

UN Environment-Contribution to SG report on oceans and the law of the sea

A. Major developments since the last reporting period

In relation to para 266 and 268 of the Resolution

UN Environment works with the International **Coral Reef** Initiative and other partners in implementing action requested in UNEA resolution 2/12 on coral reefs. An analysis of global and regional policy instruments and governance mechanisms is underway. An advisory committee for this has been established based on nominations from members states, and a full methodology developed. The analysis will be concluded in 2018 and findings reported to UNEA-4 in 2019. UN Environment and the International Coral Reef Initiative also jointly lead the Coral Reef Community of Ocean Action towards achievement of SDG 14. Coral reef awareness raising efforts are being stepped up, in the context of the International Year of the Reef 2018 declared by the International Coral Reef Initiative.

In relation to para 183, 203, 206, 209, 213, 214, 221, 232-235, 254-261, 263 of the Resolution

COBESA Strategic Directions 2018-2022 were adopted at the Second Extraordinary IGM of COBSEA 25-26 April 2018 in Bangkok, Thailand. Under these Strategic Directions COBSEA will focus on regional governance; addressing land-based marine pollution with a particular focus on nutrients, sediment, wastewater and marine litter; and marine and coastal planning and management, with a particular focus on ecosystem-based management approaches, including MPAs and MSP, towards achievement of relevant SDGs and Aichi Targets. An SDG implementation outlook focusing on these substantive priorities of COBSEA will be developed in 2018.

A process to update the COBSEA Regional Marine Litter Action Plan is underway, to ensure it remains fit-for-purpose and fully reflect priorities identified e.g. in UN Environment Assembly Resolutions 1/6, 2/11 and 3/7 as well as the 2030 Development Agenda and SDGs, a first draft of the revision was considered by the Second Extraordinary Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA in April 2018.

NOWPAP member states – Japan, P.R. China, R. Korea, and the Russian Federation – adopted the NOWPAP Medium-term Strategy (MTS) 2018-2023 in principle. The strategy provides a roadmap for further development of the mechanism with a focus on ecosystem-based integrated coastal and river basin management, assessment of the state of the marine and coastal environment, land- and sea-based pollution prevention and reduction, and conservation of marine and coastal biodiversity.

NOWPAP CEARAC - Special Monitoring and Coastal Environmental Assessment Regional Activity Centre – completed the assessment of major pressures on marine biodiversity in the NOWPAP region and feasibility study on the use of remote-sensing methods for mapping seagrass distribution in the region. The latter provides important ecosystem functions, including biodiversity protection and carbon storage. NOWPAP DINRAC - Data and Information Network Regional Activity Centre – among its several data and information management activities compiled the list of marine species included in the national Red Lists of member countries. NOWPAP MERRAC – a joint United Nations Environment and International Maritime Organization Marine Environmental Emergency Preparedness and Response Regional Activity Centre - developed and launched a GIS-based data and information system on oil and harmful and noxious HNS spills in the NOWPAP region.

In the context of implementing the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap adopted by the Contracting Parties to the **Barcelona Convention** in 2008, the MAP system has delivered the first ever Quality Status Report for the Mediterranean (2017 MED QSR). This is the first assessment product based on the MAP Ecological Objectives and IMAP indicators; it builds upon existing data and is complimented with inputs from numerous diverse sources where appropriate. The 2017 MED QSR is an important achievement and an innovative development for assessing the status of the Mediterranean ecosystem and the achievement of Good Environmental Status (GES). It is also an important milestone for the MAP-Barcelona Convention system 40-years long experience in monitoring and assessing the marine and coastal environment of the Mediterranean.

During the 20th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (COP 20, Tirana, Albania, 17 - 20 December 2017) and under its main theme “Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with focus on Sustainable Development Goal 14: Pollution and Biodiversity” fourteen relevant decisions were adopted by the Contracting Parties.

Following the adoption of Decision IG.23/7 at COP 20, on the “Implementation of the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Protocol: Annotated Structure of the Common Regional Framework for Integrated Coastal Zone Management and Conceptual Framework for Marine Spatial Planning”, an Open-ended Working Group of Experts was established with the aim to finalize the Common Regional Framework for Integrated Coastal Zone Management.

