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Regional Seas Assessments and Indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

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Chapter 1: Regional Seas and Assessments

In 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development recommended that there should be a Regular Process for reporting and assessing the state of the marine environment, including socioeconomic aspects.

The United Nations General Assembly accepted this recommendation and decided that the Regular Process should "*review...the state of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects, on a continual and systematic basis by providing regular assessments at the global and supra regional levels through an integrated view of environmental, economic and social aspects*". These regular overviews of

the ocean, the way in which the many dynamics of the ocean interact and the ways in which humans are using it should enable all the governments, stakeholders and institutions involved to position their decisions more effectively in the overall context of the ocean. The Regular process is to provide an assessment of all the aspects of the marine environment relevant to sustainable development: environment, economic and social. The World Oceans Assessment aims to provide a sound, scientific basis for decisions at the global level on the world's oceans and seas, and a framework for national and regional assessments and management decisions.

The RIO+20 Outcome Document, 'The Future We Want' provided the support for the Regular Process in paragraph 161, which states "*We support the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects, established under the General Assembly, and look forward to the completion of its first global integrated assessment of the state of the marine environment by 2014 and its subsequent consideration by the Assembly. We encourage consideration by States of the assessment findings at appropriate levels*".

Subsequently, the First Global Integrated Marine Assessment was prepared[1]. On 23 December 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 70/235 on Oceans and the law of the sea, in which it welcomed with appreciation the first global integrated marine assessment and approved its summary.

During the first cycle of the Regular Process, Member States also adopted the Agenda 2030 for the Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDG on Oceans and Seas; Goal 14 "Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development" was set as a goal. This goal will require Member States to report on the targets and indicators.

During the first cycle, the scope of the Regular Process focused on establishing a baseline, and decided that the scope of the second cycle would extend to evaluating trends and identifying gaps.

The seventh meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole of the Regular Process held 3-9 August, 2016 approved a work plan[2] in its recommendations submitted before the end of the seventieth session of the General Assembly pursuant to paragraph 283 of General Assembly resolution 70/235. The work plan stated that "*the assessment(s) prepared during the second cycle will play a decisive supporting role for other United Nations processes and that the overall, the outcome of the assessment(s) should support policy development and decision-making at national, regional and global levels*".

UNEP's input on the lessons learnt[3] during the first cycle of the Regular Process were very clear on the fact that there was no synergies with the existing global and regional assessments and recommended that future process should take on board the regional inputs.

The first WOA took a qualitative approach based on the Driving Forces-Pressure-State-Impact-Response (DPSIR) framework. In order to monitor chronological change, it has been recommended to use a

[1] http://www.un.org/depts/los/global_reporting/WOA_RegProcess.htm
[2] http://www.un.org/depts/los/global_reporting/7th_adhoc_2016/RP_Advance_Unedited_2016.pdf
[3] http://www.un.org/depts/los/global_reporting/lessons_learned_submission.htm

quantitative approach in the future with the possible use of indicators. At the same time, the results of the Transboundary Water Assessment Programme (TWAP)[4] and ongoing process of the Global Environmental Outlook (GEO) both at the regional and global level could give consideration to piloting a regionally based assessment of the marine environment under the Regional Seas Programme.

In this regards, there is an opportunity to build synergy with the Conference of the Parties (COPs) of the Regional Seas programmes by assisting them in using the integrated environmental assessment methodology to prepare assessment reports which will meet their own obligation to their COP's for a state of the marine environment report while at the same time providing inputs to the global process.

The results of the TWAP marine components for the Large Marine Ecosystems (LME) and Open Oceans are available tools within UNEP for future assessments. In the context of building upon the TWAP results, a harmonized set of indicators is being developed. Such indicators will support reporting under the SDG 14 for members of the COPs.

The project idea is to follow up on UNEPs support to the Regular Process where UNEP uses the opportunity to work with the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans to build capacity to undertake and use integrated assessments results at the national and regional levels using an indicator based approach.

