

Report of the Secretary-General on oceans and the law of the sea, as mandated by United Nations General Assembly resolution 79/144 of 12 December 2024, entitled “Oceans and the law of the sea”

These inputs provide an overview of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) activities related to ocean affairs and the law of the sea, outlining their views on the theme “Capacity building and the transfer of marine technology: New developments, approaches and challenges” of United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution 79/144 relevant to UNEP.

I. Implementation of the Convention and related agreements and instruments

n/a

II. Capacity-building

1. Effective application of Area-based management tools

An online Marine Protected Area Tool Hub (‘MPAth’) and learning platform has been launched by UNEP, TNC, WWF and partners to support more effective and equitable MPA development and implementation. A key goal is to enable countries to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 14.5 and GBF targets 1, 2, and 3. At its core, the MPAth provides an innovative, easily accessible MPA ‘problem-solving’ and ‘learning journey’ platform with insightful guidance, decision-support tools and practical knowledge. The key ambition is to provide MPA planners and practitioners with accessible ‘how-to’ guidance, problem-solving support, and practical approaches to tackle key tricky issues, barriers, and frustrations that they face. Based on comprehensive inputs from MPA practitioners globally, the initial prototype platform addresses four thematic areas: MPA effectiveness, MPAs and climate change, MPAs for sustainable livelihoods, and MPA financing and business planning. Visit MPAth at: <https://mpath.unep.org/>

2. Blue carbon capacity-building workshop in Abu Dhabi, December 2024

UNEP organised a "Harnessing blue carbon: integrating mangrove restoration and community engagement" workshop in Abu Dhabi during the Global Mangrove Conservation and Restoration Conference in December 2024. The workshop presented best practices from UNEP-supported blue

carbon projects on the ground in Kenya and Benin, as well as principles and best practices for community inclusion in mangrove restoration and blue carbon projects, as well as principles for integrity in the blue carbon market. This provided capacity-building and awareness-raising to the global mangrove and blue carbon practitioner community.

3. Monitoring and Evaluation for the Global Fund for Coral Reefs (GFCR)

UNEP is leading the Monitoring and Evaluation of the activities and impacts of the GFCR and has so far produced an M&E Toolkit as well as specialized software (MERMAID) to support M&E of coral reef ecosystems and dependent societies across 23 developing coral nations. UNEP is supporting the collection of data sets on critical ecological, social, and economic indicators across the GFCR portfolio and analysing these to show progress and impact across the GFCR. UNEP organised a workshop on integrating GFCR coral reef data sets into the GCRMN and the preparation of a regional report on the status of coral reefs of the Caribbean. The workshop brought together coral reef scientists from the Caribbean region and provided capacity-building opportunities for data analysis and the use of MERMAID software.

4. Global training in BBNJ agreement in collaboration with DOALOS

UNEP collaborated with the United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS) and the Treaty Section of the Office of Legal Affairs and organised a global training of National Focal Points of the Fifth Montevideo Environmental Law Programme that took place in Nairobi, Kenya in June 2024 to enhance understanding and to promote the 2023 Agreement under United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement).

Further, in cooperation with the UN Office of Legal Affairs and the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS), UNEP has developed a self-paced introductory course to the BBNJ Agreement hosted on InforMEA.

