

UN-Habitat contribution to the background note of the “High-Level 2020 United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”

Lisbon, Portugal, 2-6 June 2020

UN-Habitat would like to convey the important message to the conference that cities are at the forefront of much of the human activities that have a direct impact on the health of the marine resources, oceans and seas. Thus, cities and human settlements play a key role in steering the leadership of sustainably managing marine resources, also through platforms such as the upcoming “High-Level 2020 United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14” in Lisbon, Portugal.

Therefore, UN-Habitat would be pleased to co-organize an interactive dialogue with stakeholders (government, academia, NGO, international organisations, civil society, marginalised groups) that focuses on “*Cities and the Blue Economy*”. The added values of this topic to the Conference are manifold:

- **Harnessing the potential of cities to benefit from the Blue Economy is key for balanced economic and ecological development.** Many transformations that have a positive impact on the marine environment can happen in cities, such as sustainable livelihoods, green and blue job creation, sustainable housing and infrastructure, waste management, ecological protection and restoration of coastal and waterfront areas
- **Integrating urban planning and marine spatial planning must be a priority for Blue Economy.** Bringing together spatial planning and integrated coastal zone management through the development of integrated coastal and marine spatial plans are important steps to guide national government policy-makers, local government officials, marine protection experts and other civic stakeholders
- **Anticipating, mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change is an essential component of the Blue Economy.** National and local investments in infrastructure, community resilience and environmental protection must be complemented by shared global and regional principles, strategies and priorities. Improving countries’ and cities’ readiness to access international climate funds will become crucial in developing a Blue Economy
- **Resilient urban planning and design, and low-carbon plans for infrastructure and basic services are needed** to promote local economic development and to protect cities from further contributing to environmental degradation – paying special attention to water management, wastewater, oceans and marine pollution.
- **Restoring and protecting coastal and other water ecosystems will be crucial** for both cities – in terms of strengthening their resilience to climate-induced shocks – and oceans. Often, the most vulnerable and poorest populations that live in informal settlements are least prepared, will be most deeply affected, and take longest to recover

- **Investments in data, science and cutting-edge technology will be critical** in supporting governance prioritization, reforms and shaping management decisions to achieve sustainable ‘blue’ transformations in and around cities
- **More scientific research is needed** to draw the linkages between cities and the Blue Economy, in terms of cities as hotspots of vulnerability, as well as drivers of sustainable development.

Through this dialogue, UN-Habitat wishes to attract donors, as well as national and local governments that are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, which are required to rethink their approaches to land-based and sea-based planning, such as coastal countries, coastal cities and small island states. UN-Habitat’s expertise in this area is rich, with active and planned programs in Kenya (Blue Economy in coastal cities and counties), Mozambique (safer schools, living with water), São Tomé and Príncipe (resettlement), Fiji and Solomon Islands (increasing resilience to climate change impacts), and Southeast Asia (planning for resilient coastal cities in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand), to mention a few.

UN-Habitat remains open to additional suggestions to contribute to the Conference and will be pleased to take a leading role in shedding light on the important topic of **ocean and marine health and coastal urbanization** during the Conference.