

5th United Nations Ocean Forum on trade-related aspects of
Sustainable Development Goal 14: Ocean economy, trade policy,
the climate and development nexus

3 – 5 March 2025

**Contributions to trade-related aspects of SDG 14
for the 5th United Nations Ocean Forum**

by

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The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of UNCTAD.

I. Blue Deal and sustainable ocean economy initiatives

How has your organization contributed to a sustainable ocean economy since 2022, including in the context of efforts to support a post-COVID-19 recovery and increase resilience? (Please describe specific initiatives [e.g., investment strategies, partnerships, innovation-focused approaches], or policies you have implemented.)

What challenges have you faced in implementing the proposed Blue Deal initiative and what steps have you taken to address them, particularly in securing sufficient and reliable long-term investment in the blue economy? (Please include any partnerships, investment strategies or innovation-focused approaches).

- Ocean industries- including shipping, biotechnology, subsea communications, renewable energy, seafood, and coastal tourism- are set for rapid expansion in the coming decade. While this presents economic opportunities, unchecked growth could push marine ecosystems toward irreversible tipping points, threatening ocean health, business models, and millions of livelihoods. Efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 14 (Life Below Water) face a widening finance gap. The World Economic Forum estimates \$175 billion in annual investment is needed to meet SDG 14 by 2030, yet only \$10 billion was invested between 2015 and 2019 (WEF, 2022). Fragmented ocean governance further complicates sustainable management, particularly in the high seas, which cover two-thirds of the ocean. Weak regulatory frameworks limit access to data, hinder ecosystem service valuation, and deter public and private investment. A sustainable ocean economy requires collaborative action between governments and the private sector to enhance governance and allocate a portion of ocean-related revenue toward sustainability efforts. UNEP is actively engaged in initiatives addressing these challenges to ensure ocean-based industries support people, businesses, and marine ecosystems alike:
 - Guidance on Sustainable Blue Economy Financing Principles: UNEP FI has launched a series of guidance resources on the Sustainable Blue Economy Financing Principles to help close the financing gap for actions towards ocean sustainability. Fourteen voluntary Principles were developed to promote the implementation and achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 14, including to help ensure that ocean-related investment delivers long-term value without damaging marine ecosystems, increasing carbon emissions, or eroding the livelihoods and nutrition of the billions of people who depend on the oceans and their resources. By providing a global framework to drive sustainable ocean economy-related financing, the Sustainable Blue Economy Financing Principles and Initiative addresses the risk of natural capital loss resulting from unsustainable economic activity. This work also supports efforts to reduce carbon emissions and maintain the sustainability of ocean-based businesses, as well as the livelihoods of people who depend on them for their prosperity and their way of life, thus securing the long-term health, resilience and integrity of our ocean. Current guidance includes Setting Sail: Target setting in the Sustainable Blue Economy (UNEP 2024) to support financial institutions in implementing sector-specific guidance and setting targets for the Sustainable Blue Economy.
 - Blue bonds to finance the sustainable blue economy – a Practitioners Guide: The International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group, together with the International Capital Market Association (ICMA), United Nations

Global Compact (UN Global Compact), United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative (UNEP FI), and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 2023 launched a global practitioner's guide for bonds to finance the sustainable blue economy. This voluntary guidance provides market participants with clear criteria, practices, and examples for "blue bond" lending and issuances. Gathering input from the financial markets, ocean industry and global institutions, it provides information on the key components involved in launching a credible "blue bond," how to evaluate the environmental impact of "blue bond" investments; and the steps needed to facilitate transactions that preserve the integrity of the market. The new global guidance helps to define blue economy typology and eligibility criteria; suggests key performance indicators; showcases the latest case studies from the field; and highlights the critical need for increased financing to achieve SDG14, and other global sustainability targets.