III. Meeting of State Parties

n/a

IV. Peaceful settlement of disputes

n/a

V. The Area

n/a

VI. Effective functioning of the Authority and the Tribunal

n/a

VII. The continental shelf and the work of the Commission

n/a

VIII. Maritime safety and security and flag State implementation

n/a

IX. Marine environment and marine resources

1. UNEP is providing support to member States and stakeholders to address plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, through the Global Partnership on Plastic Pollution and Marine Litter (GPML). The [GPML Digital Platform](#) provides one-stop access to key data and resources on plastic pollution and marine litter to inform evidence-based decision-making. In addition, the new Country Dashboards developed in LDCs, and SIDS showcase plastic flows in the economy and environment at the country level, using the best available global datasets.
2. UNEP is building the capacity of 19 member States to successfully combat plastic pollution through the development of national source inventories and national strategies/roadmaps/plans to address plastic pollution along the lifecycle, including in the marine environment. The Capacity Development for Action on Plastic Pollution project, with funding from the United States Department of State, shares knowledge through the GPML and supports evidence-based action to achieve national targets in line with UNEA resolution 4/6. Additionally, the project advances the objectives of the Global Programme of Action on the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA) as well as the Sustainable Development Goals 6, 11, 12 and 14.
3. UNEP is working on many fronts to ensure sustainable wastewater and nutrient management, as well as sanitation provision across the world, especially for the benefit of coastal communities and coastal ecosystems. In Malaysia, UNEP, UN-Habitat and Action Caring Team (ACT) Malaysia have been developing a tailored, low-cost technology for sanitation provision and wastewater treatment for the water villages located off the coast of Kota Kinabalu, Sabah state. This solution helps the community address the repercussions of wastewater pollution and lack of sanitation, empowers them to generate income through fish-trading schemes and entrepreneurial activities, and addresses the impact of wastewater and nutrient pollution on the marine and coastal ecosystems, with benefits for the nearby-located Marine National Park, and seaweed farms. The project, which started in 2020, is in its third phase of implementation and enjoys the support of

the local and national authorities, including the sewerage and tourism authority of Sabah, as well as other relevant stakeholders from Malaysia and beyond.

4. UNEP is supporting Sri Lanka and Trinidad and Tobago in the development of a National Action Plan on Sustainable Nitrogen Management. The action plan will facilitate integrated approaches to address nitrogen pollution.
5. Pursuant to UNEA resolution 5/14, the Executive Director of UNEP convened an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to Develop an International Legally Binding Instrument on Plastic Pollution, including in the Marine Environment (INC), which began its work during the second half of 2022. The fourth session of the INC took place from 23 to 29 April 2024 in Ottawa, Canada. Two ad hoc intersessional open-ended expert groups were established following the decision made at INC-4's virtual and in-person meetings, which were held for the two groups in July and August 2024 to inform and help advance the work of the Committee. The first part of INC-5 took place from 25 November to 1 December 2024 in Busan, Republic of Korea. The Secretariat of the INC supported and facilitated the participation and engagement of Member States and observers in the process. Plastic pollution in the marine environment, capacity building, technical assistance, and technology transfer are some of the subjects discussed in the negotiations. The second part and final session is expected to take place in 2025.
6. UNEP also finalised a Guidance Document to support countries on an integrated approach to legal, legal, policy, and regulatory changes to reduce the nitrogen footprint from sectors. This reference material will assist countries when they need integrated approaches to address nitrogen pollution in all sectors, including oceans and seas.

X. Marine biodiversity

1. UNEP, through the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAP), is supporting member states in raising awareness and building their capacity to ratify and take early action to implement the BBNJ agreement. Along with FAO and UNDP, UNEP is implementing the Global Environment Facility (GEF) BBNJ enabling fund. In line with UNEP is supporting initially, 14 countries, including LDCs and SIDS, in the ratification process of the BBNJ Agreement and related early actions.
2. UNEP is a founding member of the Global Fund for Coral Reefs (GFCR), the world's leading financial vehicle to ensure a future for coral reefs and related ecosystems. The GFCR coalition strengthens the resilience of coastal reef ecosystems, communities, and economies by mobilising new public and private resources that advance sustainable businesses and innovative financial solutions. The GFCR's resilience-focused portfolio deploys catalytic grants and investments to implement market-based solutions that address the causes of coral reef stress and degradation, focusing on LDCs and SIDS.

XI. Marine Science

UNEP is supporting the production of a global report on the status of the world's coral reefs in collaboration with the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) and the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI). The production of this report is also mandated by UNEA Resolution 4/13 and is expected to be published in 2026. It will provide the latest in-depth analysis of health trends in coral reef ecosystems in all major coral reef regions. UNEP is supporting the process by organising and funding regional workshops for authors, data experts, and contributors who are developing the report. So far, regional workshops have been organised for the Caribbean (October 2024) and Western Indian Ocean (February 2025) regions.

XII. Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects

n/a

XIII. Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea

n/a

XIV. Coordination and cooperation

n/a

XV. Activities of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea

n/a

XVI. Eightieth session of the General Assembly

n/a