studies No. 2. UNEP, 1982.
- UNESCO/UNEP: River inputs to the West and Central African marine environment. UNEP Regional Seas Reports and Studies No. 3. UNEP, 1982.
- IMCO/UNEP: The status of oil pollution and oil pollution control in the West and Central African Region. UNEP Regional Seas Reports and Studies No. 4. UNEP, 1982.
- UNDIESA/UNEP: Ocean energy potential of the West African Region. UNEP Regional Seas Reports and Studies No. 30. UNEP, 1983.
- UNDIESA/UNEP: Onshore impact of offshore oil and natural gas development in the West and Central African Region. UNEP Regional Seas Reports and Studies No. 33. UNEP, 1984.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Introduction

Coastal areas are uniquely suited to support a variety of activities and to serve diverse human needs for food, energy, transport and recreation. Some two-thirds of the world's population lives near the coast and a majority of the world's largest cities - 39 of the 66 with populations over 1 million - are in coastal areas. Ninety per cent of the world's fish catch comes from the continental shelf and upwelling regions, and at present, approximately 8 per cent of the world's total animal protein supply comes from the sea. Again, about 20 per cent of the world's oil production comes from offshore areas and it is estimated that about 68 per cent of the world's ultimate recoverable hydrocarbon resources lie in coastal waters 200 metres in depth or less. Finally, the coastal area is a source of many other raw materials in the form of sand, gravel, and a variety of placer minerals such as diamonds. Salt for instance, as an extracted product from the oceans, contributes significantly in food processing and other industrial endeavours. Coastal areas are, therefore, an integral part of the development process in a large number of countries.

The evolution of coastal areas into focal points for tourism, trade, industrial production and transport, in the absence of an integrated and comprehensive plan for their development, often results in negative interactions between activities that act to reduce the potential value of one or more activities. Proper planning and coordination of marine activities can help, not only to manage and minimize conflicts, but to take advantage of positive interactions between activities and maximize the overall benefits.

accruing from the coastal area. The value of treating coastal areas as planning entities within the overall framework of national development planning is not always fully recognized and very often countries lack the administrative and legislative basis for implementing such an approach.^{1/} In West Africa, where there is a relatively narrow range of marine-related activities and a largely untrapped resource potential, there is a need and an opportunity for managing the growth of individual sectoral activities so as to obtain the optimal mix of activities which maximizes the contribution to national development, while ensuring the continuing productivity of the coastal environment.

The principal objective of the Action Plan is the development and protection of the marine and coastal area environment of the West African Region for the health and well-being of present and future generations. The Action Plan is intended to provide a framework for an environmentally sound and comprehensive approach to coastal area development particularly appropriate to the needs of the people. Any factors, therefore, that mitigate against the maintenance of the marine environment to the extent that the "health and well-being" of the people of the West African region becomes jeopardized will constitute "pollution".

The socio-economic component of the Draft Action Plan must, therefore, bring into focus the major categories of marine pollution in the region, explore their effects on this environment as well as on the people who derive benefits from it, survey past and possible future development activities which may have an impact on the quality of the marine and coastal environment, and subsequently recommend an approach towards effective environmental management which can be incorporated into national and regional development plans of the states of the region.

^{1/} The United Nations has prepared the following volumes on the subject. Manual on Coastal Area Management and Development. Vol. I - Establishing a National Programme: Economic and Technical Matters. Vol. II - Approaches, Problems and Guidelines, UN/DIESA 1980.

With the above considerations paramount, this paper seeks:

1. To examine existing classification schemes for the coastal and marine environments in West Africa;
2. To summarize the activities of the various socio-economic groupings within the West African coastal area;
3. To discuss the regional natural resource base and its relationship to the coastal area and
4. To examine present and future environmental management and planning issues for the coastal area given the various national development strategies in the West African region.

B. The Significance of the West African Coastal Area in Regional and National Development

The West African coastal area has traditionally played an important, albeit less than major role in West African socio-economic development. Over the years, using dug-out canoes, a number of the coastal ethnic groups developed such competence in sea fisheries that their influence was felt at a considerable distance inland.^{1/} With the advent of Western influence in the region, the traditional role of coastal areas was diminished and replaced by one focussed on the need to create the necessary infrastructure to facilitate trade in raw materials destined for Europe. As a result and aided by subsequent national development efforts, coastal areas in West Africa, generally contain the most obvious examples of the effort toward modernization in the region.

Of the 20 countries included in this study, excluding Cape Verde, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, all but three of the countries have capital cities located

^{1/} The Ewe ethnic group of Ghana, Togo and Benin are such an example.

in the coastal area.^{1/} Until the end of the nineteenth century, almost all these cities had populations of less than twenty thousand. In the colonial period, many of the towns already in existence were adopted as administrative and commercial centres and were linked together by railways and roads. Old towns, by-passed by the new means of communication, declined. The fastest growing towns were those chosen to be the ports, coastal or riverine, at the termini of the railways. They were the obvious centres for the type of trade and commerce of the period, and in many cases were chosen to be colonial capitals. After independence and up until the present, the dominance of the capital cities has been further heightened by various policy decisions adopted by national governments. Minor ports along the coast are declining as the harbour installations and overland links of major ports improve. Government spending on public works and the employment offered in government offices attracts ever more people to the national capitals. Industrial activity, particularly large-scale manufacturing, taking advantage of the same factors, also tends to be located in the coastal areas.

Of more recent vintage but perhaps in the present decade of more significance to the individual economies, is the known and potential energy resource endowment within the coastal area. Current petroleum production in the region is concentrated offshore. In those non-producing countries

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