



**Report of the Secretary-General on oceans and the law of the sea, pursuant to United Nations General Assembly resolution 74/19 of 10 December 2019, entitled “Oceans and the law of the sea”**

**Contribution of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) regarding paragraphs 196(c), 198, 220, 221, 225, 238, 239, 244, 245, 262, 275, 276, 296 and 326 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 74/19**

**29 April 2020**

**1. Paragraph 196(c) of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 74/19**

*Recalls that States should be guided in the application of ecosystem approaches by a number of existing instruments, in particular the Convention, which sets out the legal framework for all activities in the oceans and seas, and its implementing Agreements, as well as other commitments, such as those contained in the Convention on Biological Diversity and the World Summit on Sustainable Development call for the application of an ecosystem approach by 2010,<sup>22</sup> and in this context encourages States to enhance their efforts towards applying such an approach;*

The Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols concluded their twenty-first meeting (COP 21) in Naples, Italy, on 5 December 2019. The meeting adopted Decision IG.24/7 on “Strategies and Action Plans under the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean, including the Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean Region (SAP BIO), the Strategy on Monk Seal, and the Action Plans concerning Marine Turtles, Cartilaginous Fishes and Marine Vegetation; Classification of Benthic Marine Habitat Types for the Mediterranean Region, and Reference List of Marine and Coastal Habitat Types in the Mediterranean”.

In this decision, the Contracting Parties requested the Secretariat to prepare in 2020-2021 the “Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region” (Post-2020 SAP BIO), aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, harmonised with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework through the optic of the Mediterranean context, and following the recommendations and roadmap proposed in the evaluation and submit it for consideration by the Contracting Parties at their 22nd Meeting (COP 22). [The preparation of the Post-2020 SAP BIO will take into consideration the importance of better understanding any potential risks of transmission of zoonotic diseases from marine species \(including highly migratory ones, such as birds and marine mammals\) to humans and their pathways, and responding to such zoonotic threats, which were highlighted by the COVID-19 crisis.](#)

The COP also adopted the Updated Strategy for the Conservation of Monk Seal in the Mediterranean, the Updated Action Plan for the Conservation of Mediterranean Marine Turtles, the Updated Action Plan for the Conservation of Cartilaginous Fishes (Chondrichthyans) in the Mediterranean Sea and the Updated Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Vegetation in the Mediterranean Sea and requested the countries to take necessary steps to implement the strategy.

COP 21 further adopted Decision IG.24/6 on the Identification and Conservation of Sites of Particular Ecological Interest in the Mediterranean, including Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance ([SPAMIs](#)). The decision strongly encourages the Contracting Parties to take significant action towards achieving in the Mediterranean Aichi Target 11, including through setting up an effective and equitable management, enhancing ecological representativeness, connectivity and integration of their marine and coastal protected areas and other

effective area-based conservation measures into the wider landscape and seascape. It also request the Secretariat to elaborate an ambitious and transformational post-2020 roadmap on marine protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures in the Mediterranean, in line with the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity and other regional and global processes, and in consultation with relevant global and regional organizations, for consideration by the Contracting Parties at COP 22. The role of marine protected areas in supporting environmental health, human well-being and socioeconomic stability will be promoted in the COVID-19 recovery phase, as part of the plan to help the Mediterranean region to build back better.

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Post COVID-19 environmental action needs to be based on strong scientific evidence. In this respect, the implementation of the UNEP/MAP Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (MAP) is crucial for the production of harmonized environmental data to assess the achievement and/or maintenance of Good Environmental Status of the Mediterranean Sea and coasts. UNEP/MAP system components, including MED POL, SPA/RAC and PAP/RAC, will continue to support Mediterranean countries in their monitoring, reporting and assessment efforts in important areas such as pollution and marine litter, biodiversity and non-indigenous species, as well as coastal zones and hydrography. In addition, new/emerging pollutants extensively used in response to COVID-19 and their pathways may need to be monitored and assessed, and in that respect, potential needs for updating the UNEP/MAP List of Priority Contaminants will be explored.

One of the lessons learned from COVID-19 is that ecosystem integrity can help regulate diseases by supporting a diversity of species so that it is more difficult for one pathogen to spill over, amplify or dominate. UNEP/MAP system will continue working on restoring the health of strained ecosystems and on halting the encroachment on the marine and coastal environment.

