

Report of the Secretary-General on oceans and the law of the sea, as mandated by United Nations General Assembly resolution 78/69 of 5 December 2023, entitled “Oceans and the law of the sea”.

These inputs provide an overview of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) activities, including adoption of measures and development of programmes, that have been undertaken or are ongoing in the implementation of specific provisions of United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution 78/69 relevant to UNEP. The reporting period covers September 2023 to August 2024.¹

I. Ratification of Regional Seas Conventions and Protocols

Paragraph 198. Encourages States that have not done so to become parties to regional seas conventions and the protocols thereto addressing the protection and preservation of the marine environment, while noting the role of the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Seas Programme;

The Nairobi Convention for the Protection, Management and Development of Coastal and Marine Environment of the Western Indian Ocean (Nairobi Convention) Contracting Parties adopted and opened for signature the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) Protocol (ICZM Protocol) for the Western Indian Ocean in September of 2023. The Protocol is open for signature until 11 September 2024. Contracting Parties which already signed now are in the process of ratifying the Protocol.

The Secretariat of the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention) and the Regional Activity Centres of the Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities (LBS Protocol) and the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife to the Cartagena Convention (SPAW Protocol) have undertaken several activities to promote ratification among non-contracting parties in the Wider Caribbean Region, including bilateral meetings with Costa Rica, Guatemala, Jamaica, Mexico, and the United Kingdom Overseas Territories. A national workshop to promote the LBS Protocol was undertaken in Cuba in 2024 to provide technical support and advice in relation to the ratification of the LBS Protocol. The Government of St. Kitts and Nevis prepared and submitted a request in 2024 to its Cabinet of Ministers for ratification of the LBS and SPAW Protocols. The request is currently under consideration.

II. Marine and Coastal Ecosystems

Paragraph 197. Acknowledges the request by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its second session, in paragraph 6 of its resolution 2/10 of 27 May 2016, to the United Nations Environment Programme to step up its work, including through its Regional Seas Programme, on assisting countries and regions in the application of the ecosystem approach to managing the marine and coastal environment, including through enabling intersectoral cooperation in integrated coastal zone management and marine spatial planning;

The Nairobi Convention Contracting Parties adopted the ICZM Protocol in 2023, espousing principles of ecosystem-based management, and have developed a regional Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) Strategy, which is now informing national MSP strategies and frameworks. An international training programme on MSP was launched in 2023 to build the needed capacity. A regional Technical Working Group on MSP was set up for regional shared learning and offering of technical support to the Contracting Parties.

The Cartagena Convention Secretariat in coordination with the IOCaribe UNESCO and with the support of the Protecting and Restoring the Ocean’s natural Capital, building Resilience and supporting region-wide Investments

¹ UNEP consents to the posting of this contribution on the website of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea.

for sustainable Blue Socio-Economic development (PROCARIBE+) project will assist Contracting Parties in the implementation of case studies on Marine Spatial Planning in the wider Caribbean.

The Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols at their 23rd meeting (COP23, Portorož, Slovenia, 5-8 December 2023) adopted the Conceptual Framework for Implementing Marine Spatial Planning in the Mediterranean, as a guiding document for coordinated implementation of Marine Spatial Planning within the geographical scope of application of the Barcelona Convention.

The 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro highlighted the importance of coastal countries adopting an Integrated Coastal Area and River Basin Management (ICARM) approach to sustainably utilize their riverine and coastal resources. This approach, also referred to as the 'Ridge-to-Reef' or 'Source to Sea' management strategy for river coastal and river basin management, has been included as a priority action into the Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP). The Source-to-Sea approach integrates analysis, planning, policy-making, and decision-making across various sectors and scales. It considers the entire social, ecological, and economic system, encompassing the land area drained by a river system, the coastal region, and even the open ocean into which the river flows. In recent years specific focus has been put into the assessments of microplastics inflow into the NOWPAP region seas with river discharge into the marine systems. In close cooperation with regional and global partners, a dedicated capacity building programme was designed to promote this approach region-wide.

UNEP, through the Go Blue project, is supporting coastal counties in Kenya to develop and implement integrated ecosystem-based land-sea planning guidelines to enhance the protection and restoration of critical coastal and marine ecosystems, minimize pollution and sustainably manage and develop activities at the land-sea interface. This joint initiative aims to advance the Blue Economy agenda across the coastal counties in Kenya and strategically support the country's national Marine Spatial Planning process while leveraging Sustainable Blue Economy (SBE) guiding principles and concepts to provide mechanisms for the sustainable use and equitable allocation of land and sea resources.

Paragraph 191. Calls upon States to implement the 2030 Agenda, including Goal 14 to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, and recalls that the Goals and targets are integrated and indivisible;

Several decisions of the last Conference of Parties (COPs) to the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols held in October 2023 (IGM20/COP17, LBSA COP 6 and SPAW COP 12) were aimed at encouraging Contracting Parties to support and promote the implementation of new and existing marine protected areas, the conservation and sustainable use of marine species and addressing emerging issues such as the Sargassum inundation, coral bleaching and the presence of invasive species. New species were added to the annexes of the SPAW Protocol, and the Contracting Parties will implement national measures to protect these species.

The Global Fund for Coral Reefs (GFCR) is a blended finance instrument to mobilise action and resources to protect and restore coral reef ecosystems. United Nations Agencies, nations, philanthropies, private investors and organisations have joined the Global Fund for Coral Reefs Coalition to deliver on ecological, social and economic resilience. Through blended finance and innovative public-private partnerships, the Fund is catalysing a sustainable financial ecosystem for the conservation and development of coral reefs. The GFCR supports business models that can sustainably finance key conservation and development goals for coral reefs via two initiative funds. Technical assistance, capacity development, monitoring, and evaluation are provided via the grant fund, while the investment fund generates de-risked investment capital to maximise the impact of projects incubated by the grant fund. The GFCR supports countries in implementing ecosystem approaches to coral reef management, with strong support to the private sector. During the reporting period, programmes that support the implementation of the ecosystem approach for coral reef management have been supported in multiple countries including Bahamas, Fiji,

Indonesia, Mexico Philippines, Tanzania, . This has so far resulted in a total area of coral reef with improved management of 263,281 ha, a total area of Marine Protected Areas & Locally Managed Marine Areas supported of 2,575,436 ha, and a total number of beneficiaries of 348,200 individuals.

UNEP through the Go Blue is supporting national authorities in Kenya in the effective management of Marine Protected Areas (MPA) and in building capacity of local communities for sustainable management of locally managed marine areas. The Go Blue project, funded by the European Union, supports mapping of marine biodiversity hotspots, the development of conservation strategies for endangered marine species such as sharks, turtles and dugongs, and lays the foundation for designating a marine RAMSAR site in line with Kenya's commitment towards the 30 by 30 agenda.

The project is also supporting local communities to establish a blue carbon project and access carbon financing through the protection and restoration of more than 1000 hectares of mangroves in Lamu County.

The Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Restoration Flagship joint programme of UNEP, FAO and UNDESA was recently launched in Comoros, St. Lucia and Vanuatu aimed to strengthen SIDS' capacity to integrate marine and coastal ecosystem restoration and conservation into economic recovery and sustainable growth through a connected "ridge to reef" approach. The SIDS Restoration Flagship joint programme will address the economy-environment nexus by focusing on the innovative approaches to policy making, financing, and management of ocean and coastal ecosystems which are needed to transition towards a sustainable blue economy in Comoros, St. Lucia and Vanuatu. The flagship programme focuses on three thematic areas:

i). Site-level restoration with local communities and businesses.

This national-level component aims to strengthen the capacities of local communities and businesses to better understand restoration economic benefits and fully engage in and capitalize on restoration activities through the development of nature-based businesses, and alternative livelihoods at site-level.

ii). Enabling environment for restoration and blue economy transition.

This component is designed to foster the strengthening or establishment of the enabling conditions required at national level to facilitate the expansion of restoration activities at the national level and the transition to a blue economy. This component includes assessment and consolidation of existing knowledge, programs, policy, and plans to identify opportunities for upscaling restoration opportunities which will inform and enable blue economy transitions.

iii). SIDS-SIDS peer learning & cooperation on best restoration practices.

Through regional and global outreach, this component encourages SIDS-SIDS peer learning and cooperation on blue economy and coastal ecosystem restoration. Based on the results of components i) and ii), it will create a space for the identification, uptake, and replication of common solutions on SIDS ecosystem restoration and conservation for blue economic recovery and growth.

Moreover, through the Small Grant Programme (SGP), UNEP has worked with community-based organizations, NGOs and local government institutions and built capacities for the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of coastal and marine biodiversity. Since 2017 UNEP has supported community-based conservation and restoration of Coral reefs, mangroves and seagrasses in more than 20 coastal Least Developed Countries and SIDS. The SGP projects were designed by integrating blue carbon and alternative livelihoods to build resilience and empower the local communities including women and youth. In the reporting period, two SIDS and two coastal LDCs received similar support.

UNEP organized a global training session on the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) that took place on 6 June 2024, in Nairobi. The training session was organized back-to-back with the second global meeting of national focal points to the Montevideo Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law (Montevideo Programme V) in cooperation with UNEP's Ecosystems Division.

Representatives from the Division for Ocean Affairs and Law of the Sea (DOALOS), and the Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations and UNEP's Law Division and Ecosystems Division made presentations during the training session.

UNEP also organized a side-event during the 'MEAs day' on 28 February 2024 at UNEA-6, in partnership with DOALOS and the Government of Mexico, entitled 'Stepping Together Toward Ratification and Implementation of the BBNJ Agreement'. The event brought together representatives of Member States, several Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans and the Global Environment Facility to help increase understanding of the BBNJ Agreement, its synergies with other biodiversity MEAs, while also building political momentum for ratification, early action and future implementation.

Paragraph 196. Encourages competent organizations and bodies that have not yet done so to incorporate an ecosystem approach into their mandates, as appropriate, in order to address impacts on marine ecosystems;

The Cartagena Convention promotes and integrates the principles of the ecosystem-based approach to address the degradation of selected priority ecosystem services. Two case studies of ecosystem-based management were designed and will be implemented in Guyana and Suriname with the support of the "Enforcing Environmental Treaties in African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Countries—ACP-MEA III project."

Paragraph 197. Acknowledges the request by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its second session, in paragraph 6 of its resolution 2/10 of 27 May 2016, to the United Nations Environment Programme to step up its work, including through its Regional Seas Programme, on assisting countries and regions in the application of the ecosystem approach to managing the marine and coastal environment, including through enabling intersectoral cooperation in integrated coastal zone management and marine spatial planning;

The Nairobi Convention has established a Science to Policy Platform to ensure the integration of science into policy and management decision-making processes and established operational strategic partnerships with Regional Economic Commissions and Communities, the private sector, civil society and academia.

The Cartagena Convention Secretariat in coordination with the IOCaribe UNESCO and with the support of the Protecting and Restoring the Ocean's natural Capital, building Resilience and supporting region-wide Investments for sustainable Blue Socio-Economic development (PROCARIBE+) project will assist Contracting Parties in the implementation of case studies on Marine Spatial Planning in the wider Caribbean.

The Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention by decision 26/3 of December 2023 endorsed the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report to implement the ecosystem approach in the Mediterranean. The report provides a quantitative assessment of the status of the marine environment in the Mediterranean, following the outcomes of the first assessment (2017).

Close involvement of scientists and researchers in the decision-making process on the marine and coastal environment became instrumental in the NOWPAP region to ensure the state-of-the-art developments are used to manage and conserve marine and coastal environment. Regular meetings within the Marine Litter working group provided a solid platform for such dialogue. A newly developed Regional Action Plan on Conservation of Marine and Coastal Biodiversity (RAP BIO), still subject to approval by NOWPAP Member States, has also resulted in an intensive dialogue within the NOWPAP scientific and policy community.

199. Encourages States, directly or through competent international organizations, to consider the further development and application, as appropriate and consistent with international law, including the Convention, of environmental impact assessment processes covering planned activities under their jurisdiction or control that may

cause substantial pollution of or significant and harmful changes to the marine environment, and also encourages the communication of the reports of the results of such assessments to the competent international organizations in accordance with the Convention;

As part of their environmental management policies, Contracting Parties to the Cartagena Convention are required to develop and implement technical and other guidelines to assist the planning of their major development projects, in such a way as to prevent or minimize harmful impacts on the Convention's area. Governments are required to provide these updates to the Cartagena Convention Secretariat in their national biennial reports.

A [Regional Environmental Monitoring Data Portal \(REMDAP\)](#) was developed and launched through collaboration among the United Nations Environment Programme's Caribbean Environment Programme (UNEP-CEP), the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Commission in March 2024 as a clearinghouse mechanism to strengthen the scientific underpinning for effective regional environmental monitoring and assessment. Once fully established, it is anticipated that the portal will be a readily available source of reliable data to facilitate evidence-based decision-making by policymakers, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, private sector, *inter alia*. This portal was developed with support from the Global Environment Facility-funded project *Integrating Water, Land and Ecosystems Management in Caribbean Small Island Developing States (GEF IWEco)*.

A [Regional Environment Monitoring Platform](#) was developed by the University of Geneva through joint funding from a SIDA Grant and the GEF CREW+ project to facilitate the compilation of information from national monitoring and assessment programmes to make environmental information generated in the Wider Caribbean Region more accessible to stakeholders for national and regional decision-making. The platform supports reporting by countries on their national environmental obligations including the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols concerning Oil Spills, Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities (LBS) and Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW), which will further enable the periodic development of the Convention's "State of" reports on Marine Pollution and Marine Biodiversity.

