

POSITION PAPER

ON THE EFFICIENT IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 14: CONSERVE AND SUSTAINABLY USE THE OCEANS, SEAS AND MARINE RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Background

The well-being of our oceans and associated ecosystems is under severe threat. Overfishing, climate change, pollution, habitat destruction, unsustainable aquaculture and coastal exploitation are major concerns. Further, according to estimations by the “Sea Around Us” project, the world’s fish stocks have declined by 1.22 million tons (approximately 1% per year) since 1996¹. A WWF report concluded that since the 70ties, half of the populations of marine species are gone. The loss of marine biomass, bycatch and habitat loss, has also led to the reduction of sea bird biomass by 70% since the 1950s².

At the same time, nearly half of the world's population lives in coastal areas; many of which are fully dependent on healthy oceans, ecosystems and fisheries resources for their well-being.³ It is hence obvious, that in order to save human lives and well-being, environmental threats need to be addressed. In this respect, the new sustainable development agenda gives hope for a brighter future. For the first time healthy oceans and ecosystems are recognized as an important keystone for sustainable development. An effective implementation of SDG 14 will also create synergistic effects to help reaching many of the other sustainable developments goals (e.g. SDG 1, 2 and 3). SDG 5 (gender equality) is a cross-cutting goal, yet prerequisite, for achieving sustainable development of oceans, ecosystems and coastal populations.

Recommendations related to SDG 14 and specific targets

14.1. By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution

The main bulk of problematic substances are persistent to degradation and accumulate and biomagnify in the marine food web. Hence, they are usually also found in high concentration in species at the top of marine food webs, such as in whales, seals and seabirds – all of which are already under great stress. Marine litter is also increasingly an area of concern, as it is cumulating in the oceans and disturbs marine ecosystems at many levels and in various ways. The main reason for marine litter is poor domestic and industrial waste management, direct littering by individuals and other stakeholders, as well as general lack of proper planification of coastal development projects/activities taking into consideration coastal communities (see SDG 11 and 12). Waste must be reduced, through prevention (e.g. eco-design), reuse, repair and recycling. We must create an increasingly circular economy, which will enhance the fulfilment of a number of goals of Agenda 2030, but with material flows free from harmful substances. Waste and hazardous substances must be eliminated at the sources, and thereby prevented from reaching the marine environment.

To address the problem of marine pollution we urge the global community to:

- Fully implement the IMO Convention on Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and other Matter.
- In line with target 11.6, put in place municipal and other waste management systems already existing in many countries. Create extended global producer responsibility systems for deposit and recycling of

¹ <http://www.nature.com/articles/ncomms10244>

² <http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0129342>

³ <http://www.fao.org/fisheries/en/>

packaging materials. This can substantially reduce marine litter, and supports the transformation of the economy into a more circular.

- Ban microplastics in cosmetics and other products.
- Put in place a global legally binding framework on full transparency of the chemical contents of all constituent components of products, and information sharing in supply chains. Until this is in place, companies are recommended to join the voluntary UNEP Chemicals in Products Programme⁴.
- Fully implement the Stockholm and Minamata Conventions – as soon as possible to eliminate POPs and mercury use from society, and destruct and handle them according to best available practices. Also fully implement the Basel Convention – prohibit the dumping of hazardous chemicals and wastes in countries with no appropriate infrastructure to handle the chemicals/waste.

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.

Marine and coastal ecosystems produce numerous ecosystem services vital for human well-being. But one-quarter of coral reefs worldwide are already considered damaged beyond repair and bleaching events signals that climate change leading to warmer sea temperatures and extreme weather conditions has become more frequent and, if continuous, threatens their long term resilience⁵. Seagrasses are one of the most rapidly declining ecosystems on Earth with a 7% loss of their known area per year, mainly due to rapid development and pollution⁶. Since the 1950's, more than 35% of the world's mangrove forests have disappeared, largely as a result of aquaculture, coastal development and over harvesting⁷. In addition, there is a general lack of holistic management approaches that consider the whole coastal and marine area, and all stakeholders and interests (specifically women and youth) involved in resource extraction. There needs to be a common framework for Maritime Spatial Planning using the ecosystem-based approach that helps restore marine ecosystem health and function, secures the flow of ecosystem services and ensures development that is respectful of the ecosystems' carrying capacity.