The Nairobi Convention and partners have developed the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) Regional Outlook on Marine Protected Areas (Outlook). The Outlook provides regional baselines on protected areas for Sustainable Development Goal 14.5 which states that by 2020, countries should conserve at least 10 percent of their coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on best available scientific information. The Outlook has been through several rounds of review and the individual chapters have been endorsed by each country. The Outlook is currently in the publication stage and will be released in the third quarter of 2020.

The Nairobi Convention has developed tools and guidelines to support the implementation of national demonstration projects including: Mangrove restoration guidelines, seagrass restoration guidelines, climate change vulnerability assessment toolkit, economic valuation guidelines, and an E-flows assessment toolkit. The guidelines and toolkits capture respective western Indian Ocean specific case studies on how the various interventions have worked and lessons learnt and will be released in the second quarter of 2020.

Scientists and government representatives met in Dalian, China, on 22–23 August 2019 at the 17th Focal Points Meeting of the Data and Information Networking Regional Activity Centre (DINRAC) and agreed to survey further the endangered species of the North West Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP) region. To understand the situation with endangered species better, to promote wider information sharing, and to directly contribute to the strengthening of the biodiversity conservation efforts in the region, participants of the Dalian meeting agreed to advance the study on endangered species in the next eight years.

## 2. Paragraph 198 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 74/19

*Acknowledges the request by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its second session, in paragraph 6 of its resolution 2/10 of 27 May 2016, to the United Nations Environment Programme to step up its work, including through its Regional Seas Programme, on assisting countries and regions in the application of the ecosystem approach to managing the marine and coastal environment, including through enabling intersectoral cooperation in integrated coastal zone management and marine spatial planning;*

UNEP with the support of the European Commission, published three reports:

- a. "The Contributions of Marine and Coastal Area-based Management Approaches to Sustainable Development Goals and Targets – Technical Report" available at: [https://www.unep-wcmc.org/system/dataset\\_file\\_fields/files/000/000/539/original/A2\\_Ocean\\_SDG\\_Technical\\_Report\\_Aug18\\_FINAL%281.2%29.pdf?1534861934](https://www.unep-wcmc.org/system/dataset_file_fields/files/000/000/539/original/A2_Ocean_SDG_Technical_Report_Aug18_FINAL%281.2%29.pdf?1534861934);
- b. "Applying Marine and Coastal Area-based Management Approaches to Achieve Multiple Sustainable Development Goal targets – Summary for Policy Makers" available at <http://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/26441>; and
- c. "Marine Spatial Planning and Integrated Coastal Zone Management Approaches to Support the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goal Targets 14.1 and 14.2 – Conceptual Guidelines" available at [https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/26440/MSP\\_ICZM\\_Guidelines.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/26440/MSP_ICZM_Guidelines.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

Through these publications, UNEP highlighted a range of area-based planning and management tools to apply ecosystem approaches. In the third publication (c) listed above UNEP presented the guidance on how to use Marine Spatial Planning and Integrated Coastal Zone Management to achieve pollution and ecosystem related objectives.

The Convention for Cooperation in the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Atlantic Coast of the West, Central and Southern Africa Region (Abidjan Convention) held its Conference of Plenipotentiaries in July 2019 and its Contracting Parties adopted four additional legally binding protocols:

- a. The Malabo Protocol on Environmental Standards and Guidelines for Offshore Oil and Gas Activities;
- b. The Pointe Noire Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management,
- c. The Grand-Bassam Protocol on Pollution from land-based sources and activities; and
- d. The Calabar Protocol on Sustainable Management of Mangroves.

The Integrated Coastal Zone Management protocol, when it comes into force will promote integrated planning and coordinated development of the coastal zone including insular belts and river basins and will seek to maintain the integrity of insular belts, coastlines, and river basins for the benefit of present and future generations. The mangroves protocol will harmonize principles and set modalities for managing mangrove ecosystems and establish rules for environmental protection and conservation of mangroves within the Abidjan Convention area. The oil and gas and Land-based Sources and Activities protocols will also play an equally important role in the implementation of SDG14 in the Abidjan Convention area.

The Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA), in partnership with Blue Solutions Initiative, has initiated a review of national and regional legal and policy frameworks relevant to marine and coastal spatial planning in the East Asian Seas region. The review, to be finalized in 2020, will identify key recommended actions on enabling conditions for wider use of marine and coastal spatial planning in marine and coastal ecosystem-based management and development in the region.

