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Policy issues: state of the environment

**Progress report on the implementation of decision SS.XI/7 on
oceans**

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

The present report provides information on the main activities undertaken in 2010 by the United Nations Environment Programme to implement Governing Council decision SS.XI/7, on oceans. It provides examples of the impact of the mainstreaming of the marine and coastal strategy into the medium-term strategy for the period 2010–2013 and the programme of work; discusses the support provided to countries to undertake assessments and manage ecosystems; highlights technology support and capacity-building provided; and gives details of work in relation to small island developing States. It describes the challenges faced by the United Nations Environment Programme in strengthening its marine and coastal work. It notes the inter-agency collaborative work that has been developed and strengthened to support the implementation of the Manado Ocean Declaration and acknowledges support from donor agencies and other institutions. Lastly, it considers the pending third intergovernmental review of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities.

* UNEP/GC.26/1.

I. Suggested action by the Governing Council

1. The Governing Council may wish to consider the adoption of a decision along the lines suggested below:

The Governing Council,

Recalling its decision SS.XI/7, which pertained to, among other things, the outcomes of the World Ocean Conference held in Manado, Indonesia, in May 2009, and by which it requested the Executive Director to extend United Nations Environment Programme cooperation and engagement with other United Nations agencies to support the implementation of the Manado Ocean Declaration;

Recalling also the requirement, as stated in paragraph 13 (c) of the Washington Declaration on the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, periodically to review the implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities;

1. *Notes with appreciation* the progress report of the Executive Director on the implementation of decision SS.XI/7 on oceans,¹ which includes information on work undertaken by the United Nations Environment Programme to protect marine and coastal ecosystems, especially through its marine and coastal strategy, the Regional Seas Programme and the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities;
2. *Invites* Governments and international and regional financial institutions to make coordinated efforts to support developing countries in implementing marine and coastal initiatives, including within the United Nations Environment Programme, at the national, regional and global levels;
3. *Requests* the Executive Director to proceed with organizing the third session of the Intergovernmental Review Meeting on the Implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, working to ensure that participation is as broad as possible, and to that end urges all Governments to be actively involved in the intergovernmental review process and, where possible, to make financial contributions to defray the costs associated with that meeting.

II. Progress report on the implementation of decision SS.XI/7

A. Marine and coastal strategy

2. The marine and coastal strategy of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) endorsed by the senior management team in early 2010 is embedded in the programmes of work for 2010–2011 and 2012–2013. The strategy is built around four priority themes: land-ocean connections; ecosystems for human well-being reconciling use and conservation; and vulnerable people and places.
3. These themes encompass many of the issues that member States face in managing marine and coastal environments, such as pollution, habitat destruction and climate change. Activities under the central theme, land-ocean connections, support member States in ensuring that water, the building block of marine and coastal systems, is managed appropriately. Activities under the second theme, ecosystems for human well-being, support countries in valuing ecosystem services and ensuring that ecosystems are well managed to support sustainable development, while projects under the third theme, reconciling use and conservation, assist countries in undertaking the trade-offs that are needed to ensure that ecosystem services are contributing to development and are not degraded. The fourth theme, vulnerable people and places, relates to communities that are especially vulnerable to change, such as small island developing States, and vulnerable habitats, such as coral reefs and seamounts.
4. The strategy facilitates collaborative work through the thematic subprogrammes of the UNEP medium-term strategy for the period 2010–2013. These themes also overlap with the issues and challenges set out in the Manado Ocean Declaration. Much of the strategy is implemented in the ecosystem management, environmental governance and climate change subprogrammes, with some activities, such as the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management, in the harmful substances and hazardous waste subprogramme. The strategy builds upon and is implemented through existing platforms, such as the Regional Seas Programme and the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities.

1 UNEP/GC.26/10.

B. Continuing and developing marine activities in 2010

5. The UNEP marine and coastal programme is currently focused on:
- (a) Developing a strong marine and coastal ecosystem management programme, including measures relating to adaptation to climate change, so as to provide support to countries;
 - (b) Strengthening the regional seas platform;
 - (c) Revitalizing the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities;
 - (d) Re-establishing a coral reef unit;
 - (e) Supporting small island developing States.