To address the problem of exploitation we urge the global community to:

- Similar to the European Parliament and the European Council, and building on the methodological work carried out by UNESCO, adopt, in a transparent and participatory manner, global legislation to create a common framework for Maritime Spatial Planning using the ecosystem-based approach, that helps restore marine ecosystems to health so ecosystem services remain intact, and ensures development that is respectful of the ecosystems' carrying capacity.
- Take into consideration all ecosystems of the seascape, i.e. from coastal forests to deep sea, to account for connectivity issues and migratory species.
- Ensure scientifically accurate, accessible and transparent marine environment and social impact assessment of any proposed coastal development policy, plan or project so as to minimize the impacts on coastal ecosystems.
- Recognize and encourage the legitimate role of coastal communities to engage in local marine resource management through adoption of pro-collaborative management legislation for enhanced social-ecological resilience, particularly to climate change impacts.
- Ensure that near shore ecosystems and activities primarily done by women are included in any coastal and marine management policy and strategy.
- Take a strong precautionary approach to deep sea mining, an emerging sector which constitutes high risks for the deep sea environment, by focusing instead on efficient resource use through a circular economy and sustainable consumption and production (SDG12).

⁴ UNEP Chemicals in Products Programme (<http://web.unep.org/chemicalsandwaste/what-we-do/science-and-risk/chemicals-products-cip-programme>)

⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/mar/10/great-barrier-reef-coral-bleaching-worsens-as-scientists-fear-heatwaves-impact>

⁶ <https://www.iucn.org/content/seagrass-habitat-declining-globally>

⁷ <http://mangroveactionproject.org/mangrove-loss/>

14.3. Minimize and address the impacts of ocean acidification, including through enhanced scientific cooperation at all levels

The world's oceans and coastal ecosystems, such as seagrass meadows and mangrove forests, absorb more than 30% of the world's atmospheric carbon dioxide and are hence immensely important to reduce climate change.⁸ At the same time, marine ecosystems and species are being negatively affected by climate change. During the last 200 years pH in the ocean has been reduced by 25% and is predicted to decrease even more. This will eventually have a profound effect on all marine life. Coastal communities are already experiencing the negative effects of climate change. Rougher seas, the need for longer fishing trips due to changes in fish populations, rising sea levels are just a few of the tangible effects threatening their resilience. Thus, the need to not only mitigate climate change, but also adapt to an already changing environment, is vital.

To address the problem of ocean acidification we urge the global community to:

- Implement the Paris Agreement, to reduce the atmospheric carbon dioxide levels.
- Support a global platform to promote greater coordination and information-sharing between countries (local/national level) and regions (international level), and ensure that adaptation considerations are addressed in all relevant EU and UN policies.
- Put in place a circular economy, which will save energy as less virgin materials for products will have to be produced and manufactured. This will contribute to reducing carbon atmospheric dioxide levels.
- Enhance national understanding of the importance of seagrass meadows and mangroves as carbon sinks.
- Conserve and restore mangrove forests and seagrass meadows and take into consideration local communities' management of mangroves through enabling policies and facilities by national Governments.

14.4. By 2020, effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices and implement science-based management plans, in order to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible, at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield as determined by their biological characteristics

Large-scale, non-selective commercial fishing is one of the activities with the greatest negative impact on marine species and habitats. It kills target species and bycatch species and destructive fishing methods such as bottom trawling and dredging destroy the very foundation for thriving fish communities, the bottom habitats. Furthermore, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU) by industrial fleets of foreign origin distort competition, puts legal fishers at an unfair disadvantage, and weakens coastal communities, particularly in low income countries. Root causes of IUU fishing include a lack of effective flag State control, a lack of action by coastal states, as well as a general lack of transparency in marine fisheries.⁹ In addition, crewmembers on IUU fishing vessels are often subject to unsafe working conditions. To date, neither the Work in Fishing Convention (No 188) nor the 2014 Protocol to the Forced Labor Convention (PO 29), established to protect fish workers, have been widely ratified.

To address the problem of overfishing and IUU we urge the global community to:

- Restore global fish stocks to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield (MSY) including reducing or suspending catches of all stocks being overfished or at risk of overfishing, including by setting up transparent allocation mechanisms that favour those fishing sustainably;
- In accordance with the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation article 32, eliminate destructive fishing practices such as bottom trawling.
- Sign up to the global Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI)¹⁰ and strengthen transparency and accountability of fishing activities, including through the creation of a global public database of fishing authorizations.
- Implement effective monitoring, control, surveillance, compliance and enforcement measures in international waters.