Together with Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Government of Indonesia, COBSEA co-hosted a Regional Policy Dialogue on "Harnessing the sustainable ocean economy in South East Asia". The dialogue provided an opportunity to exchange on policy challenges and solutions to promote a sustainable ocean economy in South East Asia. It brought together officials from various Indonesian ministries and agencies, national governments from Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand and Viet Nam, finance institutions, private

sector entities, not-for-profit organizations and academia. The dialogue forged new partnerships and showcased projects and initiatives that can feed into and scale up good practices in the region.

At COP21 referenced above, the contracting parties adopted decision IG.24/5: Common Regional Framework for Integrated Coastal Zone Management where they reaffirmed their commitment toward governance and policy responses based on scientific evidence, to strengthen the application of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and its role, and committed their support to:

- a) Collect scientific findings in an easily accessible form on behalf of decision-makers at any level and develop transdisciplinary research and inter-sectoral policies to address climate change through a cross-cutting approach, particularly in the water-food-energy nexus;
- b) Evaluate the environmental, economic, and social impacts of sea level rise and coastal hazards, associated with climate change in coastal areas, with a view to ensure that land use planning and infrastructure take full account of relevant climate change scenarios and uncertainties; and
- c) Boost capacity building and involvement of a range of actors – particularly the scientific community, private sector and civil society – in designing and implementing adaptation strategies, and mobilizing funding resources, *inter alia*, through subsidies' reforms and efficient green tax collection.

[Mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation and human health concerns into marine and coastal activities and sectoral planning and development in the Mediterranean can be achieved through the implementation of the ICZM Protocol and ecosystem-based Marine Spatial Planning \(MSP\). The COVID-19 recovery should be used as an opportunity to set up and promote such new development paradigms and models.](#)

On 27 March 2019, the Contracting Parties to the Nairobi Convention agreed on the final text for the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) Protocol. States had started discussing the protocol in 2012, and the meeting in Dar es Salaam marked the fourth round of negotiations on the text. The protocol includes the ICZM objectives of promoting the sustainable use of resources, conserving the integrity and value of ecosystems, and preventing and mitigating the effects of natural and human threats to coastal and marine environments in the WIO. The protocol provides a framework to promote regional and national ICZM and enhance cooperation for sustainable development in the region. The protocol will now move to the Convention's Conference of Plenipotentiaries for formal adoption prior to the next CoP in April/May 2021.

### **3. Paragraph 220 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 74/19**

*Welcomes the request by the United Nations Environment Assembly, in paragraph 2 of its resolution 4/6, to the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, subject to the availability of resources and benefiting from the work of existing mechanisms, to immediately strengthen scientific and technological knowledge with regard to marine litter, including marine plastic litter and microplastics;*

In November 2019, UNEP and COBSEA hosted the first annual SEA of Solutions partnership week on marine plastic pollution prevention. The event was organized as part of the regional marine litter project 'SEA circular', implemented by UNEP and COBSEA with support from the Government of Sweden over a timeframe of four years (August 2018- February 2023). SEA of Solutions brought together over 500 participants from governments, businesses, science, UN agencies and community groups from more than 40 countries to share solutions for plastic pollution. Pledges were made, knowledge shared, and new partnerships forged during the event.

In 2020, the regional marine litter project SEA circular continues to engage national and local governments, plastic producers and businesses, research institutes and academia, and civil society to promote inclusive market-based solutions, policies and regulations to prevent plastic pollution. Under this project, the COBSEA Secretariat is working with national governments to strengthen and harmonize national marine litter monitoring programmes, conduct hotspot assessments in pilot countries, develop marine litter planning in line with the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP MALI) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Framework of Action on Marine Debris, and improve the science-policy interface for evidence-based action.

NOWPAP member states – The People's Republic of China, Japan, The Republic of Korea, and the Russian Federation developed a roadmap for developing a Regional Action Plan on Marine and Coastal Biodiversity Conservation scheduled to be launched after 2021. Policy makers and experts from the region discussed how to improve existing waste management approaches to address marine litter at the source in September 2019. NOWPAP experts brainstormed on future directions of the regional cooperation on addressing oil, Hazardous and Noxious Substances (HNS), and marine pollution in August 2019. Experts of the Data and Information Networking Regional Activity Centre (DINRAC) agreed to survey further the endangered species of the NOWPAP region. Scientists from China, Korea, Japan, and Russia reviewed the effectiveness of the NOWPAP Eutrophication Assessment Tool (NEAT) for protecting the region from eutrophication.

