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***Summary of the
JOINT UNEP/EC WORKSHOP ON REGIONAL OCEAN GOVERNANCE***

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Summary of the JOINT UNEP/EC WORKSHOP ON REGIONAL OCEAN GOVERNANCE
9-10 November 2015, Brussels

On 9-10 November, The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the European Commission (EC) organized a joint expert workshop on Regional Ocean Governance at the UN House in Brussels with key representatives from the international and regional organizations involved in the oceans and their resources, including Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans and Regional Fisheries Bodies. The objective of the workshop was to share the knowledge and lessons learnt from regional ocean governance experiences in different marine regions globally and identify key elements that will inform and facilitate further work on ocean governance at all levels. The meeting was conducted within the framework of a strengthened EC-UNEP Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2015¹.

Key messages from the discussions:

1. There is an urgent need to strengthen the capacities and effectiveness of existing regional institutional mechanisms worldwide, including the UNEP Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, as important vehicles to implement, monitor and review the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14² and other SDGs related to oceans at national and all other levels. Mainstreaming and implementation of SDG 14 and related SDGs within the existing ocean governance frameworks is crucial. The advantage of a regional approach for SDG implementation is its capacity to facilitate country implementation and harmonization of country actions targeting specific marine ecosystems.
2. It would be useful to complement existing attempts at mapping of regional mechanisms, processes, actors and their mandates in the field of oceans governance.
3. Regional mechanisms should re-invigorate efforts to ensure implementation of existing agreements, as well as strengthen and reinforce cooperation, coordination, communication, cross-fertilization, and sharing of best practices and information across different sectors and geographical areas/management levels. Multiple regional mechanisms have a role to play in the review and follow up of SDG implementation. Ocean specific regional review and follow up mechanisms may be developed through the existing institutional frameworks. Regional institutional frameworks can serve as effective implementation mechanisms for global oceans-related conventions, such as IMO conventions, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention on Migratory Species with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea as the overarching legal framework within which all regional arrangements as related to Oceans must be made and implemented.
4. Policy interaction among the existing regional frameworks is of importance for a holistic approach to ocean governance.

¹ EC-UNEP MoU Annex Chapter 4, “Protecting biodiversity and ensuring sustainable management of natural resources”.

² Conserve and Sustainably Use Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources for Sustainable Development; <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

5. Oceans governance will benefit from wider and more inclusive engagement of key stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society organizations. This may require innovative approaches such as community based monitoring.
6. Various activities and mandates for oceans governance defined and implemented at national, regional and international levels should be coherent and complementary, contributing collectively to the implementation of SDG 14 and other relevant SDGs.
7. Regional level frameworks should facilitate and coordinate implementation at national level including by strengthening the coherence of institutions and processes.
8. Successful models of cooperation between the regional seas conventions and action plans and regional fisheries bodies can serve as good examples for objective-driven inter-sectoral cooperation; notably the Oslo and Paris Conventions – North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (OSPAR – NEAFC) model started with practical dialogue between the two sectors and resulted mutually supportive work on objectives on for example blue economy, Ecosystem based approach, food security, and climate change.
9. The Ecosystem Approach is a useful underlying principle for operational inter-sectoral cooperation, encompassing all three pillars of sustainable development.
10. Enhanced mapping of human activities and uses in the oceans may be a useful tool to promote inter-sectoral cooperation.
11. Land-based resources use (including Sustainable Consumption and Production) and pollution, as well as linkages between ocean-based and land based-economy merit further consideration in ocean governance.
12. The application of Economic Valuation of Ecosystems and Natural Capital Accounting (according to System of Environmental -Economic Accounting guidelines) provides a useful source of information for ocean governance.
13. Consistency between the ocean-related SDGs and associated targets and existing regional oceans targets, such as targets on Good Environment Status, regional seas Ecological Objectives, etc. should be ensured in their respective implementation processes.
14. The Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) has demonstrated value added of applying a regional marine approach for sustainable development objectives and may be replicated in other marine regions. Access to ("big") data, transparency and coherence is key to ensure effective monitoring of oceans-related commitments, including the SDGs.
15. There are a number of useful existing tools available for strengthening ocean governance, including Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM), Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP), Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) as well as capacity building, stakeholder processes and regional and national strategies.
16. Blue economy was mentioned as one of the drivers for a more structured approach to ocean governance, also outside the EU.
17. Existing initiatives and processes to strengthen regional oceans governance, for example in Europe and in Africa, can mutually benefit from closer cooperation and information-sharing among each other.
18. Global arrangements and regional instruments should be mutually reinforcing.