



**United Nations
Environment
Programme**



7th Global Meeting of the Regional Seas
Conventions and Action Plans

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Report of the 7th Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans

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The 7th Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, graciously hosted by the Helsinki Commission Secretariat, was held from 18-20th October 2005 in Helsinki, Finland. In addition to the Regional Seas Programme Coordinators, various donors, and other UN agencies, the UNEP Regional Directors attended the first day of the meeting in order to discuss with the Regional Seas Coordinators, on coordinated input to the 2nd Intergovernmental Review Meeting of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA/IGR2). The second and third days focused on three levels of sustainable financing for the Regional Seas Programmes (RSPs): secretariat, programmes of work and national implementation.

Session 4: Joint Regional Seas/Regional Offices session with main focus IGR2 (*see INF.3.RS-INF.12.IGR*)

Opening remarks: Ms. Anne Christine Brusendorff, Executive Secretary, HELCOM and Dr. Veerle Vandeweerd, Head of the Regional Seas Programme (RSP) welcomed participants and thanked the People's Republic of China for the kind offer to host the GPA/IGR2 in October 2006.

A brief presentation was made on progress in implementing the six Regional Seas Strategic Directions (INF.3.RS) in 2005.

It was discussed that the combined legal support of the RS, UNEP Regional Offices (ROs) and GPA could contribute to the implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan (BSP) on capacity building at the national level.

Additionally, there was a consensus on the need to harmonize data collection and information gathering into a data management system. The Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) agreed to share the results of the first trial of its Environment Knowledge Hub (EKH) in November 2005 in Asia. ROPME distributed a background paper on its Integrated Information System (RIIS), which manages oceanographic data and analysis and archives remote sensing station images. ROPME aims to make RIIS compatible with other international systems such as GEO and IOC. The U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) offered to help the RS devise a coordinated data management system.

Global Review of the Regional Seas Programme: The draft Global Review of the Regional Seas Programme was presented as an opportunity to revive and re-focus the RSPs at regional and global level. Several issues were marked as key for the evaluation, development and institutional strengthening of the RS:

- The value of the ecosystem approach for sustainable tourism;
- A focus on human health as a priority issue, specifically, the link between human health and sewage;
- The need to increase private sector involvement in RS activities as well as public awareness of RSPs;
- The importance of country engagement with RSP activities;
- The need to assess whether the implementation of the regional conventions are supporting global conventions; and
- The need to have quantitative indicators – raise awareness of the coastal damage to policy makers.

A recently concluded evaluation of the Mediterranean Action Plan was circulated to all RSPs as well as the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD).

IGR2, 16-20 October 2006, Beijing, China: The importance of RS and RO contributions to IGR2 was stressed and feedback requested on the following outputs: the Agenda, “Annex” to the GPA, Steering Committee, Ministerial Declaration, and Partnership Roll-up. Discussion Points and recommendations:

- IGR2 is a chance to bring RSP issues back onto the Ministerial political agenda as well as to draw attention from media.
- The “Annex” should not be termed as such, as it will not be negotiated and adopted by member countries. It should be a guidance document that presents: the flexibility of the GPA, how the GPA contributes to the delivery of WSSD targets and indicators of achievement and methodologies for implementing activities.
- More time will be needed for discussion on the review of this “guidance document” and the GPA Programme of Work (POW).
- The link between the first three days and the Ministerial Session should be clarified.
- The Ministerial Segment needs to be policy based and not a discussion on technical issues.
- Topics suggested for the Ministerial segment: trans-boundary issues and cooperation, the relationship between the GPA and human health – specifically relating to sustainable tourism and sewage management.
- The meeting suggested making use of focal points to circulate documents during meetings in preparation for IGR2 and solicit input from ministries.

UNEP Regional Directors – Regional Offices input to the IGR2: The Regional Directors agreed to follow up with ministers and distribute information, especially at upcoming meetings such as the Regional or Council Ministerial Fora. It was suggested that GPA produce a 1-2 page brief as a background document for them to distribute.

UNEP-administered RSPs and UNON: The main recommendation from this session was to improve communication and information exchange between UNON and the UNEP-administered RSPs, who are occasionally not included in the UNEP and UNON mailing lists, internal circulars and memos.

Session 1: Financing the Regional Seas Secretariats and Programmes

Financing secretariat costs: PERSGA, OSPAR and NOWPAP presented their experiences in financing the secretariats. The PERSGA experience provided a good example of getting to sustainability after the GEF. OSPAR’s experience was considered particularly useful to developing RSPs’ financial structures as well as for input to IGR2, specifically as an illustration of the need for country ownership. NOWPAP’s presentation illustrated that annual equal member country payments to the NOWPAP trust fund increases the sustainability of programmes while also increasing country ownership. It also illustrated national commitment through Regional Activity Centers (RACs) in implementing activities on behalf of governments.

Financing the Regional Seas Programmes: MAP presented the experience of moving towards sustainable financing through the GEF, donor funding and country financing. MAP has increased the sustainable financing of its programmes by: strengthening the sense of ownership among member countries by fully engaging stakeholders; asking countries to test financing instruments at the national level to free up funds for environmental activities; assisting countries in the preparation of programmes for external financing; preparing integrated projects and making EU funds available for investments in projects that have a common ground; and building a GEF Strategic Partnership through a process of well prepared and executed GEF projects.