To further develop this tool, NOWPAP cooperates with the global online search service Google and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency to test NEAT for monitoring of eutrophication in oceans around the world, using cloud technologies. NOWPAP published a Regional synthesis report "Development of NOWPAP Ecological Quality Objective Targets Aligned with Sustainable Development Goals Indicators, phase 1" in January 2020, and the Report of National Actions on Marine Microplastics in the NOWPAP Region in April 2020.

The NOWPAP Secretariat organized the International Coastal Cleanup Campaign in Dalian, China, on 25 September 2019. More than 150 people joined this event and collected 76 kilograms of litter. Policymakers and experts from the NOWPAP gathered in Dalian, China, on 24-25 September 2019 to discuss how to improve existing waste management approaches to address marine litter at the source. The theme of the meeting was selected as "The Improvement of Waste Management to Reduce Marine Litter in the Oceans." The meeting presented an excellent opportunity for the participants to share their experience and best practices, as well as practical measures to overcome marine litter related challenges.

At COP21 referenced above, the contracting parties decided to scale-up their efforts to address the issue of marine litter by empowering the regulatory framework for reducing single-use plastic products, setting ambitious quantitative targets, and incorporating reduction measures including on microplastics in our national marine litter agenda, and to undertake the following actions:

- a) Promoting prevention measures and circular approaches also to open green economy opportunities; supporting long-term viable recycling targets; adopting national plans to progressively achieve 100% plastic waste collection and recycling by 2025; and addressing the private sector to minimize plastic packaging;
- b) Making the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme-based marine litter monitoring in the Mediterranean fully operational, providing an assessment of the impacts of marine litter in the Mediterranean Sea and coastal areas;
- c) Further enhancing the coordinated actions of stakeholders, through the Regional Cooperation Platform on Marine Litter; and

d) Launching awareness raising campaigns on the impacts of litter, and in particular plastic litter and microplastics, on the marine environment.

Issues related to marine litter management that were brought up or exacerbated due to the COVID-19 crisis, including the increased use of single-use plastic items as preventive measures and the management and disposal of contaminated household/ medical waste need to be further monitored and assessed in the framework of IMAP. These issues are also to be taken into account in the implementation and planned revision of the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean.

Under the Western Indian Ocean Large Marine Ecosystems Strategic Action Programme Policy Harmonisation and Institutional Reforms' (WIO LME SAPPHIRE) project implemented by UNDP, the Nairobi Convention held four partnership meetings on oceanographic data and scientific research in the WIO region by end of December 2019. The sessions brought together scientists, policy makers, and partners to discuss the status of national data centres; identify priorities of countries in using, managing and owning data findings; and agree on mechanisms and partnerships to improve data collection, sharing, and archiving, among others. The data will support the updating of the National Marine Ecosystem Diagnostic Analyses for each country and be used in updating project Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDAs) and ultimately allow a single combined Strategic Action Programme to be produced to guide coastal and marine governance in the western Indian Ocean region into the future, as requested by the Contracting Parties.

The first meeting of the Western Indian Ocean Marine Litter Technical Working Group held on 13 - 14 June 2019 in Cape Town, South Africa, constituted its terms of reference as a forum for sharing and exchange of information; provide policy guidance and advice to the Nairobi Convention and other regional frameworks; and produce peer-reviewed publications and other products on marine litter. At the meeting, the Group approved its leadership, identified ongoing initiatives, and drafted a three-year workplan. The regional action plan on Marine Litter was validated earlier in November 2018. The first major activity that the Technical Working Group will undertake is a regional stocktaking of the policy and institutional frameworks supporting efforts to address marine litter issues in the western Indian Ocean. Discussions are also underway with UNEP to establish the Nairobi Convention as a Regional Hub as part of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA) network.

