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**Discussion Paper on
the Regional Seas Strategic Directions (RSSD) 2017-2020**

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Background

1. The Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAPs) have, since 2004, set collective Strategic Directions (RSSDs) lasting four years. However, there have been concerns over the effectiveness of the RSSDs. Through the analysis nine major problems have been identified: (1) No commitments on the sides of RSCAPs and UNEP on the implementation of the RSSDs; (2) No additional resources were allocated for the implementation of the RSSDs; (3) No clear records and analyses to show whether each RSCAP has brought the RSSDs to the Governing Body; (4) Some of the RSCAPs recognise that RSSDs do not bind them; (5) No formal reporting mechanism existed for the RSCAPs with regards to the achievement of the RSSDs; (6) No profound evaluation and analysis existed before formulating the next strategy; (7) The action points are obscure and any activities could easily fall under several action points; (8) The strategic directions might not be reflected in the Programme of Work of each RSCAP; (9) Progress on each strategic point is not measurable because no clear quantifiable goals have been set.
2. UNEP recognizes the issue and proposes to have a discussion on the future of RSSDs to make them more actionable for the RSCAPs, especially in the context of formulating the next RSSD (2017-2020).

Discussion points

3. The participants of the Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAPs) are kindly invited to take note of the attached discussion document and consider the following main questions:
 - a. How the future RSSDs should be to effectively facilitate the work of RSCAPs?
 - b. What elements should we include in the next RSSD (2017-2020)? (Please refer to Chapter 4)

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Chapter 1: Regional Seas Strategic Directions

Introduction

The second session of the UNEP Governing Council (GC) in 1974 established the UNEP Regional Seas Programme. Since then, fourteen (14) Regional Seas Conventions and Actions Plans (RSCAPs) have been created under the auspices of UNEP. UNEP currently administers seven (7) RSCAPs (Abidjan Convention, Barcelona Convention, Cartagena Convention, Coordinating Body of the Seas of East Asia, Nairobi Convention, Northwest Pacific Action Plan and Teheran Convention).

The first Regional Seas Strategic Directions (RSSD) was created for the period 2004 -2007. It was developed based on the Resolution 22/2 III A of the UNEP GC. The Governing Council requested UNEP Executive Director to incorporate the following strategic elements in the Regional Seas' programmes of work;

“1. Requests the Executive Director to encourage and support regional seas conventions and action plans to incorporate the following strategic elements in their programmes of work and bring those elements to the attention of their respective Member States through their governing bodies and other relevant forums:

- a) Use of regional seas conventions and action plans as an instrument for sustainable development, such as the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development of the Barcelona Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean;*
- b) Enhance countries' "ownership" over their respective regional seas conventions and action plans;*
- c) Increase participation of civil society and industry with the regional seas conventions and action plans in the development and implementation of programmes and partnerships;*
- d) Achieve financial sustainability;*
- e) Utilize the regional seas conventions and action plans as a platform for the regional implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and global programmes and initiatives;*
- f) Strengthen horizontal cooperation as well as possible twinning arrangements between regional seas conventions and action plans;*
- g) Strengthen cooperation between existing regional seas programmes and initiatives within or outside the United Nations system, seeking synergies among them, as appropriate;*
- h) Strengthen links, cooperation and coordination with such international organizations as the International Maritime Organization, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Convention on Biological Diversity, and support cooperation among multilateral environmental agreements;*
- i) Strengthen monitoring and assessment activities and ensure that regional seas secretariats are fully involved in the development of the process of establishment of the Global Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment and of the Global International Waters Assessment;*
- j) Continue the administrative support from the United Nations Environment Programme headquarters to regional seas administration;*
- k) Provide legal support upon request;*
- l) Develop outreach, information and public awareness;*

- m) *Contribute to the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States;*"

Thus, the first RSSD 2004 -2007 was developed in order to effectively address the priorities identified in UNEP GC Decision 22/2 III A, as well as to contribute to the relevant targets of Agenda 21, the World Summit on Sustainable Development Plan of Implementation and the Millennium Development Goals.

The original aim of the strategic directions was stated as following: *"The strategic directions... aims at strengthening the Regional Seas Programme (RSP) at global level. They are intended to complement the implementation of the programme of work of the individual Regional Seas, as well as the decisions of the governing bodies of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Programmes. They provide an opportunity to improve efficiency, individually and collectively, in the RSPs, increase cooperation, and incorporate new elements in future programme of work"*¹.