- The Global Fund for Coral Reefs - a blended finance instrument to mobilize action and resources to protect and restore coral reef ecosystems, is currently the only global UN fund dedicated to SDG 14 and is now active in 18 countries. UNEP is co-chairing the GFCR with the UK Government and is also responsible for leading M&E for the fund.
- The Global Environment Facility, GEF, International Waters: Through the UNEP International Waters Focal area projects and programs, UNEP and the GEF have mobilised over USD 173 million in grant and a further USD 1.9 billion in co-financing for countries where initiatives that contribute directly to SDG 14 are implemented. GEF IW projects complement other activities across all three areas of the triple planetary crisis by fostering a sustainable blue economy and its financial means of implementation; and tackling marine pollution including but not limited to plastics as well as nutrients. On the pathway toward larger integrated programming the GEF will leverage and accelerate UNEP's efforts and those of the many global partnerships and instruments including Regional Seas and Action Plans.
- To tackle the triple-planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity and pollution impacting marine and coastal ecosystems, UNEP is piloting a novel 'Sustainable Blue Economy (SBE) Transition Planning and Readiness Approach'. It supports holistic governance within national boundaries and in transboundary contexts across the water continuum. The SBE Transition Tool provides a practical, stepwise approach to design, plan and implement pathways to sustainable, resilient and equitable blue economies tailored to countries specific context and needs. The approach provides a whole-of-government framework to support coherent policies across blue sector interests and trade-offs across policy objectives. It helps guide sector interactions and resolves conflict across connected seascapes and landscapes. Key features of the framework include equitable sharing of environmental, social and economic benefits; application of nature-based climate solution; and protection and restoration of ecosystems underpinning the sustained delivery of economic and social benefits. The accompanying UNEP 'SBE Rapid Readiness Assessment Tool' helps decision-makers, planners and stakeholder getting started on the transition, setting direction, and operationalizing the process through tailored enabling actions (e.g. knowledge generation, finance and stakeholder engagement). The SBE Readiness Assessment approach has been piloted in Caribbean SIDS (Antigua & Barbuda, Trinidad & Tobago) and Vietnam, and is being applied in Indonesia and Kenya for integrated land-sea planning to unlock sustainable blue economies. UNEP has also supported the preparation of Indonesia's national Blue Economy Framework and creation

of the Indonesian National Blue Action Agenda Partnership led by the UNRC and national ministries.

- COBSEA Marine and Coastal Ecosystem Framework for sustainable blue economy: The nine participating countries of the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA) in 2023 formally adopted The COBSEA Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Framework as an essential concept of Sustainable Blue Economy, where the wellbeing of people in the East Asian Seas, particularly of the most vulnerable, are prioritized while ensuring the sustainability of the marine and coastal ecosystems. This will be achieved by building enhanced national capacity for marine and coastal spatial planning, Marine Protected Areas and MPAs Networks, habitat conservation and restoration. The Framework is based on successes and recommendations from previous COBSEA projects, international frameworks and targets including the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), and regional studies and guides commissioned by COBSEA.
- UNEP and other UN bodies supported the Government of Indonesia's National Blue Economy Roadmap 2023-2045. Launched in July 2023, it outlines how the country can sustainably develop its marine resources for economic development. UNEP also supports Indonesia under the High Impact Initiative on Nature Driving Economic Transformation, which is part of a broader UN effort to supercharge progress on the attainment of the SDGs.
- Through the HESBERSGA Project, UNEP is supporting countries including Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen to create an inclusive approach for harnessing marine ecosystem services towards a sustainable blue economy in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. In November 2022, the Project Preparation Grant (PPG) was approved by the GEF and is in the process of approval for the full-size project. The initiative aims to alleviate threats posed by exposure to trans-boundary ecological and anthropogenic stresses in the region, whose population is projected to reach over 380 million people in 2030 from the current 235 million.
- Through the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030, UNEP, UNDESA and FAO have launched the SIDS Ecosystem Restoration Flagship Initiative. It aims to promote the integration of marine and coastal ecosystem restoration/conservation and sustainable blue finance into economic recovery and growth in three SIDS countries (Comoros, Saint Lucia and Vanuatu) through a connected 'ridge to reef' approach to build back better and bluer. By putting marine and coastal ecosystems at the heart of economic policy and decision-making, the initiative aims to guide and document transformative investments unlocking blue economy potential at SIDS level and in turn inspire further actions. At the Fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP15) in December 2022, the SIDS Restoration Flagship was recognized among the first 10 Global Restoration Flagships. The SIDS Flagship is co-led by the Governments of Comoros, St Lucia and Vanuatu with the technical support from UNEP, UNDESA, FAO, delivering SIDS-to-SIDS learning and policy advocacy is in collaboration with the SIDS Coalition for Nature and the UN Decade on Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. The flagship is funded by the German and Danish governments through the UN Decade Multi-Partner Trust Fund.