#### **4. Paragraph 221 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 74/19**

*Acknowledges the decision of the United Nations Environment Assembly, in paragraph 7 of its resolution 4/6, to extend the mandate of the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics, and its request to the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to report to the United Nations Environment Assembly at its fifth session on the progress achieved in the implementation of that resolution;*

COBSEA co-hosted and provided input to the third meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-Ended Expert Group on Marine litter and Microplastics, held in Bangkok, Thailand in November 2019.

#### **5. Paragraph 225 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 74/19**

*Notes the activities carried out by organizations at the regional level to develop and implement regional action plans and other joint prevention and recovery programmes for marine debris, and further notes in this regard, the revised Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter adopted at the twenty-fourth Intergovernmental Meeting of the*

*Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia, held in Bali, Indonesia, on 19 and 20 June 2019, which comprises actions to prevent and reduce marine litter from land-based sources as well as sea-based sources, monitoring and assessment of marine litter, and activities supporting implementation, the twenty-third Intergovernmental Meeting of the Northwest Pacific Action Plan, held in Moscow from 9 to 11 October 2018, and the Bangkok Declaration on Combating Marine Debris in the ASEAN Region, adopted at the thirty-fourth Summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, held in Bangkok on 22 June 2019, to enhance efforts in addressing the issue of marine debris;*

The twenty-fourth Intergovernmental Meeting of the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia, held in June 2019, encouraged Indonesia to further develop the Regional Capacity Center for Clean Seas (RC3S) founded in Bali in 2019 toward establishing it as a COBSEA Regional Activity Centre at IGM 25 in 2021. The RC3S is working with COBSEA to provide capacity building activities on marine litter toward achievement of COBSEA's Regional Action Plan for Marine Litter (RAP MALI), adopted in June 2019.

By request of the twenty-fourth Intergovernmental Meeting of the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia, the COBSEA Secretariat in collaboration with the Working Group on Marine Litter and regional partners, is developing an East Asian Seas Regional Node of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GMPL) for consideration at twenty-fifth Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM 25), to provide knowledge management and networking services on marine litter policy, science and capacity building toward delivery of the RAP MALI.

In line with the COBSEA Strategic Directions 2018-2022 and in cooperation with the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA), a discussion has been initiated on strengthening efforts to address land-based sources of marine pollution with a focus on nutrients, *inter alia* building on UNEP Global Environment Facility projects.

COBSEA, the Global Partnership on Marine Litter, the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA) and the Government of Indonesia held a Training of Trainers on Monitoring and Assessment of Marine Plastic Litter and Microplastics to build government capacity for improved national monitoring and assessment programmes. As a follow-up, a National Source Inventory Workshop for COBSEA countries was organized by COBSEA, GPA and Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GMPL) in late 2019. The workshop presented and promoted a national source inventory approach in national marine litter planning and monitoring.

COBSEA has fully delivered on COBSEA's Voluntary Commitment made at the UN Ocean Conference in 2017 (#OceanAction15986). Following the full delivery on COBSEA's Voluntary Commitment made at the UN Ocean Conference in 2017 (#OceanAction15986), the COBSEA Secretariat drafted two new Voluntary Commitments for country consultation. The Commitments will be registered at the 2020 UN Ocean Conference, in line with discussion held during a regional workshop in December 2019.

#### **6. Paragraph 238 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 74/19**

*Notes with concern the potential for serious environmental consequences resulting from oil spill incidents or pollution incidents involving hazardous or noxious substances, urges States, consistent with international law, to cooperate, directly or through competent international organizations, and share best practices, in the fields of protection of the marine environment, human health and safety, prevention, emergency response and mitigation, and in this regard encourages the undertaking of and collaboration on scientific research, including marine scientific research, to better understand the consequences of marine oil spills or marine spills involving hazardous or noxious substances;*