The following two periods (2008-2012 and 2013 - 2016) explained that the aim of the RSSDs is to strengthen the previous RSSD, stating as follows: *"The global strategic directions...are formulated to continue and further enhance the strategic directions for 2004 – 2007, aimed at strengthening the Regional Seas Programmes at the global level"*² and *"The global strategic directions...are formulated to continue and further enhance the Strategic Directions for 2008 – 2012, aimed at strengthening the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans at the global level."*³ To date, it is not well reported whether the three RSSDs have met their objective of strengthening RS programmes at the global level.

In 2013, the UNEP GC Decision 27/6 on Oceans further emphasized the role of RSSD and requested the Executive Director to coordinate the Regional Seas' work within the RSSD 2013 – 2016, stating as follows:

" 2. Invites member States of existing regional seas conventions and action plans:

- (a) To take a more proactive role in all stages of the implementation of the programmes of work of their respective regional seas conventions and action plans and to develop "ownership" of those conventions and action plans;*
- (b) To utilize the regional seas conventions and action plans as platforms for the regional implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and global programmes and initiatives;*
- (c) To strengthen the capacity necessary for the effective implementation of the existing regional seas conventions and action plans;*
- (d) To foster cross-sectoral governmental participation through the involvement of all relevant national ministries;*

¹ UNEP (2003) Regional Seas Strategic Directions for 2004 - 2007

² UNP(DEPI)/RS.9/6 Global Strategic Directions For The Regional Seas Programmes 2008-2012: Enhancing The Role Of The Regional Seas Conventions And Action Plans

³ UNEP (2013) Strategic Directions 2013 - 2016

3. Requests the Executive Director to further encourage and promote the United Nations Environment Programme’s work on oceans and to incorporate the work of the existing regional seas conventions and action plans into the wider framework of the mid-term strategy 2014–2017 and its work programme;

4. Requests the Executive Director, as appropriate and within available resources and within the mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme and with due respect for the autonomy of the decision-making bodies of the existing regional seas conventions and action plans to coordinate their work, **as contained in the regional seas strategic directions 2013–2016**” (emphasis added)

However, there have been some concerns that the current RSSDs have not been effective to guide the programme of work of RSCAPs. Thus, the future RSSDs need to be more actionable and relevant to the work of Regional Seas in order to be able to serve their purpose.

Historical development of RSSD

Three periods of RSSD

There have been three periods of RSSDs: (i) 2004-2007; (ii) 2008 – 2012; and (iii) 2013 – 2016. The Annex 1 summarises the main strategic items described in the RSSDs of each period.

Except for the period 2008 -2012, detailed actions points were defined both for the RSCAPs and UNEP. During 2008 -2012, actions points were defined for the RSCAPs and governing bodies. The first period (2004 – 2007) described action points assigned to Chairs of COP/IGM in addition to the RSCAPs and UNEP action points. The Table 1 described the parties to which each RSSD assigned action points.

The RSSDs set collective goals toward which UNEP and RSCAPs in support of their respective governing bodies work together. However, each RSP formulates its programme of work which is adopted by respective contracting parties. The RSSDs were, thus, meant to be a guiding document in formulating future RSCAP programmes of work to achieve the common goals identified.

	RSCAPs	UNEP	Chair of COP / governing body
2004 – 2007	+	+	+
2008 – 2012	+	-	+
2013 – 2016	+	+	-

Table 1: Action points assigning to each party during the three periods of RSSD (+: action points assigned, -: No action points assigned)

Progress reports

UNEP has produced progress reports on the action points assigned by the RSSDs as is shown in Table 2. However, the reports have focused on the completion of each action point assigned to UNEP and thus overall analyses on the achievement of the RSSDs have not been provided. As a result, it is not clear to what extent UNEP has contributed to the achievement of each RSSD and what could be done to improve the situation to achieve the original objective of strengthening RSCAPs' presence at the global level.

On the other hand, there have been no formal progress reports from the 18 Regional Seas except the annual presentations made at Global Meetings. Therefore, the degree of achievements by individual Regional Seas with regards to the action points specified in RSSDs is hardly documented. In addition, it is not clear to what extent the RSCAPs coordinated their activities within the RSSD 2013-2016 as requested by the UNEP GC 27/2.

RSSD period	Name of the progress report
2004 – 2007	UNEP (2005) (2006) Progress in Implementing the Global Regional Seas Strategic Directions
2008 – 2012	Unidentified
2013 – 2016	UNEP (2014) Progress in the implementation of the Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2013-2016

Table 2: Progress reports of the implementation of RSSDs

Recurrent issues in the three RSSDs

As it can be observed from Annex 1, that over time the RSSDs have shifted away from the original strategic components defined in UNEP GC decisions 22/2 and incorporated UNEP's priority areas of work such as the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA) and Green Economy. It reflects the shift in focused thematic areas over time both in UNEP and RSCAPs.