On biodiversity and marine protected areas, COP 20 adopted the updated Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine and Coastal Bird Species listed in annex II to the SPA/BD Protocol (Decision IG.23/8) and decided to include the Calanques National Park (France) in the list of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (Decision IG.23/9).

The Contracting Parties of the **Nairobi Convention** have been showing commendable advancement of the blue/ocean economy pathways and identified the need for tools such as marine spatial planning to sustainably manage marine and coastal areas through multi-stakeholder approaches, including the need for capacity development for marine spatial planning.

A regional exercise, held in January 2018 in Mombasa, Kenya, to develop an outlook of critical habitats and Marine Protected Areas in the Western Indian Ocean set off the process that will help establish a baseline for achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) and targets 14.2 and 14.5 in the region. The SDG14 targets seeks “to sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including strengthening their resilience and to take action for their restoration, to achieve healthy and productive oceans by 2020”.

B. Detailed developments

1. Coral Reefs

UN Environment works with the International Coral Reef Initiative and other partners in implementing action requested in UNEA resolution 2/12 on coral reefs. An analysis of global and regional policy instruments and governance mechanisms is underway. An advisory committee for this has been established based on nominations from members states, and a full methodology developed. The analysis will be concluded in 2018 and findings reported to UNEA-4 in 2019. UN Environment and the International Coral Reef Initiative also jointly lead the Coral Reef Community of Ocean Action towards achievement of SDG 14.

Coral reef awareness raising efforts are being stepped up, in the context of the International Year of the Reef 2018 declared by the International Coral Reef Initiative. This includes development of a global, multi-year coral reef campaign, to be launched in the second half of 2018. The start of the International Year of the Reef 2018 was marked by UN Environment Executive Director Erik Solheim and SG Special Envoy for the Ocean, Peter Thomson, at an event in Fiji in January 2018.

UN Environment and the International Coral Reef Initiative are leading efforts to further strengthen the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network as an Ocean Observing Network. An implementation and governance plan is being prepared for adoption by the International Coral Reef Initiative at its General Meeting in December 2018, and workplan towards publication of a global coral reef status report in 2020 has been initiated. In the Caribbean, capacity building activities have supported countries and territories apply regional monitoring and reporting standards developed. A GCRMN regional report for the Western Indian Ocean has been published by the Indian Ocean Commission in partnership with the Nairobi Convention (report: <https://www.icriforum.org/news/2017/12/first-coral-reef-status-report-western-indian-ocean-region-presented-nairobi>). A report on the Pacific Islands will be published in mid-2018, a report on the Eastern Tropical Pacific in mid-2019. **(Capacity-building initiatives)**

UN Environment, working with partners, has published tools that enable consideration of future exposure to bleaching, inherent resilience of a coral reef, as well as human factors eroding their resilience in management planning. Statistically downscaled climate model projections for future coral bleaching conditions, available on Environment Live <https://environmentlive.unep.org/theme/index/19>. Findings have been published in a journal article (van Hooidonk et al 2016 Nature Scientific Reports <https://www.nature.com/articles/srep39666>) and in a technical report entitled 'Coral Bleaching Futures' (<https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/22048>), which includes some guidance on use of the projections. Guidance on application is also contained in 'Guide to assessing coral reef for decision support' (https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/22046/Guide_Coral_Reef_Resilience.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y). **(Capacity-building initiatives)**

2. Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA)

The Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA) is a regional intergovernmental policy forum and the sole decision-making body for the East Asian Seas Action Plan. COBSEA supports the nine participating countries (Cambodia, People's Republic of China, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Singapore and Vietnam) in the development and protection of the marine environment and coastal areas of East Asian Seas. The COBSEA Secretariat is hosted by Thailand and administered by UN Environment, located at the UN Environment Asia and the Pacific Office in Bangkok, Thailand.

COBSEA Strategic Directions 2018-2022 were adopted at the Second Extraordinary IGM of COBSEA 25-26 April 2018 in Bangkok, Thailand. Under these Strategic Directions COBSEA will focus on regional governance; addressing land-based marine pollution with a particular focus on nutrients, sediment, wastewater and marine litter; and marine and coastal planning and management, with a particular focus on ecosystem-based management approaches, including MPAs and MSP, towards achievement of relevant SDGs and Aichi Targets. An SDG implementation outlook focusing on these substantive priorities of COBSEA will be developed in 2018.