COP21 referenced above adopted Decision IG.24/8: Road Map for a Proposal for the Possible Designation of the Mediterranean Sea, as a whole, as an Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides Pursuant to MARPOL Annex VI, within the Framework of the Barcelona Convention. In this decision the parties adopted the road map for a proposal for the possible designation of the Mediterranean Sea, as a whole, as an emission control area for sulphur oxides pursuant to MARPOL Annex VI, within the framework of the Barcelona Convention, set out in the Annex to the present Decision and with the view of formally submitting the proposal to the 78th Session of the IMO's Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC78) scheduled for 2022. The Parties further agreed to finalize, based on the outcome of the further studies and the preparatory work, the development of a mutually agreed joint and coordinated proposal for the possible designation by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) of the Mediterranean Sea, as a whole, as an Emission Control Area for sulphur oxides pursuant to MARPOL Annex VI and requested the Secretariat to provide the necessary technical and financial support to Contracting Parties and to address any needs identified with the studies before the designation of the proposed Mediterranean Emission Control Area (Med SOx ECA). ~~COVID-19 has reinforced the fact that air pollution has a detrimental impact on human health. In a post-COVID-19 world, the possible designation of the Med SOx ECA can help the shipping sector in the Mediterranean to become safer and more sustainable. The establishment of the Med SOx ECA would reduce morbidity linked with air pollution: REMPEC estimates that it would prevent 1,000 premature deaths and more than 2,000 cases of childhood asthma.~~

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In August 2019, NOWPAP experts gathered in Seoul, Korea, to brainstorm on future directions of the regional cooperation on addressing oil, Hazardous and Noxious Substances (HNS), and marine pollution. The participants highlighted the new opportunities for the Marine Environmental Emergency Preparedness and Response Regional Activity Centre (MERRAC) to address emerging global issues and strengthening further the partnership with the IMO. It was recognized that a stronger link with the SDGs needs to be established.

#### 7. Paragraph 239 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 74/19

*Encourages States, in accordance with international law, including the Convention and other relevant instruments, either bilaterally or regionally, to jointly develop and promote contingency plans for responding to pollution incidents, as well as other incidents that are likely to have significant adverse effects on the marine environment and biodiversity;*

At COP21 referenced above, the contracting parties adopted Decision IG.24/9 Mediterranean Offshore Guidelines and Standards: (a) Common Standards and Guidance on the Disposal of Oil and Oily Mixtures and the Use and Disposal of Drilling Fluids and Cuttings; (b) Common Standards and Guidelines for Special Restrictions or Conditions for Specially Protected Areas (SPA) within the Framework of the Mediterranean Offshore Action Plan. In this decision, the contracting parties agreed to make every effort for the effective implementation of the Common Standards and Guidance on the Disposal of Oil and Oily Mixtures and the Use and Disposal of Drilling Fluids and Cuttings, taking into account the best available, environmentally effective and economically appropriate techniques and the internationally accepted standards, regarding the use, storage and discharge of harmful or noxious substances and materials.

The decision also requested the contracting parties to make every effort for the effective implementation of the Common Standards and Guidelines for Special Restrictions or Conditions for Specially Protected Areas (SPAs) within the Framework of the Mediterranean Offshore Action Plan, bearing in mind that all appropriate measures shall be taken to prevent, abate, combat and control pollution resulting from offshore activities and if necessary, to prohibit offshore activities in Specially Protected Areas (SPAs).

The contracting parties to the Abidjan Convention also recently adopted an additional protocol “the Malabo Protocol on Environmental Standards and Guidelines for Offshore Oil and Gas Activities”. Once the protocol comes into force, it will provide a regional framework for offshore oil and gas in the West, Central and Southern African region.

**8. Paragraph 244 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 74/19**

*Expresses its concern regarding the spreading of hypoxic dead zones and harmful algal blooms in oceans as a result of eutrophication fueled by riverine run-off of fertilizers, sewage outfall and reactive nitrogen resulting from the burning of fossil fuels and resulting in serious consequences for ecosystem functioning, and calls upon States to enhance their efforts to reduce eutrophication, particularly by reducing total nutrient pollution from land-based sources and, to this effect, to continue to cooperate within the framework of relevant international organizations, in particular the Global Programme of Action and the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management and Global Wastewater Initiative, including through capacity-building initiatives and efforts to monitor, via the Global Ocean Observing System, stressors such as harmful algal blooms, areas of hypoxia, sargassum seaweed invasions and jellyfish blooms, to assess their possible linkage to eutrophication and their potential adverse impacts on the marine environment as well as on human health;*

In efforts to raise awareness on excessive nutrient pollution causing the spread of hypoxic dead zones and harmful algal blooms in oceans, UNEP through the Global Programme of Action launched the UN Global Campaign on Nitrogen Management (Campaign) which took place from 23 to 24 October 2019 in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

The Campaign marked a landmark moment towards the implementation of United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) Resolution 4/14 on Sustainable Nitrogen Management, which calls on UNEP to, inter alia, facilitate “with relevant United Nations bodies...widespread understanding and awareness of nitrogen cycling and opportunities for action”. A copy of the resolution is available at [https://papersmart.un.org/resolution/uploads/res.I.14\\_sustainable\\_nitrogen\\_management\\_resolution.pdf](https://papersmart.un.org/resolution/uploads/res.I.14_sustainable_nitrogen_management_resolution.pdf).