On the other hand, several issues recurrently appeared in RSSDs (Table 4). For example, ecosystem-based management has always been listed as a strategy over the three periods. However, it is not clear whether each consecutive period was an incremental step towards improved implementation of ecosystem-based management due to a lack of specific targets and milestones and an evaluation of progress.

Theme	2004 - 2007	2008 - 2012	2013 - 2016
Sustainability of Regional Seas Programme	Strategy 2	Strategy 1	-
Visibility of Regional Seas Programme	Strategy 3	Strategy 9	-
Ecosystem-based management	Strategy 6	Strategy 5	Strategy 1
Implementation of GPA	-	Strategy 2	Strategy 2
Blue economy	-	Strategy 8	Strategy 4
Cooperation amongst RS programmes and	Strategy 5	Strategy 7	Strategy 6

Table 3: Recurrent themes in the RSSD over the three periods

Problems of the previous RSSDs

The following nine major problems of the RSSDs over the three periods were identified through the above analysis:

1. No commitments on the sides of RSCAPs and UNEP on the implementation of the RSSDs
2. No additional resources were allocated for the implementation of the RSSDs
3. No clear records and analyses to show whether RSCAPs have brought the RSSDs to the Governing Bodies
4. Some of the RSCAPs recognise that RSSDs do not bind them
5. No formal reporting mechanism existed for the RSCAPs with regards to the achievement of the RSSDs
6. No profound evaluation and analysis existed before formulating the next strategy
7. The action points are obscure and any activities could easily fall under several action points
8. The strategic directions might not be reflected in the Programme of Work of each RSCAP
9. Progress on each strategic point is not measurable because no clear quantifiable goals have been set

These problems led to concerns over the effectiveness of RSSDs. As it has been over ten (10) years since the initial creation of the RSSD in 2004 and the situation surrounding the RS programmes has changed, it is valuable to examine these problems and consider future actions.

The values of RSSDs

As described above, the original aims of RSSDs were to: (1) strengthen the Regional Seas Programme at the global level; (2) complement the implementation of the programmes of work of the individual Regional Seas; and (3) provide an opportunity to improve efficiency, to increase cooperation and to incorporate new elements in future programmes of work. At the operational level, the RSSDs have been clarifying actions to be conducted by UNEP and by RSCAPs in order to accomplish common objectives.

One of the most significant values of RSSDs is, thus, to bring all the RSCAPs together to unify efforts in order to achieve common objectives through connecting regional activities with global processes. The RSSDs, thus, bring global objectives and targets to the RS programme such as Rio +20 as stated in the UNEP GC Decision 27/6 on Oceans 2 (b). The RSSD 2004 – 2007 Strategy 1 clearly demonstrates this

intention. It says “Increase Regional Seas’ contribution to Sustainable Development (SD).” In this way, RSSDs link the activities of RSCAPs at regional level with global processes.

By showing clear linkages between global processes and the activities of RSCAPs, RSSDs should be able to inspire development of future programmes of work at RSCAPs so that their work goes along with the global processes and consequently increases the visibility and impact of the work at RSCAPs.

It should be noted that, however, the practical value of RSSDs may be severely limited if the RSSDs are not reflected on the work of RSCAPs. Thus transparent formulation processes of RSSD with sufficient participation of the RSCAPs is necessary to foster a common understanding of the roles of RSSDs and to develop a sense of ownership of RSSDs by the RSCAPs.

The way forward

The Regional Seas Programme started as an action-oriented programme⁴. However, the extent to which each RSCAP has implemented its Action Plans has not been well reported⁵. For the Regional Seas programmes to reinvigorate as action-oriented programmes, we need to reconsider how RSSDs should be transformed to better serve the current and future needs of the RSCAPs. Thus, from the reflections on the last three RSSD periods and the discussion above, five recommendations could be made for future RSSDs:

Recommendations

1. UNEP and the RSCAPs set clear and realistic goals with measurable targets for each strategy
2. The strategies should be connected with global targets and objectives based on the decisions by GC and UNEA
3. UNEP and the RSCAPs set a clear evaluation mechanism to review the level of implementation of the strategies. The evaluation processes needs to be able to clarify the implementation gaps.
4. RSSDs need to be closely interlinked with the programme of work of the RSCAPs
5. The process of RSSD formulation needs to be participative and transparent so that the RSCAPs will have a sense of ownership

⁴ UNEP(1982) Guidelines and principles for the preparation and implementation of comprehensive action plans for the protection and development of marine and coastal areas of regional seas

⁵ UNEP (20xx) Ecosystem Approach to Regional Seas

Chapter 2: Potential Synergies between UNEP PoW and Regional Seas PoW

Overview

According to the report on the relationship between UNEP and Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) presented at UNEA 1 (2014)⁶, Regional Seas' Programmes of Work (PoW) are independent from the UNEP Programme of Work. As Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans are MEAs, it is necessary for participating countries to approve their programmes of work (PoW). In this sense, PoW of the RSCAPs are independent from the UNEP PoW since they ultimately depend on the decisions by participating countries.