NOWPAP has been traditionally involved in the development of a region-wide data and information exchange network, to promote regional cooperation and exchange of information on the marine and coastal environment in the NOWPAP region and eventually to serve as a NOWPAP Clearinghouse. NOWPAP through its Regional Activity Centre in China maintains databases, publications and GIS-based maps and information on its web portal. The databases include Marine Environmental Data (MED), Contaminants and Nutrients, Marine Protected Areas, Oil and Hazardous Noxious Substances (HNS) Spills Incidents, Red Book and Endangered Species, as well as several general and metadata databases.

Paragraph 216. Recalls that, in "The future we want", States noted with concern that the health of oceans and marine biodiversity are negatively affected by marine pollution, including marine debris, especially plastic, persistent organic pollutants, heavy metals and nitrogen-based compounds, from a number of marine and land-based sources, including shipping and land run-off, and that States committed to take action to reduce the incidence and impacts of such pollution on marine ecosystems, and encourages States, in accordance with the commitment expressed in this regard, and based on collected scientific data, to take action by 2025 to achieve significant reductions in marine debris to prevent harm to the coastal and marine environment; & Paragraph 223. Recognizes the attention paid to the theme of "Marine debris, plastics and microplastics" at the seventeenth meeting of the Informal Consultative Process in 2016, and urges States to integrate the issue of marine debris into national and, as appropriate, regional strategies dealing with waste management, especially in the coastal zone, ports and maritime industries, including recycling, reuse, reduction and disposal, to consider developing an integrated waste management infrastructure and to encourage the development of appropriate economic incentives with the aim of reducing marine debris to address this issue, including the development of cost-recovery systems that provide an incentive to use port reception facilities and

discourage ships from discharging marine debris at sea, and support for measures to prevent, reduce and control pollution from any source, including land-based sources, such as community-based coastal and waterway clean-up and monitoring activities, and encourages States to cooperate regionally and subregionally to identify potential sources and coastal and oceanic locations where marine debris aggregates and to develop and implement joint prevention programmes for marine debris and to develop and implement environmentally sound options for recovery programmes, as well as to raise awareness of the issue of marine debris and the need to consider environmentally sound options for its removal;

The Nairobi Convention Contracting Parties have developed and adopted a Land-Based and sources activities Protocol to mitigate land-based pollution. A regional marine litter action plan has also been developed and now efforts are underway to support the development of national marine litter action plans. A regional marine litter and microplastics technical working group was established through a COP decision for regional shared learning and capacity building. A strategic framework on water quality monitoring for the region and associated guidelines for setting water quality targets was developed as well.

UNEP has been supporting the development of an assessment in India for science-policy interface emphasizing nutrient recovery from wastewater as a solution to combat the climate crisis, enhance water and energy security, and address the degradation of freshwater and marine ecosystems. This includes a nutrient status assessment of different centralized and decentralized wastewater treatment plants and lakes and identify and quantify microplastics at different water bodies over time and space.

Through financing from the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management (GPNM) [two case studies on Nutrient Management Valuation in Barbados and Jamaica](#) were developed. This analysis will support the Cartagena Convention Secretariat's efforts to draft new regional quantitative discharge standards for nitrogen, and phosphorus loads within the region. In addition, a Regional Eutrophication Workshop was held to facilitate training and professional exchanges of experiences and lessons learnt in the development of National Nutrient Reduction Strategies and Action Plans in Barbados and Jamaica.

To protect the unique ecosystem of the NOWPAP region, collaboration among the participating countries is vital. As such, NOWPAP scientists and practitioners collaborate with experts and government authorities from multiple nations to tackle environmental concerns like red tide, eutrophication, and the preservation of marine biodiversity in the northwest Pacific Ocean. In 2021-2023, such activities included a series of international expert meetings, development and improvement through the establishment of effective partnerships by the NOWPAP's Regional Activity Centre in Japan with key players, like Google Earth Engine (GEE), of remote sensing satellite-based tools for assessing the state of marine and coastal environment (e.g. eutrophication), development and implementing, also beyond the NOWPAP region, modern approaches to biodiversity assessment and conservation (e.g. environmental DNA).

In May 2024, UNEP, in partnership with UN Habitat, started the implementation of the third phase of a sustainable wastewater management initiative that has been empowering and building the capacity of local communities in Lok Urai Water Village (Malaysia), with a focus on women, to implement wastewater treatment solutions to protect the marine environment. This project is enhancing wastewater management, nutrient management, and sanitation provision for hundreds of marginalized coastal communities in Sabah, Malaysia and preventing pollution from land and sea-based sources from entering the marine environment.

218. Notes that the UNEP Frontiers 2016 Report identifies microplastics as one of six key emerging environmental issues, further notes that the sixth Global Environment Outlook stresses, inter alia, the urgency of addressing ocean plastic pollution and the proven adverse impacts of microplastics to marine ecosystems, and calls upon States to implement resolution 4/6 on marine plastic litter and microplastics, adopted by the United Nations Environment

Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme at its fourth session, held in Nairobi from 11 to 15 March 2019.

The GEF-funded *Latin America and Caribbean Cities-Project* is focusing on reducing marine plastics and plastic pollution in the Latin America and the Caribbean region by facilitating circular actions at the city-level to accelerate the transition to a circular economy, in line with government and business commitments. The project is commencing implementation in six (6) coastal municipalities in Colombia, Jamaica and Panama to reduce marine plastics and plastic pollution.

The German-funded (BMUV) PROMAR project is contributing to the reduction of waste streams, namely plastic packaging and single-use plastics, into the Caribbean Sea while promoting circular economy solutions in the British Virgin Islands, Guyana, St. Kitts and Nevis, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. This project in the five countries is beginning implementation, building upon a successful first phase of project activities in Colombia, Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic led by project implementation partner adelphi.

Paragraph 221. Further welcomes the activities of relevant United Nations bodies and organizations, in particular the United Nations Environment Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the International Maritime Organization and other intergovernmental organizations, to address the sources and impacts of marine debris, including through the Global Partnership on Plastic Pollution and Marine Litter and the GloLitter Partnerships project, as well as actions relating to marine debris taken under the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, 114 in particular the adoption by the Conference of the Parties to that Convention at its twelfth meeting of resolution 12.20 on the management of marine debris, and notes the work of the International Whaling Commission on assessing the impacts of marine debris on cetaceans;

Paragraph 222. Encourages States to further develop partnerships with Indigenous Peoples, local communities, including coastal communities, industry and civil society to raise awareness of the extent of the impact of marine debris on the biological diversity, health and productivity of the marine environment and consequent economic loss and to cooperate with other States, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, including coastal communities, industry and civil society, as appropriate, on environmentally sound and cost-effective measures to prevent and reduce, as appropriate, marine debris and microplastics in the marine environment, including through strengthened cooperation under the Global Partnership on Plastic Pollution and Marine Litter (GPML).

There are a significant number of actors, initiatives and projects working on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, and coordination amongst them to maximize resources continues to be of utmost importance. [The Global Partnership on Plastic Pollution and Marine Litter \(GPML\)](#), for which UNEP provides secretariat services, continues to facilitate multi-stakeholder cooperation and partnerships, including through its Communities of Practice, to enhance the scientific foundation for action at national, regional and/or sectoral levels. As of April 2024, the GPML consists of 642 member organizations, including 50 government agencies, 308 non-governmental organizations, 94 academic institutions, 162 private sector entities and 28 intergovernmental organizations.

