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Global Ocean Forum

*Through its Secretariat, the International Coastal and Ocean
Organization accredited to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development since 1993*

INPUT TO RIO+20 COMPILATION DOCUMENT

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For an in-depth analysis of ocean and coastal issues in the context of Rio+20 and detailed recommendations for each issue-area, please see our report, *Oceans at Rio+20: How Well Are We Doing in Meeting the Commitments from the 1992 Earth Summit and the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development?--Summary for Decision Makers* at <http://www.globaloceans.org/sites/udel.edu.globaloceans/files/Rio20SummaryReport.pdf>

INTRODUCTION

The Global Ocean Forum calls on all of the world's governments participating in the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) to seize the opportunity to achieve a significant ocean outcome at Rio de Janeiro on June 4-6, 2012. The new vision embodied in the 1992 Earth Summit (UN Conference on Environment and Development) represented a major paradigm shift that changed the world and many of us around the world. Twenty years later, we must take advantage of Rio+20 to assess what we have achieved (and not achieved) and to craft the way to a new future: A future where we can all live and prosper in a low-carbon global economy in health and harmony with nature. There must be sustained political attention on the importance of oceans and coasts in achieving sustainable development goals.

Oceans are the quintessential sustainable development issue, essential to all three pillars of sustainable development—economic development, social development, and environmental protection. Oceans perform vital life-sustaining functions for the planet—oceans generate half of the oxygen on Earth, are a vital source of sustenance and livelihood, absorb carbon dioxide, and regulate climate and temperature. Marine and coastal biodiversity provides many valuable services and products to people, including climate regulation, cancer-curing medicines, genetic resources, nutrient cycling, carbon storage, cultural value, and sustainable livelihoods, among others. Healthy oceans are inextricably linked to the long-term management, development, and well-being of coastal populations. Just as one cannot do without a healthy heart, the world cannot do without a healthy ocean.

The International Coastal and Ocean Organization (ICO), an NGO accredited to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development since 1993, is dedicated to advancing the global agenda on oceans, coasts, and small island developing States through policy analyses, multistakeholder dialogues, and public education and outreach. ICO serves as the Secretariat of the Global Ocean Forum.

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However, the impacts of a number of key drivers, including overfishing, pollution, population rise, and climate change are compromising the ability of the oceans to continue providing essential resources and critically important services. The magnitude of the cumulative impacts on the ocean is greater than previously understood. As we continue to delay the urgent and critical action needed to address these negative trends, environmental conditions continue to deteriorate, coastal communities continue to suffer, and the action needed to mitigate these impacts becomes more costly and difficult.

Urgent action can no longer be delayed if we hope to provide a sustainable ocean for current and future generations. Societies must implement integrated and cross-cutting approaches to managing the world's ocean and coastal resources to ensure the survival of the planet and the safety and well-being of coastal and island populations in 183 coastal countries.

GENERAL PERSPECTIVES

We must embrace the vision of the whole, and institute integrated oceans governance at all levels. At the global level, we need enhanced and decisive United Nations mechanisms for dealing with the new levels of risk arising from climate change impacts and realizing the opportunities that lie ahead. At the regional and national levels, we must bolster our collective capacity for addressing the intertwined issues of oceans, climate, and biodiversity in an effective and decisive manner, building on the experiences and partial successes since the 1992 Earth Summit and the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development. We must create and take advantage of opportunities presented by the movement towards a green economy and an improved framework for sustainable development, in order to alleviate poverty in coastal and island nations around the world and find better means by which these countries can sustainably benefit from the ocean resources found under their jurisdiction and ensure local benefits, social equity, resource conservation, and public transparency.

We must link the actions of the major global negotiating fora related to oceans (the Law of the Sea processes, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity, etc.) to achieve coherent and decisive outcomes for ocean policy. Oceans must become a prominent aspect of the UNFCCC outcomes, given the central role of oceans in the climate system and the profound impacts of climate change on coastal and island resources and communities. We must support the implementation of a regular process for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects (Regular Process), and the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, and promote linkages among these initiatives, to provide a broader basis for more effective and coordinated decision making among the major fora and across all levels.

