



**Governing Council
of the United Nations
Environment Programme**

Distr.: General
12 November 2004

English only



**Twenty-third session of the Governing Council/
Global Ministerial Environment Forum**
Nairobi, 21–25 February 2005
Items 4 and 6 of the provisional agenda**

Assessment, monitoring and early warning: state of the environment

**Follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development:
contribution of the United Nations Environment Programme to
the forthcoming session of the Commission on Sustainable Development**

**Progress report on regional seas conventions and action plans and the
activities of UNEP related to marine safety and protection of the
marine environment from accidental pollution**

Note by the secretariat

The secretariat has the honour to provide, in the annex to the present note, information on the implementation of Governing Council decisions 22/2 III and 22/2 V.

* Re-issued for technical reasons.

** UNEP/GC.23/1.

Annex

Progress report on regional seas conventions and action plans and the activities of UNEP related to marine safety and protection of the marine environment from accidental pollution

I. Progress report on regional seas and action plans

A. Follow-up to decision GC.22/2.III

1. Regional seas strategies for sustainable development

1. The UNEP Regional Seas Programme provides a comprehensive institutional framework not only for regional cooperation in the seas and oceans, but equally importantly for the regional implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and global programmes, initiatives and action plans. Currently, seventeen regions are covered by the Regional Seas Programme and are supported either through a regional convention (thirteen) or a regional action plan (three). The most recent UNEP achievements in relation to supporting regional seas include the signing of the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Environment of the Caspian Sea in Tehran on 4 November 2003 and progress in the establishment of a new secretariat for the Action Plan for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Northwest Pacific Region (Northwest Pacific Action Plan).

2. At the Fifth Global Meeting of the Regional Seas held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 26 to 28 November 2003, the coordinators and representatives of the regional seas conventions and action plans agreed upon a set of global strategic directions for 2004–2007, in response to the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, decisions adopted by the Governing Council at its twenty-second session, Agenda 21 and the internationally agreed goals of the Millennium Declaration. The directions are aimed at strengthening the Regional Seas Programme at the global level, while continuing to implement the action programmes of the individual Regional Seas Programmes as agreed upon by their governing bodies. The global strategic directions 2004–2007 are summarized below, with an indication of progress related to each:¹

(a) Increase regional seas' contribution to sustainable development through the enhancement of local, national, regional and global partnerships with relevant social, economic and environmental stakeholders: A database giving an overview of all major actors and players in the field of conservation and management of the marine and coastal environment of the various Regional Seas Programmes has been developed. Discussions are already underway on partnerships and best practices;

(b) Enhance sustainability and effectiveness of Regional Seas Programmes through increasing country ownership, translating regional seas conventions and protocols into national legislation, promoting compliance and enforcement mechanisms, involving civil society and the private sector, building capacities, ensuring viable financial arrangements: Guidelines are being developed on translating the regional seas conventions and action plans into national legislation with an emphasis on promoting compliance and enforcement. Various discussions are underway on financial sustainability, including with the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and involvement of civil society;

(c) Enhance regional seas' visibility and political impact in global and regional policy setting, by establishing a strengthened "regional seas alliance", addressing emerging and priority issues, and publishing regular statements, among other things;

- (i) A statement on a particular emerging issue will be produced annually to increase the visibility of the Regional Seas Programme. Work on the current statement is under way;
- (ii) The Regional Seas Coordinating Office has established its new web-based information centre and is launching its new web site with detailed information and links on the Regional Seas Programmes;

¹ Further actions will be discussed at the Sixth Global Meeting of the Regional Seas, 29 November to 3 December 2004 in Istanbul, Turkey. The meeting will also involve the Chairs of the various Conferences of the Parties and governing bodies of the regional seas conventions and action plans.

(d) Strengthening of appropriate national and regional monitoring and periodic assessment of the marine and coastal environment: The Regional Seas Programmes have contributed to the planning meeting on the development of a UNEP module for a global assessment of the coastal and marine environment. They have also concluded an agreement with International Atomic Energy Agency and Marine Environment Studies Laboratory (IAEA/MESL) on a review of regional marine pollution monitoring and assessment in the UNEP Regional Seas Programmes and gave recommendations for improved systems in those programmes;

(e) Increase the use of regional seas as a platform for developing common regional objectives, promoting synergies and coordinated regional implementation of relevant multilateral environmental agreements and global initiatives;

- (i) A framework for collaboration between the Global Ocean Observing System and the Regional Seas Programme has been provided through a memorandum of understanding that was recently approved between the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO-IOC) and UNEP;
- (ii) Collaboration with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) is enhanced through a variety of training and capacity-building activities related to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), the International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Cooperation (OPRC) and the London Dumping Convention implemented in various Regional Seas Programmes. (see also chapter II);
- (iii) A joint programme of work on activities of mutual interest has been developed with both the Convention on Biological Diversity (including on invasive species) and the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, including an agreement with the latter on integrated waste management for the Pacific small island States. Joint activities on marine mammals are being developed with the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals;
- (iv) The Regional Seas Programme is working closely with the UNEP coral reef unit, the International Coral Reef Action Network (ICRAN) and the International Coral Reef Initiative. A joint publication detailing experiences and lessons learned from ICRAN field sites in regional seas around the world has been published. Development of proposals for coral reef and ICRAN-related activities in the Inter-agency Plan of Action for the Region Covered by the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME) and the Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (PERSGA) sea areas are under way as well as a similar agreement with South Asia;
- (v) The Regional Seas Programme has assisted in the preparatory process to the Barbados Programme of Action review meeting planned for January 2005, among others, through providing support in the UNEP policy publication on UNEP and small island developing States;

(f) Promote the development of a common vision and integrated management, based on the ecosystem approach: The Regional Seas Programme is aiming at increased collaboration between UNEP, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and regional fisheries bodies in order to promote the ecosystem-based management of living marine resources.

