



Partnership for Regional
Ocean Governance

Summary for Decision Makers

PARTNERING FOR A SUSTAINABLE OCEAN

The Role of Regional Ocean Governance in
Implementing Sustainable Development Goal 14

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The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development puts a healthy ocean at the core of the global sustainable development agenda and sets targets for tackling some of the most pressing issues facing the ocean.

The responsibility for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals lies with the member states of the United Nations, but the transboundary nature of marine resources and threats to the marine environment requires States to work together. Fish stocks, pollution, and marine ecosystems do not respect national boundaries.

Partnering for a Sustainable Ocean: The Role of Regional Ocean Governance in Implementing Sustainable Development Goal 14 highlights the major role that regional ocean governance can play in the implementation of SDG14. It assesses the mandates of different regional cooperation frameworks, showcases existing regional efforts contributing to the specific targets underpinning SDG14, and identifies key contributions that regional institutions and initiatives can make to the overarching challenges of the 2030 Agenda.

The report also highlights the urgent need to increase support for regional ocean governance efforts, including through the provision of greater political and financial support, as well as the establishment of new partnerships and spaces for exchange.

Key messages:

1. Regional cooperation is essential for ocean sustainability.

Regional approaches to ocean governance make it possible for States and stakeholders to cooperate at an ecosystem scale and work together across sectors and national boundaries.

2. Most of the SDG14 targets can be addressed through regional initiatives.

Regional approaches and instruments can play a key role in meeting most of the SDG14 targets, with particular relevance in the areas of marine pollution, sustainable ocean management, fisheries, conservation, and economic benefits for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

3. Regional ocean governance is a driver for the development of integrated approaches.

Regional approaches can help advance ocean governance by bringing all relevant actors together, taking the interdependencies among SDG14 targets into account, and providing co-benefits for the other SDGs.

4. Regional ocean governance efforts require greater support to overcome gaps and institutional weaknesses.

Regional cooperation is key to the success of SDG14 and the 2030 Agenda, and should be further strengthened, including through capacity building and the development of regional partnerships.

1. Regional cooperation is essential for ocean sustainability

Marine ecosystems do not respect national borders, so national action alone cannot ensure the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean. Regional ocean governance, i.e. efforts among countries to work together to manage their ocean, coasts, and marine resources, has proven to be an effective means for advancing ocean sustainability.

Regional approaches are not only a cornerstone of ecosystem-based management, but they frequently result in stronger commitments by States and stakeholders than those made under global instruments. Regional ocean governance initiatives vary widely in scope, mandate, and geographic coverage. Such efforts can take many forms, including:

- Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans
- Regional Fisheries Bodies
- Political and economic organisations
- Leader-driven initiatives
- Large Marine Ecosystem projects

Regional ocean governance is diverse and adaptable, encouraging strong leadership and action, in particular by:

- Taking into account the particular ecological, economic, and social characteristics and challenges of marine regions.
- Increasing the level of collective ambition and the diversity of solutions available.
- Providing flexibility that better ensures the participation of civil society in adaptive decision-making processes.
- Encouraging parties to cooperate by sharing expertise, developing joint processes, and coordinating and harmonising their governance efforts.



Scramble for fish, scramble for a livelihood
Mayungu, Kenya's North coast

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2. Most of the SDG14 targets can be addressed through regional initiatives

Regional organisations have mandates covering most of the SDG14 targets (see Table 1), in particular marine pollution, sustainable ocean management, fisheries, conservation, as well as economic benefits for SIDS and LDCs. The good practice examples and solutions in the report (see Figure 1), drawn from marine regions across the world's ocean, demonstrate how effective solutions for marine sustainability challenges can be developed through regional cooperation, coordination, and harmonisation.

While the analysis shows that there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach, important factors for successful regional cooperation include existing legal mandates and frameworks for cooperation, prioritisation of marine conservation and sustainable use at the political level, and sufficient institutional and financial capacity.

SDG14 targets	Mandate of ROG organisations	Potential for regional implementation
Target 14.1: Marine Pollution	Yes, but prevention of shipborne pollution mainly falls under the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the agreements it administers.	High
Target 14.2: Sustainable management and protection	Yes.	High
Target 14.3: Ocean acidification	Yes, mainly through scientific cooperation and elaboration of adaptation measures.	Medium
Target 14.4: Sustainable Fisheries	Yes, some, but not in Regional Seas programmes.	High
Target 14.5: Conservation	Yes, mainly through area-based management tools.	High
Target 14.6: Fisheries subsidies	Partially, as inter-governmental fisheries subsidies negotiations are the exclusive province of the World Trade Organization (WTO).	Low
Target 14.7: SIDS and LDCs	Yes.	High
Target 14.a: Knowledge, capacity building & technology transfer	Yes.	Medium
Target 14.b: Artisanal fisheries	Yes, mainly through regional economic organisations and Regional Fisheries Management Organisations.	High
Target 14.c: Implementation of international law	Yes.	Medium

Table 1: SDG14 targets and regional organisations' mandates and activities

3.Regional ocean governance is a driver for the development of integrated approaches

The SDGs are an integrated package that aims to balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. Achieving the goals will require governance approaches that

work across sectoral and State boundaries and take into account the interactions between different goals and targets.