C. Marine and coastal ecosystem management

6. UNEP is supporting countries by developing ecosystem management tools and building national capacities for assessment and the integrated management of marine and coastal ecosystem services, including coupled integrated assessment and marine spatial planning. Small island developing States are among the beneficiaries of these efforts, given the unique challenges that they face and their high levels of vulnerability to climate change.

7. The past decade has witnessed increasing efforts to include oceans and coasts in global, regional and national assessments. Most environmental assessments provide insight into the specific marine areas that they cover but neither provide an overview of the state of the oceans nor assess the full range of human activities that affect or depend on marine ecosystem goods and services. To fill these gaps, in its resolution 60/30 of 29 November 2005, the General Assembly, recalling its decision in resolutions 57/141 and 58/240 to establish a regular process under the United Nations for global reporting on and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects, decided to launch a preparatory stage in the establishment of the regular process. Known as the "assessment of assessments", the preparatory stage will involve UNEP and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) co-leading a study of what would be required of the regular process.

8. By its resolution 64/71 of 4 December 2009, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendations adopted by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole that proposed a framework for the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socio-economic Aspects and described its first cycle and a way forward, requesting the Secretary-General to convene an informal meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole from 30 August to 3 September 2010 further to consider and make recommendations to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session on the modalities for the implementation of the Regular Process.

9. At that meeting, the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole recommended² that the Secretary-General should designate the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea to provide secretariat support to the Regular Process and should invite the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, UNEP, the International Maritime Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and other competent United Nations specialized agencies, as appropriate, to provide technical and scientific support to the Regular Process.

10. At the regional level, continuing assessment programmes, such as the Green Fins Programme for coral reef monitoring and awareness, have increased the protection of coral reefs by marine tourism operators in Thailand. Other countries in the region have submitted requests to join the Green Fins programme, which UNEP supports.

11. At the national level, the link between assessments and policymaking has been strengthened in Papua New Guinea, as UNEP has worked closely with that country's Department of Environment and Conservation to link its global environment outlook process, by which the country is assessing the current and future state of the environment, including response measures, to an ecosystem-based management framework with a local-level demonstration site in Kimbe Bay. This resulted in the country's framework on environmentally sustainable economic growth using principles from its national ecosystem-based management framework. Similarly, UNEP-supported national diagnostic studies, hot-spot analysis and demonstrations enabled the implementation of a strategic action plan for

2 See the report on the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on the regular process for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects, annex, paragraph 29 (A/65/358).

sustainable development in the São Francisco river basin in Brazil. The Poverty and Environment Initiative, jointly run by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNEP, has established a 10-year integrated management programme to transform Dominica into an environmentally sound organic island as a basis for sustainable development.

12. In Trinidad and Tobago, an ecosystem-based management demonstration project on ecosystem management for the integrated land and seascape has included reforestation of degraded sites and rehabilitation of riparian buffer zones along watercourses and other sensitive areas in upper watersheds to prevent pollution run-off. The project has also led to the Government's mainstreaming of these activities with financing from a national Green Fund.

13. Support has been provided to national planners and decision makers in implementing an ecosystem-based management approach through a manual of marine and coastal ecosystem-based management principles and good-practice case studies, which is being circulated gradually to the various regional seas programmes. Marine protected areas are considered to constitute a key part of ecosystem-based management and, accordingly, support in the use of marine protected areas has been provided to countries through a joint publication analysing and providing guidance on good management practices. The publication was also used to inform discussions on marine protected area targets at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, held from 18 to 29 October 2010 in Nagoya, Japan. A report produced jointly by UNEP, FAO and the Convention on Biological Diversity on the ecosystem effects of fishing also helped to inform discussions at that meeting and has led to further cooperation with FAO on the issue.

D. Climate change

14. Support by UNEP in terms of mitigating the effects of climate change encompasses marine and coastal areas and is based on strengthening the preliminary work of the UNEP/UNESCO/FAO report, "*Blue Carbon: the Role of Healthy Oceans in Binding Carbon*", released in late 2009, which highlighted the importance of coastal ecosystems in capturing and storing carbon. The importance of bearing in mind the value of coastal and marine ecosystem services for carbon sequestration and adaptation to climate change continues to increase as decision makers negotiate under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The report has resulted in a strategic partnership with key players, such as the Government of Indonesia, and the development of a Global Environment Facility (GEF) project for funding during the fifth GEF replenishment period. The strategic partnership will develop methodologies to assess the value of inshore ecosystems, to assess ecosystems and to explore payment for ecosystem-service mechanisms and, where possible, to link to the concept of reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. To support such initiatives, a manual on valuation methods for marine and coastal ecosystem services was produced in 2010. These methods are applicable to marine and coastal ecosystems, as requested by regional and national programme officers.