These assessments could also cover species targeted ecosystems such as seagrass, coral reefs and seabed grass. This will provide inputs to the second phase of the WOA, the UNGA led initiative, and other relevant global process including the agenda 2030 as well as regional initiatives including commitments under the COPs of the Regional Seas programmes to prepare state of the marine environment reports.

In the first phase, the Western Indian Ocean (Nairobi Convention) prepared a baseline assessment of the state of the coast, Abidjan Convention has started a process using a country level approach and most recently the Caribbean Region has embarked on the development of the State of the Conversion Area Report (SOCAR), for the Wider Caribbean Region (WCR). Such information will then provide a baseline for periodic assessment of the coastal marine environment building on content for UNEP-Live[5] and the GEO.

Chapter 2: Progress report of the Regional Seas Indicators Working Group

1. Background

In 2014, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) organised the Technical Workshop on Selecting Indicators for the State of Regional Seas from 30 June to 2 July 2014 in Geneva, Switzerland. In this workshop, the participants recommended to establish a Regional Seas Indicators Working Group.

[4] http://www.geftwap.org/
[5] http://uneplive.unep.org/

Based on the recommendation, the First Meeting of the Regional Seas Indicators Working Group was organised on 23 October 2015 in Istanbul, Turkey. At the meeting, a Regional Seas core indicator set was adopted[6] (**Table 1**). Subsequently, UNEP requested Regional Seas Convention and Action Plans to provide further information on the indicators including monitoring methods, data coverages, and data sources based on a questionnaire (Annex 1).

The second meeting of the Regional Seas Indicators Working Group was held on 15 March 2016 in order to review the progress of the compilation by UNEP and to discuss possible way forward as the indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are finalized through the 47th Session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC). At the meeting, the Working Group members agreed that that Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans would continue working on the Regional Seas indicators, while start analysing ways to align them with the SDG indicators. As was agreed in the work plan[7], the members were invited to nominate its Working Group Chair and Ms. Virginie Hart, UNEP/MAP, was elected as Chair.

The third meeting of the Regional Seas Indicators Working Group was organised on 6 July 2016 to review the progress of the work on the SDG indicators and the compilation work on Regional Seas indicators especially on Indicator 22 on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM). The Working Group agreed to conduct a mapping exercise to analyse current regional targets and indicators against the SDGs and the Aichi Biodiversity Target. By conducting this exercise, it is expected that the Regional Seas programme would be able to identify alignment as well as gaps between their regional targets and global targets.

Using the responses provided on the indicators, UNEP compiled information on the Regional Seas indicators (**Section 2**) and analysis of the core Regional Seas indicators set against the SDGs and Aichi Biodiversity Targets (**Section 3, Annex 2**). The Regional Seas indicators that are closely linked with the SDG 14.1 (RS indicator 1 and 3) and SDG 14.2 (RS indicator 22) were submitted to the Inter-agency Expert Group on SDG Indicators as existing metadata.

Six of the Regional Seas indicators are related to fisheries and aquaculture (RS indicator 5,6,7,12,13, and 20). At the First Working Group meeting, the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) agreed to assist the Working Group with the development of those indicators. FAO has communicated to UNEP that these indicators are still under development.

As agreed at the First Working Group meeting, the Working Group presents its work to the 18th Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans in Incheon, the Republic of Korea, which is to be held from 30 September to 1 October 2016. Based on this progress report, the representatives of the Regional Seas programmes are invited to discuss the results of the Working Group and possible way forward.

