

European Union and its Member States contribution

Oceans and sustainable development: integration of three dimensions of sustainable development, namely, environmental, social and economic

EUROPEAN UNION

Oceans and Sustainable Development: Integration of the three pillars, namely environmental, social and economic

Sustainable management of oceans provides well documented economic and social benefits to humankind which goes further than a simple contribution to food security. It has been estimated that over 3 billion people depend on marine and coastal resources for their livelihoods while the market value of these resources is around \$3 trillion annually (about 5% of GDP) with around 350 million jobs worldwide linked to oceans. The EU has recognised the importance of oceans for sustainable development and has taken different measures under its relevant policies to harness the potential of oceans and seas to contribute to the creation of wealth and jobs while ensuring long term environmental sustainability and management of the natural resource base as outlined below.

- **Common Fisheries Policy**

The European Union's Common Fisheries Policy was reformed in 2013 and prioritizes sustainable development of Europe's fisheries sector to ensure that fishing and aquaculture activities are environmentally sustainable in the long-term and are managed in a way that is consistent with the objectives of achieving economic, social and employment benefits, and of contributing to the availability of food supplies. It thus contributes to sustainable and inclusive growth, enhancing cohesion of coastal regions, resource efficiency, and improving the economic performance of the fishing industry.

In line with the commitments reiterated at Rio+20, the objective of Maximum Sustainable Yield is at the heart of the fisheries management system and is to be achieved by 2015 where possible and at the latest by 2020. Maximizing yields under conditions of sustainability will result in increased catch opportunities, and potential for increased returns on investment, higher profit margins and gross added value for the catching industry. The policy integrates the ecosystem and precautionary approaches to fisheries management through the application of integrated multiannual plans for fisheries areas in European waters based on the best available science. The European fisheries policy also seeks to ensure resource efficiency by eliminating unacceptable waste of resources before the end of this decade through the progressive implementation of a landing obligation for commercial fish catches.

Sustainable fishing, in combination with secure access rights, will particularly benefit smallscale coastal fisheries and the future of Europe's coastal communities. Some specific measures are also foreseen to help manage and strengthen small-scale coastal fleets, including technical and financial

support to ensure sustainable production methods which contribute to increased productivity without negatively affecting the coastal marine ecosystems. In addition, there are also measures to contribute to the improvement of safety and working conditions for fishing operators and to foster direct and indirect job creation and economic development in coastal areas.

The EU promotes the same objectives of the CFP internationally, ensuring that Union fishing activities outside Union waters are based on the same principles and standards as those applicable under Union law, and promoting a level-playing field for Union operators and third-country operators.

European Union bilateral fishery agreements, now known as "Sustainable Fishery Partnership Agreements" (SFPAs) under the new Common Fisheries Policy, constitute the international legal instruments between the EU and third countries with the objective of putting in place a Ref. Ares(2015)189284 - 16/01/2015 highly regulated and transparent framework for fishing activities of the EU fleet in third country waters. SFPAs aim to create a partnership to promote sustainable fisheries, based on the best available scientific advice, allowing EU vessels to fish only surplus resources in the exclusive economic zones of a number of third countries.

Through these SFPAs, while obtaining access to the surplus resources of third countries, the EU also provides financial sectoral support for the sustainable development of the fisheries sector of partner countries and for enhancing their overall fishery governance capacity (control, fight illegal fishing, research, artisanal fishery, etc.). Thus, they can contribute to ensuring sustainable management of fish stocks and improving knowledge about fisheries resources and also contribute to employment and wealth creation through support for harbour activities, processing factories etc.

In addition, all EU SFPAs also include a clause to ensure the respect of human rights in the third countries to avoid suspension of these agreements, together with a clause on working conditions of the workers on board of the EU fishing vessels, which should be in line with ILO standards.

- **Integrated Maritime Policy**

The European Union's Integrated Maritime Policy seeks to provide a more coherent approach to maritime issues, with increased coordination between different policy areas. It focuses on issues that do not fall under a single sector-based policy e.g. "blue growth" (economic growth based on different maritime sectors) as well as issues that require the coordination of different sectors and actors e.g. marine knowledge.

The "Blue Growth" policy aims to ensure sustainable development and sustainable use of marine resources and integrates sustainable growth, employment and environmental protection in one coherent policy vision. The strategy consists of three components:

1. Developing sectors that have a high potential for sustainable jobs and growth such as coastal and maritime tourism:

The European Commission adopted the Communication "A European Strategy for More Growth and Jobs in Coastal and Maritime Tourism" in February 2014, in which it promotes a sustainable approach towards innovation and social inclusion for coastal and maritime tourism in Europe.

This Communication includes actions tackling environmental issues (e.g. promotion of the Protocol to the Barcelona Convention on Integrated Coastal Management, development of strategies on marine litter, etc.) as well as other actions promoting economic growth and employment such as developing guidelines for the development of marinas, promotion of economic competitiveness while safeguarding the environment and involving the coastal populations in decision making and on the shared return from tourism. The Commission is launching in March 2015 a Pan-European Dialogue for Tourism bringing together all relevant stakeholders to jointly address issues as the congestion at ports and in land, environmental sustainability of cruise tourism, guarantee shared return for coastal populations and the promotion of regional cooperation in this regard.

