

Report of the Secretary-General on oceans and the law of the sea, pursuant to United Nations General Assembly resolution 75/239 of 31 December 2020, entitled “Oceans and the law of the sea”

Contribution of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) regarding paragraphs 35, 200, 215, 216, 219, 220, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 230, 240, 241, 271, 276, 277, 279, 298, 307, 308, and 329 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 75/239

7 June 2021

1. Paragraph 35 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 75/239

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;

The Sanitation and Wastewater Atlas of Africa was launched on 2 February 2021. The product is the flagship result of a four-year project implemented jointly by UNEP, the Global Resource Information Database-Arendal (GRID-Arendal), and the African Development Bank (AfDB) to better understand the current situation related to wastewater management and sanitation across the African continent. The Atlas consists of different chapters focusing on various aspects of wastewater management, including for example ecosystems, human health, policies and circular economy, and has a section with detailed country profiles. It is a tool that will help policymakers and the wide public across Africa and beyond to better understand and address the current gaps, and opportunities in this sector. Outreach initiatives such as social cards and webinars are foreseen throughout the year. The report can be found here <https://www.unep.org/resources/publication/sanitation-and-wastewater-atlas-africa>. The first webinar was organized on 2 March 2021, available here <https://www.unep.org/events/webinar/introducing-sanitation-and-wastewater-atlas-africa>.

Detailed Developments

In November, the Initiative launched the publication “Faecal sludge management in Africa: Socio-economic aspects, human and environmental health implications.” Jointly developed by UNEP and the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), the report highlights the current trends of faecal sludge management and how poor management practices worsen human and environmental health across Africa. At the end, the authors make recommendations on how to enhance wastewater management and sanitation services delivery. Overall, the publication presents some solutions to improve faecal sludge management and how this is fundamental to tackle the global sanitation crisis and achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6.

ACT Malaysia, one of the youngest members of the Global Wastewater Initiative (GW²I), together with UNEP is working to tackle the issue of untreated wastewater released in and around the Sabah Marine National Park located in North-Eastern Malaysia. The project which aims to provide local communities with appropriate on-site sanitation technology using the Independent Sewerage Treatment Plant (ISTP) technology started in August 2020 and despite the pandemic, is scheduled to conclude in June 2021. Local communities will be empowered to stop wastewater pollution, with consequent benefits for the environment. The revenues will allow to purchase more tanks for other water villages, hence improving the socio-economic condition of the local population. It is expected that the tourism industry will also gain from this project.

UNEP assists the County Government of Vihiga, Kenya to tackle the issue of liquid and solid waste management around the County, with specific focus on wastewater and nutrient management. The project was launched in October 2020. Despite the pandemic, a draft of the County Environment Action Plan, the basis of any future intervention in the field of solid and liquid waste management, has been produced. The project is expected to continue throughout 2021 with relevant strategies and measures to fight wastewater and nutrient pollution adopted and implemented on the ground.

Even before the pandemic, the GW²I organized webinars to discuss the latest developments and relevant topics for the wastewater sector. In September and December 2020, the Initiative organized two webinars on wastewater and COVID-19 and wastewater and nature-based solutions (NbS). Many members of the Initiative have contributed to the discussion and organization of these online events. The recordings of the webinars can be found here <https://register.gotowebinar.com/recording/7621963447788642059>.

2. Paragraph 200 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 75/239

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 Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA), in partnership with Blue Solutions Initiative, has carried out regional trainings on Marine and Coastal Spatial Planning (MCSP) for COBSEA representatives, analysing elements of ecosystem-based planning process, in particular for protecting blue economy assets and their climate resilience. Further, a review of national and regional legal and policy frameworks relevant to MCSP in the East Asian Seas region by COBSEA and Blue Solutions Initiative, will be finalized in 2021 and will identify key recommended actions on enabling conditions for wider use of MCSP in marine and coastal ecosystem-based management and development in the region.

3. Paragraph 215 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 75/239

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;

Supported by UN Environment Programme Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP), the network of Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change (MedECC – www.medecc.org) was established in 2015 as an open and independent international scientific expert network providing support to decision-makers and the public based on available sound scientific information. The 1st Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1) has been released on 17 November 2020. The Summary for Policymakers (SPM) of MAR1 underwent the consultation with governments and policymakers and was approved during a plenary session held remotely on 22 September 2020. The report can be found at: <https://www.medecc.org/first-mediterranean-assessment-report-mar1/>. MedECC contributes to the 6th Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Report scheduled for 2022, with, for the first time a cross-chapter dedicated to the Mediterranean. MedECC has been awarded the 2020 North-South Prize of the Council of Europe for “its efforts to address climate change and biodiversity conservation in the Mediterranean and in particular by drafting the first-ever scientific assessment on climate and environmental changes’ impacts in the Mediterranean Basin”. The next step towards broader political recognition of MedECC will include submitting in

2021 the MAR1 full report to the 22nd Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (COP 22), for the possible endorsement of its SPM.

