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**Ninth Global Meeting of the Regional Seas
Conventions and Action Plans**

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**GLOBAL STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS
FOR THE REGIONAL SEAS PROGRAMMES 2008-2012:
ENHANCING THE ROLE OF THE REGIONAL SEAS CONVENTIONS
AND ACTION PLANS**

I. Mission

To promote the sustainable use and conservation of coastal and marine ecosystem and the services they provide, for the human well-being of present and future generations.

II. Background

Sixty percent of the global ecosystems services are in decline, many of which are provided by marine and coastal ecosystems. It is important to recognize that continual decline in these ecosystem services is a barrier for achieving many of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and overall global economic and human development.

The international community has over the past decade become increasingly concerned about many issues involving oceans and coasts. The issues of concern include depleting fish stocks, destruction of natural marine and coastal habitats, uncontrolled pressure of urbanisation and tourism on coastal regions and pollution from maritime and land-based activities.

Lately, issues such as the impact of climate change on oceans and coasts, deep-sea biodiversity, conservation and sustainable use of the high seas and the exploitation of the seabed, have raised the profile of marine issues even further. All these issues have generated a host of new initiatives from governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, think tanks and other groups.

A shared vision on an oceans and coasts strategy should contribute in terms of poverty eradication and the implementation of the MGDs.

The international community (i.e. World Summit on Sustainable Development -WSSD, UN General Assembly - UNGA, UN agencies, governments, environmental NGOs, and a multitude of other stakeholders) acknowledges the need for strengthening international governance, including at the regional level, to address marine and coastal environment concerns. In addition the marine and coastal environment are part of the International Environment Governance Agenda as addressed in the framework of the UNGA.

Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAP), guided by their respective governing bodies, are major mechanisms for the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and the WSSD Plan of Implementation.

In response to a request by its Governing Council, UNEP is adopting a more structured approach to coastal and marine issues with the preparation of a Medium-Term Strategy (2010-2013), which incorporates an ecosystem management component.

The 18 Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, fulfill an important role in implementing the international agenda on marine and coastal issues. In bringing together governments, the scientific community, intergovernmental organisations, and other stakeholders, the various Regional Seas Programmes provide valuable regional frameworks for *i*) assessing the quality of the marine environment; *ii*) identifying key developments (e.g. socio-economic activities, coastal settlements, land-based activities) that interact with the marine environment; and

iii) agreeing on appropriate responses in terms of strategies, policies and management tools, thus contributing to the formulation and implementation of UNEP future Medium-term Strategy.

The global strategic directions, as listed below, are formulated to continue and further enhance the strategic directions for 2004-2007, aimed at strengthening the Regional Seas Programmes at the global level.

III Strategic Directions

The continued decline in marine and coastal ecosystem services can no longer be seen purely as an environmental issue. The links with economic and human development make it imperative that the Regional Seas adapt its strategic directions for the coming five years to an environment for development approach, contributing to the implementation of the MDGs. It is in this spirit that the following strategic directives have been formulated to allow a smooth transition and connection between the 2004-2007 strategic directions and the forthcoming 2008-2012 strategies.

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. Contribute to the effective implementation of the 2012 biodiversity 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.

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*) marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction; and *ii*) 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.

IV. Implementation of the Strategic Directions

In order to effectively carry out the Strategic Directions 2008-2012, the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAP) governing bodies will endeavour to:

10. Strengthen the scientific component of the RSCAPs through *i*) the development of monitoring networks; *ii*) the contribution to the UN Regular process for “global reporting and assessment of the state of environment, including socio-economic aspects” as well as to the UNEP GEO process, Millennium Ecosystem Assessment follow up initiative; *iii*) the active collaboration with the marine-related Multilateral Environmental Agreements; and *iv*) cooperation with UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) and its various scientific programmes related to the marine and coastal environment.
11. Build and strengthen the knowledge base on the links between marine and coastal ecosystem services and human well-being by collaborating with UNEP on the establishment of sub-global assessments using the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment conceptual framework and methodologies to improve:
 - Understanding of the value of coastal and marine ecosystem services
 - Understanding of the trade-offs across the marine and coastal ecosystem services
 - Understanding of the ecological dynamics underlying coastal and marine ecosystems

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- Understanding on how marine and coastal ecosystems can change under different plausible scenarios for the future
 - Understanding on how different responses work under a variety of different conditions
12. Strengthen their capacities in governance and sustainable financing mechanisms through, amongst others, the mobilization of external funding in cooperation with international and Development Banks (both international and regional) and other Donors. Promote, develop and implement GEF-eligible projects in the context of the Large Marine Ecosystem approach.
 13. Build on the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building to enhance regional and national technical, administrative, legal and financing capacities related to the management of coastal and marine issues.
 14. Develop and strengthen reporting, and compliance and enforcement mechanisms; develop synergies with Multilateral Environmental Agreements.
 15. Publish and disseminate regular reports on the state of the marine environment and the implementation of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans; reports are to be reviewed by Parties.
 16. Raise public awareness on the importance of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, and draw in all appropriate regional stakeholders, private sector, academia, NGOs and civil society in their promotion and implementation.
 17. Mainstream coastal and marine ecosystems and their services into the One UN reform process specially the One UN Delivery, UNEP-UNDP Poverty Environment Facility, and the UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF).
 18. Develop and implement joint programme of work among UNEP, RSCAPs and the CBD Secretariat to further enhance the regional implementation of the Jakarta Mandate on the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity of the CBD.