



SOUTH ASIA CO-OPERATIVE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

Reference No. SACEP/SASP/SPO®/2026/01
24th February, 2026

Ms. Elinor Hammar skjöld
Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and United Nations Legal Counsel
Office of Legal Affairs
United Nations
New York, NY 10017

Subject: Contribution to the Secretary-General's Report on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (A/80/364)

Dear Ms. Hammar skjöld,

Thank you for your letter of 19 February 2026, inviting the contribution of the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) to the annual report of the Secretary-General on oceans and the law of the sea, to be submitted to the General Assembly at its eighty-first session pursuant to resolution 80/110.

We are pleased to provide our input on the developments and activities within the South Asian Seas (SAS) region relating to ocean affairs and the law of the sea for the reporting period from September 2025 to August 2026.

Implementation of General Assembly Resolution 80/110

In line with your request, our contribution focuses on the activities undertaken by SACEP under its South Asian Seas Programme and its Member States (Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka) to implement the specific provisions of resolution 80/110 relevant to our mandate.

- **Strengthening Regional Preparedness for Marine Pollution:** A landmark achievement in the implementation of the resolution's call for enhanced cooperation was the finalization of the updated Regional Oil and Chemical Pollution Contingency Plan for the South Asia Seas. This 2025 update, supported by international partners, significantly strengthens the region's ability to respond to Tier 3 pollution incidents. It incorporates new protocols for hazardous and noxious substances (HNS), updated command and control structures, and detailed procedures for mutual assistance, financial arrangements, and post-incident claims, directly contributing to the objectives of the OPRC Convention and addressing critical aspects of maritime safety and security as highlighted in the Secretary-General's recent report (see A/80/364, paras. 24-32 on maritime safety and security). The Plan serves as a key operational tool for regional cooperation. As part of the implementation of the regional contingency plan, a number of regional training and capacity building exercises conducted, one in Colombo, Sri Lanka in November 2024 and another in UK in March 2025 with the participation of all five member countries. These programmes have been conducted in collaboration with the Ocean Country Partnership Programme of UK.
- **Advancing Marine Biodiversity Conservation:** In support of the resolution's emphasis on protecting marine ecosystems, significant national-level initiatives are underway. Reflecting the growing recognition of the ocean-climate-biodiversity nexus (A/80/364, para 45), the Marine Mammal Consortium of India (MMCOI) is actively addressing critical data gaps on cetaceans, holding its second national workshop in January 2026 to develop a coordinated research and policy roadmap to mitigate threats like fisheries bycatch. Concurrently, the Government of Odisha launched the five-year, multi-institutional "Samudra Manthan" project to create a comprehensive marine bioresources atlas, utilizing advanced technologies like GIS and remote sensing to map biodiversity and explore marine biotechnology opportunities.
- **Promoting Sustainable Fisheries and Combating Marine Pollution:** Member States are actively pursuing projects to address pollution and promote sustainable resource management. Pakistan secured GEF funding in February 2026 for a project to accelerate the transition to sustainable and regenerative fisheries management, strengthening governance and monitoring to

(SACEP) is an inter-governmental organization, established in 1982 by the governments of South Asia to promote and support conservation and management of environment through sustainable development in the region

combat overfishing and bycatch. In India, the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board, under the World Bank-funded TN-SHORE project, is establishing discarded fishnet collection centers to tackle the critical issue of marine plastic pollution and ghost fishing, creating economic incentives for coastal communities to participate in ocean cleanup. This initiative also positively impacts the human dimension by engaging coastal communities and supporting decent work, a central theme of the 2030 Agenda (A/80/364, paras. 13-23).

- The Plastic Free Rivers and Seas for South Asia (PLEASE) Project (2020–2026), implemented by SACEP with World Bank support, represents a major regional effort to address marine plastic pollution. The initiative has made measurable progress in reducing plastic leakage and protecting marine biodiversity by recovering more than 10 million kg of plastic waste and recycling around 500,000 kg. It has also strengthened inclusive circular economy practices by supporting 5,108 informal waste workers and awarding 28 grants to pilot innovative mitigation solutions. Through these actions, the project fosters regional cooperation while advancing outcomes aligned with UNEA priorities on marine litter prevention and sustainable resource management.

Main Developments Since August 2025

In addition to our work in direct implementation of the resolution, we wish to highlight the following key developments within our organization and the region since 31 August 2025:

- **Entry into a New Phase of Regional Cooperation:** A significant development in strengthening international cooperation and coordination (A/80/364, paras. 67-72) has been the establishment and launch of a dedicated digital platform for the SAS region. While access to the **South Asian Seas Regional Oil Spill Response Centre Network (SASROSRC)** at <https://sasrosrc-network.com/> is currently restricted to authorized national focal points, its creation marks a pivotal step forward. The platform is intended to serve as a secure, real-time hub for information exchange, resource tracking, and communication during joint response operations, thereby operationalizing the updated Regional Contingency Plan and fostering deeper, more effective collaboration among SAS Member States in line with General Assembly resolution 80/110's call for enhanced cooperation and the objectives of UN-Oceans to leverage synergies and maximize resources (A/80/364, para. 68).

Web Posting and Languages

We confirm that we agree to the full text of this contribution, along with the referenced updated Regional Contingency Plan, being made available on the website of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS). We understand that this will help to overcome the strict page limits for the official report.

In response to your request regarding General Assembly resolution 78/330 on multilingualism, this contribution is provided in English. We are pleased to note that the updated Regional Oil and Chemical Pollution Contingency Plan for South Asia Seas, which is central to our regional efforts, is available in English, the working language of our regional cooperation framework.

We appreciate the Secretary-General's acknowledgement of contributions received for previous reports. We look forward to continuing our productive collaboration with the Office of Legal Affairs and DOALOS.

Please do not hesitate to contact the SACEP Secretariat, should you require any further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely,



Norbu Wangchuk
Director General