The Nairobi Convention has developed a Climate Change Vulnerability Assessments (CCVA) toolkit for assessing the vulnerability of communities to climate change which is essential, particularly for those that are highly dependent on coastal and marine resources in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO). The toolkit will help identify communities that are most vulnerable to climate change and its impacts and help in crafting adaptation plans. Given this need and urgency, the Implementation of the Strategic Action Programme for the protection of the Western Indian Ocean from land-based sources and activities (WIOSAP) and the Partnership Project for Marine and Coastal Governance and Fisheries Management for Sustainable Blue Growth in the Western Indian Ocean (NC-SWIOFC partnership project), are undertaking CCVA for representative communities in four countries (Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, and Madagascar) as part of the implementation of the Climate Change Strategy for the Convention.

The Nairobi Convention project WIOSAP and the “Western Indian Ocean Large Marine Ecosystem Strategic Action Programme Policy Harmonization and Institutional Reforms” (WIO LME SAPPHERE) supported the [Western Indian Ocean Science to Policy Dialogue on 23-25 March 2021](#). The overall objective of the WIO regional Science to Policy Workshop was to promote the linkages between science and policy for evidence-based decision-making and provide timely technical advice and policy recommendations. The 3-day virtual workshop had [thirty-three papers](#) discussed, and elicited policy recommendations around (i) financing the transition to a sustainable Ocean Economy, (ii) climate change adaptation and mitigation, (iii) the role of the private sector in the management of marine plastics, (iv) establishing and managing area-based conservation measures, and (v) regional Ocean governance.

Under the [African, Caribbean, and Pacific \(ACP\) Countries Capacity Building of Multilateral Environmental Agreements \(MEAs\) project](#), the Nairobi Convention is undertaking a review of the Protocol Concerning Protected Areas and Wild Fauna and Flora of the Eastern African Region with the goal of making it a more modern and practical instrument that a) makes provisions for coastal and marine ecosystem-based management as a globally-established good practice for the conservation and management of coastal and marine resources; and b) strengthens the legal and policy framework for the protection of marine and coastal biodiversity, in line with current global and regional legal instruments and political processes; and c) ensures its consistency with the 2010 Amended Nairobi Convention. A progress report on the review of the protocol will be shared with countries at the next Conference of Parties of the Nairobi Convention, in November 2021.

4. [Paragraph 216 of United Nations general Assembly resolution 75/239](#)

Notes the vital role that coastal blue carbon ecosystems, including mangroves, tidal marshes and seagrasses, play in climate adaptation and mitigation through carbon sequestration, and in increasing the resilience of coastal ecosystems to ocean acidification, and the range of other benefits that these ecosystems provide, including sustainable livelihoods, food security and biodiversity conservation, and coastal protection, and encourages States and relevant international institutions and organizations to work collaboratively to protect and restore coastal blue carbon ecosystems;

UNEP supports the protection and conservation of blue carbon ecosystems (seagrasses and mangroves) through sustainable initiatives such as Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) projects and locally managed marine areas (LMMAs). UNEP is currently supporting mangrove and seagrass PES projects in Kenya, Madagascar and Ecuador.

5. [Paragraph 219 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 75/239](#)

Notes the discussions at the seventeenth meeting of the Informal Consultative Process, in 2016, which focused on the theme “Marine debris, plastics and microplastics” and which, inter alia, highlighted that the size of the problem had increased exponentially since the topic of marine debris was addressed at the sixth meeting of the Informal Consultative Process, in 2005, noted that marine debris in general, and plastics in particular, were some of the greatest environmental concerns of our time, along with climate change, ocean acidification and loss of biodiversity, discussed prevention and emphasized the need to address the issue, both downstream, through improved mechanisms for waste management, disposal and recycling, and upstream, by addressing consumption and production patterns, including through awareness-raising campaigns;

COBSEA and UNEP, together with partners such as UN-Habitat, Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML), UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and Plasticity, organized the second annual SEA of Solutions partnership event on preventing plastic pollution from 24-26 November 2020. The event was co-hosted by the Government of Viet Nam and was held as hybrid virtual/in-person event with more than 800 participants and speakers from governments, plastic producers and brands, researchers, CSOs, youth and the informal waste sector. Nearly 30 pledges were made to prevent and reduce plastic pollution across different sectors. More information is available at <http://sos2020.sea-circular.org/>.

6. Paragraph 220 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 75/239

Recognizes the need for better understanding of the sources, amounts, pathways, distribution, trends, nature and impacts of marine debris, especially plastics and microplastics, and to examine possible measures and best available techniques and environmental practices to prevent its accumulation and minimize its levels in the marine environment, and welcomes in this regard the work conducted under the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection, led by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, and its report entitled Sources, Fate and Effects of Microplastics in the Marine Environment: A Global Assessment, its report entitled Guidelines for the Monitoring and Assessment of Plastic Litter in the Ocean, and the report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme on marine plastic debris and microplastics, which reviews best-available knowledge and experiences in this regard and gives recommendations for further steps to reduce plastic litter and microplastic in the oceans;

COBSEA is supporting participating countries to better understand and address the sources, amounts, pathways and impacts of marine litter in the East Asian Seas. In line with the Regional Action Plan for Marine Litter (RAP MALL) and the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP) guidelines, COBSEA has drafted regional guidance for harmonized monitoring, is providing national training on monitoring and assessment and technical assistance for national monitoring programmes, is conducting hotspot assessments of plastic leakage and accumulation, and is developing the Regional Node of the GPML, with support from the UNEP-COBSEA project SEA circular. The third Meeting of the COBSEA Working Group on Marine Litter (COBSEA WGML) on 29-30 June aims to advance these issues for consideration at the 25th Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA in September 2021.