Alteration of the global nitrogen cycle is one of the greatest development challenges facing humanity. Based on current diets humans have more than doubled annual terrestrial cycling of reactive nitrogen compounds, with nitrogen and phosphorus-based fertilizers permitting almost half of humanity to be fed.

Further, a Working Group on Sustainable Nitrogen Management (Working Group) has been established to oversee the implementation of the above UNEA resolution. This Working Group will focus on improving the coordination of policies across the Nitrogen Cycle at national, regional and global levels, including an ambition to “Halve Nitrogen Waste” from all sources globally by 2030, as articulated in the “Colombo Declaration on Sustainable Nitrogen Management” made by UN member states in Colombo on 24 October 2019. More information is available at <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/press-release/colombo-declaration-calls-tackling-global-nitrogen-challenge>.

Marine scientists from NOWPAP countries met in Vladivostok, Russia, at NOWPAP's Pollution Monitoring Regional Activity Center (POMRAC) in March 2019 to discuss ways of assessing the health of the seas shared by the four countries to support regional progress towards ocean-related SDGs. The meeting discussed the six most applicable indicators related to the monitoring of marine ecological quality in the region and agreed on the targets for four of them, aligned with Sustainable Development Goals. As a follow-up, a Regional synthesis report, “Development of NOWPAP Ecological Quality Objective Targets Aligned with SDG Indicators, Phase 1”, was published in January 2020.

**9. Paragraph 245 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 74/19**

*Encourages States that have not yet done so to take, as soon as possible, the domestic measures necessary to enable them to meet their obligations upon ratification and, thereafter, to ratify, accept, approve or accede to the Minamata Convention on Mercury;*

The Minamata Convention currently has 119 Parties, of which five ratified the convention since September 2019. Please find a full list of Parties at <http://www.mercuryconvention.org/Countries/Parties/tabid/3428/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

The third Conference of the Parties (COP3) agreed in November 2019 issues including the adoption of guidance on the management of contaminated sites (COP3 document on contaminated sites UNEP/MC/COP.3/8 is available at <http://www.mercuryconvention.org/Meetings/COP3/tabid/7854/language/en-US/Default.aspx>), the definition of certain mercury wastes, and plans for intersessional work. COP3 encouraged Parties to take the guidance into account in identifying, assessing, managing, and, as appropriate, remediating sites contaminated by mercury or mercury compounds.

**10. Paragraph 262 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 74/19**

*Calls upon States and international organizations to urgently take further action to address, in accordance with international law, destructive practices that have adverse impacts on marine biodiversity and ecosystems, including seamounts, hydrothermal vents and cold water corals;*

The Nairobi Convention showcased the results, related initiatives and key challenges of the project on Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) Deep Seas at the 2019 Deep Sea Conference held in Rome, Italy on 9 May 2019. Stakeholders representing multiple sectors synthesized the opportunities and challenges faced and discussed support to sustainable deep-sea fisheries management and biodiversity conservation in ABNJs.

The joint workshop on improved ocean planning and governance for ABNJs in the South East Atlantic and Western Indian Ocean was held on 11 - 12 June 2019 in Cape Town, South Africa. The workshop brought together stakeholders within the western Indian Ocean and South East Atlantic Ocean regions to discuss the current status and challenges of global and regional ocean governance, foster exchange and build new networks.

**11. Paragraph 275 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 74/19**

*Emphasizes the need to mainstream sustainable coral reef management and integrated watershed management into national development strategies, as well as into the activities of relevant United Nations agencies and programmes, international financial institutions and the donor community;*

UNEP continues to collaborate with member states and partners, especially the International Coral Reef Initiative, to deliver on UNEA Resolution 4/13 on Sustainable Coral Reefs Management. To this end, UNEP in collaboration with the Regional Seas Programmes has provided both technical and financial support to the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network in the development of a global report on the status of coral reefs, which will be published in 2020. This is the first global report on the status of coral reefs by the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network since 2008. UNEP, as requested by UNEA Resolution 4/13, is furthermore collaborating with academic and governmental partners to develop best practice guidelines for coral restoration to be published in 2020 and to inform the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration. UNEP continues to build on the success of the 2018 International Year of the Reef to further promote public awareness of the values of and threats to coral reefs through a global communications campaign in partnership with leaders in the creative industry.