⁸ http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/SYR_AR5_FINAL_full_wcover.pdf

⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/illegal_fishing_en

¹⁰ <http://fisheriestransparency.org/>

- Implement an effective international vessel monitoring system as a key tool in preventing and combatting IUU-fishing.
- Ratify and apply key instruments (the Work in Fishing Convention and the 2014 Protocol to the Forced Labor Convention) to combat forced labour, address poor working and living conditions related to IUU-fishing and to extend social protection.

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

Despite global efforts to increase the area of the ocean that is protected, only 4% of it lies within marine protected areas (MPAs)¹¹. The Nagoya agreement target of at least 10% protected coastal and marine areas by 2020 is thus far from achieved. Not to mention that most marine protected areas (MPA) are not well managed and protected from negative human impact. Also, in September 2016, the IUCN World Conservation Congress approved a motion that urges world leaders to protect 30% of the planet's oceans by 2030. This is what the scientific community estimate is needed to secure marine biodiversity.

To address the problem of insufficient MPAs we urge the global community to:

- Implement at least 10% well managed MPAs in national waters before 2020 and aim for 30% by 2030.
- Implement efficient tools and measures to reduce human impact within MPAs, and put in place enforcement and monitoring systems
- Where MPAs are to be established, take into consideration the relationship between the MPAs and local and/or indigenous communities, and their role in MPA management and governance processes, and socio-economic and conservation benefits/outcomes.
- Ensure that the ongoing UNGA process of identifying, deciding and implementing an effective instrument to protect areas beyond national jurisdictions is swift and successful.

14.6. By 2020, prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and refrain from introducing new such subsidies, recognizing that appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing and least developed countries should be an integral part of the World Trade Organization fisheries subsidies negotiation.

Fisheries subsidies, estimated to be in the tens of billions of dollars annually, create significant distortions in global fish markets and are a major factor contributing to overfishing and overcapacity and the depletion of fisheries resources. Following the Doha Ministerial Conference launched negotiations, the Hong Kong Ministerial Conference in 2005, and the 2017 meeting of the WTO's Negotiating Group on Rules (NGR), WTO global disciplines must be clarified and improved.

To address the problem of fisheries subsidies we urge the global community to:

- Eliminate fisheries subsidies that contribute to overfishing and overcapacity through the ongoing negotiations in the World Trade Organization (WTO).
- Ensure that trade policies on fisheries products in Economic Partnership Agreements are consistent with Multilateral Environmental Agreements like the Convention on Biological Diversity, Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

14.7. By 2030, increase the economic benefits to Small Island Developing States and least developed countries from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism.

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and least developed countries (LDCs) are afflicted by economic difficulties and confronted by development imperatives similar to those of developing countries. However, as highlighted in "The Future We Want" (final document of Rio+20 conference) SIDS also have their own vulnerabilities and characteristics related to their small size, remoteness, narrow resource and export base, and exposure to global environmental challenges and external economic shocks, including to a large range of impacts from climate change and potentially more frequent and intense natural disasters (para 178).

¹¹ <https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/S0030605315000848>

To address the special need for SIDS and LDCs we urge the global community to:

- Make voluntary contributions to the Assistance Fund in accordance with UNGA Resolution 71/123
- Facilitate access for SIDS and LDCs to the Assistance Fund in order to develop their national capacity to exploit fishery resources and value-added processing, consistent with the duty to ensure the proper conservation and management of fisheries resources.
- Set national regulatory and policy frameworks that enable business and industry to advance sustainable development initiatives, taking into account the importance of transparency, accountability and corporate social responsibility.

14.A. Increase scientific knowledge, develop research capacity and transfer marine technology, taking into account the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission Criteria and Guidelines on the Transfer of Marine Technology, in order to improve ocean health and to enhance the contribution of marine biodiversity to the development of developing countries, in particular small island developing States and least developed countries

Scientific understanding is essential to forecast, mitigate, and guide the adaptation of societies to the ways oceans affect human lives and infrastructures at different spatial and temporal scales. Despite increasing knowledge, our understanding of current processes is not keeping up with the pace of change in the oceans. There is a need to better understand ecosystem processes and functions, ecological limits and tipping points, social-ecological resilience and ecosystem services. Particularly, the effects upon biodiversity and ocean productivity from cumulative impacts as well as socioeconomic impacts are often not well understood, nor are the impacts of marine pollution. Scientific knowledge of areas beyond national jurisdiction is another area lacking sufficient knowledge. To sustainably manage our oceans a holistic understanding of various threats, and their cumulative impacts, is vital.