In December, the GW²¹ launched a publication jointly developed by UNEP and IWMI. The report “Water pollution by plastics and microplastics: A review of technical solutions from source to sea,” is composed of a toolkit and catalogue and presents a range of solutions to reduce plastic and microplastic pollution from the source to the sea while focusing on wastewater as a main pathway. The publication also encourages policymakers and practitioners to set priorities and select those that are more cost-effective and suitable for their local context. Finally, it stresses the importance of having technical solutions in addition to appropriate legislation, economic instruments, education, and awareness that force real change on the ground. The publication is available here <https://www.unep.org/resources/publication/feecal-sludge-management-africa-socioeconomic-health>.

7. Paragraph 222 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 75/239

Welcomes the request by the United Nations Environment Assembly, in paragraph 2 of its resolution 4/6, to the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, subject to the availability of resources and benefiting from the work of existing mechanisms, to immediately strengthen scientific and technological knowledge with regard to marine litter, including marine plastic litter and microplastics;

The impact of COVID-19 on the increase of plastic waste generation in the Mediterranean was the subject of a webinar organized on 29 September 2020 by UNEP/MAP and the Mediterranean Regional Node on Marine Litter. Key contributions focused on: how UNEP/MAP is addressing and managing the issue of COVID-19 in the generation of marine litter in the Mediterranean; the side effect of COVID-19 in the fight against plastic pollution; the impact of COVID-19 related to plastics in the Mediterranean Sea and the relevant evidence that are available from monitoring practices; the impact of COVID-19 in consumers perception through web contents; and the impact of COVID-19 in plastic waste in Catalonia, Spain.

In recognizing the adverse impact of marine litter, the Nairobi Convention Secretariat and the Western Indian Ocean Group of Experts on Marine Litter and Microplastics is undertaking a regional assessment on the status of marine litter and microplastics and their ecological, human health and economic impacts. The ongoing assessment will document measures undertaken by different institutions to address marine litter challenges and highlight opportunities which can be harnessed.

8. Paragraph 223 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 75/239

Acknowledges the decision of the United Nations Environment Assembly, in paragraph 7 of its resolution 4/6, to extend the mandate of the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics, and its request to the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to report to the United Nations Environment Assembly at its fifth session on the progress achieved in the implementation of that resolution;

UNEP/MAP has contributed with input during the stocktaking exercise coordinated by the Ad hoc Open-ended Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastics (AHEG) on the existing activities and action towards the long-term elimination of discharges into the oceans, to reduce marine plastic litter and microplastics. The input focused on how MAP and the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean are contributing to the regional and global work on marine litter.

COBSEA countries attended and provided input to the fourth meeting of the AHEG (AHEG-4), held virtually in November 2020 with support from COBSEA Secretariat.

9. Paragraph 224 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 75/239

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 Marine Litter, 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,¹⁰⁴ 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;

A desk review on nutrient pollution as a transboundary challenge in the East Asian Seas region has been undertaken in cooperation with the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management (GPNM) of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA). The study maps existing knowledge on the main sources and impacts of nutrient pollution in the coastal and marine environment as well as prevention and reduction targets and related assessment in COBSEA countries. This information can support development of further actions in line with COBSEA Strategic Directions 2018-2022 addressing land-based sources of marine pollution.

10. Paragraph 225 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 75/239

Encourages States to further develop partnerships with 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, 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 Marine Litter;

In December 2020, COBSEA collaborated with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Indonesian Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Secretariat and ESCAP on the Second Regional Ocean Policy Dialogue. The Dialogue engaged governments and stakeholders across the region to explore interlinked issues of policy coherence, ocean finance and marine plastic pollution toward new partnerships and good practice initiatives, building on the first dialogue held in 2019. More information is available at <https://www.unenvironment.org/cobsea/events/virtual-meeting/2nd-regional-ocean-policy-dialogue>.

11. Paragraph 226 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 75/239

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;

COBSEA supports participating countries to address priority issues including land-based marine pollution and marine and coastal planning and management, in line with the COBSEA Strategic Directions 2018-2022, adopted in 2019 and COBSEA's RAP MALI, adopted in June 2019.

12. Paragraph 227 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 75/239

Notes the activities carried out by organizations at the regional level to develop and implement regional action plans and other joint prevention and recovery programmes for marine debris, and further notes in this regard, the revised Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter adopted at the twenty-fourth Intergovernmental Meeting of the

Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia, held in Bali, Indonesia, on 19 and 20 June 2019, which comprises actions to prevent and reduce marine litter from land-based sources as well as sea-based sources, monitoring and assessment of marine litter, and activities supporting implementation, the twenty-third Intergovernmental Meeting of the Northwest Pacific Action Plan, held in Moscow from 9 to 11 October 2018, and the Bangkok Declaration on Combating Marine Debris in the ASEAN Region, adopted at the thirty-fourth Summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, held in Bangkok on 22 June 2019, to enhance efforts in addressing the issue of marine debris;

Recent activities included the following: the approval of a New EU-funded Marine Litter MED II Project (Sept. 2020 – Aug. 2023); the updated baseline values and proposal for threshold values for beach marine litter (Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria (IMAP) Common Indicator 22); a regional operational strategy for monitoring the effect of marine litter on biota and in particular on sea turtles (IMAP Candidate Indicator 24) developed and approved; regional guidelines for monitoring floating microplastics developed and approved; meetings of the Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON) Marine Litter and Integrated organized in December 2020 and March 2021; online Expert Group on Marine Litter established in the Mediterranean.