II. The seaweed sector and sustainable economic recovery post-COVID19

How has your organization contributed to sustainable seaweed or aquaculture practices? (Please describe any projects or initiatives that support sustainable production, job creation, improvement of livelihoods, and/or enhance ecosystem health.)

What key challenges have you faced in scaling up sustainable seaweed production, and how have you addressed them? (Please include any policy, technology, or investment needs.)

- Among the more than 12,000 identified marine seaweed species, only a small subset—around eight genera—dominates global farmed production. The vast majority (99.5%) of this cultivation takes place in just nine countries across East and Southeast Asia. Studies suggest that in regions where seaweed farming has expanded rapidly but scientific advancements are limited, industry growth has slowed due to challenges such as crop diseases and pests. Conversely, in areas with well-established seaweed farming and ongoing scientific progress, the sector continues to expand, though concerns over ecosystem carrying capacities and climate change pose potential threats to its sustainability. In regions where seaweed farming is still emerging, significant obstacles hinder development, including competition for space, lack of social acceptance, inadequate legislative frameworks and regulatory support, as well as underdeveloped domestic markets for high-value seaweed products.
- UNEP recognizes the growing global interest in seaweed farming as a potentially scalable ocean-based solution to climate change that may provide environmental and social co-benefits as part of the advancement of resilient and climate smart aquaculture. To critically examine this potential, UNEP's report: Seaweed Farming: Assessment on the Potential of Sustainable Upscaling for Climate, Communities and the Planet | UNEP - UN Environment Programme, recognizes the growing global interest in seaweed farming as a potentially scalable ocean-based solution to climate change that may provide environmental and social co-benefits as part of the advancement of resilient and climate smart aquaculture. It delivers an in-depth literature review and situational analysis scientifically assessing the potential for the sustainable expansion of seaweed farming to deliver climate benefits with minimal environmental and social risks. The report collates and scrutinizes existing research on the quantifiable climate benefits as well as the associated environmental and social risks and benefits of global seaweed farming. The scope of the report includes an investigation into the full value chain of seaweed farming with an emphasis on the potential for climate benefits realized through various natural and commercial use pathways, and the feasibility of upscaling global farmed seaweed production. The findings are synthesized in a situational analysis with a SWOT design for sustainable expansion of global seaweed farming.
- Into the Blue: Securing a Sustainable Future for Kelp Forests (May 2023) – a global synthesis report - is the most comprehensive knowledge review on kelp to date, revealing the state of science on the world's kelp forests and providing recommended actions to build their recovery. In addition to improving our understanding of the value of kelp forests and providing recommendations to protect and sustainably manage them, the report also provides a range of policy and management interventions and options that can be used to

maintain these remarkable ecosystems into the future, in order to support the people and economies that have depended on them for generations.

III. Fisheries subsidies and non-tariff measures reform

Has your organization taken steps to support the ratification of the WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement and the phasing out of harmful fisheries subsidies, in line with SDG 14 Target 6? (Please describe your efforts and approaches to promote fair, equitable and sustainable fishing practices.)

How have you addressed non-tariff measures (NTMs) impacting marine goods exports in your cooperation and technical assistance activities? (Please discuss any strategies to reduce NTMs while ensuring capacity and compliance with sustainability guidelines or standards for fisheries and seafood processing.)

- In July 2016, UNCTAD, FAO and UNEP joined forces to propose a roadmap to ending subsidies – a statement which was supported by more than 90 member States, four international and regional organizations and more than 10 global NGOs. This joint statement calls on Member States to address certain subsidies that contribute to overcapacity, overfishing and IUU fishing.
 - The roadmap for elimination of harmful fishing subsidies includes a four-point plan:
 - Require countries to provide information on what subsidies they are providing.
 - Prohibit those subsidies which contribute to overfishing and illegal fishing.
 - Introduce new policies tools to deter the introduction of new harmful subsidies.
 - Provide special and differential treatment to developing countries.
- The UNCTAD-FAO-UNEP statement was fully supported by several Member States such as the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group (ACP), Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Peru and Uruguay, whom are seeking to reinforce it and advance in the implementation of trade-related aspects of SDG 14. It also enjoyed the support of relevant international governmental organizations such as the Commonwealth Secretariat, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat as well as active civil society organizations such as WWF, IOI, Oceana, Sea Around Us, CUTS International, IISD and the Fisheries Economics Research & Changing Ocean Research Units, University of British Colombia.
- UNEP has supported WTO Members throughout the two (2) decades of negotiations of the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement, which was adopted in 2022.
- In 2018, at the Second United Nations Oceans Forum on Trade-related aspects of SDG 14, July 2018, Member States requested UNEP, UNCTAD and FAO to prepare a draft joint Plan of Action to accelerate the implementation of SDG 14 through trade. This resulted in the [SDG 14 Trade-related Inter Agency Plan of Action \(IAPoA\)](#), produced by UNEP, UNCTAD and FAO with guidance from Member States, with the aim to accelerate the achievement of trade-related targets of SDG 14 - namely targets 4, 6, 7 and b, through improved trade policies that safeguard food security and contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, living marine resources and livelihoods.