The COBSEA Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter 2008 remains the only intergovernmentally adopted framework for addressing marine litter in the region. A process to update this Regional Marine Litter Action Plan is underway, to ensure it remains fit-for-purpose and fully reflect priorities identified e.g. in UN Environment Assembly Resolutions 1/6, 2/11 and 3/7 as well as the 2030 Development Agenda and SDGs. A first draft of the revision was considered by the Second Extraordinary Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA in April 2018, prepared based on consultation with participating countries, other stakeholders and desk review. At that meeting, participating countries agreed steps towards finalization of the revised action plan. A decision on the revised COBSEA Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter will be made at the 24th Intergovernmental Meeting in 2019.

COBSEA and UN Environment are developing a regional project on reducing marine litter through management of the plastic value chain (USD 6.5M). The inception phase of the project is expected to commence in Q3 2018. The project will support countries implement key provisions of the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter, including in relation to and in doing so also facilitate development, planning and implementation of national commitments made in the context of the global Clean Seas campaign and voluntary commitments related to SDG 14.1.

3. Northwest Pacific Region (Northwest Pacific Action Plan)

NOWPAP member states – Japan, P.R. China, R. Korea, and the Russian Federation – adopted the NOWPAP Medium-term Strategy (MTS) 2018-2023 in principle. The strategy provides a roadmap for further development of the mechanism with a focus on ecosystem-based integrated coastal and river basin management, assessment of the state of the marine and coastal environment, land- and sea-based pollution prevention and reduction, and conservation of marine and coastal biodiversity. NOWPAP MTS 2018-2023 is a major milestone of the NOWPAP's voluntary commitment #OceanAction17490 submitted at the UN Ocean Conference and aimed at strengthening regional cooperation for the protection of the marine and coastal environment in the Northwest Pacific. The

MTS further strengthens NOWPAP's role as a regional implementation mechanism for ocean-related SDGs. It is underpinned by the three major pillars: (i) Promoting ecosystem-based management approach to sustainable development of marine and coastal areas to achieve the Ecological Quality Objectives (EcoQOs), thereby helping implement the 2030 Agenda, especially SDG 14; (ii) Monitoring and reporting on progress towards selected SDG 14 targets, and (iii) Strengthening partnerships with relevant global and regional institutions.

Within the MTS 2018-2023 framework, NOWPAP Regional Coordinating Unit and its four Regional Activity Centres continue addressing marine environmental issues such as eutrophication, introduction of alien invasive species, accidental oil and chemical spills, and threats to marine and coastal biodiversity. Members implement two Regional Action Plans – NOWPAP Oil and Noxious and Hazardous Substances (NHS) Contingency Plan (RCP) and NOWPAP Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP MALI) - and started deliberations on the Regional Action Plan on Marine and Coastal Biodiversity (RAP BIO).

NOWPAP CEARAC - Special Monitoring and Coastal Environmental Assessment Regional Activity Centre – completed the assessment of major pressures on marine biodiversity in the NOWPAP region and feasibility study on the use of remote-sensing methods for mapping seagrass distribution in the region. The latter provides important ecosystem functions, including biodiversity protection and carbon storage. NOWPAP DINRAC - Data and Information Network Regional Activity Centre – among its several data and information management activities compiled the list of marine species included in the national Red Lists of member countries. NOWPAP MERRAC – a joint United Nations Environment and International Maritime Organization Marine Environmental Emergency Preparedness and Response Regional Activity Centre - developed and launched a GIS-based data and information system on oil and harmful and noxious HNS spills in the NOWPAP region. The 'International Maritime Disaster Response Conference' held on 6-7 December 2017 in Busan, Republic of Korea was organized by the Centre with the support of Korea Coast Guard, Korea Research Institute of Ships and Ocean Engineering, Korea Marine Environment Management Corporation and Korea Environment Institute. The conference reviewed lessons learned from major pollution incidents at sea, marine environmental disaster response policies and the latest know-how in coping with such disasters. The Centre also completed a regional review of sea-based marine litter and floating marine litter prediction models in the region. NOWPAP POMRAC - Pollution Monitoring Regional Activity Centre – is working on the development of indicators and targets for EcoQOs linking them to relevant SDG indicators and undertook a pioneering investigation on microplastics contamination in the Far East of the Russian Federation.