13. Paragraph 230 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 75/239

Encourages States that have not yet done so to become parties to international agreements addressing the protection and preservation of the marine environment and its living marine resources against the introduction of harmful aquatic organisms and pathogens and marine pollution from all sources, including the dumping of wastes and other matter, and other forms of physical degradation, as well as agreements that provide for preparedness for, response to and cooperation on pollution incidents and that include provisions on liability and compensation for damage resulting from marine pollution, and to adopt the necessary measures consistent with international law, including the Convention, aimed at implementing and enforcing the rules contained in those agreement;

Universal ratification has been achieved of the 1995 Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention). The Barcelona Convention constitutes the principal regional legally binding MEA in the Mediterranean, under which its 22 Contracting Parties agree to take all appropriate measures to prevent, abate, combat and to the fullest possible extent eliminate pollution of the Mediterranean Sea Area and to protect and enhance the marine environment in that Area so as to contribute towards its sustainable development.

14. Paragraph 240 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 75/239

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;

In the framework of the Western Mediterranean Region Marine Oil and HNS Pollution Cooperation (West MOPoCo) Project (www.westmopoco.rempec.org), UNEP/MAP's Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC) in cooperation with the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM), the Bonn Agreement, Cedre, Transport Canada, and the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, reviewed and upgraded the Maritime Integrated Decision Support

Information System on Transport of Chemical Substances (<http://midsis.rempec.org>), and in collaboration with IMO, HELCOM, the Bonn Agreement, Cedre, the Italian National Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA) and ITOPF, the "Marine HNS response manual - Bonn Agreement, HELCOM, REMPEC" was produced. To enhance cooperation between Western Mediterranean countries, REMPEC carried a Study on the Synergy between the Sub-regional Agreements and the Contingency Plans of the Western Mediterranean. A "Study on trends and outlook of marine pollution, maritime traffic, and offshore activities in the Mediterranean," was also carried out by REMPEC to support Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to make well-informed decisions, while drafting the Mediterranean Strategy for the Prevention, Preparedness, and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (2022-2031) to be adopted by COP 22 of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (Antalya, Turkey, 7-10 December 2021).

The Nairobi Convention organized a regional workshop on "cooperation in preparedness and response to marine pollution incidents" in collaboration with the IMO from 3 - 5 March 2020 in Zanzibar, Tanzania. The workshop brought together governments and focal points responsible for oil spill preparedness and response to promote the implementation of the International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-operation (OPRC) and OPRC Hazardous and Noxious Substances (HNS) Protocol. The workshop recommended the establishment of a regional mutual assistance agreement for cooperation and response during pollution incidents and the development of a draft regional plan to implement this agreement.

15. Paragraph 241 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 75/239

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;

Further to the oil spill detected in February 2021, which affected the coast of Israel and Lebanon, REMPEC provided remote technical assistance to Israel and onsite expertise to Lebanon through the deployment of an expert from the Mediterranean Assistance Unit.

The sub-regional emergency plan for marine oil pollution prepared with the assistance of REMPEC following the "Joint Declaration of Intent on Cooperation in the Field of Environmental Protection" signed between Cyprus, Greece and Israel on 6 April 2016 and the subsequent trilateral agreement between the contracting parties by virtue of "The Implementation Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Cyprus, the Government of the Hellenic Republic and the Government of Israel on the sub-regional plan for marine pollution (ratification) law of 2021 N. 4 (III)/2021" have been ratified by the Republic of Cyprus.

In the framework of the EU funded West MOPoCo Project (2019-2020), with the support of REMPEC and project partners, Algeria, France, Italy, Malta Morocco, Spain and Tunisia, carried out self-assessment of oil spill management capabilities and, based on the outcome of this evaluation, developed the national improvement plans exposed during national workshops, gathering concerned actors and stakeholders.

The Nairobi Convention Secretariat, through the SAPPHIRE and WIOSAP projects, convened a meeting of Convention and Project Focal Points on 21 August 2020. The meeting followed the oil spill crisis offshore of Pointe d'Esny, south of Mauritius after the running aground of MV Wakashio on 25 July 2020. The Government of Mauritius updated the Contracting Parties to the Nairobi Convention on the measure taken to mitigate the impact of the oil spill and explored on the support to be extended to Mauritius. The Nairobi Convention Secretariat had provided a framework concept on how to respond to the oil spill and Mauritius requested to make a formal request to the Convention for specific technical assistance that might be required. The meeting highlighted the need for

member states to take a decision on the Regional Response Mechanism/Centre and build the necessary capacity in order to respond better to future incidents.

16. Paragraph 247 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 75/239

Expresses its concern regarding the spreading of hypoxic dead zones and harmful algal blooms in oceans as a result of eutrophication fueled 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;

UNEP assists the County Government of Vihiga, Kenya to tackle the issue of liquid and solid waste management around the County, with specific focus on wastewater and nutrient management. The project was launched in October 2020. Despite the pandemic, a draft of the County Environment Action Plan, the basis of any future intervention in the field of solid and liquid waste management, has been produced. The project is expected to continue throughout 2021 with relevant strategies and measures to fight wastewater and nutrient pollution adopted and implemented on the ground.