15. UNEP has developed a flagship programme to support countries seeking to adapt to climate change through an ecosystem-based approach. Small island developing States and low-lying coastal areas figure prominently therein. The major focus of the programme's adaptation efforts is on the provision to developing countries of support to undertake vulnerability assessments and of capacity-building to enable them to maintain the resilience of those ecosystems that are most vulnerable to climate change and to maximize ecosystem services for adaptation. Activities during the first phase of the programme include the development and implementation of technical, policy and financial interventions, such as piloting adaptation projects in hot spots and low-lying coastal areas, which include small island developing States and coastal cities.

16. UNEP work on climate change also includes risk reduction. It has, for example, produced a handbook on disaster risk management for coastal tourism destinations in the Caribbean and developed a tool to assess the risks of climate change in coastal areas.

E. Regional seas platform

17. The regional seas conventions and action plans are one of the long-term success stories of UNEP and continue to be extremely effective political platforms for dealing with national and transboundary issues affecting the marine and coastal environment. UNEP administers 6 of the 18 conventions and action plans and provides a global coordination platform for all of them.

18. The support provided to the regional seas platform has been focused on strengthening the science-policy interface for marine biodiversity. To raise the profile of marine biodiversity in 2010, a year that was declared the International Year of Biodiversity and saw the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, UNEP produced 19 marine assessment reports. The marine biodiversity assessment and outlook series, which covers the regional

seas conventions and action plans, provided a baseline of the state of marine biodiversity for each region, with an outlook for the future by 2050 given the predicted effects of climate change. Other UNEP publications related to the marine environment launched in Nagoya also contributed to discussions on setting marine protected area targets and the provisions of decision SS.XI/7 regarding fisheries.

19. Many regional seas conventions and action plans have made significant progress in assessing issues related to integrated water resources management, pollution, habitat destruction and resource use, and, more importantly, in developing and implementing strategic action plans to tackle these issues, with many being approved by member States. The next steps are to continue to operationalize the implementation of these strategic action plans and to secure sustainable financing mechanisms that enable long-term planning.

F. Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities

20. In accordance with the guidance provided at the second session of the Intergovernmental Review Meeting on the Implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, held in Beijing from 16 to 20 October 2006, and in line with the UNEP coastal and marine strategy, the Global Programme of Action will focus its future efforts on wastewater, nutrient management, marine litter, and physical alteration and habitat destruction.

21. Land-based activities affecting the quality of coastal water remain a major problem for many countries. The Global Programme of Action took up the issue of wastewater in 2010, producing a report on the central role of wastewater management in sustainable development entitled "Sick water", which was launched on World Water Day (22 March). The report has generated considerable interest among the members of the United Nations mechanism for inter-agency coordination on water resources (UN-Water), with UNEP taking the lead on the task force looking at innovative technical and financial solutions to wastewater issues.

22. Nutrients used in food production are also linked to declining coastal water quality. The Global Partnership on Nutrient Management, launched in June 2007 to reduce nutrient over-enrichment of coastal and marine ecosystems and their associated watersheds, gained further momentum in 2010 and expanded significantly, engaging major private partners such as the International Fertilizer Industry Association. National programmes of action on land-based sources of pollution, which are the core mechanism by which countries implement the Global Programme of Action, continue to be developed.

23. At the regional level, significant progress has been made in tackling issues under the Global Programme of Action. For example, the Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region entered into force and is receiving support from a recently established UNEP-Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) Caribbean regional fund for wastewater management, partly funded by GEF.

24. The parties to the Amended Convention for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Western Indian Ocean adopted a similar protocol for the protection of the marine and coastal environment of the Western Indian Ocean from land-based sources and activities.

25. The Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management in the Mediterranean to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean achieved the required six ratifications for entry into force in 2010, although the last is still to be formally adopted.