Strengthening existing and building new partnership remains an important part of NOWPAP activities. Among the highlights in 2018 were joint NOWPAP-Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA) capacity building workshop on coastal zone management in November 2017, co-sponsoring of several sessions during the 2017 Conference "Environmental Changes in the North Pacific and Impacts on Biological Resources and Ecosystem Services" of the North Pacific Marine Science Organization, sharing experiences and undertaking capacity building together with the 2nd Phase of Yellow Sea Large Marine Ecosystem Project, and joint NOWPAP-Tripartite Environmental Ministers marine litter workshops and coastal cleanup campaigns held in Japan and Republic of Korea in 2017 and 2018, respectively. The mechanism continues providing expert support to globally coordinated harmonization of marine litter methodologies led by the UN Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP). **(Capacity-building initiatives)**

Strengthening existing and building new partnership remains an important part of NOWPAP activities. Among the highlights in 2018 were joint NOWPAP-Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA) capacity building workshop on coastal zone management in November 2017, co-sponsoring of several sessions during the 2017 Conference "Environmental Changes in the North Pacific and Impacts on Biological Resources and Ecosystem Services" of the North Pacific Marine Science Organization, sharing experiences and undertaking capacity building together with the 2nd Phase of Yellow Sea Large Marine Ecosystem Project, and joint NOWPAP-Tripartite Environmental Ministers marine litter workshops and coastal cleanup campaigns held in Japan and Republic of Korea in 2017 and 2018, respectively. The mechanism continues providing expert support to globally coordinated harmonization of marine litter methodologies led by the UN Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP). **(Capacity-building initiatives)**

4. Mediterranean Region (Mediterranean Action Plan-Barcelona Convention)

In the context of implementing the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap adopted by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention in 2008, the MAP system has delivered the first ever Quality Status Report for the Mediterranean (2017 MED QSR). This is the first assessment product based on the MAP Ecological Objectives and IMAP indicators; it builds upon existing data and is complimented with inputs from numerous diverse sources where appropriate. The 2017 MED QSR is an important achievement and an innovative development for assessing the status of the Mediterranean ecosystem and the achievement of Good Environmental Status (GES). It is also an important milestone for the MAP-Barcelona Convention system 40-years long experience in monitoring and assessing the marine and coastal environment of the Mediterranean. The 2017 MED QSR is publicly available at <https://www.medqsr.org> and at the MAP website, <https://unepmap.org>. **(Capacity building initiatives)**

While IMAP is implemented and a more complete data-base is established, work is ongoing to harmonize the monitoring and assessment systems at national level. With the ultimate objective of achieving the GES the Mediterranean Sea, the EU funded EcAp-MEDII Project provided capacity building activities to support the development of draft national IMAPs. Regular thematic reports will be developed in the coming years, based more and more on quantitative rather than qualitative information, including the 2019 State of Environment Report and the next Quality Status Report in 2023. The 2019 State of Environment Report will provide an up-to-date foundation for improved decision-making at all levels and enhancing the delivery of the 2030 Agenda, the achievement of its SDGs, and the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development. Furthermore, MAP is currently undertaking a participatory process for the elaboration of a foresight study on the environment and development in the Mediterranean region with the horizon 2050 (MED 2050). **(Capacity building initiatives)**

During the 20th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (COP 20, Tirana, Albania, 17 - 20 December 2017) and under its main theme “Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with focus on Sustainable Development Goal 14: Pollution and Biodiversity” fourteen relevant decisions were adopted by the Contracting Parties. Through Decision IG.23/4, a list of indicators of the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard for the monitoring of the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016–2025 was set out as a basis for further work. Work on further streamlining these indicators with the Sustainable Development Goals indicators, as well as on populating the dashboard is currently ongoing. Furthermore, a list of indicators has been prepared for the monitoring of the implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production in the Mediterranean; this list of indicators is further elaborated in synergy with the work undertaken for the relevant indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals and of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development.