SPECIFIC ELEMENTS

The link between healthy oceans and sustainable development must be further recognized and enhanced. We must strengthen and underpin efforts already being taken on the ground that have laid the foundations for prolonged success—but with stronger measures, more decisive actions and, most importantly, enhanced global, regional, and national institutions that can adapt to changing conditions and potential tipping point scenarios in an effective, decisive, and timely manner. These efforts should build on successful experiences and effective institutional frameworks, rely on lessons-learned, and should be supported by sustainable financing.

In order to provide a basis and rationale for crafting a strong oceans outcome at Rio+20, the Global Ocean Forum, in collaboration with members of the Global Ocean Forum Working Groups and support from the Global Environment Facility, the UN Development Programme, and the University of Delaware, prepared a major report assessing progress achieved in the implementation of international commitments emanating from the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) related to oceans, coasts, and small islands, and examining the prospects of a green economy for oceans, coasts and small islands and an improved institutional framework for sustainable

development. The report examines the implementation (or lack thereof) of each of the major UNCED/WSSD goals related to oceans, coasts, and island states in the following areas:

- Ecosystem-Based Integrated Coastal and Ocean Management
- Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities, and Integrated Water Resources Management
- Biodiversity and Marine Protected Areas
- Small Island Developing States
- Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture
- Addressing Critical Uncertainties for the Management of the Marine Environment and Climate Change
- Coordination of UN Activities on Oceans
- A Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment
- Capacity Development and Public Outreach

For each topic, we provide an overview of the issue-area as it has evolved, on the basis of the available data. We then provide a rating of progress achieved on the major UNCED/WSSD goals in the form of a Report Card. The report cards assess three major variables: 1) *Extent of efforts*; 2) *Extent of progress*, and 3) *Timing—Goals reached*. The report cards also provide an explanation for the grades that are given, discuss major obstacles to implementation, point to “bright spots” or successful cases, if appropriate, and present a set of recommendations for the consideration of decision makers. The report relies, in large part, on policy analyses prepared by the Global Ocean Forum and the expert judgments of participants at the five global ocean conferences organized by the Global Ocean Forum who come from all sectors of the global ocean policy community (governments, international agencies, NGOs, industry, science groups).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OCEANS AT RIO+20

Major cross-cutting recommendations which emanate from the Oceans at Rio+20 report are highlighted below.

1. Ecosystem-Based Management/Integrated Coastal and Ocean Management (EBM/ICM)

Proposal

Enhance the implementation of integrated ecosystem-based ocean and coastal management at the national, regional, and global levels, including in marine areas beyond national jurisdiction

Rationale/Justification

Oceans can no longer be managed solely on a sector-by-sector, use-by-use basis. Sole reliance on sectoral institutions at the national level does not provide an appropriate framework needed to manage complexity and uncertainty for effective EBM/ICM. Instead, as Agenda 21 put it, approaches that are “integrated in content, and precautionary and anticipatory in ambit” must be adopted.

Since 1992, the paradigm of ecosystem-based integrated coastal and ocean management has been widely accepted and put into place in a growing number of countries. A major challenge in the next phase is to further enhance the implementation of integrated ocean policy, including its institutional aspects, at various levels, and consider appropriate applications in marine areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Recommendations

- Scale up successful EBM/ICM efforts at the national level to include larger portions of the coastal zone and ocean under national jurisdiction;
- Further strengthen integrated institutions and decision-making processes for oceans and coasts, including

through the enactment of ocean and coastal laws;

- Accelerate the development and implementation of EBM/ICM in regional and transboundary governance approaches, including through the Large Marine Ecosystem Programs and the Regional Seas Programs, encouraging the adoption of regional protocols on EBM/ICM to guide action at the national level;
- Apply established EBM/ICM principles and approaches to the 64% of the ocean that lies beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ) to address multiple use conflicts, manage new uses, and protect vulnerable ecosystems and marine biodiversity. Vest authority for applying EBM/ICM approaches in ABNJ in existing or new institutions and establish a process for multiple-use decision making;
- Accelerate efforts to create representative, resilient and well-managed networks of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the context of the ecosystem approach, complemented by the integration of harmonized economic and non-economic valuation methodologies into development planning and sectoral management frameworks;
- Incorporate and apply Marine Spatial Planning, aiming to achieve, in national waters and regional areas, the Convention on Biological Diversity's Aichi target of protecting at least 10 per cent of marine and coastal areas.