2. Improving knowledge, legal certainty and security in the blue economy including marine knowledge to improve access to information about the sea and maritime spatial planning to ensure an efficient and sustainable management of activities at sea;

In 2014, European Legislation was adopted on Maritime Spatial Planning¹ (MSP). Its objective is that all waters under the jurisdiction of Member States are will be covered by a spatial plan by 2021. MSP, by involving stakeholders to participate in the development of maritime areas, allows the integration of environmental, social and economic objectives at an early stage and thus contributes to the sustainable development of oceans and associated coastal communities. MSP brings legal certainty for maritime growth as developers know where to invest and for how long. It aims to reduce the risk of investments being delayed or plans having to be changed repetitively. It has been estimated that a reduction of 1% in investment costs could generate positive economic effects ranging to up to EUR 1.3 billion in Europe by 2020. Furthermore, accelerating investments in wind-farm and aqua-farm activities by 1, 2 or 3 years have been estimated to generate between up to EUR 600 million by 2020 in Europe.

EU legislation on MSP has been introduced to provide a legal framework to support sustained economic development in marine and coastal regions, especially in cross-border areas. It makes sure that all stakeholders are involved and helps to preserve local and traditional practices. For example, some EU Member States allocate specific areas to local small-scale fisheries to protect those practices. MSP helps identify solutions to facilitate the development of new sectors that provide new employment opportunities (for instance in the renewable energy sector), while providing a legal structure giving a voice to coastal communities and traditional activities with regard to the maritime economic development in their area.

It also enables decision-makers to devise mitigation measures when an activity is expected to have an impact on the environment and it ensures that the cumulative impact of those activities is well understood. The implementation of MSP in Europe will strongly contribute to the establishment of MPAs and help the EU reach the UN Convention on Biological Diversity objective to cover 10% of marine waters with protected areas. Cross-border cooperation on marine planning, as required by the Directive, will also make possible the establishment of a trans-national and coherent network of MPAs, as required by EU environmental legislation.

3. Establishing sea basin strategies to ensure tailor-made measures supporting sustainable development and to foster cooperation between countries

The EU has up to now, three such strategies in place: for the Baltic, the Atlantic and the Adriatic and Ionian Region. In 2014 the EU adopted the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR,

¹ Directive 2014/89/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning.

June 2014) together with its Action Plan. It addresses the three dimensions of sustainable development by promoting blue growth (Blue technologies, Fisheries & Aquaculture, Maritime & marine services); connecting the region (Maritime transport, Intermodal hinterland, Energy networks); environmental quality (Protecting the marine environment, protecting terrestrial biodiversity, habitats and ecosystems); sustainable tourism (Diversified tourism products and services, sustainable tourism management, innovation and quality). Research & Innovation, SME development, Capacity building and Communication will be addressed as cross-cutting issues.

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive² (MSFD) is the key EU instrument which helps to deliver the environmental pillar of the European Union's maritime policy and promotes the integration of environmental considerations into all relevant policy areas. This directive requires the Member States to take the necessary measures to achieve or maintain good environmental status in the marine environment by 2020 at the latest. It includes the preparation of a monitoring programme and a programme of measures. It ensures sustainable development of the EU seas since it contains environmental, economic and social elements. The Directive was inspired by International Conventions and Agreements and translates them into EU law. It is firmly based on the ecosystem approach and thereby takes the health of the ecosystems as a reference point when developing economic activities. It also incorporates the precautionary principle and the polluter pays principle are two fundamental principles of environmental protection policy. Moreover, an economic and social assessment is a mandatory part of the adaptive management process of the law. As the environmental pillar of EU's Integrated Maritime Policy, the MSFD thereby ensures that our seas can be productive and stay healthy at the same time. As a result it influences the economic development potential (e.g. fish stock increase) and the well-being of the local population. Finally, it sets up a good governance system for oceans based on the best-available science.

- **Development policy**

The European Union (EU) fisheries development policy aims at improving food security and reducing poverty in the world, while promoting sustainable management of fisheries. Fisheries and aquaculture play an important role for food security and nutrition not only as a primary source of protein and essential nutrients, but also as a provider of income and livelihoods. The sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture is a fundamental condition for food security and nutrition and for providing employment and income generation in coastal areas of many developing countries and small-island developing States.

For the period 2007-2014, the EU development policy funds have financed several projects in the field of fisheries and aquaculture for a total of more than 220M euros. Regional programmes in Africa, in the Indian Ocean and in the Pacific Ocean have focused on strategic governance issues including stock assessments and fisheries management, control, surveillance and monitoring as well as the fight against IUU fishing and which all have an impact on achieving sustainable development in marine and coastal areas and associated communities of these regions. As a complement, national programmes have supported the formulation and implementation of national sectoral policies developed by partner countries as well as initiatives led by local communities. Fisheries have also benefited from EU development programmes on health surveillance, sanitary issues and market-access

² Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy (Marine Strategy Framework Directive).