During the last biennium, a pilot edition of a Simplified Peer Review Mechanism of National Sustainable Development Strategies was successfully delivered, with the voluntary participation of three Contracting Parties (France, Montenegro, Morocco). A second edition of this Peer Review Mechanism is currently under preparation, taking into account the lessons learned from the 2016–2017 exercise and with a view to enhancing the interlinkage with the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals and the Voluntary National Reviews presented at the High-Level Political Forum. **(Capacity building initiatives)**

Another strand of work is related to the Integrated Coastal Zone Management and the Marine Spatial Planning in the Mediterranean. Following the adoption of Decision IG.23/7 at COP 20, on the “Implementation of the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Protocol: Annotated Structure of the Common Regional Framework for Integrated Coastal Zone Management and Conceptual Framework for Marine Spatial Planning”, an Open-ended Working Group of Experts was established with the aim to finalize the Common Regional Framework for Integrated Coastal Zone Management. **(Capacity building initiatives)**

On biodiversity and marine protected areas, COP 20 adopted the updated Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine and Coastal Bird Species listed in annex II to the SPA/BD Protocol (Decision IG.23/8) and decided to include the Calanques National Park (France) in the list of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (Decision IG.23/9). Capacity building activities were

supported on monitoring, inventory and assessment of biodiversity with focus on endangered and threatened species, non-indigenous species and key habitats. Work is continuing for the successful implementation of the MoU between UNEP/MAP and the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM); close collaboration is enhanced to achieve SDG 14, including on issues such as the Sub-Regional Pilot Study for the Eastern Mediterranean on Non-Indigenous Species in Relation to Fisheries. **(Capacity building initiatives)**

Furthermore, COP 20 adopted the Mediterranean Guide on Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in Responding to Marine Pollution Incidents (Decision IG.23/11) as well as updated Guidelines on Management of Dredged Materials (Decision IG.23/12) and updated Guidelines on the Management of Desalination Activities (Decision IG.23/13).

MAP is implementing with the support of the EU-funded Marine Litter MED project, key measures on marine litter as provided for in the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean. In addition, partnerships were strengthened through the organization of the second meeting of the Regional Cooperation Platform on Marine Litter (November 2017) during which a joint workplan was agreed. The Secretariat is also participating in the Ad Hoc Open-Ended Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastics as provided for by the UNEA3 resolution on marine litter and plastic. Coordination is ongoing with the other European Regional Seas for the implementation of the Regional Action Plans on Marine Litter; MAP is also supporting the Black Sea Commission Permanent Secretariat to develop a Monitoring Programme and an Action Plan on Marine Litter based on the Mediterranean experience. **(Capacity building initiatives)**

Efforts to achieve universal ratification of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols continue. Since May 2017, the following instruments of ratification or accession have been deposited: (a) the instrument of ratification of the ICZM Protocol by Lebanon; dated 1 August 2017; the Protocol entered into force for Lebanon on 31 August 2017; (b) the instrument of accession to the Prevention and Emergency Protocol by Lebanon, dated 3 November 2017; the Protocol entered into force for Lebanon on 3 December 2017; and (c) the instrument of ratification of the Offshore Protocol by Croatia, dated 8 February 2018; the Protocol entered into force for Croatia on 10 March 2018.

5. Nairobi Convention Secretariat

As part of the process of strengthening ocean governance and awareness in the Western Indian Ocean, the Nairobi Convention in collaboration with Kenya's National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) organized a 3-day leadership training on the management of the coastal and marine environment in July 2017 in Mombasa. The workshop equipped senior policy makers in Kenya with skills for better advocacy on the use of integrated approaches to the management of the coastal and marine ecosystems within the government. The training also equipped policy makers with skills necessary for the development of informed policies and decision making for ocean management. The training was organized pursuant to Decision CP8/6c of the Eighth Conference of Parties to the Nairobi Convention on support and partnership for implementation of the Strategic Action Programme for the protection of the Western Indian Ocean from land-based sources and activities. A similar leadership training on coastal and marine management targeting senior policy makers in Tanzania was held on 4-6 October 2017 in Tanga, Tanzania, followed by another training in Seychelles on 11-13 April 2018 attended by senior policy makers from Seychelles and Mauritius. **(Capacity building initiatives)**