The [GPML Digital Platform](#) is a tool that facilitates knowledge exchange, fosters coordination, and propels collective action by all the relevant stakeholders working to eliminate plastic pollution and marine litter at all geographic levels. It has 1,480 registered users and currently hosts over 2,680 resources, including 891 technical resources, 164 events, 79 technologies, 207 capacity development resources, 641 initiatives, 71 action plans, 702 policies, and 115 financing resources, which are all accessible to Members States and other actors which they may use to inform and develop their partnerships and action with Indigenous Peoples, the private sector and local communities. Dedicated spaces for Small Island Developing States, the informal sector, and the scientific

community are being developed on the Digital Platform to promote the inclusivity and raise awareness of the issues and developments being driven by these specific groups.

In October 2023, the GPML released a [Masterclass on Unnecessary, Avoidable and Problematic \(UAP\) Plastic Products and Polymers](#) (developed by UNEP and the Open Universiteit of the Netherlands). The masterclass offers information and educates students on topics such as chemicals in plastics, plastics and circularity, policy approaches and multi-stakeholder actions related to plastic pollution and raises awareness of the impact of these types of plastics on biological diversity, health, and productivity of the marine environment. The GPML and Open University of the Netherlands are also developing an e-learning course on Sea-Based Sources of Plastic Pollution and Marine Litter. The course will introduce key sources of plastic pollution and marine litter originating from sea-based activities and provide an in-depth overview of the causes and impacts of Abandoned, Lost or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG), as well as its governance and possible solutions. The course has been developed in close collaboration with the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UNEP and the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP), and it will be made publicly accessible by June 2024.

On 19 April 2024, the GPML organized a multi-stakeholder day which provided an opportunity for various actors to showcase ongoing initiatives, share lessons on the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement, and explore next steps to enable further action to reduce plastic pollution. Participants included members of the GPML, and other relevant stakeholders engaged in activities to reduce plastic pollution at various levels. The event took place in Ottawa, Canada, just before the start of the fourth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment (INC-4).

The GPML is an integral part of the UNEP Plastics Initiative, which is a comprehensive programme aimed at addressing the escalating global issue of plastic pollution. It consolidates all UNEP's plastic-related projects into a unified programme, focusing on activating and scaling up actions at the global, regional, and national levels. Through collaboration with diverse stakeholders, ongoing projects, and a multifaceted approach, the Initiative seeks to accelerate market transformation towards a circular economy of plastics. The UNEP Plastics Initiative's inaugural [newsletter](#) was published in April 2024.

The Cartagena Convention Secretariat and the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute are co-hosts of the Global Partnership on Plastic Pollution and Marine Litter – Caribbean Node (GPML-Caribe). The following highlights the activities undertaken by the Secretariat through, or in collaboration with, the Node between September 2023 – August 2024.

- i. The Node through a consultant in The Bahamas is currently developing partnerships with a diversity of stakeholders, including local communities, coastal communities, and youth. One of the partnerships involves the Bahamas Plastic Movement (BPM), a non-profit organization geared towards raising awareness and finding solutions to plastic pollution. The mission of the BPM is to build a community of education and activism around plastic pollution. By empowering Bahamians to contribute to hands on citizen science and environmental leadership, BPM aims to evolve mindsets and spark cultural practices that will be pivotal in executing changes at the policy level. Another partnership includes the Plastic Pollution Education and Ocean Conservation Camp, a tuition free, intensive summer program that takes students on a holistic journey from the problem with plastic to solutions to this environmental crisis. This camp, which is the first of its kind for The Bahamas, empowers students to become environmental leaders and tackle the issue of plastic pollution using a dynamic, creative and hands on approach. Working predominantly in South Eleuthera, Bahamas, the main program is targeted towards youth, ages 9-15 years old with an additional aim to host satellite plastic camps with partner organizations on other islands of The Bahamas. The consultant will provide technical assistance to the Node to develop an educational manual

detailing Bahamas Plastic Movement's approach to education via their plastic camp program that could be shared across the region and scaled and duplicated regionally/globally. This work is scheduled to be completed by November 2024.

- ii. In order to address the sources and impacts of marine debris whilst also minimizing the occurrence and impact of Abandoned, Lost and Otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG) in extreme weather events, communication products targeted to fishers and policy and decision makers were developed. This project leveraged the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI's) expertise as co-host of the GPML-Caribe by harnessing previous Gladding Memorial Award (GMA) Winners to implement a community-based outreach program focused on raising awareness on abandoned, lost and otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG). The Gladding Memorial Award recognizes fishers with an enduring vision for the sustainable and wise use of marine resources and is awarded annually by GCFI. Two of the most recent GMA recipients from Grenada and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines were selected to pioneer this work, which was eventually replicated in 2023 in Antigua and Barbuda and Saint Lucia. In 2024, this work will be expanded within four islands in The Bahamas, utilizing local fisher champions. This work is scheduled to be completed by August 2024

Paragraph 242. Notes with concern the potential for serious environmental consequences resulting from oil spill incidents or pollution incidents involving hazardous or noxious substances, urges States, consistent with international law, to cooperate, directly or through competent international organizations, and share best practices, in the fields of protection of the marine environment, human health and safety, prevention, emergency response and mitigation, and in this regard encourages the undertaking of and collaboration on scientific research, including marine scientific research, to better understand the consequences of marine oil spills or marine spills involving hazardous or noxious substances;

Paragraph 243. Encourages States, in accordance with international law, including the Convention and other relevant instruments, either bilaterally or regionally, to jointly develop and promote contingency plans for responding to pollution incidents, as well as other incidents that are likely to have significant adverse effects on the marine environment and biodiversity;

The Regional Marine Pollution Emergency, Information and Training Centre – Caribe (REMPEITC-Caribe) provides technical support to Contracting Parties to the Cartagena Convention, upon request, to assess, prepare, adopt, update as well as implement and test national contingency plans and regional or sub-regional agreements and contingency plans, dealing with preparedness for and response to oil and Hazardous and Noxious Substances (HNS) spills from ships, seaports, oil handling facilities and offshore installations.

REMPEITC-Caribe also continues to consult and collaborate with the other regional activity centers within the Wider Caribbean Region, such as, but not limited to the Regional Activity Center for Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife of the Caribbean (SPAW-RAC), and the Regional Activity Center for the LBS Protocol, (RAC-IMA) on cross cutting issues affecting the marine environment.

Through funding from the ACP MEAS III project, support was provided for the development of the National Oil Spills Contingency Plan for the government of Barbados. The government was also provided with a Gap Analysis Report and a Draft Readiness Evaluation Tool for Oil Spills (RETOS) Analysis.