2. Oceans and Climate Change

Proposal

Develop an integrated approach to addressing the interlinked issues of oceans and climate change, including through the development of an integrated strategy on oceans and climate within and outside the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

Rationale/Justification

The world's oceans play a central role in global climate processes, generating oxygen, absorbing carbon dioxide and regulating climate and temperature. But climate change is now threatening the oceans' ability to continue to provide these services. The more than 50% of the human population that lives in 183 coastal countries, including 44 small island nations, are already experiencing the earliest and most pronounced effects of climate change, and will suffer disproportionate impacts from ocean warming--e.g., sea level rise, extreme weather events, glacial retreat, and ocean acidification--if bold action is not taken.

Despite the threats to these key resources, however, oceans and coasts have not figured on the agenda of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) until very recently.

Recommendations

Develop an integrated strategy for oceans and climate within and outside the UNFCCC that would include provisions for:

Mitigation

- Adopt stringent reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, including from marine industries such as shipping, within a short timeframe;
- Support additional research on quantifying the amounts of carbon stored and released by marine and coastal ecosystems ("Blue Carbon"), take measures to protect and restore marine ecosystems as major carbon sinks, and move toward incorporating Blue Carbon into emissions reduction and climate mitigation protocols;

- Sustainably develop ocean-based renewable energy (such as offshore wind power, wave energy, tidal power, etc.) and accelerate efforts to implement these approaches through marine spatial planning;
- Consider and, if appropriate, develop regulatory systems for possible carbon capture and storage via injection in deep seabed geological formations;
- Strongly discourage application of other geo-engineering approaches, such as iron fertilization, and CO₂ injection in the water column.

Adaptation

- Implement ecosystem-based adaptation strategies, including marine protected areas, through integrated coastal and ocean management institutions at national, regional, and local levels to build the preparedness, resilience, and adaptive capacities of coastal communities;
- Provide sufficient funding, supported by improved estimates of adaptation costs in coastal areas and small island States, to support adaptation for coastal and island communities that are at the frontline of climate change, including through the possible creation of a special Coastal Adaptation Fund;
- Develop and support measures to address the issues associated with the displacement of coastal populations as a result of climate change.

Capacity development, scientific monitoring, and public education

- Provide technical assistance to small island developing States (SIDS) and developing countries to build institutional capacity to implement adaptation measures, early warning systems, and disaster risk reduction;
- Improve awareness of understanding among policymakers and the general public of the importance of oceans and climate issues and the need to take bold policy measures and changes in behavior and lifestyle to avoid disastrous impacts on the world's coastal and island communities;
- Establish the scientific capacity in all countries for marine environment assessment, monitoring, and prediction;
- Expand public outreach and education efforts to improve awareness of the risks posed to coastal communities and to catalyze support for mitigation and adaptation responses.

3. Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Oceans

Proposal

Improve the ability of SIDS to sustainably utilize and effectively govern their oceans and coastal resources to ensure the continued functioning of marine resources and ecosystems as a critical aspect of livelihood, well-being, and survival

Rationale/Justification

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are stewards of vast ocean resources and play a key role in efforts to sustainably manage ocean and coastal resources. Social and economic development for most SIDS is inextricably linked to the sustainable management and use of coastal and marine resources.

Many SIDS are often unable to benefit from the resources within their EEZs due to lack of funding support, exploitation by foreign entities, and, in some cases, insufficient technical and management capacity. Climate change further threatens the very survival and economic and social well-being of SIDS, bringing the drastic possibility, in some cases, of loss of country and widespread population displacement.

Building the capacity of SIDS to equitably access and sustainably manage and utilize their oceans and coasts is critical to achieving sustainable development goals for oceans and coasts.