On the other hand, UNEP has historically identified the Regional Seas Programme as a regional implementation platform⁷ for implementing global conventions, MEAs and global programmes. Under the framework of the Regional Seas Programme, thus, the RSCAPs have greatly contributed to the implementation of activities that are closely related to UNEP's PoW.

This ambivalence between UNEP and Regional Seas has led to questions about the relationship between Regional Seas and UNEP. At the 16th Global Meeting of Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, some RSCAPs asked for full integration of the Regional Seas Programme in UNEP's programme of work and budget⁸ especially for those that are administered by UNEP.

Although there will be further discussions and development of the report on the relationship between UNEP and MEAs to be presented at UNEA 2 in 2016, it is possible for UNEP and RSCAPs to identify potential synergies between the UNEP PoW and Regional Seas PoW, in order to increase effectiveness of work. These components of potential synergies could feed into the process of formulating the RSSD 2017-2020.

Potential synergies between UNEP PoW and Regional Seas' activities

Currently UNEP's PoW (2014-2015) consists of seven (7) subprogrammes: (1) Climate Change; (2) Disaster and Conflicts; (3) Ecosystem Management; (4) Environmental Governance; (5) Chemical and

⁶ UNEP (2014) Relationship between the United Nations Environment Programme and multilateral environmental agreements. UNEP/EA.1/INF/8

⁷ UNEP (2014) Regional Seas Convention and Action Plans. A framework for regional coordination and cooperation to protect shared marine and coastal resources

⁸ UNEP (DEPI)/RS.16/WP.7.RS 16th Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans Meeting Report. "One intervention suggested that ways to overcome some barriers could include: mobilizing civil society and public opinion; using RSCAPs comparative advantage to improve cross agency work at national and regional scale; and initiating changes in UNEP to fully integrate the RSP in the programme of work and budget."

Waste; (6) Resource efficiency; and (7) Environment under Review. These seven areas continue to be the priority themes for the UNEP PoW (2016-2017). The next UNEP Medium Term Strategy (2018-2021) is under preparation as of today (October 2015) but the seven key themes for PoW (2018-2019) are expected to stay the same.

Activities of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans may be relevant to all the seven subprogrammes of UNEP's PoW. Relevance of UNEP's PoW (2016-2017) to the activities of Regional Seas implemented under respective PoWs are highlighted below.

PoW (2016-2017) Subprogramme 1: Climate Change

UNEP Subprogramme Expected Accomplishments	Example of relevant Regional Seas Activities
(a) Adaptation approaches, including an ecosystem-based approach, are implemented and integrated into key sectoral and national development strategies to reduce vulnerability and strengthen resilience to climate change impacts	Integration of climate change adaptation measures into ICZM/coastal strategies, plans and programmes such as in Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP)

PoW (2016-2017) Subprogramme 2: Disasters and conflicts

UNEP Subprogramme Expected Accomplishments	Example of relevant Regional Seas Activities
(a) The capacity of countries to use natural resource and environmental management to prevent and reduce the risk of natural and man-made disasters is improved	Monitoring of mangrove to build resilience in the context of climate change

PoW (2016-2017) Subprogramme 3: Ecosystem Management

UNEP Subprogramme Expected Accomplishments	Example of relevant Regional Seas Activities
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(b) Use of the ecosystem approach in countries to sustain ecosystem services from coastal and marine systems is increased	Increase the capacity of countries to develop and implement local and/or national plans of action for pollution prevention, reduction and control.
	Increased use of the ecosystem-based management approach in member countries

PoW (2016-2017) Subprogramme 4: Environmental governance

UNEP Subprogramme Expected Accomplishments	Example of relevant Regional Seas Activities
(a) The United Nations system and multilateral environmental agreement bodies, respecting the mandate of each entity, demonstrate increasing coherence and synergy of actions on environmental issues	Increase the capacity of countries to implement their obligations under the protocols and supporting MEAs.
(b) The capacity of countries to develop and enforce laws and strengthen institutions to achieve internationally agreed environmental objectives and goals and comply with related obligations is enhanced	Increase the capacity of countries to develop and implement local and/or national plans of action for pollution prevention, reduction and control.