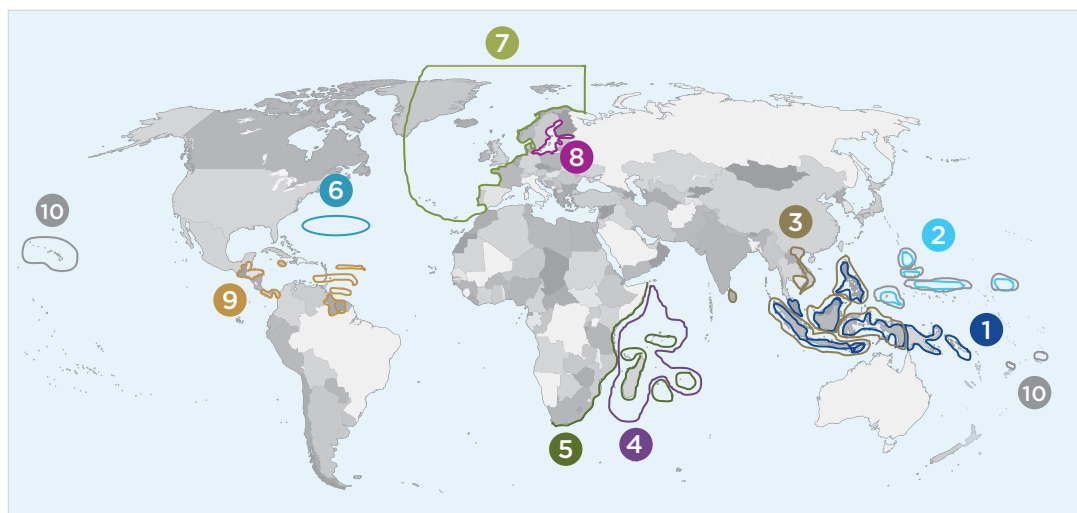


Figure 1: Good practice examples; map of case studies in the report.

- 1 Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries, and Food Security
- 2 Micronesia Challenge
- 3 The Regional Fisheries Livelihood Programme for South and Southeast Asia (RFLP)
- 4 Fish-I Africa
- 5 Addressing Land-based Activities in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO-LaB) and Western Indian Ocean Consortium (WIO-C)
- 6 Sargasso Sea Commission
- 7 Protected areas and cooperation in the North East Atlantic
- 8 European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region
- 9 Caribbean Regional Fund for Wastewater Management
- 10 Pacific Islands Managed and Protected Area Community

4. Regional ocean governance efforts require greater support to overcome gaps and institutional weaknesses

Regional initiatives and approaches to ocean governance are a key part of the framework for the implementation of SDG14 and the 2030 Agenda, and should be further developed and strengthened. In this regard, the report urges decision-makers to:

- **Support regional ocean governance efforts:** National governments, donors, and stakeholders should commit to further developing existing regional ocean governance efforts. This includes:
 - Cooperating at the regional level to identify priorities, develop joint indicators, and implement concrete actions and measures for the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean.
 - Incorporating the implementation of Agenda 2030 into the work programmes of regional organisations.
 - Providing flexible and sustainable finance to regional initiatives and developing their human and technical capacities.
- **Develop regional partnerships:** As no regional organisation has a mandate covering the entire set of ocean-related SDG targets, tailor-made and context-specific regional partnerships should be developed and bring together States, existing regional and sectoral international organisations, and other stakeholders. Such cross-sectoral and transboundary cooperation would contribute to the development of coordinated approaches and roadmaps for the regional implementation of SDG14.
- **Create a regional exchange mechanism:** Establishing a mechanism for cooperation and exchange, both between regions and between regional initiatives and global processes, could help to broaden the scope of existing cooperation and further improve stakeholder engagement. Such a mechanism could provide the opportunity for regional organisations and mechanisms from different regions to meet informally to share experiences and good practices, build capacity, discuss common initiatives, highlight options to tackle key challenges, and identify pathways toward improved cooperation.



St. John's Harbour in Antigua polluted due to lack of sewage treatment

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Citation

Wright, G., Schmidt, S., Rochette, J., Shackeroff, J., Unger, S., Waweru, Y., Müller, A., 'Partnering for a Sustainable Ocean: The Role of Regional Ocean Governance in Implementing SDG14', PROG: IDDRI, IASS, TMG & UN Environment, 2017.

This publication has been prepared within the framework of the Partnership for Regional Ocean Governance (PROG).



The Partnership for Regional Ocean Governance would like to thank the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) for the financial support provided and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH for the collaboration in this work.

Published by

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June 2017

DOI of the main report: 10.2312/iass.2017.011



The Partnership for Regional Ocean Governance (PROG)

The PROG was created in 2015 with the aim of advancing regional cooperation for the conservation and sustainable use of marine ecosystems and resources. Established as a platform at the interface of science, policy, and society, the PROG focuses on facilitating dialogue, fostering regional cooperation, and encouraging the development of integrated and coherent governance frameworks at regional and national levels. Main areas of work include the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. The work of the PROG is supported by different international organisations and agencies, including the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) through the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

More information at: <http://www.prog-ocean.org/>



Contributing organisations

The PROG is hosted by the Institute of Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS), the Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI), TMG-Think Tank for Sustainability, and the United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment).

Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS)

Funded by the ministries of research of the Federal Republic of Germany and the State of Brandenburg, the IASS aims to identify and promote development pathways for a global transformation towards a sustainable society.

More information at: www.iass-potsdam.de



Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI)

IDDRI is an independent research institute dedicated to fostering the transition to sustainable development and prosperity for all. IDDRI identifies the necessary conditions for the integration of sustainable development into public policies and proposes tools for their implementation.

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TMG – Think Tank for Sustainability (Töpfer Müller Gaßner GmbH)

TMG initiates and supports transitions towards a sustainable society and cooperates with groups from across society to overcome existing barriers in the fields of renewable energy, sustainable development goals, development policy, and the management of natural resources.

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The United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment)

UN Environment is the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment.

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