The Contracting Parties of the Nairobi Convention have been showing commendable advancement of the blue/ocean economy pathways and identified the need for tools such as marine spatial planning to sustainably manage marine and coastal areas through multi-stakeholder approaches, including the need for capacity development for marine spatial planning. The Nairobi Convention in collaboration with Blue Solutions, United Nations Environment Programme - World Conservation and Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (IOC/UNESCO) organized a training on Marine Spatial Planning on 13-14 November 2017 in Mahe, Seychelles. The training developed a

common understanding of Marine Spatial Planning necessary to support the implementation of sustainable resource use planning in the Western Indian Ocean region through exploring different applications of marine spatial planning and sharing of marine spatial planning experiences. A follow-up training is planned for late 2018. Through UNEP-WCMC, the training also delved into Area Based Planning Tools for Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) as part of implementation of the project on Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation of Deep-sea Living Marine Resources and Ecosystems in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction. On 15 November 2017, a session by IUCN presented to the western Indian Ocean countries the results of the Seamounts project and the Marine Spatial Atlas for the Western Indian Ocean project. **(Capacity building initiatives)**

A regional exercise, held in January 2018 in Mombasa, Kenya, to develop an outlook of critical habitats and Marine Protected Areas in the Western Indian Ocean set off the process that will help establish a baseline for achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) and targets 14.2 and 14.5 in the region. The SDG14 targets seeks “to sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including strengthening their resilience and to take action for their restoration, to achieve healthy and productive oceans by 2020”. The regional outlook is being developed under the Project on the ‘Implementation of the Strategic Action Programme for the protection of the Western Indian Ocean from land-based sources and activities’ (WIOSAP). The Outlook will capture endangered species within the critical habitats and recommendations from the Outlook on improved management of critical habitats will be presented to the Contracting Parties of the Nairobi Convention for adoption. **(Capacity building initiatives)**

On 9-11 July, 2018 in Durban, South Africa The Nairobi Convention Secretariat has scheduled a Science to Policy Forum for the Western Indian Ocean to support the efforts of the Contracting Parties of the Convention to integrate relevant scientific evidence and findings to protect, manage and develop the coastal and marine environment in a sustainable manner. The Forum will highlight emerging issues and present evidence to policy makers on the areas that require new policies. Some emerging areas include taking into account the contribution of critical habitats to the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) of countries, sustainable port development, SDG14 voluntary commitments in the WIO region, innovative approaches of dealing with land-based plastic waste, threat of ocean acidification to coastal and marine resources and building partnership for coastal cities. The Nairobi Convention Ninth Conference of Parties (COP9) to be held on 30–31 August 2018 in Kenya, will review the status of implementation of the Nairobi Convention and provide policy directions on several coastal and marine issues following the Science-Policy Forum. At the same time the Conference will seek to secure partnerships and foster collaboration between international, regional and national organizations, key regional players and the Contracting Parties in the implementation of the 2018–2022 Work Programme of the Nairobi Convention. **(Capacity building initiatives)**

To foster effective management of the coastal and marine environment in the Western Indian Ocean, the Nairobi Convention contributed to the 2018-2021 EAF-Nansen Programme Science Plan in a meeting in Mauritius organized by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization in August 2017. The four-year maritime surveys by EAF Nansen research vessel will strengthen the knowledge base for the sustainable management of fisheries in the face of increasing fishing pressure, climate variability and change, pollution and other anthropogenic stressors in the Western Indian Ocean region. The plan will identify priority areas for collaborative work between the Western Indian Ocean countries and the EAF-Nansen Programme in marine fishery and environmental research, fisheries management and capacity development.

The Nairobi Convention in collaboration with the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) organized a workshop on “Delivering on regional voluntary commitments to Sustainable Development Goal 14” was held on 20-23 November 2017 in Maputo, Mozambique to deliberate further on how the Western Indian Ocean countries and key stakeholder groups will deliver on joint voluntary commitments for the

Sustainable Development Goal 14 targets in the region, with a specific focus on the northern Mozambique channel area that is shared by five countries.