Recommendations

- Enhance ocean use agreements in the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) of SIDS by improving their design and implementation to ensure social equity, resource conservation, and public transparency, and that the benefits from EEZ resources accrue to SIDS and their peoples;
- Provide financial support to SIDS to improve their ability to adapt to the impacts of climate change, supported by improved cost estimates, and to protect coastal and ocean ecosystems, securing their role in providing valuable ecosystem services, products, and livelihoods critical to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, especially poverty alleviation;
- Enhance capacity development on the interrelated issues of ocean and coastal management/climate change/biodiversity, especially: 1) among high-level leaders, 2) fostering the next generation of leaders through investment in university programs, especially through the SIDS Consortium of Universities, and 3) among leaders and stakeholders in local communities.

4. Capacity Development

Proposal

Increase capacity for ocean and coastal management, and sustainable resource use, and ensure that capacity building projects are linked to national and regional sustainable development goals

Rationale/Justification

The ambitious agenda on capacity development laid out by the UNCED and WSSD processes has not yet been realized. The total level of funds expended on capacity development has been very small, and there is little collaboration and coordination of efforts among the wide array of actors—educational institutions, UN agencies, multilateral and bilateral donors, and NGOs, that assist in capacity development.

Capacity development remains an issue of central importance to developing states and SIDS. With the threats of climate change, the importance of capacity development of country leaders, current and future professionals in the field, local communities, and the public, becomes even more important and urgent. Likewise, the strengthening of national institutions dealing with oceans and coasts to respond to the challenges of climate change adaptation and mitigation, represents an essential imperative. There needs to be greater collaboration and coordination among countries, donors, UN agencies, providers of capacity training and education, others, to provide an accurate assessment of needed financial investments, and to develop a strategic approach to capacity development at the global level and in various regions.

Recommendations

- Develop a strategic approach to funding and capacity building for oceans and coasts, including through increased collaboration and coordination among countries, donors, UN agencies, and providers of capacity training and education. Periodically assess and track overall efforts and expenditures in capacity development, aggregate impact, and the extent to which current and emerging needs are being met;

- Substantially increase the total amount of financing devoted to capacity development, commensurate with the needs and challenges facing developing countries and SIDS;
- Develop and/or strengthen mechanisms for sharing of training materials and education curricula, and lessons learned in capacity development among organizations involved in capacity development for ocean and coastal governance, including the development of a clearinghouse of information on capacity building activities, courses, and training materials.

5. Green (Blue) Economy in the Context of Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication

Proposal

Develop a low-carbon green (blue) economy that facilitates the sustainable utilization of ocean and coastal resources that provides for improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental and ecological impacts

Rationale

A green economy has been defined as *one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities*. It is an economy which is *low in carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive*. The oceans play a critical role in sustainable livelihoods and social well-being around the world and offer a multitude of opportunities for greening the economy, especially in key sectors such as ocean and coastal ecosystems management, sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, ports and shipping, coastal tourism, and renewable energy. Therefore, the oceans must factor critically into the movement towards a low-carbon green economy to support sustainable development and poverty eradication.

Recommendations

For the world's oceans and coasts, a blue approach to a green economy should:

- Support the greening of ocean industries through efficiency measures, low carbon technologies, and enhanced access to international markets and finance, especially for the developing and least developed countries;
- Identify and scale-up ongoing successful green economy initiatives (e.g., responsible coastal tourism practices modeled in small island developing States, sustainable fishing practices such as through certification of sustainably caught seafood, greening of the shipping industry through efforts to reduce sulphur oxide emissions) and strengthen means of implementation, including capacity building, technology transfer, and the mobilization of financial resources from both the public and private sectors;
- Ensure that the greening of ocean industries contributes significantly to: 1) new sources of income and jobs; 2) low carbon emissions, efficient use of resources, and reduced production of waste and pollution; and 3) sustainable development of oceans and coasts, social equity and inclusiveness, and poverty reduction in coastal communities;
- Support the valuation and payments of ecosystem services and other biodiversity financing mechanisms for more effective decision making in development planning involving ocean and coastal environments and resources. Information on the estimated value of particular ocean/coastal ecosystems in terms of the goods and services that they provide (such as food provision, raw materials, nutrient cycling, gas and climate regulation, and recreation), is a powerful tool for justifying conservation measures and the expenditure of financial resources for management;