Even before the pandemic, the GW²I organized webinars to discuss the latest developments and relevant topics for the wastewater sector. In September and December 2020, the Initiative organized two webinars on wastewater and COVID-19 and wastewater and NbS. Many members of the Initiative have contributed to the discussion and organization of these online events. The recordings of the webinars can be found here <https://register.gotowebinar.com/recording/7621963447788642059>.

17. Paragraph 271 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 75/239

Recalls that the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, at its ninth meeting, adopted scientific criteria for identifying ecologically or biologically significant marine areas in need of protection in open-oceanwaters and deep-sea habitats and scientific guidance for selecting areas to establish a representative network of marine protected areas, including in open-ocean waters and deep-sea habitats, 129 and notes the ongoing work under the Convention on Biological Diversity on the application of the scientific criteria for ecologically or biologically significant marine areas through the organization of a series of regional workshops;

UNEP supported the development and submission of the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), which is a series of recommendations on a coral reef related target and indicators to the Convention on Biological Diversity Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. The recommendation can be found at <https://www.icriforum.org/terms-of-reference-for-the-ad-hoc-committee-on-developing-a-recommendation-for-a-post-2020-coral-reef-target/>.

18. Paragraph 276 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 75/239

Recalls that, in “The future we want”, States recognized the significant economic, social and environmental contributions of coral reefs, in particular to islands and other coastal States, as well as the significant vulnerability of coral reefs and mangroves to impacts, including from climate change, ocean acidification, overfishing, destructive fishing practices and pollution, and supported international cooperation with a view to

conserving coral reef and mangrove ecosystems and realizing their social, economic and environmental benefits, as well as facilitating technical collaboration and voluntary information-sharing;

The UNEP Coral Reef Unit supports the protection and conservation of blue carbon ecosystems (seagrasses and mangroves) through sustainable initiatives such as PES projects and LMMAs. UNEP is currently supporting mangrove and seagrass PES projects in Kenya, Madagascar and Ecuador.

19. Paragraph 277 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 75/239

Emphasizes the need to mainstream sustainable coral reef management and integrated watershed management into national development strategies, as well as into the activities of relevant United Nations agencies and programmes, international financial institutions and the donor community;

A coalition between United Nations agencies (UNEP, UNDP, UNCDF, UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund), financial institutions (BNP Paribas), and private philanthropy sources saw the launching of the Global Fund for Coral Reef (GFCR) in September 2020. The GFCR is a blended finance instrument to mobilize action and resources to protect and restore coral reef ecosystems, with an aim of raising USD 500 million for coral reef protection over 10 years. More information on GFCR can be found at <https://globalfundcoralreefs.org/>.

20. Paragraph 279 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 75/239

Encourages States and relevant international institutions to improve efforts to address coral bleaching by, inter alia, improving monitoring to predict and identify bleaching events, supporting and strengthening action taken during such events and improving strategies to manage reefs to support their natural resilience and enhance their ability to withstand other pressures, including ocean acidification, and in this regard also encourages States to implement the priority actions to achieve Aichi Biodiversity Target 10 for coral reefs and closely associated ecosystems, adopted by the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity

UNEP has produced global guidelines and best practices for coral reef restoration in response to UNEA Resolution 4/13 on sustainable management of coral reefs. The global guidelines can be found at <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/coral-reef-restoration-guide-coral-restoration-method>. UNEP also published a report on coral reef restoration, which provides examples of best practices and guidelines for investing in coral reef restoration projects. UNEP has also produced an analysis of coral bleaching projections based on the latest IPCC climate models, which is a useful planning tool for identifying climate change refugia for coral reefs, which can be found at <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/projections-future-coral-bleaching-conditions-using-ipcc-cmip6-models-climate>. Furthermore, UNEP is supporting the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) in preparing the most comprehensive report on the status and trends of coral reef health to date, based on the largest data set on coral reefs ever assembled. The global report on coral reef status is expected to be launched in 2021.

21. Paragraph 298 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 75/239

Stresses the importance of increasing the scientific understanding of the oceans-atmosphere interface, including through participation in ocean observing programmes and geographic information systems, such as the Global Ocean Observing System, sponsored by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, the United Nations Environment Programme, the World Meteorological Organization and the International Science Council, particularly considering their role in monitoring and forecasting climate change and variability, in supporting Earth system prediction and in the establishment and operation of tsunami warning systems;

UNEP/MAP and its Programme for the Assessment and Control of Marine Pollution in the Mediterranean (MEDPOL) co-organized with the Italian Oceanographic Commission, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC-UNESCO), the European Commission and the Mediterranean Science Commission, the Regional Workshop “The Mediterranean Sea We Need for the Future We Want” that was held from 21 to 23 January 2020, in Venice, Italy, in the framework of the preparations for the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030. In order to contribute to the Implementation Plan of the UN Decade, UNEP/MAP identified the strategic directions and orientations to guide science science-policy interface within the framework? of the new UNEP/MAP Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2027, and participated in the preparation of the “Science We Need for the Mediterranean Sea We Want” (SciNMeet) Programme Proposal submitted within the 1st Ocean Decade Call for Action of UNESCO in the context of the Implementation Plan of the UN Decade. UNEP/MAP also continues to provide substantive contribution to the implementation of the ecosystem approach (EcAp) in synergy with the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive, as well as to filling the gaps identified by the 2017 Mediterranean Quality Status Report. In that respect a new generation of national monitoring programmes, aligned with IMAP requirements, was set-up. Significant progress includes the development of the Monitoring Guidelines related to IMAP Common Indicators 13, 14, 17, 18 and 20, that are composed of 98 specific Protocols prepared to support standardization and harmonization of the monitoring procedures for all the steps of analytical chain.