248. Expresses its concern regarding the spreading of hypoxic dead zones and harmful algal blooms in oceans as a result of eutrophication fuelled by riverine run - off of fertilizers, sewage outfall and reactive nitrogen resulting from the burning of fossil fuels and resulting in serious consequences for ecosystem functioning, and calls upon States to

enhance their efforts to reduce eutrophication, particularly by reducing total nutrient pollution from land-based sources and, to this effect, to continue to cooperate within the framework of relevant international organizations, in particular the Global Programme of Action and the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management and Global Wastewater Initiative, including through capacity-building initiatives and efforts to monitor, via the Global Ocean Observing System, stressors such as harmful algal blooms, areas of hypoxia, sargassum seaweed invasions and jellyfish blooms, to assess their possible linkage to eutrophication and their potential adverse impacts on the marine environment as well as on human health;

Two Case Studies Report on Nutrient Management Valuation were undertaken for Barbados and Jamaica. The two case studies have been developed within the framework of an Economic Valuation Pilot Project financed by the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management (GPNM). The analysis from the Barbados and Jamaica case studies will support the Cartagena Convention Secretariat's efforts to develop new regional quantitative discharge standards for nitrogen, and possibly also for phosphorus. The project is intended to promote and instigate an improved understanding of nutrient management and prevent nutrient over-enrichment through demonstrating best practices and supporting policy options that will stimulate and incentivize cost effective action and contribute to broader environmental sustainability benefits not only for Barbados and Jamaica but for other Caribbean nations as well.

UNEP, in August 2023, launched the publication "Wastewater. Turning Problem to Solution", which highlighted wastewater as a growing health and environment threat, especially to marine and coastal ecosystems from land and sea-based sources. This report also specifies the need for countries to sustainably manage wastewater, which can address the climate and water crisis.

Paragraph 250. Calls upon all States to ensure that urban and coastal development projects and related land-reclamation activities are carried out in a responsible manner that protects the marine habitat and environment and mitigates the negative consequences of such activities;

Paragraph 267. Calls upon States to strengthen, in a manner consistent with international law, in particular the Convention, the conservation and management of marine biodiversity and ecosystems, and national policies in relation to area-based management tools, including marine protected areas;

The Cartagena Convention Secretariat supported Contracting Parties during the reported period by promoting coordination with other environmental agreements and programmes dealing with issues related to the conservation and management of biodiversity and ecosystems of particular relevance to the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA) Protocol, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management Programme (BIOPAMA), the PROCARIBE+ project, the Implementation of the Strategic Action Plan Of The Gulf Of Mexico project, International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), MPA Connect, North American Marine Protected Areas Network (NAMPAN), among others.

268. Recalls that, in "The future we want", States reaffirmed the importance of area-based conservation measures, including marine protected areas, consistent with international law and based on best available scientific information, as a tool for conservation of biological diversity and sustainable use of its components;

Several decisions of the last COPs of the Cartagena Convention and the SPAW Protocol are aimed at encouraging Contracting Parties to support and promote the creation and effective implementation of marine protected areas. In particular in the framework of the PROCARIBE+ project, the Secretariat is supporting the implementation of marine protected areas and Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) in Colombia and the Dominican Republic, including a transboundary marine protected area in Sierra Beata.

In the framework of the project “Implementing the Strategic Action Plan of the Gulf of Mexico” the Cartagena Convention Secretariat is supporting the implementation of effective marine protected areas by strengthening the network of marine protected areas in the Gulf of Mexico.

III. Minimizing the Impacts of Climate Change

Paragraph 206. Welcomes the Paris Agreement and its early entry into force on 4 November 2016, encourages all its parties to fully implement the Agreement and parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change that have not yet done so to deposit their instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, as appropriate, as soon as possible, notes the entry into force of the Doha amendment to the Kyoto Protocol on 31 December 2020, and recognizes the importance of raising awareness of the adverse impact of climate change on the marine environment, marine biodiversity and sea level;

Paragraph 214. Encourages States, individually or in collaboration with relevant international organizations and bodies, to enhance their scientific activity to better understand the effects of climate change on the marine environment and marine biodiversity, support continued coordination of scientific work to study and minimize the impacts of ocean acidification and develop ways and means of adaptation, taking into account, as appropriate, the precautionary approach and ecosystem approaches;

The Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols at COP23 endorsed the Summary for Policymakers (SPM) of the MedECC Special Report on climate and environmental coastal risks; urged the Contracting Parties and the Secretariat to make all possible efforts to overcome the knowledge gaps that are identified in the MedECC Special Report; and invited the Contracting Parties to provide adequate and sustained support to MedECC, and its science-policy-society interface within the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system.

IV. Strengthening the Science-Policy Interface

Paragraph 352. Notes the discussions at the twenty-third meeting of the Informal Consultative Process, from 5 to 9 June 2023, on the theme of new maritime technologies: challenges and opportunities, during which delegations and other participants, inter alia, highlighted the potential benefits of new maritime technologies in addressing threats facing the ocean, facilitating ocean observing, building resilient oceans and coastal communities, mitigating the impact of climate change, efforts towards reducing the greenhouse gas emissions of the shipping sector, countering pollution, developing renewable energy sources, improving data collection to enhance marine science and achieve the goals of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, and for meeting the targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 14, noted challenges arising with respect to the introduction and use of such technologies, and recognized the vital role of national, regional and global cooperation in ensuring that all States can benefit from the sustainable development of the ocean, including the crucial importance of targeted capacity-building to enable developing States to benefit from the opportunities presented by these new technologies;

The Science to Policy Platform established under the Nairobi Convention has become the basis of COP Decisions for the Convention thus assuring the link between science and policy. A Forum for Academic and Research Institutions (FARI) has also been established under the Convention through various relevant COP decisions and this has become the science pillar of the Convention.

317. Further reaffirms that capacity-building is one of the core objectives of the Regular Process, and recalls that, during the third cycle (2021-2025), a coherent programme on capacity-building will be carried out with the aim to

develop the capacities of States in strengthening the ocean science-policy interface at the national, regional and global levels;

Paragraph 314. Reiterates the need to strengthen the regular scientific assessment of the state of the marine environment in order to enhance the scientific basis for policymaking;

The Cartagena Convention Secretariat will work on the next report of Marine Habitats and Pollution of the Wider Caribbean Region with support from the PROCARIBE+ project and in collaboration with countries and organizations of the Ocean Coordination Mechanism (once this is formally established).

The SPAW Regional Activity Centre, who coordinates the GCRMN-Caribbean node, is leading the development of the report of the Status of the Coral Reefs in the Wider Caribbean Region. The report will be included in the World Report on the Status of Coral Reefs that will be presented at the United Nations Ocean Conference III (UNOC III) in 2025.

334. Invites States and international organizations to enhance their cooperation to better protect the marine environment;

The Cartagena Convention Secretariat supported Contracting Parties during the period by promoting coordination with other environmental agreements and programmes dealing with issues related to the conservation and management of biodiversity and ecosystems of particular relevance to the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) Protocol, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar), Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), Inter-American Sea Turtle Convention (IAC), Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management Programme (BIOPAMA), the PROCARIBE+ project, the Implementation of the Strategic Action Plan Of The Gulf Of Mexico project, International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), CAMPAM, MPA Connect, North American Marine Protected Areas Network (NAMPAN) among others.