- Most recently in 2022, UNEP participated at a workshop organized by IISD for WTO Members, in the framework of the so-called “second wave” of negotiations on fisheries subsidies to address the issues that could not be resolved at the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference - specifically subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing. Here, UNEP assisted WTO Members presenting most central pieces of research and analysis regarding the impact of fisheries subsidies, including:
 - [Analyzing the resource impact of fisheries subsidies: a matrix approach | UNEP - UN Environment Programme](#)
 - [Sustainability Criteria for Fisheries Subsidies: Options for the WTO and Beyond](#)
- Through its [Environment and Trade Hub](#), UNEP has organized workshops and provided technical assistance to countries, particularly developing nations, to help them align their national policies with international commitments on fisheries subsidies. These efforts aim to promote sustainable fishing practices and ensure that subsidy reforms are implemented effectively.
- UNEP produced the paper on [Sustainability Criteria for Fisheries Subsidies: Options for the WTO and Beyond](#), which aims to assist governments in the identification of criteria for the use of fisheries subsidies, with the dual ambition of helping WTO negotiators craft new international law and providing domestic governments with useful advice as they pursue responsible fisheries subsidies policies.
- These two ambitions obviously overlap while being somewhat distinct. WTO rules cannot embody robust policy advice for fisheries managers but can only set a few simplified (but important) legal constraints on the “policy space” governments enjoy for fisheries subsidies.

IV. [Social sustainability in fisheries and aquaculture](#)

What actions has your organization taken to curtail exploitative practices, promote labour rights, enhance occupational safety and health, provide decent work, social sustainability, and climate-resilient livelihoods within fisheries and aquaculture?

What steps have been implemented to facilitate market access and incorporate gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) policies, particularly for women, youth, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups in decision-making within these sectors?

- UNEP’s [Environment and Trade Hub](#) is actively engaged in providing sustainable and policy solutions to several important issues relating to trade and its fundamental role in sustainable development. Among other areas, the Environment and Trade Hub continues to engage in global policy reform surrounding harmful fisheries subsidies. The Environment and Trade Hub has a key role to play in helping countries to deliver upon SDG 14, particularly as related to trade-related targets and indicators including targets 14.4 (regulating illegal unregulated or unreported - IUU - fishing activities), 14.6 (prohibiting certain forms of fisheries subsidies) and 14.b (market access for small-scale artisanal fishers).
- A UNEP-led regional project, funded by the GEF, aims to enhance fisheries management in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand by expanding the network of fisheries refugia – an innovative approach that prioritizes sustainable utilization of fisheries resources and

habitats. In Thailand for instance, the Fisheries Refugia Project focuses on protecting blue swimming crabs, particularly berried female crabs often caught as by-catch. Trawlers are encouraged to release these crabs back to the sea for spawning and record their numbers, with fishers contributing via mobile phones and social media. Over 6 months, 45 trawlers participated, releasing over 4,000 berried females for natural spawning. This successful initiative has fostered sustainable changes in fishers' attitudes, promoting support for ocean conservation and sustainable fisheries.

- The GEF-funded FISHEBM MED project, is co-implemented by FAO and UNEP. The agreement was signed between UNEP and the executing agency, UNEP/MAP in March 2023 – signalling the start of implementation. The project aims to reverse the over-exploitation of select commercial living marine resources by enhancing the capacity of Mediterranean countries to manage fisheries, including through the application of ecosystem-based management tools, in their blue economy development pathway. The initiative is a comprehensive effort involving various regional stakeholders such as the Mediterranean Action Plan (Barcelona Convention) and the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM).

