

ECLAC's contribution to the report of the SG on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (September 2024-August 2025)

The following topics are related to different sections of the law of the sea:

Within the framework of the 2025 Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, ECLAC prepared the in-depth review of SDG 14. This section of the official ECLAC document provides updated indicators, analyzes progress, gaps, and proposes key recommendations for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans. This review is included in Section D of Chapter IV of the eighth ECLAC's report: [*Latin America and the Caribbean in the Final Five Years of the 2030 Agenda*](#), as well as in the booklet [*SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development*](#).

During the current period, ECLAC updated and expanded the previous regional report on Oceans 2020¹, elaborating and publishing the new [*Outlook on the Ocean, Seas and Marine Resources and its contribution to the Sustainable Development of Latin America and the Caribbean*](#)² (June, 2025), with a programmed launch during the Third UN Ocean Conference (UNOC 3). This key regional outlook presents an updated technical assessment of the regions' marine economy and recommends public policy and productive transformations to advance a sustainable, inclusive, and knowledge-based blue economy that provides income, jobs and growth opportunities for communities and productive enterprises, food security and sustainable development. It addresses key issues such as overfishing, pollution, ocean-related trade, investment in marine science, degradation of ecosystems, the role of subsidies, and progress in conservation in the context of climate change and its increasing impacts.

As part of the preparations for the third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC 3), ECLAC, together with the Embassies of Costa Rica and France in Chile, ECLAC organized the [*Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Blue Talk*](#) on May 13, 2025. This multi-stakeholder space for regional coordination aimed to share key findings and recommendations of the described Outlook 2025 and to promote a shared vision towards a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable marine economy. Also, during UNOC 3, a high-level side-event organized jointly with CAF with the aim of highlighting Latin America and the Caribbean's leadership in restoring and protecting marine biodiversity and resources and strengthening the transition to a blue economy through ocean-based initiatives. During the event, both institutions presented their respective studies on the state of the region's oceans and the transition toward a sustainable ocean economy.

In both the described regional meetings and documents produced, it is highlighted that the region encompasses three of the four fishing areas with high levels of overfishing, and that overexploitation is not solely the responsibility of Latin American and Caribbean fishing fleets. Distant-water fleets—particularly from Asia, Europe, and the United States—that operate in waters adjacent to the region's

¹ In 2020, ECLAC published the first [*Outlook on the Ocean, Seas and Marine Resources in Latin America and the Caribbean*](#), which has been widely used by governments and civil society as a baseline to support the setting of goals, the promotion of public policies and cooperation, for awareness-raising, among other purposes.

² The link will be functional as of June 12

exclusive economic zones exploit between 81% and 88.7% of marine resources, benefiting from high levels of subsidies. It is noted that studies estimate that optimal management could enable the region to increase its catches by 4,103 tonnes, with an estimated value of nearly USD 3 billion annually, and position it as the region with the highest potential for recovery in full-time employment (Teh, Teh, and Sumaila, 2024).

Voluntary responsible fishing processes are also highlighted, such as the Marine Stewardship Council and FAO's Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs), grew by more than 50% in the region between 2020 and 2024. Furthermore, 75% of the latter are being implemented by small-scale fisheries. Therefore, it was emphasized that advancing fisheries sustainability in the region will require empowering small-scale fishers, allocating exclusive resources for them, and meaningfully including them in relevant marine resource management and decision-making processes. Also, it has to be considered that artisanal fishing communities, comprising both men and women, are those who experience firsthand the impacts of ocean change, such as rising sea temperatures. Their empirical knowledge is essential for designing legitimate and effective policies.

Notably, the region's marine trade generated USD 119.318 billion in 2023, with a negative trade balance of USD 12.210 billion. Tourism, port services related to transport (primarily through the Panama Canal), and fisheries are the sectors with the largest trade surpluses.

In terms of marine conservation, regional progress has been significant, with marine protected areas now covering 23% of marine surface area (EEZs). However, progress at the national level remains highly uneven, with 64% of countries protecting less than 5% of their marine areas, the target set by SDG 14.5 for 2020. Regarding key ecosystems, the proportion of protected area varies widely: 70% of mangroves, 64% of salt marshes, 43% of tropical coral reefs, 36% of seagrasses, 16% of cold-water corals, and only 6% of kelp forests are under protection. This highlights the need to scale up protection for cold-water corals, which are also scarce, and kelp forests, while also consolidating and enhancing protection for the other ecosystems, which continue to face high levels of risk due to multiple, simultaneous pressures.

Complementarily, during 2024, ECLAC intensified its efforts to mainstream biodiversity and ocean sustainability into public policies in the region. At the COP 16 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Cali, Colombia, ECLAC prepared and launched the new report [*Biodiversity and Development: Reflections from Latin America and the Caribbean*](#)³, which incorporates both terrestrial and marine economy dimensions of sustainable development within the analytical framework of SDGs 14 and 15. During the same event, [*ECLAC launched the Digital Toolbox for Mainstreaming Biodiversity into Development Planning*](#), that brings together methodological tools and knowledge products, integrating good practice cases from the region related to marine and terrestrial resources. Also, as chair of the UN Regional Commissions, ECLAC coordinated the preparation of the joint report [*Making Peace with Nature: Regional Actions to Mainstream and Invest in Biodiversity*](#). This document brings together regional experiences and approaches to mainstream both marine and terrestrial biodiversity into public policy and was also presented at a high-level side event during COP 16. The document emphasizes six priority actions for mainstreaming and boosting investments in marine and terrestrial biodiversity across all global regions.

³ Published in Spanish, and available in English starting in early August.

Voluntary National Reviews of Agenda 2030: Since December 2024, ECLAC has provided technical assistance to Saint Lucia and Suriname in preparing their Voluntary National Reviews. This support focuses on SDG 14, facilitating consultations with stakeholders involved in implementing the 2030 Agenda and preparing the VNR report for the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

Sargassum Management in the Caribbean SIDS Region: ECLAC is preparing a study entitled "Responding to Sargassum Influxes through Integrative and Adaptive Natural Resources Management Approaches in the Caribbean SIDS Region- An Exploratory Framework". This study assesses the feasibility of Sargassum management using an Integrated and Adaptive Natural Resources Management approach. The IANRM framework is relevant due to the uncertainties associated with Sargassum blooms. The study considers United Nations General Assembly Resolution 70/75 which expresses concern about the massive influx of Sargassum in Caribbean waters. As the editor document highlights, these influxes have ecological, economic, and social impacts, making effective management a requirement for having Integrated management approaches to the management of the Sargassum influxes facing the Caribbean SIDS.

Blue Economy: ECLAC is supporting six Caribbean SIDS in a project titled "Building Back Better in Tourism Dependent Caribbean Economies Post-COVID-19". This project aims to identify the pandemic's impact on tourism and develop strategies for post-pandemic rebuilding. It focuses on policy measures to build resilience in the tourism sector and develop productive capacity in new sectors, leveraging South-South cooperation. Attention will be paid to vulnerable groups, with a focus on the specific situations of women, children, young people, older persons, persons living with disabilities, and rural communities to capitalize on entrepreneurial opportunities.