PoW (2016-2017) Subprogramme 5: Chemicals and Waste

UNEP Subprogramme Expected Accomplishments	Example of relevant Regional Seas Activities
(a) Countries increasingly have the necessary institutional capacity and policy instruments to manage chemicals and waste soundly, including the implementation of related provisions in the multilateral environmental agreements	Increase capacity and finance opportunities of states and other stakeholders to assess, manage and reduce risks to human health and the environment posed by land and marine-based sources of marine pollution and associated activities including chemicals and wastes.

PoW (2016-2017) Subprogramme 6: Resource Efficiency

UNEP Subprogramme Expected Accomplishments	Example of relevant Regional Seas Activities
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(b) Uptake of sustainable consumption and production and green economy instruments and management practices in sectoral policies and in business and financial operations across global supply chains is increased, in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication	Mainstreaming SCP in national development planning processes
	SCP Capacity Building workshops, trainings for Green Entrepreneurs
	Promote sustainable tourism

PoW (2016-2017) Subprogramme 7. Environment under review

UNEP Subprogramme Expected Accomplishments	Example of relevant Regional Seas Activities
(b) Global, regional and national assessment processes and policy planning are informed by emerging environmental issues	Data and information management for environmental trends
(c) The capacity of countries to generate, access, analyse, use and communicate environmental information and knowledge, including data related to gender aspects, is enhanced	Data and information management for monitoring oceans and seas in the region

As is seen from the tables above, there are many ways in which synergies between the UNEP PoW and Regional Seas PoW could emerge. . Thus it is possible for the RSCAPs to take these synergies into consideration when formulating the PoWs. However, it should be noted that each region needs to respect and respond to specific problems in the region and the PoW should reflect such regional uniqueness.

UNEP strives to create coherency and synergies with different MEAs including RSCAPs on environmental issues as is clearly stated under Subprogramme 4 Environmental Governance, Expected Accomplishment (a). Therefore, it is important to continue this discussion to create a better collaboration mechanism between UNEP and the RSCAPs. This discussion will, in turn, strengthen coordinated work by UNEP under the framework of the UNEP Regional Seas Programme.

With regards to the future RSSDs, it is important to note the range of RSCAPs' activities relevant to different subprogrammes of the UNEP PoW. When formulating RSSDs, thus, it is worthwhile to consider aspects that go beyond UNEP's ecosystem management subprogramme in order to maximise the capacity of the RSCAPs.

Chapter 3: Coordination through UNEP Regional Seas Coordination Unit

Role of UNEP Regional Seas Coordination Unit

At the early stage of the development of the UNEP Regional Seas programme, it was clearly stated that “UNEP’s role is to be a catalyst for the initiation of regional seas action plans”⁹. Over time, however, UNEP’s role has expanded. According to Mrema (2013)¹⁰, UNEP’s roles were defined as (1) Facilitate initiation of the Action Plans, Conventions and Protocols, (2) Promotion of the visibility of the RSCAPs, (3) Organization of annual Global Meetings of RSCAPs, and (4) Administration of seven (7) Regional Seas Secretariats¹¹. Overall UNEP has provided facilitative supports to the RSCAPs in order to assist implementation of Conventions and Protocols by Regional Seas Secretariats.

UNEP DEPI has been responsible for the coordination of the implementation of the Regional Seas Programme¹². The components of UNEP’s Regional Seas programme¹³ were recently defined as following. Thus it is expected that UNEP will facilitate the following four points through UNEP Regional Seas Coordination Unit.

I. Strengthening the scientific component of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans - enhancing the interface between science and policy through national and regional capacity building so as to stimulate the identification and implementations of actions aimed at protecting the marine environment, based on sound science and viable policy and management responses.

II. Strengthening the institutional and governance capacities of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans - including facilitating technical, administrative, legal and financing mechanisms and implementation tools.

III. Enhancing the visibility of the Regional Seas Programmes - through common strategies in priority areas affecting the marine environment. Strengthening the communication capacities of the Regional Seas Alliance is essential for improving knowledge management and expanding the community of practice. Raising the profile of the Regional Seas Programmes within relevant regional and international forums will engender potential partnerships with leading organizations and institutions.

IV. Mainstreaming marine and coastal ecosystem management into national planning and development processes - this includes supporting economic valuations of marine and coastal ecosystem services to make the case for maintaining their socio-economic contributions to society by mainstreaming their values.