26. Other achievements include the release of procedures under the Action Plan for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Northwest Pacific Region to assess eutrophication status, including an evaluation of land-based sources of nutrients for the region. In African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, especially at the local level, capacity has been built to manage wastewater, and in East Africa there is now increased capacity to manage solid wastes. In the Caribbean, countries are improving their integrated management of watersheds and, ultimately, coastal areas, including by reducing pesticide run-off.

27. The Global Programme of Action Coordination Office and the UNEP Regional Office for North America are working with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of the United States of America to organize the Fifth International Marine Debris Conference in Honolulu from

20 to 25 March 2011. The conference will bring together participants to address the issue of marine debris globally and identify solutions locally to improve overall ecosystem health and biological diversity dependent on it. It will provide a forum for sharing research results, innovative approaches and solutions from around the globe.

28. The third session of the Intergovernmental Review Meeting on the Implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities is tentatively scheduled to take place in November 2011. Subject to the availability of funding, UNEP plans to take advantage of the session to strengthen and build strategic partnerships on coastal and marine protection, and to reach agreement on a series of five-year multilateral and multi-stakeholder action plans on mainstreaming Global Programme of Action objectives at the national and subnational levels: reducing nutrient enrichment of coastal waters; revolutionizing wastewater management in coastal watersheds; reducing marine litter; and preventing and remediating the physical alteration and destruction of coastal habitats.

G. Coral Reef Unit

29. The Coral Reef Unit was transferred from the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre in Cambridge, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, to the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific to provide better service to the coral reef community, given that, for example, Bangkok is close to an area of the highest coral reef diversity globally where there are active coral reef programmes such as the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security and the Micronesia Challenge. A coordinator for the Unit was recruited in late 2010 with the aim of developing a global programme and linking to other major regional initiatives.

H. Small island developing States

30. UNEP has provided substantial support to small island developing States in implementing the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (the Barbados Programme of Action) and to assist them to participate in the five-year review of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. UNEP has identified priority areas within the Programme of Action aligned to the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building where it can assist small island developing States. An example of the assistance that it has provided is in the production of a manual, based on the experiences of such States, to help them to meet their unique needs in undertaking integrated water resources management. The manual complements UNEP activities related to wastewater, including training, wastewater treatment facilities, constructed wetland for sewage treatment and solid waste management.

31. Many UNEP activities to support small island developing States in implementing the Programme of Action have yielded results in 2010. Some examples include the provision of support for the implementation of national biosafety frameworks under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity; and strengthened integrated water resource management in countries of the Caribbean (strengthened commitment and capacity of countries to implement an integrated approach to the management of watersheds and coastal areas), the Pacific Ocean (strengthened enabling environment for the implementation of the Strategic Action Programme for International Waters) and the Atlantic and Indian oceans (support to tackle water and marine-related constraints and barriers to the development of integrated water resource management and strategies for efficiency in water use).

32. The five-year review of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States took place in 2010. UNEP supported the preparatory process for this review at the national, regional and global levels by collaborating in the preparation of national assessment reports, the organization of regional and interregional preparatory meetings and the production of relevant outcome documents for these meetings and the high-level review meeting.

III. Challenges

33. Support is growing for strengthening the marine and coastal strategy within UNEP and for the regional seas conventions and action plans. Some countries have demonstrated their commitment by providing significant funding. Just as in any rebuilding programme, there remains much to be done: new partnerships are needed, existing partnerships within and outside the United Nations system must be strengthened, funds need to be raised and staff skills enhanced. The levels of expertise, funding and political support vary greatly between regional seas conventions and action plans, and therefore the consistent implementation of programmes through these platforms can prove a challenge that

necessitates varying approaches and levels of support from UNEP. The incomplete specific action by Governments in limiting land-based sources of pollution has proved a challenge in raising funds for fully implementing some revitalization work, as well as in meeting the objectives of the second session of the Intergovernmental Review Meeting on the Implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities. GEF, among other donors, provides support through projects for the implementation of the regional seas conventions and action plans and strategic action programmes. Developing and managing such projects, however, require considerable expertise and numerous staff members.

IV. Partnerships

34. Pursuant to the implementation of the Manado Ocean Declaration and decision SS.XI/7, and to implement the marine and coastal strategy, UNEP has forged partnerships with other United Nations organizations, non-governmental organizations, relevant multilateral environmental agreement secretariats, research institutes, regional organizations and the private sector. Major partnerships have been developed or extended involving other United Nations organizations, many of them members of what is known as “UN-Oceans, an inter-agency coordination mechanism on ocean and coastal issues within the United Nations system (originally known as the “Oceans and Coastal Areas Network”).

