



OCEAN ACTION HUB

OCEAN FORUM

Ensuring Sustainable Marine and Coastal Ecosystems

15 March – 5 April 2017

Background Note

Target 14.2: By 2020, sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration in order to achieve healthy and productive oceans.

Target 14.5: By 2020, conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information.

About the Forum

The [Ocean Action Hub](http://www.oceanactionhub.org) is hosting a series of online discussion over the course of the preparatory process for The Ocean Conference in order to engage stakeholders in assessing the challenges and opportunities related to delivering on SDG14 implementation. Bringing together governments, UN agencies, intergovernmental organizations, international financial institutions, NGOs, civil society organizations, academic institutions, the scientific community, private sector, philanthropic organizations and other actors, each online discussion will focus on one of the agreed Partnership Dialogue themes and implementation of relevant SDG targets and are being launched following the conclusion of the Preparatory Meeting in New York (15-16 February 2016). This discussion is focused on ensuring sustainable marine and coastal ecosystems, which includes SDG14 targets 14.2 and 14.5.

About Ensuring sustainable marine and coastal ecosystems

Target 14.2

¹Managing ecosystems sustainably involves balancing sustainable use and biodiversity and habitat conservation on the basis of the best available scientific information, data, knowledge and best practices. Yet, often there seems to be no clear process for addressing the different knowledge gaps and ensuring that sound advice is available for management, in relation to critical fishery resources, habitats and critical natural processes.

The lack of strong and coordinated frameworks to develop and implement integrated coastal zone and ocean management and planning as well as ecosystem approaches was highlighted in contributions to the Background note of the Secretary-General for the preparatory process of the

¹ Source: Edited extract from the Background note of the Secretary-General for the preparatory process of the Ocean Conference A/71/212.

Ocean Conference (A/71/212). Also stressed was the need for effective national legislation, civil society participation, strengthening of administrative and technical frameworks and capabilities, and institutional arrangements that enhance and ensure monitoring, control and surveillance, and enforcement of legislation. Sharing knowledge and practices more systematically can help address coordination problems and needs to involve both public and private stakeholders.

The importance of ecosystems and ecosystem approaches, as well as the need for enhancing their resilience, as the basis for sustainable management of the marine environment and resources has long been recognized.² The development and implementation of area-based management tools should, to the extent possible, be combined with other appropriate conservation and management measures, taking into account the need to avoid negative impacts in other areas.³

Sustainable management of coastal ecosystems requires sustained inclusion and participation of coastal communities. Legislative and policy frameworks should foster community organization and allow for their full participation in the management of marine resources as stewards, as their engagement helps achieve better biodiversity outcomes.

Target 14.5

⁴The main purpose of conservation measures is to rebuild and protect coastal and marine areas and resources; but they can also support economically valuable activities and have important social impacts.⁵ Area-based conservation measures and management tools can be used to help achieve target 14.5, including through the application of an ecosystem approach, marine spatial planning, integrated coastal zone management and the establishment of MPAs.

Even though MPA coverage has grown significantly over the last decade, the geographical distribution of MPAs is skewed, with a small number of countries making up the majority of the area of MPAs.⁶ In areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ), MPAs cover only 1% of the total ABNJ. Marine protection in general has been deemed to be weak, with approximately one-sixth of the combined area designated as no-take areas (i.e. fishing and other extractive activities are prohibited).^{7, 8} Some have questioned whether the trend of establishing remote large MPAs is leading to a global network that is effective, representative, connected and equitably managed. To better meet global conservation targets, all types of MPAs must be implemented, including smaller MPAs in more intensely used metropolitan sea.⁹ Some specialists feel there is currently an overreliance on MPAs as a management tool, and that it should only be considered as one of a number of mechanisms for safeguarding the marine environment.

Despite local success stories from integrated coastal and marine area management and MPAs, biodiversity in coastal areas continues to decline with intensifying pressures. Many areas that are protected are located in remote areas away from commercial activities and thus fail to protect the species, communities and habitats most threatened.¹⁰ Many MPAs are affected by illegal harvesting, regulations that legally allow detrimental harvesting, or emigration of animals outside boundaries

² See for example General Assembly resolution 70/235.

³ See A/CONF.210/2016/5.

⁴ Source: Edited extract from the Background note of the Secretary-General for the preparatory process of the Ocean Conference A/71/212.

⁵ UNDESA, 2014, How oceans- and seas-related measures contribute to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: Local and regional experiences.

⁶ Graham J. Edgar et al., "Global Conservation Outcomes Depend on Marine Protected Areas With Five Key Features," *Nature* 506, no. 7487 (2014): 216–220, doi:10.1038/nature13022.

⁷ Boonzaier, L., & Pauly, D. (2016). Marine protection targets: an updated assessment of global progress. *Oryx*, 23 50(01), 27-35

⁸ Milam, A., Kenney, S., Juffe, B., Bignoli, D., Bertzky, B., Corrigan, C., MacSharry, B., Kingston, N. (2016). Maintaining a Global Data Set on Protected Areas. *Protected Areas: Are They Safeguarding Biodiversity?*, 81- 101.

⁹ Jones, P. J. S., & De Santo, E. M. (2016). Viewpoint—Is the race for remote, very large marine protected areas (VLMPAs) taking us down the wrong track?. *Marine Policy*, 73, 231-234.

¹⁰ United Nations, 2016, First Global Integrated Marine Assessment. A/71/212

because of continuous habitat or inadequate size of reserve. Management effectiveness remains one of the largest problems facing the current MPA system such as lack of awareness, multiple jurisdictions and fragmented decision-making, conflict between different activities and users, and inadequate governance.

The socioeconomic benefits created by MPAs remain difficult to predict. Stakeholders, including local communities, are often not sufficiently involved in the development, designation and management of area-based conservation measures. Where livelihoods are affected by conservation and management measures, meaningful alternative livelihoods should be made available to local communities. Effective enforcement measures, including traditional and community-based measures, need to be in place to support conservation initiatives.¹¹

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the **challenges** faced in your community, country or region in achieving Target 14.2 & 14.5 aiming to sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems, including strengthening their resilience, to achieve healthy and productive oceans?
2. What do you see as the **priority actions** which we can all rally around in global 'Calls for Action' in achieving Target 14.2 & 14.5 to improve ecosystem-based marine and coastal management, including marine protected areas? What actions could support ocean contributions towards wider sustainable development?
3. Please share any **innovative partnerships** - existing or proposed - aimed at more effective marine and coastal policy-making, governance and management that you are aware of or involved in that could be launched at the June Ocean Conference and can advance effective actions from local to global levels.

To participate, post your response in the discussion forum here:
<http://www.oceanactionhub.org/marine-ecosystems-discussion>

¹¹ UNDESA, 2014, op.cit.