Paragraph 342. Notes with appreciation the various cooperative efforts displayed by States at the regional and subregional levels, and in this regard welcomes initiatives such as the Integrated Assessment and Management of the Gulf of Mexico Large Marine Ecosystem;

In the framework of the project “*Implementing the Strategic Action Plan of the Gulf of Mexico*” the Cartagena Convention Secretariat is supporting the implementation of effective marine protected areas by strengthening the network of marine protected areas in the Gulf of Mexico.

V. Addressing Marine Pollution

Paragraph 33. Further welcomes ongoing activities for capacity-building so as to address maritime security and protection of the marine environment of developing States, and encourages States and international financial institutions to provide additional funding for capacity-building programmes, including for transfer of technology, including through the International Maritime Organization and other competent international organizations;

The Regional Marine Pollution Emergency, Information and Training Centre – Wider Caribbean Region (REMPEITC-Caribe) based in Curacao, serves as the Regional Activity Centre (RAC) for the Cartagena Convention’s Oil Spills Protocol. During the reporting period, REMPEITC-Caribe delivered 7 regional and national workshops across the Wider Caribbean Region in direct support to Small Island Developing States. These workshops included:

- A National Workshop in Cuba on the Implementation of the Anti-Fouling Systems Convention in September 2023;

- A National Workshop in Barbados on Oil Spill Contingency Planning in October 2023;
- A National Workshop in the Bahamas on the Ballast Water Management Convention in October 2023;
- A sub-regional Workshop in St. Eustatius on Maritime Oil Spill Response in November 2023;
- A National Workshop in Trinidad and Tobago on the International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response, and Cooperation (OPRC) in January 2024;
- A National Workshop in Jamaica on National Oil Spill Contingency Planning in February 2024;
- A National Workshop in Belize on the OPRC Convention in March 2024.

Paragraph 35. Also recognizes the need to build the capacity of developing States to raise awareness of and support the implementation of improved waste management practices, noting the particular vulnerability of small island developing States to the impact of marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities and marine debris and nutrient pollution;

UNEP continues its "Beat Pollution Campaign" to raise awareness on addressing pollution. An interactive webpage on nitrogen was launched which became one of the most visited webpages of UNEP. A number of factsheets, web stories and videos on nutrient pollution and management have been developed. Several side events on nutrient have been organized during international conferences such as UNEA- 6.

UNEP is implementing the project *"Capacity development to catalyze actions and commitments at the national and global level to reduce plastic pollution, including in the marine environment"*, which aims to support countries to build their capacity to successfully combat plastic pollution through the development of national source inventories and national strategies, roadmaps and plans to address plastic pollution. Participating countries span the regions of Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean. 18 countries are formally engaged thus far: Cambodia, Cote D'Ivoire, Ecuador, Fiji, Guinea, Kiribati, Mauritius, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Samoa, Senegal, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. This project is linked to the work of the Global Partnership on Plastic Pollution and Marine Litter (GPML), including its GPML Digital Platform, which directly supports knowledge sharing activities. Innovative tools, such as a digital workflow to assist countries in the development of plastics inventories to inform national strategies, have been generated in the Digital Platform and will become available to countries beyond this project after this initial pilot phase. A needs assessment has been undertaken for all the project countries and its results have been summarized into country profile sheets, including currently available plastics data, to inform further work in each country as well as additional capacity development activities. Funding for this project, which runs through September 2025, is provided by the U.S. Department of State. The Third Coordination Meeting of the project took place on 19 and 20 April 2024 in Ottawa, Canada. A variety of capacity development opportunities are planned for county focal points, including tailored Regional Training of Trainers (ToTs) and national online technical sessions on topics identified through a needs assessment survey for project countries. Training topics include effective stakeholder engagement strategies, data collection and relevant methodologies, policy and legislative review frameworks, lessons learned from other multilateral environmental agreements, and existing regional, national, and sectoral action plans and latest science on plastics.

Through UNEP's support, the GPML has also recently conducted a survey to collect best practices in utilizing Indigenous knowledge and nature-based solutions to address plastic pollution and marine litter, and to gain information on perceptions regarding the involvement of Indigenous Peoples and communities in decision-making on this topic. Key findings indicate a need for better knowledge transfer, funding, and the protection of Indigenous knowledge. The survey will be used to inform and support the development and implementation of regional and national action strategies on plastic pollution and marine litter by incorporating Indigenous knowledge and nature-positive solutions.

The Cartagena Convention Secretariat assisted countries of the Wider Caribbean to control, prevent and reduce pollution of their coastal and marine environments, thus enabling them to meet their obligations under the Protocols concerning Oil Spills and Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities (LBS) and related Global multilateral environmental agreements. Key projects and activities undertaken during the reporting period include:

- Co-execution of the [Global Environment Facility-funded CReW+](#) project (GEF CReW+) '*An integrated approach to water and wastewater management in the Wider Caribbean Region using innovative solutions and sustainable financing mechanisms*'. Several activities were advanced during this reporting period and include:
 - o The United Nations University Institute for Water Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH) supported the development of national Water Information Management Systems (WIMS) in six Caribbean countries: Costa Rica, Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago.
 - o The Caribbean Water and Sewerage Association (CAWASA) undertook workshops to train and certify utility operators and develop a cadre of qualified regional water and wastewater personnel to conduct tutorials for the certification examinations and provide Continuing Education Credit courses so operators may comply with and be in good standing with their certification requirements.
 - o The Caribbean and Wastewater Association (CWWA) convened a capacity building workshop at the 2022 CWWA Annual Conference to drive national and regional reforms for integrated water and wastewater management (IWWM) and provide guidance for reporting on relevant sustainable development goals and to support the participation of the GEF Integrated Approach to Water and Wastewater Management Using Innovative Solutions and Promoting Financing Mechanisms in the Wider Caribbean Region CReW+ Project beneficiary countries at the CWWA Conference and High-Level Forum on Water.
 - o Rare convened a capacity-building workshop to train practitioners, who are community leaders (including civil, non-profit and public sectors) to effectively apply behavioural science to reducing wastewater pollution. This included the design of behavioural change campaigns that sought to reduce wastewater pollution.
 - o The University of Geneva through joint funding from a SIDA Grant and the GEF CReW+ project developed [a regional environmental monitoring platform](#) that has been incorporated in the UNEP World Environment Situation Room. This platform will support "State of" reporting for the Cartagena Convention by Contracting Parties.
 - o The Global Water Partnership-Caribbean (GWP-C) issued a call for project proposals to implement small-scale capacity-building projects in Integrated Water and Wastewater Management (IWWM) for eligible Caribbean CReW+ countries. Four of GWP-C's partners secured grant funding to implement short-term, small-scale IWWM projects in their respective countries. These Partners include:
 - Integrated Health Outreach for their project on 'Water Treatment Systems in Antigua and Barbuda.
 - Dominica Water and Sewerage Company Ltd. for their project on "Constructed Wetlands for Wastewater Treatment in Dominica"
 - Brightline Institute and Global Partnership Inc. for their project on "Constructed Wetlands for Wastewater Treatment in the Dominican Republic".
 - Richmond Vale Academy (RVA) for their project on "Greywater Systems in St. Vincent and the Grenadines"
- The Integrating Water, Land and Ecosystems Management in Caribbean Small Island Developing States ([GEF IWEco](#)) Project is winding down and expected to end in December 2024. The project is a multi-focal, regional project that sought to contribute to the preservation of Caribbean ecosystems and to the sustainability of livelihoods using nature-based solutions. The project further aimed to strengthen national and regional systems for monitoring of environmental status with respect to key international agreements, support national policy and legislation, as well as strengthen the capacity of national and regional institutions and other stakeholders.