3. A feasibility study on the sustainable management of marine litter and the possibility of developing a global initiative on marine litter has been completed and developed into a report. UNEP is aiming at developing this initiative based on regional pilot projects in the Mediterranean, Caribbean, Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR) and the Northwest Pacific Action Plan regions.

2. Northwest Pacific Action Plan

4. Over the last ten years, the Regional Seas Coordinating Office has acted as the interim coordination secretariat for the Northwest Pacific Action Plan. UNEP negotiated and finalized the host country agreements with Japan and the Republic of Korea for the co-hosted regional coordinating unit offices, which will be co-located in Toyama and Busan, respectively. UNEP is facilitating recruitment

of six staff members for the unit, which is expected to start operation in November 2004. Several major events are taking place in November 2004, including the inauguration of the unit in Toyama and Busan, the ninth intergovernmental meeting of the Northwest Pacific Action Plan and the celebrations of its tenth anniversary.

3. Northeast Pacific Action Plan and the Convention for Cooperation in the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the North-East Pacific

5. UNEP has mobilized support from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) in assisting to institutionalize the Northeast Pacific Action Plan. Informal consultations are taking place to discuss future institutional arrangements, including a host country for the Northeast Pacific Action Plan secretariat and its programme of work.

4. Abidjan and Nairobi Conventions

6. The Republic of South Africa acceded to the Convention for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Eastern African Region (Nairobi Convention) by signing the instruments of ratification on 16 May 2003. The Convention thus includes all the countries of the region. UNEP continues to support the Nairobi Convention and the Convention for Cooperation in the Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the West and Central African Region (Abidjan Convention) and has assisted in mobilizing a major GEF project in the latter region. UNEP organized the third meeting of the Ad Hoc Legal and Technical Working Group of the Nairobi Convention, Nairobi, 17–19 November 2003, to discuss the proposed revisions of the Convention and the Protocol Concerning Protected Areas and Wild Fauna and Flora in the Eastern African Region and a draft of the protocol on land-based activities. The Nairobi Convention held several institutional-strengthening and training meetings and continues to strengthen links with IMO. The fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Nairobi Convention, held from 6 to 8 July 2004 in Antananarivo, Madagascar, discussed and approved a four-year programme of work and discussed new initiatives and emerging issues that require new partnerships. The Nairobi and Abidjan Conventions have received support from SIDA to strengthen their Joint Implementation Unit. The Abidjan Convention is currently being translated into Portuguese in order to assist its ratification by São Tomé and Príncipe.

5. South-East Pacific Action Plan and the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and Coastal Area of the South-East Pacific

7. The Regional Seas Coordinating Office and the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities Coordinating Office, in collaboration with the Comisión Permanente del Pacífico Sudeste, has organized workshops and supported expert meetings in the region including on integrated coastal area and river basin management and on marine mammals. It has continued to offer support to the South-East Pacific region for various activities as well as support in implementing the global regional seas strategic directions.

B. Other issues

8. UNEP, in close collaboration with the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP), organized a workshop on integrated coastal area and river basin management for the South Asian region in Chennai, India, leading to the selection of a pilot project on that subject in Sri Lanka.

9. Various activities are being undertaken in collaboration with the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden involving collaboration with the UNEP Regional Office for West Asia and the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (where activities relate to the protocol on land-based sources of pollution).

10. Other activities continue within the Wider Caribbean, SACEP, Mediterranean, Caspian and Black Sea Regional Seas Programmes, as part of the continued programmatic support by UNEP to the individual Regional Seas Programmes.

11. Various Regional Seas Programmes are also involved in the development of the European Marine Strategy.

II. Progress report on UNEP activities related to marine safety and protection of the marine environment from accidental pollution

12. UNEP and IMO jointly finalized a report of a joint IMO/UNEP forum on regional arrangements in emergency response to marine pollution. Collaboration continues with IMO and other relevant partners in the development of activities, such as the proposal on ship-generated marine pollution in the North-East Pacific. The Regional Seas Programme, in collaboration with IMO, has developed a draft project proposal on preventing the spread of alien invasive species, particularly through addressing non-shipping vectors at a regional level, through the Regional Seas Programme. An IMO/UNEP workshop on marine pollution prevention and environmental management in ports in Eastern Africa was held in Mombasa, Kenya, from 26 to 30 April 2004, under the framework of the technical cooperation and assistance programme established under the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter (London Dumping Convention 1972). The main objective of the workshop was to address capacity-building issues in the area of marine pollution prevention and environmental management in port environments in Eastern Africa. The workshop was followed by the twenty-seventh meeting of the Scientific Group of the London Dumping Convention held in Mombasa from 3 to 7 May 2004. The Northwest Pacific Action Plan has finalized a memorandum of understanding on regional cooperation regarding preparedness and response to oil spills in the marine environment of the Northwest Pacific region, which will come into force once signed in November 2004.