UNEP also continues to engage with member states on an analysis of policies related to the protection of coral reefs submitted to UNEA-4 as an information document UNEP/EA.4/INF.6 outlining options for the international community to strengthen international environmental policies related to coral reefs. Furthermore, UNEP is collaborating with the UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund, the UNDP, the UNCDF, Vulcan Inc and the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation in the development of a global fund for coral reefs.

**12. Paragraph 276 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 74/19**

*Reiterates its support for the International Coral Reef Initiative, notes that the thirty-fourth International Coral Reef Initiative General Meeting was held in Townsville, Australia, from 2 to 7 December 2019, and supports the*

*elaborated programme of work of the Convention on Biological Diversity on marine and coastal biological diversity related to coral reefs under the Jakarta Mandate on Marine and Coastal Biological Diversity;*

UNEP played a key role in the 34<sup>th</sup> International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) General Meeting (<https://www.icriforum.org/ICRIGM34>) with notable outcomes. These include the adoption of resolutions to update the 2005 ICRI resolution on artificial coral reef restoration and rehabilitation, to extend the ICRI ad hoc committee on coral reef restoration and adaptation research and development, to include a coral reef-related target in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, to address the decline of herbivorous fish populations for improved coral community health throughout the Tropical Eastern Pacific, the Eastern and Western Atlantic, and the Greater Caribbean Region and to support the global fund for coral reefs. UNEP forms part of the ad hoc committee on coral reef restoration and the ad hoc committee on resilience-based management of coral reefs and is providing technical and financial support to these processes. UNEP also provided technical input to text submitted by ICRI to the CBD on the inclusion of a coral reef-related target in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

COBSEA supported the organization of a Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) global data workshop held in Bangkok, Thailand, February 2020, towards preparation of the GCRMN Status of the Coral Reefs of the World report to be launched 2020. COBSEA has initiated a geospatial analysis of coral reef conservation priorities in a regional marine protected area network, to be finalized in 2020. Together with Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network, planning is underway for regional coral reef workshops towards strengthening the science-policy interface. The overall aim of the activities is to support efforts to protect coral reefs as a blue economy asset and strengthen their resilience in the face of climate change.

**13. Paragraph 296 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 74/19**

*Stresses the importance of increasing the scientific understanding of the oceans-atmosphere interface, including through participation in ocean observing programmes and geographic information systems, such as the Global Ocean Observing System, sponsored by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, the United Nations Environment Programme, the World Meteorological Organization and the International Science Council, particularly considering their role in monitoring and forecasting climate change and variability, in supporting Earth system prediction and in the establishment and operation of tsunami warning systems;*

UNEP is in preliminary discussions for a partnership at the science policy interface between Ocean Observations and implementation at scale of blue economy and other solutions. A co-design of a Global Environmental Monitoring System will convene ocean monitoring and sustainability dialogues with partners in and outside the UN system to raise awareness and foster solutions. UNEP is already engaged in the monitoring of freshwater (GEMS water) and air quality (GEMS air). Additional monitoring of oceans (GEMS oceans) will facilitate links between the Sustainable Development Goals 3, 6, and 14.

**14. Paragraph 326 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 74/19**

*Recalls its invitation to the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme, the International Maritime Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Meteorological Organization and relevant United Nations system organizations, bodies, funds and programmes, as appropriate, to assist in the implementation of the second cycle of the Regular Process with regard to the following activities: awareness-raising, the identification of experts for the Pool of Experts, technical and scientific support for the Bureau and the Group of Experts, hosting meetings of the writing teams and capacity-building, and also recalls its invitation to relevant intergovernmental organizations to contribute, as appropriate, to the activities of the second cycle;*

UNEP continues to support the implementation of the second cycle of the Regular Process through the provision of technical and scientific expertise. Additional experts have been nominated to the Pool of Experts for the Regular Process in response to a request from the United Nations Secretariat for more diverse expertise through the Regional Seas Programme.