V. Decarbonization of shipping and fisheries and resilient maritime supply chains

How is your organization contributing to the decarbonization of shipping, fisheries and related supply chains? (Please provide details on any low-carbon shipping and fishing practices, sustainable fuel adoption, or emissions reduction initiatives, and alignment with international frameworks e.g., SDG 13, the 2023 IMO Strategy, and others.)

What key challenges do you face in building sustainable and resilient maritime supply chains? (Please include critical needs and strategies for investment, traceability, digitalization, infrastructure upgrades or regulatory support.)

- In June 2022, the Mediterranean Sea was designated as an Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides and Particulate Matter (Med SOx ECA), a major milestone that the UNEP Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP) was instrumental in securing. The Med SOx ECA is set to become effective in 2025. Under this regulation, ships entering the Mediterranean Sea will be prohibited from using fuel with a sulfur content exceeding 0.10% m/m. Practical monitoring will focus on ensuring compliance with this rule. Ships will need to either utilize fuel oil that already meets the stipulated low sulfur content or install an appropriate exhaust "alternative" method to adhere to the requirements of the Med SOx ECA.

VI. Addressing marine litter and plastic pollution

What actions has your organization undertaken to combat marine litter and plastic pollution? (Please describe initiatives that support the development and/or production of material substitutes for plastics, biodegradation, and end-of-life solutions.)

Are you engaged in multilateral or national-level efforts to reduce plastic waste in marine environments? (Please discuss relevant partnerships and/or collaboration, policy advocacy, regulatory measures or other efforts in support of an International Legally Binding Instrument (ILBI) on plastic pollution.)

- Plastic pollution remains particularly alarming, as it constitutes at least 85% of total marine waste,⁸ with approximately 11 million metric tons entering oceans annually - a

figure projected to triple by 2040 if no action is taken. Marine plastic pollution continues to have extensive and detrimental impacts on marine ecosystems, wildlife, human health, and economies with impacts that are beyond the safe operating space for humanity. Global plastic waste emissions are rising, with significant leakage from mismanaged waste (particularly in low- and middle-income countries), microplastic abrasion and loss, littering, and marine activities. These plastics, especially microplastics, impact all marine ecosystems, with now over 4,000 animal species thought to be adversely affected, with interactions including ingestion, entanglement, and habitat disruption.

- Following the historic resolution adopted during the resumed fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-5.2) in March 2022, the INC convened five sessions between November 2022 and December 2024, that focused on an international legally - binding instrument which could include both binding and voluntary approaches, based on a comprehensive approach that addresses the full life cycle of plastic, including its production, design, and disposal, and, taking into account, among other things, the principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, as well as national circumstances and capabilities. The INC will continue its work in 2025, aiming to conclude negotiations at a resumed fifth session (INC-5.2). The final agreement is anticipated to set a strong framework for international cooperation and action.

Key milestones achieved:

- The UN Environment Assembly resolution 5/14 adopted in February 2022 requested the Executive Director of UNEP to convene an intergovernmental negotiating committee (INC), to begin its work during the second half of 2022, with the ambition of completing its work by the end of 2024. The INC is tasked with developing an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, which could include both binding and voluntary approaches, based on a comprehensive approach that addresses the full life cycle of plastic². The INC began its work during the second half of 2022, with the ambition to complete the negotiations by the end of 2024. The first session of the INC (INC-1) took place in Punta del Este, Uruguay, from 28 November to 2 December 2022, followed by a second session (INC-2) from 29 May to 2 June 2023 in Paris, France. The third session (INC-3) marked the process' midway point from 13 to 19 November 2023 in Nairobi, Kenya, followed by the fourth session (INC-4) from 23 to 29 April 2024 in Ottawa, Canada. The fifth session (INC-5) took place from 25 November to 1 December 2024 in Busan, Republic of Korea. Looking ahead in 2025 and beyond, the INC is anticipated to conclude its work at a resumed session (INC-5.2), and the Hong Kong International Convention for the safe and environmentally sound recycling of ships will enter into force on 26 June 2025.
- There are a significant number of actors, initiatives and projects working on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, and coordination amongst them to maximize resources continues to be of utmost importance. The Global Partnership on Plastic Pollution and Marine Litter (GPML)³ continues to facilitate multi-stakeholder cooperation, including through its Communities of Practice, to enhance the scientific foundation for action at national, regional and/or sectoral levels, while scaling up its work through its Action Tracks to streamline efforts and increase positive impact. The GPML is a voluntary multi-stakeholder partnership that brings together governments, civil society, academia, and the private sector under the common goal of eliminating plastic pollution and marine litter. Resolution UNEA 5/14 requested the Executive Director to continue to support and advance the work of the GPML, while strengthening scientific, technical and technological knowledge with regard to

plastic pollution, including in the marine environment; on methodologies for monitoring, and sharing available scientific and other relevant data and information which is underway through various areas of work.