- Support scientific research efforts to quantify the carbon sequestration capacity of coastal ecosystems, include mangroves in the existing REDD+ program,* and pursue the potential for the trading of various forms of “Blue carbon” (coastal vegetation such as mangroves, seagrasses and salt marsh grasses that sequester carbon) in a similar way to green carbon (e.g., rainforests) and how this could be incorporated into emission and climate mitigation protocols;
- Address the gaps in the implementation of international commitments on ocean-related targets within the framework of a green economy. For example: 1) reduce fishing pressure on overfished or depleted stocks through alternative livelihood development as part of a broader green growth roadmap; 2) apply the integrated and ecosystem-based approach to marine pollution prevention through more effective engagement of industry and the private sector;
- Enhance the capacity and participation of all stakeholders for effective ocean and coastal management and governance in a green economy through: provision of incentives for green/blue production and resources for promoting research, development, and transfer of clean technologies; investment in capacity development, and development of a toolbox of best practices and mechanisms for sharing knowledge, experience and practices, including through communities of practice.

6. Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development of Oceans and Coasts

Proposal

Develop a coordinated and coherent institutional approach to sustainable development of oceans and coasts at various levels, underpinned by renewed political attention and effective institutional frameworks, to enable a crosscutting approach and timely response to major threats and opportunities

Rationale

The institutional framework for oceans and coasts is made up of a complex web of agreements, agencies and organizations operating at various levels, characterized by overlapping mandates, substantive policy gaps, conflicting priorities, and/or lack of coordination. In light of growing drivers of change, such as climate change and population growth, and insufficient political attention on oceans, achieving sustainable development goals for oceans and coasts becomes very difficult.

A coordinated and cross-cutting approach at the global, regional, and national levels (including a greater focus at the highest political levels) is needed to provide a common vision for sustainable development of oceans and coasts, enhance the joint capacity to address difficult issues (such as climate change), facilitate cross-sectoral and trade-off decisions among different sectors, develop integrated and coordinated solutions to interrelated problems, and enable joint action with appropriate funding support.

Recommendations

- Elevate oceans to the highest levels of the UN system (UN Secretary General), to enable a cross-cutting approach and appropriate and timely response to major threats and opportunities for oceans, including through the establishment of a UN Secretary-General or other high-level entity/coordination mechanism on oceans;

* *Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) is an effort to create a financial value for the carbon stored in forests, offering incentives for developing countries to reduce emissions from forested lands and invest in low-carbon paths to sustainable development. “REDD+” goes beyond deforestation and forest degradation, and includes the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks ([UN REDD Programme](#)).*

- Link various various ocean-related fora (Law of the Sea processes, Convention on Biological Diversity, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, UN Food and Agriculture Organization, International Maritime Organization, etc.) and reform existing institutions, including the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), to provide for consistent and coordinated policy development and priority-setting in addressing ocean and coastal issues;
- Develop a UN Secretary-General “Ocean Budget” report that would address financing needs for oceans and coasts and provide an assessment of previous and current expenditures on ocean-related issues;
- Support regional institutional approaches to cross-sectoral ecosystem-based ocean governance by further developing existing regional mechanisms or creating new regional mechanisms where they do not exist to facilitate regional cross-sectoral coordination and priority-setting;
- Integrate ocean and coastal issues into national sustainable development strategies and frameworks providing institutional support for the critical role of oceans in sustainable development, and focus continued efforts to improve the national-level implementation of duties and responsibilities emanating from multilateral instruments and agreements.

ABOUT THE GLOBAL OCEAN FORUM

The Global Ocean Forum, first mobilized in 2001 to help governments place issues related to oceans, coasts, and SIDS on the WSSD agenda, brings together ocean leaders from all sectors from 112 countries to advance the global oceans agenda. The Global Ocean Forum promotes the implementation of international agreements related to oceans, coasts, and SIDS by assessing progress made, and identifying obstacles and opportunities for achieving sustainable development. Through expert working groups and multi-stakeholder dialogues, the Global Ocean Forum has been reporting on progress achieved on each of the WSSD ocean-related goals. The Secretariat of the Global Ocean Forum, the International Coastal and Ocean Organization, is an international NGO that was accredited to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development in 1993, and received special Consultative Status with the UN Economic and Social Council in 2006.

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