The Secretariat of the Nairobi Convention co-organized a regional consultation workshop for Africa and the Adjacent Island States on the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) from 27-29 January 2020 in Nairobi, Kenya. The workshop provided an opportunity for African States to co-design mission-oriented research strategies and actions in line with the 2030 Agenda and continental and regional initiatives. The workshop addressed: (a) ocean processes and solution-oriented research, (b) mapping of existing networks and science initiatives that can contribute in the identification of major knowledge gaps hindering sustainable development, and, (c) aspects related to marine technology and capacity development. Other issues highlighted include the role of youth, job creation, adoption of marine spatial planning (MSP), the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change impacts on coastal zones, addressing land-sea interactions and pollution, and innovative financing models for the ocean economy.

22. Paragraph 307 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 75/239

Invites UN-Oceans and its participants to collaborate with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission on the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development;

UNEP, through the Blue Economy Programme, participates in the UN-Oceans Contact Group for the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and has directly contributed to formulation of the Ocean Decade Implementation Plan. UNEP has also accepted an invitation to serve as member of the Ocean Decade Alliance, a network of leaders from governments, United Nations organizations, scientific institutions, private sector and philanthropic organizations, among others, who will stimulate and motivate ambitious action in advancing ocean science towards addressing societal needs.

23. Paragraph 308 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 75/239

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 2020-report on the State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean (SoED) - requested by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, and published by UNEP - is a comprehensive assessment of the environment and development in the Mediterranean region. Its production entailed a two-year

effort of knowledge compilation undertaken by 150 experts mobilized from across the region by UNEP/MAP and its Plan Bleu Regional Activity Centre. Representatives of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, for which UNEP serves as Secretariat, took part in the SoED preparation process. The report provides a foundation for evidence-based environmental action in the region; its authors stress the urgent need for appropriate and effective policy responses to alleviate pressure on the environment while meeting pressing human development needs. The report is available at: <https://planbleu.org/en/soed-2020-state-of-environment-and-development-in-mediterranean/>

UNEP/MAP and its MEDPOL Programme continues to contribute to regional initiatives including: i) support provided to the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area (ACCOBAMS) Permanent Secretariat regarding organization of the workshops within Quiet Med 2 Project; ii) contribution to the final conference of the harmonization and Networking for contaminant assessment in the Ionian and Adriatic Seas (harmoniA) Project; iii) participation at the EEA meetings organized for Copernicus and the European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODNet) Projects; iv) identification of the areas of cooperation for closer cooperation with EMODNet; v) building the interrelations of International Ocean Governance process under EU actions with the preparation of the new UNEP/MAP Medium-Term Strategy; vi) creating synergies between UNEP/MAP activities and UNEP Capacity Development and Innovation Branch, SDGs and Statistics Unit; vii) consultation on the World Environment Situation Room (WESR) in relation to further upgrade of Info MAP System; viii) establishing interrelation of Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment with IMAP implementation.

The Nairobi Convention and its partners and relevant actors organized [a meeting](#) on 26 April 2021 to take stock of activities undertaken to date supporting the development of the Ocean Governance Strategy for the WIO region. The meeting agreed to produce a draft outline of the Strategy and an Action Plan to advance the role of Regional Economic Communities and the process of stakeholder engagement in the development of an Ocean Governance Strategy for the WIO. The Ocean Governance strategy for the WIO is expected to be available in February 2022.

Earlier on 5 September 2020, the Nairobi Convention launched [The State of Ocean Governance in the Western Indian Ocean Region](#), developed in partnership with the WIO Marine Science Association. The publication reviews the status and trends in ocean governance in the WIO and identifies key gaps, challenges, and opportunities in relation to global norms and best practices. Specifically, it focuses on the policy and legal instruments and strategic plans at the global, African, and WIO level; addresses the governance arrangements in sectors like maritime security or fisheries; summarizes features of national ocean governance; and describes selected international experiences in regional ocean governance.

In March 2021, the Nairobi Convention unveiled a strategic framework to improve private sector engagement and partnerships for ocean governance. The Strategic Framework for Private Sector Engagement in the WIO Region proposes a series of implementation measures for engagement of the private sector. It proposes the establishment of a WIO Blue Economy Platform (WIO-BEP) as a regional platform for facilitating private sector engagement across sectors and to promote partnerships between the private sector, governance authorities (regional and national) and civil society. It also proposes partnerships on research and monitoring, and a number of sector-specific partnerships. The framework benefited from a [stakeholder consultation meeting](#) on 30 October 2020.