- The GPML Digital Platform, seeks to facilitate knowledge exchange, foster coordination, and propel collective action by all the relevant stakeholders working to eliminate plastic pollution and marine litter at all geographic levels, from local to global. It now provides access to 2600+ global, transnational, regional, national and subnational resources including 71 roadmaps/strategies/plans; 702 policies; 892 technical resources; 115 financing resources; 641 initiatives; 79 technologies; 164 events; 207 capacity development materials; and 400+ data layers. Efforts continue in consolidating data and information on plastic pollution and marine litter through the GPML Digital Platform. This integration was prominently highlighted at UNEA-6 by the UNEP World Environment Situation Room (WESR), signaling the aspiration to create a centralized data hub encompassing comprehensive information on plastic pollution and marine litter. The current Phase 6 of the Platform is in development, which aims to upscale and replicate its functionality to include other pollution source categories.
- Closely linked to the GPML and its Digital Platform, UNEP is currently implementing the project “Capacity development to catalyze actions and commitments at the national and global level to reduce plastic pollution including in the marine environment”, which aims to support countries to address plastic pollution through the development of national source inventories along the plastics lifecycle as a basis for the formulation and implementation of roadmaps, strategies and action plans to reduce plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. Participating countries (17 formally engaged thus far) span the regions of Africa, Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean. <https://digital.gpmlitter.org/>
- UNEP also implemented the “CounterMEASURE II extension” project. The project aims to promote science-based and evidence-driven action to reduce and prevent the influx of plastic into Asian rivers through the formulation of bankable project proposals in 5 countries in Asia and strengthening regional, national and local capacities for an enhanced systematic approach for plastic pollution management. These two projects are a follow-on to prior support for the development of source inventories and strategies, roadmaps and action plans to address plastic pollution and marine litter, including for 5 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and Africa (at the national level) and the Northeast Pacific (at the regional level), all of which were finalized between 2022 and 2023.
- A workflow for the development of source inventories to inform strategies/roadmaps/plans has been created on the GPML Digital Platform, in consultation with the GPML Community of Practice to harmonize approaches for informing action on plastic pollution and marine litter. It aims to provide resources and guidance for developing national source inventories of plastics, using a lifecycle approach. Without being prescriptive, this digital workflow aims to offer a wide range of information, case studies and other useful resources to countries undertaking this process, regardless of the specific stage in which they currently find themselves. The Community of Practice on harmonization of plastic flow quantification methodologies and models also provided feedback to the workflow, as well as to the statistical guidelines to measure plastic flow across the plastic lifecycle which are under development through a collaboration between UNEP and UNITAR.
- Recognizing that rivers are a major source of plastic pollution in oceans, the GPML risk and warning system for macroplastic litter in rivers has been developed by UNEP-DHI in collaboration with the UNEP Freshwater Ecosystems Unit and the GPML for all major river systems in the world. Simulations are produced for over 870,000 data points. The GPML early warning system can help map where the problem is and how it is changing in the upcoming 9 months. Using the forecasts, upcoming freshwater hotspots and accumulation points can be

seamlessly identified, supporting local authorities and NGOs in planning and prioritizing interventions and monitoring activities.

