



UNIDO inputs to the Report of the Secretary-General on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, as mandated by United Nations General Assembly resolution 79/144 of 12 December 2024, entitled “Oceans and the law of the sea”

June 2025

These inputs provide an overview of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) activities. The reporting period covers September 2024 to August 2025¹.

I. SUMMARY OF CONTRIBUTION

During the reporting period, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) advanced ocean-related priorities through its global technical assistance portfolio focused on industrial sustainability, marine ecosystem resilience, and inclusive blue economy development. UNIDO's interventions spanned Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, with measurable contributions to reducing land-based marine pollution, valuing ecosystem services, strengthening ocean literacy, and supporting national blue economy transitions. Moreover, during the reporting period, UNIDO developed its new Blue Industry Framework, which puts particular emphasis on promoting low-carbon and climate resilient blue productive uses in exclusive economic zones, including in Small Island Developing States (SIDS). These efforts directly align with UNCLOS Part XII (Protection and Preservation of the Marine Environment), the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (GPA), and Sustainable Development Goal 14, particularly targets 14.1 (marine pollution), 14.2 (ecosystem management), 14.7 (sustainable blue economy), and 14.b (access for small-scale fishers).

II. DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES AND IMPACTS

1. Reducing industrial pollution in the Niger River Basin

Through the [GEF-funded TEST-Niger project](#), UNIDO promoted cleaner production in 19 pilot enterprises across nine countries in the Niger River Basin: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Nigeria².

Highlights included:

- 36% reduction in industrial pollution.
- 15,324 m³/year of wastewater prevented.
- Over USD 4.2 million in private investment mobilized for environmental upgrades.
- Harmonized pollutant discharge standards adopted across the Niger Basin Authority States.
- Strengthened transboundary monitoring systems with 164 georeferenced water quality stations.

¹ UNIDO consents to the posting of this contribution on the website of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea.

² The list of beneficiary partners is available here: <https://www.test-niger.com/en/beneficiary-partners/>

This aligns with UNCLOS Articles 207–213 on land-based sources of marine pollution and exemplifies public-private cooperation in shared water systems.

2. Economic valuation and policy tools in Sudan's Red Sea State

UNIDO conducted a marine ecosystem valuation and developed decision-making tools to inform sustainable resource use in Sudan's Red Sea State:

- USD 20 million/year in estimated potential from sustainable fisheries.
- USD 3 million/year in existing eco-tourism value, with strong potential for expansion.
- Delivery of nine policy briefs promoting integrated marine spatial planning and ecosystem-based management.

This work contributes to more informed trade-offs in coastal development and aligns with Article 192 of UNCLOS on the duty to protect and preserve the marine environment.

3. Promoting ocean literacy in conflict and coastal settings

To bridge knowledge gaps and support behavioural change, UNIDO developed a suite of ocean literacy guides tailored to different audiences in Sudan's Red Sea region:

- Industry guide for aligning business operations with marine sustainability norms.
- Introduction for displaced populations, providing ocean-related knowledge to internally displaced persons relocated from Khartoum.
- Fisherfolk guide, integrating local ecological knowledge with conservation best practices.
- Youth-focused guides for high school and university students, fostering marine science engagement.

These efforts support UNCLOS Article 202 (scientific and technical education) and promote inclusive environmental stewardship.

4. Managing surf ecosystems for biodiversity and blue economy gains

UNIDO, in partnership with Conservation International, Save The Waves Coalition, Peruvian Society for Environmental Law, and GIZ, is implementing a [GEF project](#) across Costa Rica, Panama, and Peru to demonstrate the role of surf ecosystem management in enhancing biodiversity and blue economy benefits. Key elements:

- 4 surf breaks received legal protection in Peru by end-2024.
- Development of tools and participatory governance frameworks for surf ecosystem management.
- Training of communities and local authorities to protect coastal-marine biodiversity.

The project demonstrates a practical model for ecosystem-based management that protects surf zones and strengthens coastal economies, contributing to SDG target 14.7 and the targets of the [Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework](#).

5. Supporting Somalia's blue economy transition

In collaboration with the Ministry of Fisheries and Blue Economy, UNIDO is co-implementing [Somalia's national Blue Economy Strategy](#) (2025–2027). Inception activities completed during the

reporting period include institutional setup, staff onboarding, and the first Project Steering Committee. Key pillars of the project include:

- Fisheries governance reform, including legislation to establish a national competent authority.
- Promotion of sustainable harvesting practices, food safety, and hygienic processing.
- Development of fisheries infrastructure, including cold chains and processing facilities.
- Co-development of the national Blue Economy investment plan with FAO and the World Bank.

This initiative contributes to UNCLOS implementation by enhancing Somalia's capacity to sustainably manage its exclusive economic zone and increase marine-derived economic value in line with SDG 14.b.: Provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets.