35. The Regional Seas Programme is a major partner in tackling marine and coastal environmental issues and facilitating the efforts of national Governments, funding institutions and non-governmental organizations in respect of such issues. A major achievement was the coordination and production of the marine biodiversity assessment and outlook reports with the regional seas conventions and action plans. The Global Programme of Action provides a major framework for partnerships involving United Nations agencies, national Governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and the research community. In tackling emerging issues as called for in decision SS.XI/7 and the Manado Ocean Declaration, the Global Programme of Action renews these partnerships.

36. These partnerships have produced significant results in 2010. Some examples follow:

(a) Based on the findings of a joint report that they prepared, “*Blue Carbon: the Role of Healthy Oceans in Binding Carbon*”, UNEP, UNESCO and FAO have developed a global blue carbon initiative and extended their partnership with the Government of Indonesia, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Conservation International to provide Governments with tools to value ecosystem services, especially in terms of carbon sequestration and storage;

(b) Since its launch in May 2009 the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management has expanded to include additional partners, such as UNDP, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), FAO, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, the International Atomic Energy Agency and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme. The private sector and academic and research institutions have also joined the partnership and provided specific financial and technical contributions;

(c) Under the United Nations mechanism for inter-agency coordination on water resources, UNEP, in collaboration with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, spearheaded the organization of the UN-Water task force on wastewater management;

(d) UNEP and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO have continued their long-term partnership on assessment of marine and coastal ecosystems, as seen in their joint leadership of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socio-economic Aspects. The process also engages other United Nations agencies, including FAO, the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea and the International Maritime Organization (IMO). UNEP is also working with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO and the International Union for Conservation of Nature on the GEF Transboundary Waters Assessment Programme;

(e) UNEP is working with other agencies (UNDP, UNIDO, FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, WWF and the World Bank) on various GEF projects.

V. Financial support

37. Several sources of funding through bilateral programmes and GEF were used to support the implementation of decision SS.XI/7. The Governments of Norway, Spain and Finland provided significant financial support to develop an ecosystem management approach at the regional and national levels. Donor funds were used to support the strengthening of marine protected areas,

assessments, marine spatial planning and ecosystem-based management. Much of the support for the Global Programme of Action comes from Belgium, the European Commission, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and the United States and is put towards strengthening wastewater management, mainstreaming Global Programme of Action activities and developing the Global Partnership for Nutrient Management. The United States remains the key supporter of the UNEP coral reef programme. The European Commission, directly through its contributions to related multilateral environmental agreements and indirectly through an array of financed projects, is a major contributor to Mediterranean activities.

38. UNEP developed and implemented a series of regional projects addressing identified and recognized transboundary marine and coastal issues with financial support from GEF and other donors. UNEP support to countries is further strengthened through a portfolio of GEF projects worth more than \$30 million, with at least two dollars provided by UNEP and its partners for every dollar provided by GEF. Currently, a project on a strategic partnership for the Mediterranean Sea with partners including the World Bank, UNESCO, UNIDO and FAO is being implemented. Financing from the World Bank is filling financial gaps faced by eligible countries to tackle land-based sources of pollution and biodiversity conservation. A project on integrated watershed and coastal area management in small island developing States in the Caribbean has produced results in enhancing water supply, wastewater management and coastal ecosystem restoration in selected demonstration sites. Projects to deal with marine and coastal environmental issues in the Canary and Guinea currents are being implemented in partnership with UNDP, UNIDO, FAO and IMO. A project addressing land-based activities that affect the marine and coastal environment of the Western Indian Ocean has been successfully completed. It provided a basis for coordinated efforts at the national and regional levels.

39. The Government of Finland, GEF and other partners have provided financial support to the development of a methodology to assess the status and health of transboundary waters. It is expected that that methodology will be applied to regional assessments. With GEF funding, knowledge-sharing and information-sharing and management for transboundary water issues have been promoted, with a focus on scientific knowledge and data relevant to marine and coastal ecosystems, marine ecosystem management experiences and lessons learned, and management and assessment tools. The knowledge and information mobilized through these efforts have led to further enhancement of the capacity and efforts of developing countries in their implementation of marine and coastal initiatives.