- In August 2022, UNEP published the Foresight Brief “Plastics in agriculture – an environmental challenge”, highlighting this emerging topic within the broader plastic pollution issue. UNEP has been collaborating closely with FAO since 2021 in raising awareness of this topic through several publications and joint events in relevant conferences, including 7IMDC.
- In October 2023, UNEP and the Open University of the Netherlands finalized the masterclass on Unnecessary, Avoidable and Problematic (UAP) Plastic Products and Polymers, developed within the framework of the GPML. The masterclass functions as a standalone course, accessible to any interested participant online at no cost.
- The One Planet Network and its programmes have released a compendium of solutions to support governments and businesses in implementing ambitious commitments on the circular economy of plastics. The Global Tourism Plastics Initiative (GTPI) has been working to engage tourism stakeholders in adopting reusable solutions and eliminating single-use plastics from their operations. Several initiatives, including bilateral training sessions and the Goa Roadmap for Tourism, have been implemented to support this effort.
- The Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA) supports participating countries in addressing marine litter and plastic pollution through the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP MALI). The RAP MALI consolidates, coordinates, and facilitates cooperation, and guides implementation of necessary environmental policies, strategies and measures for sustainable, integrated management of marine litter in the East Asian Seas region across four main actions:
 - Action 1: Preventing and reducing marine litter from land-based sources;
 - Action 2: Preventing and reducing marine litter from sea-based sources;
 - Action 3: Monitoring and assessment of marine litter;
 - Action 4: Activities supporting the implementation of the COBSEA RAP MALI.

The COBSEA Secretariat coordinates closely with other Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, the GPML and the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA) to support effective action in the East Asian Seas region to achieve SDG target 14.1.

- Under the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast (IMAP), monitoring is ensured through 27 IMAP indicators. In 2023, UNEP/MAP published the Mediterranean Quality Status Reports, encompassing three themes: pollution and marine litter, biodiversity and fisheries, and coast and hydrography. In relation to eutrophication, the current report shows that three out of four Mediterranean sub-regions (Adriatic Sea, Central and Western Mediterranean Sea) maintain a good environmental status.
- Similarly, the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR) published its Quality Status Report in 2023. The report highlights a substantial reduction in plastic litter on beaches across most OSPAR Regions and improvements in wastewater treatment. However, the sustained progress in addressing eutrophication has been hindered by the expansion of aquaculture within the region.
- UNEP and WWF are co-leading the implementation of the GEF-funded ‘Circular Solutions to Plastic Pollution’ Integrated Program (IP), a global initiative designed to transition countries toward a circular plastics economy, particularly in the food and beverage sector. This program

is worth a substantial USD 107 million and represents the largest global investment tackling plastic pollution to date. The IP will be delivered through 15 national child projects and one global child project (Global Platform), supporting countries in reducing the amount of plastic pollution entering transboundary marine and freshwater ecosystems.

- In August 2023, Colombia, Jamaica and Panamá joined forces to reduce plastic pollution from coastal and urban environments through the GEF-funded 'Reduce marine plastics and plastic pollution in Latin American and the Caribbean cities through a circular economy approach.' project. The USD 42 million initiative of which USD 7 million is funded through the GEF will do this by facilitating circular actions at the city level to accelerate the transition to a circular economy, in line with government and business commitments on addressing marine litter and plastic pollution.
- For SDG 14.1.1b- Plastic debris density, UNEP is monitoring beach litter in collaboration with Ocean Conservancy and Citizen Science. UNEP is also monitoring plastic patches in High Seas beyond National Jurisdiction in partnership with Carl von Ossietzky University Oldenburg. The main objective and ambition for the monitoring of the above is to be able to establish a baseline for monitoring and to achieve the SDG target 14.1 by 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular, from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution. In 2023, UNEP carried out a data collection exercise for both SDG indicators 14.1.1 and 14.2.1 from countries through the platform of Regional Seas and directly from countries that are not members of any Regional Seas. The data for both indicators is published in the SDG Global Database.

VII. Further comments

Are there additional actions or priorities you consider important in the global effort to achieve trade-related aspects of SDG 14 by 2030, and beyond?

- BBNJ Agreement: After years of formal negotiations by the intergovernmental conference convened under the auspices of the UN, a new international, legally binding agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (the "BBNJ Agreement") was adopted in June 2023 as the third implementing agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) - the overarching legal framework governing all activities in the oceans and seas. The overall objective of the BBNJ Agreement is to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction for the present and in the long term, through effective implementation of the provisions of UNCLOS and further international cooperation and coordination.
 - As the leading UN agency on environmental matters, UNEP is supporting Member states toward ratification of the Agreement and early action, including through the GEF-8 replenishment fund (\$34M), and all other available funding sources, to 1) increase information and awareness about the Agreement, 2) support enhanced legal capacity for Member States to ratify including through needs assessments and national consultations and 3) to provide technical assistance to Member States for future implementation of the Agreement.
 - UNEP is closely coordinating with DOALOS and other UN Agencies, including via UN-Oceans and the GEF, in support of ratification, early action and future implementation of the BBNJ Agreement. The Ecosystem Division/Marine & Freshwater Branch is serving as UNEP's Focal Point to lead the coordination internally across UNEP Divisions, Regional Offices, relevant MEAs, and Collaborating Centers, including in the development of UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy and associated linkages with UNEP's Global Programme of Work - integrating existing ocean governance work streams

within national jurisdiction and in areas beyond national jurisdiction in collaboration and in alignment with the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAPs).