ICP 2015 - Oceans and sustainable development: integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development

Belgian contribution

One of the main outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference was the agreement to develop a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Oceans and Fisheries have a critical importance to all three dimensions of sustainable development (social, economical and environmental) and have critical relevance to food security and poverty eradication. This is why the United Nations General Assembly decided to accept this issue as the topic for the 16th Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea in April 2015.

Oceans and Fisheries – facts and figures

Oceans cover approximately 71% of the world surface. The UN calculates that over three billion people depend on marine and coastal biodiversity for their livelihoods, and estimates the market value of marine and coastal resources and industries at \$3 trillion per year, or about 5% of global GDP³. The World Bank estimates that 350 million jobs are directly linked to the ocean worldwide⁴. Around 97% of the world's fishers live in developing countries, including Small Island Developing States (SIDS), where fish are the single most traded food product, valued at \$25 billion a year⁵. Sustainable fishing provides employment, can help alleviate poverty and boosts nutritional security for millions of vulnerable people.

The human population is predicted to reach 9,5 billion by 2050⁶. As the global population continues to rise, humanity's dependence on healthy and productive ocean ecosystems will increase. The FAO estimates that 85% of fish stocks are fully exploited, overexploited, depleted or recovering from depletion, preventing the marine ecosystem from reaching its full potential as an animal protein source, critical for global food security. In addition to the overexploitation of fish stocks, the degradation of marine ecosystems and a steady trend in biodiversity loss threaten marine ecosystem services.

Political recognition of the importance of Oceans and Fisheries

In *The Future We Want*, it was decided that SDGs would focus on priority areas for the achievement of sustainable development, being guided in part by the outcome document of Rio+20. Oceans and seas were identified prominently as a priority therein. Fundamentally – any set of SDGs needs to take into account the critical nature, as well as global value and interest of the ocean and the need to ensure its long term conservation and sustainable use.

"We stress the importance of the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and seas and of their resources for sustainable development, including through the contributions to poverty eradication,

³ UNEP, 2013. Freshwater and Marine Water Systems.

⁴ World Bank, 2012. The Living Oceans

⁵ The World Bank - FAO, 2010. The Hidden Harvests - the global contribution of capture fisheries; FAO, 2012. A value-chain analysis of international fish trade and food security with an impact assessment of the small scale sector

⁶ UN – Department of Economic and Social Affairs - Population Division, 2012

sustained economic growth, food security, creation of sustainable livelihoods and decent work, while at the same time protecting biodiversity and the marine environment and addressing the impacts of climate change. We therefore commit to protect, and restore, the health, productivity and resilience of oceans and marine ecosystems, and to maintain their biodiversity, enabling their conservation and sustainable use for present and future generations, and to effectively apply an ecosystem approach and the precautionary approach in the management, in accordance with international law, of activities impacting on the marine environment, to deliver on all three dimensions of sustainable development.” (The Future We Want, A/RES/66/288, 11 Sept. 2012 (“Rio+20”), para. 158)

In its intervention at the Open Working Group, Belgium recognized oceans and seas as important components of the post 2015 development agenda, highlighting the need to maintain marine and coastal biodiversity, to protect and restore marine ecosystems, to address marine pollution, to achieving sustainable fisheries and to improve oceans and seas governance so that illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing is prevented and eliminated. Belgium further recognized that the interrelations of oceans and seas with many other sustainable development challenges call for a more holistic approach to the sustainable management of natural resources and services provided by oceans and seas.

Report of the Open Working Group & UNSG Summary Report

The importance of Oceans and Seas was ultimately validated by the entire Open Working Group on the SDGs, which by consensus recommended that a stand-alone SDG on oceans (Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development – including 7 targets) be included in the post-2015 sustainable development framework. This recommendation is one of the key elements which will form the basis for further deliberations of the General Assembly, before adoption of the final outcome document in the fall of 2015.

In December 2014, UN Secretary General stressed the historic nature or the result of the Open Working Group in his Synthesis Report On the Post-2015 Agenda. This report distills 6 essential elements, including to ensure healthy lives, to grow a strong, inclusive, and transformative economy and to protect our ecosystems for all societies and our children. The Secretary General recognizes that it is essential to “[...]halt biodiversity loss, [...], to protect our oceans, seas, rivers and atmosphere as our global heritage [...], to promote sustainable [...] fisheries and food systems, to foster sustainable management of water resources, and of waste and chemicals, to foster renewable and more efficient energy, to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, [and] to ensure sustainable consumption and production, and to achieve sustainable management of marine and [...] ecosystems [...].”

In the context of these proceedings, Belgium welcomes the recommendation of the Open Working Group, as well as the Secretary General’s Summary Report and continues to stress the critical importance of oceans in the post-2015 development agenda, recognizing the importance of the ocean for sustainable development and humankind as a whole. The ocean merits and requires focused attention and a specific approach, due to its complex nature and significant contribution to the all three dimensions of sustainable development globally.

Belgium is looking forward to studying these issues in more detail at the upcoming ICP.