6. Shaping global marine pollution solutions through the GEF Integrated Programs

UNIDO is a key technical partner under two global GEF-8 Integrated Programs relevant to UNCLOS and SDG 14:

- Under the [Clean and Healthy Oceans Integrated Program \(CHO-IP\)](#), UNIDO contributes to the Global Coordination Project with a focus on reducing land-based industrial pollution, particularly nutrient and chemical discharges contributing to hypoxia. UNIDO is providing technical expertise to help scale private sector engagement, promote circular production systems, and integrate nature-based solutions within industrial zones.
- Under the Integrated Program on Plastics: "[Plastic Reboot](#)", UNIDO supports the transition to sustainable manufacturing and waste reduction through policy reform (including Extended Producer Responsibility), innovation in product design and recycling, and technical capacity building for small and medium enterprises in coastal regions. These efforts aim to reduce plastic leakage into the marine environment while promoting circular economy growth in partner countries.

Both programs are active during the reporting period and align with UNCLOS obligations related to marine environmental protection and land-based pollution sources.

7. Decarbonizing blue industries and renewable energy for blue productive uses

- UNIDO has continued to implement projects promoting renewable energy and electric mobility solutions for productive uses in exclusive economic zones in coastal developing countries and SIDS, such as Indonesia, the Philippines and Cabo Verde.
- Under the [Global Network of Regional Sustainable Energy Centers \(GN-SEC\)](#) program, UNIDO and SIDS DOCK have launched the [Global Ocean Energy Alliance \(GLOEA\)](#), which provides a platform to connect SIDS with the emerging ocean energy industry in the Global North, that seeks to test new solutions across diverse climates and facilitates access to blue-green financing and venture capital.

This aligns with several UNCLOS Articles, including Articles 192 to 194 on protection and preservation of the marine environment, as well as Articles 56 and 60 related to the development of the EEZs.

III. CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Work in fragile and post-conflict contexts, such as Sudan, has underscored the importance of inclusive ocean literacy as a foundation for resilience, while projects like TEST-Niger revealed that pollution reduction at scale is achievable but depends on sustained investment, policy coherence, and technical capacity. Early findings from surf ecosystem and blue economy efforts confirm the importance of local engagement, legal reform, and inter-agency coordination in achieving durable outcomes.

IV. FUTURE PLANS

Building on the results achieved during the reporting period, UNIDO plans to expand and deepen its support for sustainable ocean governance and blue economy development through targeted initiatives and partnerships.

These efforts include, among others, scaling UNIDO's impact between 2025 and 2026 in Latin America, through the Surf Ecosystem Management Project in Costa Rica and Peru by:

- Bringing 36,550.70 ha of terrestrial ecosystems under improved conservation management.
- Improving cooperative governance of 10,347 ha of shared marine and freshwater ecosystems.
- Delivering direct benefits to 804 individuals (311 women, 493 men) through training, capacity building, and technical assistance to support transitions to sustainable livelihoods.
- Engaging at least 100 individuals in virtual exchanges and knowledge-sharing platforms.

UNIDO and its partners are actively seeking additional funding to extend this work and build critical infrastructure that supports the sustainable development of coastal communities and marine ecosystems.

In addition, UNIDO is preparing the Facilitating Long-term Opportunities for Water Stewardship (FLOWS) initiative under the GEF International Waters focal area. FLOWS will address industrial wastewater pollution in strategic coastal and riverine zones, with a particular focus on nutrient-rich effluents from textile, food and beverage, and chemical industries. By scaling up the application of UNIDO's TEST methodology and circular economy approaches, FLOWS will promote the reduction of nitrogen and phosphorus discharges into freshwater and marine environments. This is expected to contribute significantly to the prevention and mitigation of hypoxia, particularly in semi-enclosed seas and eutrophication-prone coastal zones. The initiative will also support countries in adopting nature-based infrastructure solutions to enhance resilience and nutrient uptake, and will generate transferable models for nutrient management within global supply chains. FLOWS directly supports SDG target 14.1 and contributes to the broader objectives of the Clean and Healthy Oceans Integrated Program.

Across regions, UNIDO will continue to mainstream resource efficiency, circular economy approaches, promote nature-based solutions, and provide technical support to blue economy strategies.



V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing on UNIDO's technical cooperation, the following recommendations are proposed to support the effective implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and accelerating SDG 14:

1. *Scale industry-focused pollution reduction at source*
Support industries, particularly in pollution-intensive sectors, with tools and financing to minimize land-based sources of pollution.
2. *Mainstream ocean science into industrial policy and practice*
Bridge the gap between marine science and enterprise behaviour through diagnostics, benchmarking, and technical training.
3. *De-risk investment in sustainable practices*
Industry is a key partner to demonstrate ROI for sustainability-linked upgrades to attract blended finance and value chain co-investment.
4. *Strengthen regional cooperation with industry*
Support shared discharge standards, monitoring, and technical capacity in industries operating across river basins and Large Marine Ecosystems.
5. *Integrate nature-based infrastructure solutions into coastal and industrial development*
Promote green-grey infrastructure approaches that restore ecosystem services while meeting industrial and community needs.