To address the lack of scientific knowledge we urge the global community to:

- Establish, where absent, institutional infrastructures to carry out specific activities or programmes (national, regional or global in scope and influence) related to marine science, such as oceanographic institutes.
- Integrate marine science, technology plans and strategies in existing marine policies to build the acquired human and technical capacity.

14.B. Provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets.

Approximately 90% of the nearly 1 billion people who are dependent on fisheries or aquaculture for survival are directly, or indirectly, occupied in the important but often neglected small scale fisheries sector. These small scale fishers catch at least half of the world's total catches by volume and provide over 60% of the fish destined for direct human consumption. But as these resources have declined, so has the ability to live from them. Women's livelihoods are particularly threatened. However, the importance of artisanal fishing for food security, national economies and employment is being increasingly recognized by decision-makers. The adoption, in June 2014, of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) has played a major role for this enhanced recognition. However, they are far from implemented worldwide.

To address the needs of small scale artisanal fisheries we urge the global community to:

- Urgently implement the Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Small Scale Fisheries, both in national fisheries and other relevant policies, and in EU common fisheries policy (CFP) by establishing national plans of action. Particular efforts should be directed towards improving the situation for women and youth in the SSF value chain.
- Establish national insurance schemes for small scale fishers', including women fish processors and traders, right to good health, property and markets.
- Support the adoption of a Global Strategic Framework, for the facilitation and monitoring of the SSF Guidelines implementation.
- Establish fishing zones exclusively reserved for small scale fisheries that are commensurate with sustainable artisanal fishing capacity, and protected against the incursions of industrial fisheries.

Similarly, recognize coastal land areas reserved for artisanal fishing activities, protected from encroachment by industrial developments (tourism, industrial plants, etc.).

- Consider the coherence between initiatives such as Blue Growth and sustainable fisheries. In several coastal developing countries, including Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Blue Growth strategies have already been adopted. However, there is a risk of economic sectors and interests overshadowing and pushing away SSF, thus, food security, poverty alleviation, and sustainable SSF livelihoods must be *at the centre* of any such initiative.
- Emphasize the need for further research on country and context specific issues and needs prior to subjecting into green/blue subsidies under the WTO or any other regional or bilateral arrangement.
- Review and implement WTO provisions on Special and Differential (S&D) Treatment for developing countries in order to facilitate sustainable fishery and inclusive growth of small scale fishers and primary producers.

14.C. Enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in UNCLOS, which provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources, as recalled in paragraph 158 of The Future We Want.

Each of the resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 2004, 2006, 2009 and 2011 has been progressively stronger than the last. However, to date, states and RFMOs have not fully implemented the UNGA resolutions and many of the problems identified by UN remain unsolved. Part of the reason for this is of course the very nature of the ocean – as a shared responsibility for all countries where lack of compliance with resolutions is left unpunished. Another reason is the lack of resources and power for implementation at an international level. There is no UN agency with responsibility for the whole ocean; instead responsibility is scattered into different sectors affecting the ocean (i.e. fisheries, deep sea mining and maritime transport). UNEP – the agency responsible for the marine environment neither has enough power nor sufficient resources to efficiently address marine protection.

In order to address the need for a more efficient implementation of UNCLOS we urge the global community to:

- Establish an Intergovernmental Panel on Ocean Governance – inspired by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) - in order to monitor progress in ocean health and the effect of ocean governance.
- Strengthen UNEP and its role as guardian of the sea, by giving it sufficient power to decide on measures and sufficient resources to implement, monitor and control such measures.

We undersigned organizations, believe that for a successful implementation of SDG 14, effective policy and laws must go hand in hand with science, society and sector interests. Implementation also needs to be based on partnership within and across countries and a strong civil society. We must close legal gaps, cooperate more effectively and strengthen enforcement, but also improve transparency, accountability and stakeholder participation. In short, we need better and more inclusive ocean governance at the local, national and global level, closely linked to governance of related land based activities. If we do not act today, we compromise our future! Only sound, international and inclusive ocean governance and adequate resources allocated for such governance can provide a sustainable development of our oceans and life below water.



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Environment and Social Development Organization,
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SEAS AT RISK



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*African Confederation of Artisanal Fisheries
Professional Organizations*

*Confédération Africaine des Organisations
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