- The Capacity Building Related to Multilateral Environmental Agreements in African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries - Phase 3 project focuses on strengthening the governance framework of the Convention and its Protocols: The project provided the following to pollution prevention in the Convention area:
 - o Support provided for the development of the National Oil Spills Contingency plan for Government of Barbados, as well as a Gap Analysis Report and draft RETOS Analysis.
 - o Support provided for the development of a Draft MARPOL Regulation for the Government of the Dominican Republic.
 - o Support to the Government of Saint Lucia for the development of a National Marine Litter Action Plan.

Paragraph 216. Recalls that, in “The future we want”, States noted with concern that the health of oceans and marine biodiversity are negatively affected by marine pollution, including marine debris, especially plastic, persistent organic pollutants, heavy metals and nitrogen-based compounds, from a number of marine and land-based sources, including shipping and land run-off, and that States committed to take action to reduce the incidence and impacts of such pollution on marine ecosystems, and encourages States, in accordance with the commitment expressed in this regard, and based on collected scientific data, to take action by 2025 to achieve significant reductions in marine debris to prevent harm to the coastal and marine environment;

UNEA Resolution 5/14, in operative paragraph 14, requested UNEP to continue to support and advance the work of the GPML, while strengthening scientific, technical and technological knowledge with regards to plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, on methodologies for monitoring, and sharing available scientific and other relevant data and information. In response to this and previous UNEA mandates, UNEP has continued to strengthen the GPML, fostering multi-stakeholder engagement, including from governments, intergovernmental organizations, the scientific community and the private sector, in efforts to address plastic pollution and marine litter at global, regional, national and sectoral levels.

With the aim of advancing priority issues by connecting key stakeholders and facilitating collaboration and coordination among them, the core work of the GPML is currently streamlined through five Action Tracks: 1) enhancing science-policy linkages; 2) enabling action through national, regional and/or sectoral strategies, roadmaps and plans; 3) harmonizing data, standards and methodologies; 4) fostering sustainable and innovative financing; and 5) promoting access for all through environmental justice awareness, transparency and access to information, and digital transformation and innovation.

The GPML currently coordinates 5 Communities of Practice (CoPs), which consist of informal groups of experts from key organizations and stakeholders, including the scientific community, who are convened to provide expertise and advance work on specific subjects related to plastic pollution and marine litter. These CoPs foster coordination and sharing of best practices and lessons learned on topics such as the harmonization of plastics monitoring and modelling methodologies and data, and the development of national source inventories of plastics, using a lifecycle approach to inform action strategies, roadmaps and plans. A UNEP/UNITAR Statistical Guideline on Measuring Flows of Plastic along the Lifecycle is currently being drafted to enable national statistical offices and other relevant organizations to provide policymakers with high-quality statistics on plastics that are comparable at the national, regional and global levels.

Between 2022 and 2024, the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA) conducted national and regional trainings on marine litter monitoring methods and baseline surveys in Cambodia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam to further harmonize monitoring and collect comparable data. In 2023, COBSEA launched a Ghost Gear Toolbox featuring regional case studies, videos, and guidance for abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) recovery, management, and prevention. To expand this effort addressing sea-based plastic pollution and ensure regional alignment, COBSEA has explored strategic partnerships with FAO and IMO under the

Regional Litter Project (RegLitter), funded by the Government of the Republic of Korea, following the Inception Meeting and GloLitter Asia Regional Task Force Meeting in Viet Nam in March 2024. The COBSEA Secretariat also supports countries in meaningful participation in the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) established as per United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 5/14, including resource-sharing, briefings by the INC Secretariat, preparatory meetings, and travel support. The Working Group on Marine Litter (WGML) has developed joint regional statements on behalf of COBSEA countries to [INC-2](#), [INC-3](#), and [INC-4](#) to highlight regional priorities and needs.

Paragraph 246. Recognizes that most of the pollution load of the oceans emanates from land-based activities and affects the most productive areas of the marine environment, and calls upon States, as a matter of priority, to implement the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities;

United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 5/14 requested the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to convene an intergovernmental negotiating committee, and to begin its work during the second half of 2022, with the ambition of completing its work by the end of 2024. Pursuant to that mandate, four sessions of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, have been held: from 28 November to 2 December 2022 in Punta del Este, Uruguay; from 29 May to 2 June 2023 in Paris, France; from 13 to 19 November 2023 in Nairobi, Kenya; and from 23 to 29 April 2024 in Ottawa, Canada respectively. The meeting reports of the sessions are available on the session webpages².

The fifth session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee will be hosted by the Republic of Korea and is scheduled to take place from 25 November to 1 December 2024 in Busan. The session will be preceded by regional consultations.

The [UNEP Working Group on Nitrogen](#), formed in line with [UNEA resolution 4/14](#) on sustainable nitrogen management, held its fourth, fifth, and sixth sessions in September 2023, January 2024, and June 2024 respectively. These sessions aimed to provide technical support to Member States to prepare for national action plans for nitrogen management. To kickstart this process, an initial assessment of current actions and plans was conducted, laying the groundwork for a voluntary national action plan. Eleven countries sought UNEP's guidance in formulating their plans, prompting a series of consultation meetings for technical assistance. As of April 30, 2024, 95 [focal points](#) from Member States have been nominated to the Working Group.

The Global Partnership on Nutrient Management ([GPNM](#)) has been a key ally, extending support to the Working Group through information exchange, expert gatherings, and direct assistance to Member States by sharing pertinent information and expertise. The GPNM provided a forum for comprehensive technical discussions and engagement across various stakeholders on the focal points of the Working Group's agenda.

Additionally, UNEP is currently in the process of developing guidance on Legal, Policy, and Regulatory Frameworks for an Integrated Approach to Reduce Nitrogen Footprint across different sectors.

The Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols at COP23 adopted the Regional Plan on Agriculture Management, the Regional Plan on Aquaculture Management and the Regional Plan on Urban

² INC-1:

<https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/41841/UNEPINC.114Reportupdated.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>; INC-2: <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/42953/FinalINC2Report.pdf>; INC-3: <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/44760/INC3ReportE.pdf>; Final report for INC-4 being finalized and will be uploaded once ready, in-session draft report available at <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/45464/INC4ReportE.pdf>.