⁹ RSSR No15

¹⁰ Mrema, E. Regional Seas Programme & the Role Played by UNEP in its Governance

¹¹ Mrema, E. Regional Seas Programme & the Role Played by UNEP in its Governance

¹² Mrema (2013) Regional Seas Programme. The role Played by UNEP in its governance

¹³ <http://www.unep.org/ecosystemmanagement/Portals/7/Documents/factsheets/RSCAPs%20FactSheet%20web.pdf>

The Regional Seas Programme was designed to be an action-oriented programme¹⁴ and the secretariats are capable of implementing actions including capacity building workshops and projects in each region. However, it has been reported that the capacities of Regional Seas Programmes were not expressed at their maximum potential especially due to financial constraints. It is important for UNEP and the RSCAPs to work together to reinvigorate the programme and allow RSCAPs to fulfil their potential.

The RSSDs assigned specific action points for UNEP and RSCAPs for the implementation of the strategies. These strategies are, therefore, meant to be a guideline for the work implemented by UNEP through the DEPI in order to facilitate RSCAPs' activities.

Problems

As discussed above, there has not been clear evaluation with regard to the implementation of Strategic Directions by UNEP, coordinated by the UNEP Regional Seas Coordination Unit. Consequently, the extent to which the unit has facilitated the work of the RSCAPs is hard to evaluate. Since there have been several persistent issues, such as financial sustainability of the RSCAPs as well as visibility of the programme over past decades, it is anticipated that UNEP, through the coordination efforts of the UNEP DEPI, will strengthen support to the RSCAPs in the coming years.

Recommendations

Recommendations for UNEP Regional Seas Coordination Unit

- Seek resources to provide integrated support across UNEP Divisions to Regional Seas, e.g.:
 - Increase support from UNEP DELC with regards to enforcement of Conventions, Action Plans and protocols
 - Create knowledge-sharing platform for RSCAPs to exchange experiences, in order to catalyse collaboration among regions (e.g. Global Meetings, Mailing list, Newsletter, compilation of RS activities)
- Assist the RSCAPs in securing financial means to sustain their programme of work
- Assist the RSCAPs to create partnerships with regional organisations as well as with international organisations
- Actively involve the RSCAPs in global dialogues on the marine and coastal environment

Recommendations for Regional Seas

- Keep UNEP Regional Seas Coordination Unit informed in terms of assistance needs, planned activities and upcoming meetings.

¹⁴ UNEP (2014) UNEP/EARS/WG.1/INF3 Ecosystem Approach to Regional Seas

- Share reports on the implementation of PoW activities with UNEP so that the experiences could be shared with other Regional Seas when appropriate
- Identify needs and constraints that would need support from UNEP and communicate with the UNEP Regional Coordination Unit.

Chapter 4: Elements to be considered for the RSSD 2017 – 2020

The next Strategic Direction needs to be based on the visioning processes in 2014. The visioning processes consisted of the Visioning Workshop and the following session entitled “*The Development of roadmap for implement visioning priorities for 10+ years*” at the 16th Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans in 2014¹⁵. Four key themes for the RSCAPs were identified through the visioning process: (1) Governance, (2) Extractives, (3) Pollution, and (4) Climate change and ocean acidification. The next RSSD, thus, needs to encompass these four key themes. Based on the visioning outcome and the discussion above, it is recommended to consider the following elements in formulating the Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2017-2020. A matrix presentation was prepared for the purpose of discussion (Annex 2).

Recommendation on the monitoring and reporting of the RSSD

- Set clear aims for the Strategic Directions 2017-2020.
- Set actionable strategies
- Set clear targets and related milestones with indicators to be able to measure the level of achievements
- Set a clear reporting mechanism. For example UNEP and RSCAPs could report the progress at the 20th Global Meeting (mid-term) and 22nd Global Meeting (End of term)
- Set an evaluation mechanism for the implementation of the RSSD
- Clarify roles of UNEP and RSCAPs in achieving the common goals set as Strategic Directions

Recommended elements to be considered for the RSSD 2017-2020

Governance

Suggested element	Potential target (2017-2020)	Relevant SDG target
Enhance institutional	Develop strategies for securing financial	14.c

¹⁵ UNEP/WBRS.17/INF/2 Summary of Visioning Processes in 2014

sustainability of the Regional Seas Programmes	sustainability for at least two (2) regions	
Improve internal governance efficiency	At least one (1) region will start developing national reporting system	14.c
Increase visibility of the Regional Seas programme	Three (3) regions reform and modernise their websites	-
Green economy in oceans	Three new (3) regions use green economy concept in their region	14.2 / 14.7
Enhanced environmental monitoring and data collection	Five (5) regions will adopt core regional seas indicators	14.1, 14.2, 14.7, 14a, 14c
Governing marine protected area	Two (2) regions engage in capacity building on MPA governance	14.2, 14.5