The Nairobi Convention began in 2020 to support the development of a regional MSP Strategy for the blue and ocean economic growth and operationalized the WIO MSP Technical Working Group (TWG). 21 experts have been nominated to the MSP TWG through the support of the national Focal Points from the 10 Contracting Parties of the Nairobi Convention. The [first meeting of the WIO MSP TWG](#) was organized on 28 July 2020 with the aim of operationalizing the working group contribution of the Working Group to the development of the WIO regional MSP

strategy. The [strategy](#) was presented for further regional input during the March 2021 Western Indian Ocean Science to Policy Meeting.

The Nairobi Convention has produced the [Western Indian Ocean Marine Protected Areas Outlook](#) to document progress made in the WIO region towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 14.5. WIO countries have played their part, by identifying and declaring Marine Protected Areas (MPAs); from Tsitsikamma, the first MPA in Africa, proclaimed by the Government of the Republic of South Africa in 1964, to the MPAs proclaimed in 2019 by the Government of Seychelles and the Republic of South Africa, and those proposed for imminent declaration by the government of Comoros. The Outlook provides an assessment on MPA management effectiveness and the impact of COVID-19 pandemic in the MPA of the WIO. The MPA Outlook will be launched in July 2021.

On 24 July 2020 the Nairobi Convention launched the [Guidelines on Mangrove Ecosystem Restoration for the Western Indian Ocean](#) to provide a step-by-step guide in mangrove restoration, document previous mangrove restoration activities across the WIO region as well as outline best practices from previous mangrove restoration activities. Researchers and partners working in the mangrove ecosystem were urged to adopt, disseminate and apply the guidelines in their mangrove restoration projects.

The Nairobi Convention launched, on 25 September 2020, the [Environmental Flows Assessment guidelines](#) developed by the WIOSAP project to guide environmental flows assessments for rivers and estuaries across the WIO region. The Guidelines have been developed through a rigorous process involving stakeholders' consultations, regional expert review, and validation. The Guidelines are intended for use by government agencies, national research institutions, civil society organizations, universities and entities involved in management of water resources in the WIO region.

The Nairobi Convention is supporting the development of a regional framework for coastal and marine water quality monitoring and management to ensure that pollution does not adversely affect coastal and marine environment. The framework seeks to enhance the proper implementation of existing Convention Protocol dealing with land-based and sea-based marine pollution. The framework was [presented](#) at the WIO Science to Policy Dialogue meeting on 23-25 March 2021 to seek further input and finalization. It is expected to be adopted by the Contracting Parties in November 2021.

The Nairobi Convention Secretariat is supporting an economic valuation and development of potential investment opportunities for the Trans-Boundary Conservation Area (TBCA) between Kenya and Tanzania. The Convention [organised a stakeholder consultations](#) on 21 October 2020 to guide the assessment, identify other initiatives in the conservation area and to serve as a basis for a business case towards the establishment of a collaboratively managed area between the two countries. The assessment kick-started in May 2021 to i) value the resources within the TBCA, ii) provide future management scenarios to ensure ecological risk management, sustainable use and optimal benefits flows, and iii) provide investment opportunities to optimize the benefits of such an area.

24. Paragraph 329 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 75/239

Notes with appreciation efforts and initiatives at the regional level, in various regions, to further the implementation of the Convention and to respond, including through capacity-building, to issues related to maritime safety and security, the conservation and sustainable use of living marine resources, the protection and preservation of the marine environment and the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity;

COBSEA Secretariat has initiated a webinar series for COBSEA countries on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. Webinars, held every couple of months, provide a platform for dialogue on the development, implementation and tracking of the Framework as well as capacity building elements relating to issues such as the

protection and preservation of the marine environment and the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity. More information is available at <https://www.unenvironment.org/cobsea/events/webinar/cobsea-webinar-post-2020-global-biodiversity-framework>.

Detailed developments

COBSEA is a regional intergovernmental policy forum and the sole decision-making body for the Action Plan for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment and Coastal Areas of the East Asian Seas Region (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 Viet Nam) 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 UNEP, located at the UN Environment Programme Asia and the Pacific Office in Bangkok, Thailand. COBSEA supports its participating countries to address priority issues including land-based marine pollution and marine and coastal planning and management, in line with the COBSEA Strategic Directions 2018-2022 adopted in 2019.

The 24th Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA (IGM 24), held in June 2019, encouraged Indonesia to further develop the Regional Capacity Center for Clean Seas (RC3S) founded in Bali in 2019 toward establishing it as a COBSEA Regional Activity Centre at the 25th Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA (IGM 25). The RC3S is working with COBSEA to provide capacity building activities on marine litter linked to the East Asian Seas Regional Node and in line with the COBSEA RAP MALI, adopted in June 2019.

By request of the IGM 24, the COBSEA Secretariat in collaboration with the WGML and regional partners, is developing an East Asian Seas Regional Node of the GMPL for consideration at IGM 25, to provide knowledge management and networking services on marine litter policy, science and capacity building toward delivery of the RAP MALI. A review of published plastic pollution research, policies and initiatives in 13 countries in South-East and East Asia was conducted during the second half of 2020 in partnership with the National University of Singapore (NUS). Collaboration with NUS continues to expand the marine litter research database towards integration in the Regional Node of the GPML and establish a regional research network to address knowledge gaps. More information is available at <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/33383>.