Stormwater Management, all in the framework of Article 15 of the Land Based Sources and Activities Protocol. The Contracting Parties also adopted the Updated Guidelines for the Dumping of Inert Uncontaminated Inorganic Geological Materials.

The Go Blue project in Kenya is supporting local communities to establish constructed wetlands as a form of low-cost technology and a nature-based solution for wastewater treatment and preventing marine pollution. The project also supports mapping of pollution hotspots along the urban town of Mombasa and informs the local government for the implementation of pollution prevention measures. UNEP jointly with UN-Habitat are also assisting local authorities in Taita-Taveta (Kenya) to establish a waste recovery facility in an effort to prevent pollution in the marine environment.

UNEP launched the report "[Wastewater - Turning Problem to Solution](#)" in August 2023. This new report, developed jointly by UNEP's [Global Wastewater Initiative](#) and GRID-Arendal, urges decision makers and action takers from all regions of the world to implement the three key actions, to overcome barriers, and to put in place the building blocks, described in the publication. This report also emphasizes the need to sustainably manage wastewater to combat the climate and water crisis and achieve energy, food and water security.

In May 2024, UNEP, in partnership with UN Habitat, started the implementation of the 3rd phase of a sustainable wastewater management initiative that has been empowering and building the capacity of local communities in Lok Urai Water Village (Malaysia), with a focus on women, to implement wastewater treatment solutions to protect the marine environment. This project is enhancing wastewater management, nutrient management, and sanitation provision for hundreds of marginalized coastal communities in Sabah, Malaysia and preventing pollution from land and sea-based sources from entering the marine environment.

Paragraph 184. Encourages States and competent international organizations and bodies to support the effective implementation of the requirements of the International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters (Polar Code), adopted by the International Maritime Organization under the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea and the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as modified by the Protocol of 1978 relating thereto, as amended, including relevant requirements of the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 1978, as amended, and notes in this regard the adoption by the International Maritime Organization of amendments to the Polar Code to incorporate new requirements for ships that are operating in polar waters concerning safety of navigation and voyage planning, which are expected to enter into force on 1 January 2026;

Paragraph 235. Notes that the global limit of 0.50 per cent on sulphur in fuel oil under annex VI to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships entered into force on 1 January 2020, encourages States that have not yet done so to become parties to the Protocol of 1997 (annex VI – Regulations for the Prevention of Air Pollution from Ships) to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as modified by the Protocol of 1978 relating thereto, as amended, and encourages the effective implementation of that Protocol;

Paragraph 248. Expresses its concern regarding the spreading of hypoxic dead zones and harmful algal blooms in oceans as a result of eutrophication fuelled by riverine run-off of fertilizers, sewage outfall and reactive nitrogen resulting from the burning of fossil fuels and resulting in serious consequences for ecosystem functioning, and calls upon States to enhance their efforts to reduce eutrophication, particularly by reducing total nutrient pollution from land-based sources and, to this effect, to continue to cooperate within the framework of relevant international organizations, in particular the Global Programme of Action and the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management and Global Wastewater Initiative, including through capacity-building initiatives and efforts to monitor, via the Global Ocean Observing System, stressors such as harmful algal blooms, areas of hypoxia, sargassum seaweed invasions and

jellyfish blooms, to assess their possible linkage to eutrophication and their potential adverse impacts on the marine environment as well as on human health;

UNEP has been assisting countries in the implementation of UNEA Resolution 5/2 which encourages Member States to accelerate actions to significantly reduce nitrogen waste globally by 2030 and beyond through the improvement of sustainable nitrogen management. Three meetings of the UNEP Working Group on Nitrogen have been organized between September 2023 and June 2024 to help countries in the development of national action plans on sustainable nitrogen management. The Global Partnership on Nutrient Management has organized a series of webinars on topics such as nutrient recovery from wastewater, sustainable nutrient and wastewater management practices, national action plans and lessons learned, good practices in interministerial and interdepartmental coordination for the sustainable management of nutrients and more, to provide support to member states.

With the support of COBSEA, Thailand was selected as one of the child projects for the GEF8 Clean and Healthy Oceans Integrated Programme in February 2024. The project aligns with Thailand's priority to address issues of nutrients pollution as well as COBSEA's endeavour to reduce nutrients pollution at a regional level. The project design will be finalized through a series of meetings and stakeholder consultations throughout 2024.

VI. Marine biodiversity

The Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols at COP23 adopted the Evaluation and Monitoring Framework for the Post-2020 Regional Strategy for Marine and Coastal Protected Areas and Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures in the Mediterranean. The Contracting Parties at COP 23 also adopted the Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine and Coastal Bird Species listed in Annex II to the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean, the Action Plan concerning Species Introductions and Invasive Species in the Mediterranean Sea, and the Restoration Programme of *Pinna nobilis*. Furthermore, they decided to include the Specially Protected Area of Mediterranean Importance of the Habibas Islands (Algeria) in a period of provisional nature of a maximum of six years.

The Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols at COP23 also adopted the regional harmonised procedures for the uniform implementation of the Ballast Water Management Convention in the Mediterranean Sea.

In early 2023, COBSEA participating countries adopted the COBSEA Marine and Coastal Ecosystems (MCE) Framework. Anchored on Sustainable Blue Economy, the MCE Framework will assist COBSEA participating countries in achieving relevant targets of SDG-14 and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework through several efforts including development of marine and coastal spatial plans, strengthening and expansion of Marine Protected Areas and a potential regional marine protected area Network, and the conservation and restoration of marine and coastal habitats. The MCE Framework also led to the formal establishment of a COBSEA Working Group on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems, which convened its first meeting in September 2023 in Bali, Indonesia.

UNEP supported Antigua Barbuda, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Trinidad and Tobago, Vietnam, and other countries in the pilot application of a Sustainable Blue Economy Transition Framework and Rapid Readiness Assessment tool. The framework assists countries in practical planning and building enabling conditions for the transition processes, applying integrated ecosystem-based solutions, connecting environmental, social and economic dimensions, land and sea, as well as public and private sectors to enhance the conservation, restoration, protection and sustainable use of coastal and marine biodiversity as well as the ocean and seas.

UNEP supported member states in the introduction of nature-based climate solutions, ecosystem-based adaptation and mitigation ('blue carbon'). This includes enhancing conservation, restoration and sustainable use of marine and coastal ecosystems through natural capital assessment, effective and equitable management of MPAs and Marine and Coastal Spatial Planning (MCSP), and conservation and monitoring of coral reefs, mangroves, sea grasses, *inter alia*.

Conservation of marine and coastal biodiversity of the NOWPAP region remains a key focus of the countries. A new Regional Action Plan (RAP BIO), aforementioned in this document, has been developed to be further approved by the NOWPAP member states to become the main strategic guidance to a coordinated efforts in the region.