Extractives (living and non-living resources)

Suggested element	Potential target (2017-2020)	Relevant SDG target
Integrated, ecosystem-based regional ocean policies developed for sustainable marine and coastal resource use	Four (4) new regions adopt integrated ecosystem-based ocean policies or strategies	14.2
Addressing environmental aspects of living and non-living resource extraction through integrated ecosystem-based management	Four (4) regions apply UNEP tools and guidance on ecosystem-based spatial planning and management in trainings and pilot projects for sustainable oceans and coasts	14.2, 14.4, 14.7,
Knowledge-sharing on coastal and marine spatial planning and management implementation	Ten (10) regions share experiences of marine spatial planning through UNEP online information platform on “Marine Spatial Planning in Practice”	14.2, 14c
Develop and support collaborative mechanisms between RSCAPs and RFMOs	Four (4) new collaborative arrangements for integrated marine management between RSCAPs and RFMOs	14.2, 14.4

Pollution

Suggested element	Potential target (2017-2020)	Relevant SDG target
Improve implementation of Conventions, Action Plans and Protocols on pollutions	At least two (2) regions conduct capacity development workshops with UNEP	14.1
Enhance monitoring and data	Five (5) regions will adopt core regional seas	14.1 / 14.a

collection	indicators related to marine pollution	
Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land Based Activities (GPA)	At least three (3) new regions formulate regional action plans on GPA-related issues	14.1

Ecosystem Approach in the context of Climate Change

Suggested element	Potential target (2017-2020)	Relevant SDG ¹⁶ target
Ecosystem-based coastal and marine climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies and policies	Two (2) regions integrate EBA and mitigation objectives in regional coastal and marine policies, strategies or planning	13.2
Decision-support for ecosystem-based mitigation, adaptation and resilience	Two (2) new regions pilot test or apply spatial planning and management tools and guidance for coastal adaptation, mitigation and resilience	13.2, 14.2
Coral Reef Partnership	At least three (3) new regions adopt the new GCRMN monitoring standards for Coral Reefs	14.3
Planning on Ocean Acidification	Three (3) regions use downscaled temperature and acidification models	14.3
Ocean acidification and Climate change strategies	Two (2) regions incorporate ocean acidification aspects in regional policies, protocols or strategies	13.2 /14.3

¹⁶ A/69/L.85 Draft outcome document of the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda

Annex 1: Three Regional Seas Strategic Directions

	1 st RSSD 2004 – 2007	2 nd RSSD 2008 – 2012	3 rd RSSD 2013 - 2016
1	Increase Regional Seas' contribution to Sustainable Development, through the enhancement of local, national, regional and global partnerships with relevant social, economic and environmental stakeholders, and through the strengthened implementation of the mandates of the Regional Seas, as a major contribution to the implementation of the WSSD Plan of Implementation and the goals and targets associated with the Millennium Declaration.	Enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of Regional Seas Programmes through increasing country ownership, incorporating Regional Seas conventions and protocols into national legislation, promoting compliance and enforcement mechanisms, involving civil society and the private sector, building capacities, ensuring viable national and international financial arrangements, as well as developing assessment/evaluation procedures where appropriate.	Effectively apply an ecosystem approach in the management of the marine and coastal environment.
2	Enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of Regional Seas Programmes through increasing country ownership, incorporating Regional Seas conventions and protocols into national legislation, promoting compliance and enforcement mechanisms, involving civil society and the private sector, building capacities, ensuring viable national and international financial arrangements, as well as developing assessment/evaluation procedures where appropriate.	Contribute to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, especially the provision related to the development and implementation of protocols addressing land-based pollution sources and activities.	Contribute to the implementation of the Manila Declaration of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land Based Activities (GPA), in particular the partnerships on wastewater management, nutrients and marine litter.
3	Enhance Regional Seas' visibility and political impact in global, regional and national policy setting, through strengthening the Regional Seas Partnership, increasing political and public awareness on the economic, social, and environmental importance of coastal and marine resources, promoting concerted information and communication policies, and ensuring participation and promotion of Regional Seas in relevant national, regional and global fora.	Strengthen regional cooperation on preparedness and response to pollution from maritime accidents with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and promote the implementation, as pertinent, of the IMO conventions.	Strengthen capacities at the regional level and national level on marine and coastal governance.
4	Support knowledge-based policy making, enhanced public	Contribute to the effective implementation of the 2012 biodiversity	Support the provision of tools to decouple economic growth from