In line with the COBSEA RAP MALI and following outcomes of the technical consultation of the COBSEA WGML held 23-25 June 2020, COBSEA is working in partnership with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) to develop regional guidance for harmonized monitoring. This includes an inventory of existing marine litter monitoring efforts and identification of common objectives, core indicators, and shared standards, for consideration by COBSEA IGM 25 in 2021.

In 2020 and 2021, the regional marine litter project SEA circular continues to engage national and local governments, plastic producers and businesses, research institutes and academia, and civil society to promote inclusive market-based solutions, policies and regulations to prevent plastic pollution. In 2020, 153 private and public entities were trained to measure and disclose their plastic footprint and efforts to reduce plastic pollution continued in three pilot demonstration sites. Further, a campaign toolkit is under development to support and leverage awareness raising and behaviour change in South-East Asia toward preventing plastic pollution. The SEA circular has initiated a partnership with UN-Habitat to develop a regional model of waste leakage hotspots and conduct city-level waste flow analyses to inform priority action that will be complemented by in-depth on-site sampling of marine litter accumulation in 2021/22. More information is available at <https://www.sea-circular.org/>.

Following the full delivery on COBSEA's Voluntary Commitment made at the UN Ocean Conference in 2017 ([#OceanAction15986](#)), the COBSEA Secretariat has drafted two new Voluntary Commitments with country input, for submission to the second UN Ocean Conference.

Pursuant to the COBSEA Strategic Directions 2018-2022, an Outlook on COBSEA follow-up and review of ocean-related SDGs is being prepared to guide COBSEA in supporting tracking and implementation of relevant ocean-related SDGs and targets. On basis of a regional workshop held in 2019 and written country submissions, the Outlook document is being finalized for consideration at COBSEA IGM 25.

In 2020 COBSEA initiated a regional initiative in partnership with Blue Solutions Initiative to advance MCSP in the East Asian Seas Region by building capacity and supporting development of a conducive policy environment. Two week-long virtual regional training workshops were held in November 2020. Participants from national and local authorities in COBSEA countries attended the trainings which used interactive practical exercises to examine different elements of ecosystem-based planning process, in particular for protecting blue economy assets and their climate resilience. The trainings supported the establishment of a community of practice across COBSEA countries and provided opportunity for participants to draft personal action plans. More information is available at <https://www.unenvironment.org/cobsea/events/workshop/regional-training-workshop-marine-and-coastal-spatial-planning>.

A review of national and regional legal and policy MCSP frameworks is being undertaken through desktop research and consultation with COBSEA countries. The review will identify recommendations on enabling conditions for wider use of MCSP in marine and coastal ecosystem-based management and development. A workshop was held 20 May 2021 in which COBSEA participating countries provided input on the first draft of the review as well as discussed possible future MCSP-related actions through COBSEA. Findings of the policy review will be presented at COBSEA IGM 25 for consideration. More information is available at: <https://www.unep.org/cobsea/events/workshop/mcsp-policy-review-workshop>.

Organized by the OECD and the Indonesian Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs in collaboration with COBSEA, ASEAN Secretariat and ESCAP, the Second Regional Ocean Policy Dialogue took place virtually on 15-16 December 2020. Under the theme "Financing Solutions to Address Marine Plastics Pollution in Southeast Asia", the Dialogue explored interlinked issues of policy coherence, ocean finance and marine plastic pollution. The dialogue is part of the OECD's "Sustainable Ocean for All" initiative which aims at harnessing the benefits of sustainable ocean economies through existing and emerging ocean-based industries and the conservation of ocean ecosystems and builds on the Regional Policy Dialogue held in collaboration with COBSEA in Indonesia in December 2019. The Dialogue forges new partnerships and showcases projects and initiatives that can feed into and scale up good practice in the region.

The COBSEA Secretariat has launched a webinar series on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, providing a platform for dialogue on how COBSEA can be leveraged to support countries during the development, delivery and tracking of the Framework. Webinars cover topics such as UNEP's role in the development and implementation of the Framework, including its work with and through the Regional Seas Programme; preparations and outcomes of meetings of subsidiary bodies and the consultation workshops of biodiversity-related conventions on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework; activities building on the ICRI Recommendation on the inclusion of coral reefs and related ecosystems within the Post-2020 Framework; as well as an introduction to the Data Reporting Tool for MEAs (DaRT). The webinar series invites COBSEA countries to provide views of national engagement and recommended action through COBSEA in the post-2020 process.

1. A desk review on nutrient pollution as a transboundary challenge in the East Asian Seas region has been carried out through desk research and country consultation in cooperation with the GPNM of the GPA. The

review compiles available information on the main sources and impacts of nutrient pollution in the coastal and marine environment; prevention and reduction commitments, targets and measures; and related monitoring and assessment in COBSEA countries. This information can support development of further actions in line with COBSEA Strategic Directions 2018-2022 addressing land-based sources of marine pollution and may be used by COBSEA countries to inform development and implementation of actions addressing nutrient pollution. A virtual workshop was held 3 March 2021 in which COBSEA participating countries provided input to the draft review to support its finalization and exchanged views on possible future efforts to address nutrient pollution through COBSEA. More information is available at: <https://www.unep.org/cobsea/events/workshop/nutrient-pollution-workshop>.