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**United Nations
Environment Assembly of the
United Nations Environment Programme**

**United Nations Environment Assembly of the
United Nations Environment Programme
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Oceans and seas

The United Nations Environment Assembly,

Recognizing that the marine environment, including the oceans, seas and adjacent coastal areas, forms an integrated whole that is an essential component of the global life-support system and an asset presenting important opportunities for sustainable development,

Gravely concerned about threats to the health of our oceans, coastal areas, wetlands and islands, as reflected, inter alia, in the first global integrated marine assessment (World Ocean Assessment I) of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects, acknowledged in General Assembly resolution 70/235, the fourth *Global Biodiversity Outlook* report¹ and chapter 30 of the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and about their probable increase in the foreseeable future,

Recalling that United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, calls for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in UNCLOS, which provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources, as recalled in paragraph 158 of “The future we want”,

Also recalling General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, by which the Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and welcoming the inclusion therein of Sustainable Development Goal 14 and its commitment on the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, while recognizing also the connections between healthy and productive oceans and other Sustainable Development Goals,

Further recalling General Assembly resolution 70/226 of 22 December 2015 ‘United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development’, and welcoming in particular the decision therein to convene the high-level conference in Fiji in June 2017,

Recognizing the contribution in accordance with international law of the regional seas conventions, regional action plans and regional fisheries management organizations in achieving SDG 14 and relevant related Sustainable Development Goals at the regional level, as well as to their regional follow-up and review, including through the regional monitoring and reporting mechanisms to be developed for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda,

¹ Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, *Global Biodiversity Outlook 4: A mid-term assessment of progress towards the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020*, Montreal, 2014.

Also recognizing the important contribution of many multilateral environmental agreements to delivering on the oceans-related Sustainable Development Goals and contributing to their follow-up and review processes,

Recalling that the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled “The future we want”, reaffirmed the commitment contained in Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 on area-based conservation measures, including marine protected areas, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information as a tool for the conservation of biological diversity and sustainable use of its components² and that target 14.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals calls for, by 2020, the conservation of at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas,

Also recalling the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and noting with concern the assessment in the fourth *Global Biodiversity Outlook* report that while there is significant progress towards meeting some components of the majority of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the rate of progress in most cases will not be sufficient to achieve the targets by 2020 unless additional action is taken,

Further recalling the United Nations Environment Programme Governing Council decision 27/6 on oceans, which urged countries to take the necessary steps to implement relevant and existing commitments, as well as commitments made at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, to protect and restore the health, productivity and resilience of oceans and marine ecosystems and to maintain biodiversity, and to effectively apply an ecosystem approach and the precautionary approach in their management, in accordance with international law, of activities having an impact on the marine environment in order to deliver on all three dimensions of sustainable development,

Acknowledging the United Nations Environment Programme’s contribution to tackling of emerging issues and activities adding to pressure on the marine environment, and to increasing knowledge on issues such as marine litter, ocean acidification, hypoxia and marine and coastal carbon sinks and reservoirs,

Recognizing the contribution of area-based management measures for the conservation of biological diversity and sustainable use of its components under international instruments, such as particularly sensitive sea areas established by the International Maritime Organization and vulnerable marine ecosystems identified by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the work on marine protected areas under the regional seas conventions and action plans or other area-based management measures taken by regional fisheries management organizations, to reach the target of Sustainable Development Goal 14 by 2020 to conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas consistent with national and international law and based on best available scientific information, and acknowledging related scientific and technical work on ecologically or biologically significant marine areas under the Convention on Biological Diversity and other global initiatives,

Welcoming the Paris Agreement³ adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change as a crucial step towards limiting the climate change-related impacts of warming and acidification of the oceans and of sea-level rise, and reduce the adverse consequences for marine and coastal ecosystems and coastal residents worldwide and including for small island developing States and other vulnerable States,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 69/292 of 19 June 2015, on the development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction,

Taking into account the contribution which the United Nations Environment Programme can make upon request by the concerned State(s) to assist them in the protection and preservation of the marine environment including in helping to achieve their objectives under relevant international law,

Acknowledging the challenges involved in enhancing cooperation and coordination among international organizations and forums relevant to marine issues, and highlighting the value in UNEP’s cooperation and coordination with these organizations and fora to contribute to a coherent delivery of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

² General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex, para. 177.

