

**Contribution from the International Maritime Organization (IMO)  
to the Secretary-General report on the importance of protecting coral reefs  
for sustainable livelihoods and development**

### **Dumping at sea**

The Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter, 1972 (the "London Convention" - LC) was one of the first global conventions to protect the marine environment from human activities and has been in force since 1975. Its objective is to promote the effective control of all sources of marine pollution and to take all practicable steps to prevent pollution of the sea by dumping of wastes. Currently, 87 States are Parties to this Convention.

In 1996, the "London Protocol" (LP) was adopted to modernize the Convention and, eventually, replace it. The London Protocol entered into force in March 2006 and currently has 40 Parties. Under the Protocol all dumping is prohibited, but Parties may issue permits to allow the dumping of the following specified materials, subject to certain conditions: dredged material; sewage sludge; fish wastes; vessels and platforms; inert, inorganic geological material (e.g., mining wastes); organic material of natural origin; bulky items primarily comprising iron, steel and concrete; and carbon dioxide streams from carbon dioxide capture processes for sequestration (CCS).

As regards dumping at sea (including dredging, construction and dump-site selection (near coral reefs)), article 4 of the London Protocol states that permits, given for dumping at sea, must comply with the provisions set out in annex 2 – Assessments of wastes or other matter that may be considered for dumping. While the annex does not explicitly mention coral reefs, there are various elements of the provisions that stress that particular attention should be given to sensitive areas and habitats, in the assessment of potential effects, and that the utmost care must be undertaken to minimize (physical) impacts during all associated activities, including dump-site selection and dumping at sea.

These mandatory provisions have also been set out in more detail under the Generic Waste Assessment Guidance and the Specific Waste Assessment Guidelines (SWAGs) (there are eight SWAGs). Further details about these Guidelines can be found at: <http://www.imo.org/OurWork/Environment/SpecialProgrammesAndInitiatives/Pages/London-Convention-and-Protocol.aspx>

### **Artificial Reefs**

In 2009, LC/LP published jointly with UNEP "Guidelines for the Placement of Artificial Reefs".

In this context "Artificial Reefs" are defined as submerged structures deliberately constructed or placed on the seabed to emulate some functions of a natural reef such as protecting, regenerating, concentrating, and/or enhancing populations of living marine resources.

Objectives of an artificial reef may also include the protection, restoration and regeneration of aquatic habitats, and the promotion of research, recreational opportunities, and educational use of the area. The term does not include submerged structures deliberately placed to perform engineering functions.

Artificial reefs have, *inter alia*, been extensively used to protect and rehabilitate coral reefs. However, the escalating use of artificial reefs in coastal areas, combined with the possibility that they may have negative consequences has given rise to the need for some form of global guidance with regard to their construction, deployment and ongoing management.

LC/LP Contracting Parties and UNEP have been particularly concerned that the inappropriate placement of such reefs could be used to legitimize the dumping of waste or other materials which would normally be prohibited under these treaties.

Hence, one of the primary objectives of these Guidelines is to ensure that the development of artificial reefs is consistent with the aims and provisions of the London Convention and its Protocol, and is carried out in harmony with the basic principles of the ecosystem approach to the management of the marine environment

([http://www5.imo.org/SharePoint/blastDataHelper.asp/data\\_id%3D25688/London\\_convention\\_UNEP\\_Low-res-ArtificialReefs.pdf](http://www5.imo.org/SharePoint/blastDataHelper.asp/data_id%3D25688/London_convention_UNEP_Low-res-ArtificialReefs.pdf)).

Further information about the London Convention and Protocol can be found at:  
[www.londonprotocol.imo.org](http://www.londonprotocol.imo.org)

### **Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas**

A Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) is an area that needs special protection through action by IMO because of its significance for recognized ecological or socio-economic or scientific reasons and which may be vulnerable to damage by international maritime activities.

For an area to be designated as a PSSA, three elements must be present:

- 1) The area must have certain attributes (ecological, socio-economic, or scientific);
- 2) It must be vulnerable to damage by international shipping activities; and
- 3) There must be a measure (or associated protective measure) with an identified legal basis that can be adopted by IMO to prevent, reduce, or eliminate risks from these activities.

Any new proposals must be submitted to IMO's Marine Environment Protection Committee. If approved by IMO, the end result is an area designated as a PSSA and one or more IMO adopted measures for ships to follow. Such areas may include the territorial sea of States, and sea areas beyond national jurisdiction.

It is important to recall that IMO is the only international body responsible for assessing proposals and designating sea areas as PSSAs and adopting measures applicable to international shipping.

Since 1990, IMO has designated 13 PSSAs, eight of which are designed to protect coral reefs from the threat of impacts from international shipping.

More information about PSSAs and a full list of areas designated thus far can be found at:  
<http://www.imo.org/OurWork/Environment/PollutionPrevention/PSSAs/Pages/Default.aspx>