- GEF8 Global/Regional Medium Size Project (MSP): UNEP is a co-implementing agency alongside FAO (lead) and UNDP for a \$5M Global/Regional MSP. By design, this MSP will help operationalize UNEP's activities articulated below, primarily related to supporting the ratification phase, which will include information and awareness raising, regional trainings and capacity building workshops, but also to some early action projects in lead up to future implementation.
- **Other specific areas of UNEP's support include:**
 - Technical and scientific support:
 - Providing expertise on marine biodiversity conservation and ecosystem-based management approaches and area-based management tools.
 - Facilitating the integration of BBNJ objectives with existing global biodiversity frameworks, including the Kunming-Montreal GBF and the SDGs.
 - Offering policy and legal guidance through the Regional Seas Programme to ensure regional coherence in implementation efforts.
 - Capacity-Building and stakeholder engagement:
 - Organizing regional workshops to enhance national and regional capacities for ratification and implementation.
 - Supporting awareness-raising and knowledge-sharing initiatives to promote an inclusive approach to BBNJ governance.
 - Leveraging UNEP's networks to mobilize resources and partnerships for implementation efforts.
- The recent UNEA-6 resolution: UNEP/EA.6/L.18 "Strengthening ocean efforts to tackle climate change, marine biodiversity loss and pollution" encourages decisive and urgent action to improve the health, productivity, and resilience of the ocean and its ecosystems and affirms the need to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources. This resolution - which in and of itself, leverages the interlinkages across multiple SDGs- invites Member States to scale up means of implementation to enhance the capacity to deliver on ocean related sustainable development goals and implement the relevant conventions, particularly in developing countries, taking into account special circumstances of Small Island Developing States. So too, it calls for continued cooperation and coordination on marine issues among all relevant global and regional forums and organizations in order to deliver coherently on Sustainable Development Goal 14 and other relevant ocean-related Sustainable Development Goals and their targets.
- As part of this work, UNEP will inter alia, continue to strengthen technical support to Member States in implementing their respective obligations and activities under the Regional Seas conventions, action plans, multilateral environmental agreements and other relevant environmental instruments. In addition, UNEP will continue to provide technical support to Member States in the assessment of marine biodiversity, the development of marine and coastal planning and management tools in particular marine protected areas, integrated coastal zone management, and marine spatial planning. This, based on the best available science, including, where appropriate, traditional knowledge, innovations, and practices. Moreover, UNEP will support Member States in the ratification and implementation of the BBNJ and contribute to the marine-related Early Warnings for All initiative at all levels.

- Early warning systems: UNEP contributes to UN-wide early warning systems by providing early warning services that target nature and pollution-free actions and by enhancing the well-established work of climate information and early warning services. Anthropogenic nature and pollution risk drivers that degrade ecosystems, which are largely slow-onset risks, exacerbate climate change by way of depleting natural carbon sinks and diminishing the capacity of ecosystems to buffer against the worst of the effects of a changing climate. This cumulatively drives up climatological and meteorological risk events that further damage ecosystems and escalate pollution risks, in addition to impacting human lives and livelihoods, creating a vicious cycle of vulnerability. Such climatological risks manifest mostly as rapid onset risks and are covered by early warning systems against weather and climate-related hazards. Given these interactions, early warning systems targeted at addressing ecosystem and pollution risk drivers are critical to complement and enhance the effectiveness of early warning systems against weather and climate-related hazards and ultimately enhance solutions to the triple planetary crisis towards the realisation of the SDGs. The importance of ocean observation and prediction to better understand coastal areas, protect local ecosystems and populations, evaluate and predict the impact of coastal hazards and provide support to the development of a sustainable blue economy, has never been more pressing.
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