	participation, education, awareness, and improved reporting on the state of the coastal & marine environment, its resources, and possible threats to them, through amongst others, contributing to appropriate national and regional monitoring and assessment activities.	targets, the WSSD Plan of Implementation biodiversity targets for promoting the establishment of networks of marine and coastal protected areas and planning of proper coastal land and watershed use by 2012 including the designation of important wetlands under the Ramsar Convention.	environmental pressures in the marine and coastal environment by promoting resource efficiency and productivity, including assessing the value of the services provided by these key ecosystems.
5	Increase the use of Regional Seas as a platform for developing common regional objectives, promoting synergies and co-ordinated regional implementation of relevant MEAs, global and regional initiatives, and responsibilities of United Nations Agencies and other international actors, as a contribution to the sustainable management of the coastal and marine environment.	Emphasize the need to implement the ecosystem approach in integrated marine and coastal management (IMCAM) as an overarching management framework for addressing threats to the sustainability of regional seas.	Strengthen coordination and build necessary capacities at the regional and national levels to improve global knowledge and trends on the status of the marine environment, contributing to the World Oceans Assessment (Regular Process).
6	Develop and promote a common vision and integrated management, based on ecosystem approaches, of priorities and concerns related to the coastal and marine environment and its resources in Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, introducing amongst others proactive, creative and innovative partnerships and networks and effective communication strategies.	Assess and address the impact of climate change on the marine and coastal environment, in particular, the potential social, economic and environmental impacts and consequences on fisheries, tourism, human health, marine biodiversity, coastal erosion, and small islands ecosystems. Promote cooperation for formulating regional climate change adaptation strategies.	Strengthen collaboration mechanisms with relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), UN Agencies and International Financial Institutions (IFIs)
7	-	Intensify regional activities in support of the WSSD Plan of Implementation and the Jakarta Mandate of the Convention on Biological Diversity, notably by identifying critical issues of marine biodiversity, protecting its major components, and promoting its sustainable use; more specifically, focusing on: a. Addressing the protection of <i>i</i>) marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction; and <i>ii</i>) deep-sea biodiversity at the regional scale; b. Cooperation with FAO and regional fisheries management organisations (RFMO) to address environmental impacts of fisheries and promote an ecosystem management approach; c. Participation in the Coral Reef Initiative	-

		and the implementation of the SIDS Mauritius Strategy, as appropriate.	
8	-	Recognize the need for economic valuation of marine and coastal ecosystem services for decision making and policy formulation.	-
9	-	Facilitating the mainstreaming of its activities within broader development and economic planning processes including the poverty reduction strategies in developing countries.	-

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Annex 2

Tentative joint target matrix of regional and global activities between UNEP and the RSCAPs based on the RSSD thematic priorities 2017-2020

	Governance	Extraction (sustainable living and non-living resource use)	Pollution	Climate change and ocean acidification
Decision-support tools / guidance	<p>Regional integrated ocean policy [x planning framework]</p> <p>MPA governance guidance [x guide]</p> <p>Marine Spatial Planning governance baseline-setting and monitoring [x planning framework]</p>	<p>Guidance on Marine Spatial Planning in Practice [x guide]</p> <p>Online knowledge and peer-exchange on Marine Spatial Planning in Practice [x tool]</p> <p>Mapping ecosystem services for spatial planning [x tool]</p>		<p>Online Coastal EBA decision-support tool [x tool]</p> <p>Mapping social-ecological resilience for integrated coastal spatial planning and management [x tool]</p>
Training / capacity building	<p>Regional ocean governance principles [x workshop]</p>	<p>Regional introductory course and project design on ecosystem-based management [x workshops]</p>		<p>Regional training on Coastal EBA options [x workshops]</p>
Pilot projects	<p>Configuring governance arrangements in MPA planning [x pilot projects]</p>	<p>Strategic Environment Assessment for ecosystem-based coastal land-use planning [x pilots]</p>		<p>Applying EBA principles in coastal/SIDS NAPs [x pilots]</p>
Policy support	<p>Regional strategies for cross-sectoral arrangements [x regions]</p> <p>Guidance implementing ocean-related targets across SDGs</p>	<p>Regional/global policy discussions on sustainable oceans and coasts informed by UNEP/RSCAPS guidance and experiences</p>		<p>Practical experiences on integrating EBA in National Adaptation Planning</p>

*The specific target numbers to be determined within a year