[6] UNEP/EARS/WG.2/5 (Annex 4)
[7] UNEP/EARS/WG.2/5 (Annex 5)

Table 1: Regional Seas Core Indicators Set

No	Category of Indicator	Possible regional Seas Coordinated Indicator	SDG 14 (plus SDG 1 SDG 2 others)	TWAP indicators[8]	Desirability in RS
1	Total inputs of nitrogen and phosphorus from agriculture, sewage and atmospheric nitrogen	**Chlorophyll a concentration** as an indicator of phytoplankton biomass	14.1	Chlorophyll time series; **DIN, DIP** (modelled data) **(both concentration and flux**	Med / BS/ NOWPAP/ ROPME / SACEP /HELCOM / Nairobi
2	Inputs of marine chemical pollution Trends for selected priority chemicals	Trends for selected **priority chemicals including POPs and heavy metals**	14.1	POPS (Persistent Organic Pollutants) status	NOWPAP /Nairobi / BS/ CPPS
3	Overall levels of marine litter Quantification of beach litter items	Quantification **and classification** of **beach litter** items	14.1	Marine Plastic Litter	NOPAP /HELCOM/ PERSGA /Nairobi
4	Ocean warming	Annual mean **sea surface temperature** (25m below the surface)	14.3	Sea Surface Temperature (SST)	Agreed
5	Fish landings	Fish catches within EEZs (tonnes) – total capture production	14.4	Fish landings and Landed Value, Fishing effort, Fish stock status, Primary Production required, Marine Trophic Index, Fishing in Balance Index	FAO to provide inputs
6	Aquaculture	Application of risk assessment to account for pollution and biodiversity impacts	14.4		FAO to provide inputs
7	Aquaculture	Destruction of habitat due to aquaculture			FAO to provide inputs
8	Population pressure / urbanization	**Length of coastal modification and km^2 of coastal reclamation**	14.2	Rural/ Urban population, %poor,	ROPME / MAP / NOWPAP/ SACEP
9	Eutrophication status	**Locations and frequency of algal blooms reported**	14.1	Index of coastal eutrophication	agreed
10	Pollution hot spots[9]	1) Concentration of Status of	14.1	Floating plastic debris	agreed

[8] A detailed table is presented below.

No	Category of Indicator	Possible regional Seas Coordinated Indicator	SDG 14 (plus SDG 1 SDG 2 others)	TWAP indicators[8]	Desirability in RS
		selected **pollutant** contamination in biota and sediments and temporal trends 2) Number of hotspots			
11	Ocean acidification	1) Aragonite saturation 2) pH 3) Alkalinity	14.3	Pteropods at risk:	ROPME (pH)
12	Level of exploitation of commercial fisheries	FAO stock status: % stocks overfished compared to MSY	14.4	Catch Stock Status, Marine Trophic Index, Fishing in Balance Index	FAO to provide inputs
13	Species replacement as a consequence of capture fisheries	Marine trophic index	14.5	Marine Trophic Index	FAO to provide inputs
14	Endangered species	Distribution of Red List Index species	14.5		NOWPAP
15	Loss of critical habitat	Trends in critical habitat extent and condition	14.5	Mangrove status; Reefs at Risk Index; seagrass; salt marshes	NOWPAP / CPPS
16	National Action Plans to reduce input from LBS	% National action plans ratified / operational	14.1	Transboundary Legal Instruments	agreed
17	Waste water treatment facilities	1) % coastal urban population connected to sewage facilities 2) % of waste water facilities complying with adequate standards 3) % of untreated waste water	14.1	NA	agreed
18	Incentive to reduce marine litter at source	1) % port waste reception facilities available	14.1	NA	agreed

[9] Actual pollution hotspot and source of hotspot

No	Category of Indicator	Possible regional Seas Coordinated Indicator	SDG 14 (plus SDG 1 SDG 2 others)	TWAP indicators[8]	Desirability in RS
		2) Incentives to reduce land based sources[10] 3) Amount of recycled waste on land (%)			
19	Climate change adaptation	1) % national adaptation plans in place 2) Sector based national adaptation plans 3) Number of existing national and local coastal and marine plans incorporating climate change adaptation	14.3	Transboundary Legal Instruments	agreed
20	Fish harvested within safe ecological limits	Fisheries measures in place (by-catch limits, area-based closures, recovery plans, capacity reduction measures) and multilateral/bilateral fisheries management arrangements	14.4	Catch Stock Status, Marine Trophic Index, Fishing in Balance Index; Fishery Production Potential of LMEs	FAO to provide inputs
					agreed
					agreed