³ Nicaragua is not a party to the Paris Agreement.

Recalling the three priority source categories for work (nutrients, marine litter and waste water) under the 2012 Manila Declaration of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land Based Activities,

Noting the Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2017–2020 adopted at the seventeenth Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans,

1. *Requests* the Executive Director to include oceans-related aspects regarding the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets in United Nations Environment Programme activities, in cooperation and coordination with relevant global and regional fora, agreements and organization, consistent with international law, and to report to the next Environment Assembly;
2. *Calls* for continued cooperation and coordination among all relevant global and regional fora and organizations on marine issues, including the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Maritime Organization, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, the International Seabed Authority, the International Whaling Commission and the United Nations Environment Programme, to deliver coherently on Sustainable Development Goal 14 and its interrelated targets;
3. *Invites* the Executive Director to provide the necessary input for the 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 to be organized in June 2017, as appropriate;
4. *Calls on* Member States who have not yet done so to consider acceding to the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments, to promote its rapid entry into force;
5. *Invites* Member States and regional seas conventions and action plans, in cooperation, as appropriate, with other relevant organizations and fora, such as regional fisheries management organizations, to work towards the implementation of, and reporting on, the different ocean-related Sustainable Development Goals and associated targets, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets;
6. *Requests* the United Nations Environment Programme to step up its work, including through its Regional Seas Programme, on assisting countries and regions in the application of the ecosystem approach to managing the marine and coastal environment, including through enabling inter-sectoral cooperation in integrated coastal zone management and marine spatial planning;
7. *Also requests* the United Nations Environment Programme to provide, upon request from the Member States, technical advice on the designation, establishment and active management of marine protected areas and on the application of other spatial management measures in cooperation with competent international and regional forums and organizations, including, as appropriate, multilateral environmental agreements, and regional fisheries bodies;
8. *Encourages* Member States, individually and jointly and also within regional bodies, to designate and actively manage marine protected areas and take other effective area-based conservation measures, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information, with a view to achieving the related global targets, in particular where significantly less than 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas are so far being conserved, or where protected areas lack effective and equitable management, connectedness or ecological representativeness;
9. *Encourages* the United Nations Environment Programme to continue to participate in the process initiated by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 69/292 on the negotiations on the development of an international legally binding instrument under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction;
10. *Notes* the document on the Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2017–2020 and requests the Executive Director to communicate the Strategic Directions to conferences of the parties, intergovernmental meetings or other governing bodies of the relevant regional seas conventions and action plans;
11. *Requests* the Executive Director, through the United Nations Environment Programme's Regional Seas Programme, to reinforce cooperation, coordination, communication and sharing of best practices and information among the existing regional seas conventions and action plans across different geographical areas, in line with the United Nations Environment Programme's Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2017–2020;

12. *Invites* Member States that have not done so to consider becoming Parties and/or Members to regional seas conventions and action plans, and encourages the United Nations Environment Programme, through its Regional Seas Programme, to support initiatives of such Member States in that regard;
 13. *Encourages* the contracting parties to existing regional seas conventions to consider the possibility of increasing the regional coverage of those instruments in accordance with international law
 14. *Acknowledges* and expresses support for the strategic partnership between the United Nations Environment Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization in the context of the 2030 Agenda, particularly for the implementation of the Sustainable Food Systems Programme of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns;
 15. *Supports* the United Nations Environment Programme's contribution to the activities of marine ecosystem restoration, and in particular to ecosystem management and restoration in coastal regions, nature-based solutions to climate adaptation and the creation of sustainable jobs and livelihoods in coastal regions, including through multi-stakeholder partnerships;
 16. *Encourages* the United Nations Environment Programme to provide scientific support, in cooperation with relevant organizations, programmes and forums, to increase understanding of – and thus help in avoiding – abrupt, accelerating, or irreversible environmental changes with potentially significant global consequences, for example through thawing of the permafrost of the seabed and melting of sea ice and glaciers;
 17. *Requests* the Executive Director to assess the effectiveness of the United Nations Environment Programme's 2011 marine and coastal strategy and, on the basis of that assessment, submit a proposal for its update, revision or replacement for consideration by the Environment Assembly at its next session.
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