Session 2: Financing national implementation of Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans

Financing the implementation of the Regional Seas Programmes at national level (framework conditions, strategic planning, financing strategies, project preparation cycles): SACEP presented the experience in Sri Lanka as it relates to planning actions based on realistic affordability.

The Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO) presented financing mechanisms for environmental action and considerations for their usage. NEFCO, a multilateral financial institution, also provided information on the range of their activities, such as: providing loans, carbon financing, investment funds and conditional grants. RSPs expressed great interest in the NEFCO model and seek to adapt it to their individual regions. The need to adapt to the world of financiers, rather than expect them to adapt to the environmental mind-set as well as the need to build an effective business plan as a way to gain the interest of financiers was discussed. The RSP secretariat will provide and distribute more detailed information on the NEFCO model.

Practical experience: from the planning stage to action in various RSPs: HELCOM presented the experience of moving from SAP/NAP development to concrete investments. The “hotspot” approach establishes priorities for action at the regional and national levels and provides a framework to mobilize financial resources from different sources. HELCOM is currently developing a Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) that builds on the political momentum from the ecosystem approach. It was presented that RS can provide a policy forum, tapping into the ongoing initiatives e.g. the EU Marine Strategy.

Danish Environmental Protection Agency (DEPA) presented the experience from a donor perspective on the transition process of moving from limited hotspot projects to programmed activities to full scale implementation of EU directives – and obtaining the needed financial resources to undertake the investments to do so. Among the main issues raised were the importance of gradually moving towards sustainable financing mechanisms such as the user/polluter pays principle and the necessity of obtaining long-term financing from external organizations and institutions. Experience from the EU accession process showed that strong ownership, enforcement and availability of different financing mechanisms for blending project finance was and is needed. It was suggested that in the initial phases there is a need to follow the money until specific environmental financing mechanisms are established.

The successful turnaround of the Nairobi and Abidjan Conventions was presented, as well as steps forward, including: supporting the development of National Action Plans (NAPs) and their implementation; developing and implementing regional projects; data and information management; supporting the establishment of trans-frontier Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and their management; and offering a legal platform and framework to discuss trans-boundary Economic Exclusive Zones (EEZ) issues.

Discussion Points:

- The need to think realistically about post-GEF funding, RSPs need a toolkit, not just on obtaining GEF funding but also on how to build bankable projects.
- It was suggested that a paper be written that can be presented to politicians to clearly express the impacts and achievements of the RSPs thus far.
- Requests for more information on the Danish experience of moving towards sustainable financing.
- The PERSGA financing paper could be expanded into a publication relevant to all RSPs.

Strategic planning on realistic implementation: The RSP/GPA discussed how to move from an action plan ‘wish list’ towards affordable action programmes, along with the need to build long-term sustainable financing through economic instruments (i.e. user/polluter-pays principle, taxpayer funding, fee- or reward-based policies, etc.). The expectation that grants will continue to fund projects is not realistic. The biggest issue is that most action plans are too vague and do not address specific actions or specific sources of funding. The more developed and specific the action plan, the better the chance to obtain financing for large scale investments from International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and Public Investment Programs. In the short term the key is to identify a few very high-priority projects that the country can afford. The short-term projects should be implemented while the enabling environment (legislation, institution, capacity and possibly additional financing mechanisms) is strengthened. The short-term should likewise be used to develop concrete medium and long-term project pipelines (investment as

well as institutional/capacity projects). There is a strong need to prioritize based on possible limited resources in order to create a realistic action plan. Most countries already have economic instruments in place (i.e. all people pay for water, energy, etc.), which should be strengthened, as well as additional instruments established to ensure long term sustainable financing from domestic sources.

The RSP/GPA then presented the Lithuanian Environmental Financing Strategy (INF.19.RS), which is a good example of strategic planning based on household and national affordability. The Lithuanian study identified needed investments to comply with EU implementation directives, at municipal level, matching these with financing sources and priorities for the needed investments over time.

Caribbean Environment Programme (CEP) presented the experience of strengthening domestic resource mobilization – framework conditions, increasing market-based instruments (MBIs), leveraging/increasing allocations, public-private partnerships and handing over responsibility to relevant implementing ministries. The benefits of working with other organizations to develop projects and share best practices was stressed, as well as the value of partnerships, especially private sector involvement with sustainable tourism issues, particularly with respect to capacity building.

Discussion Points:

- The meeting suggested that a paper be produced on the different economic instruments, best practices and usages.

Partnerships with the GEF:

Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI) presented on strengthening the claim for environmental financing (economic valuation – Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs), poverty issues and job creation). The report compiles data on marine activities at a national and international level that can be used for comparative purposes. This approach can be used to establish priorities and then develop case studies for regions with less activity. A method was developed for aggregating the data to give a sense of the scale of activity in economic terms. These activities can then be compiled at the different levels: national, Regional Seas and LME. The study also allows for comparison across regions. Economic valuation is helpful in increasing the visibility and political support for marine programmes – by emphasizing the value of these programmes in economic terms, broken down by country/region. It was proposed to simplify the language in the study being finalized in order to be able to present this to the policy and decision makers.

UNEP/Division of Global Environment Facility (DGEF) presented on an approach adopted by GEF IW projects to endeavor to ensure sustainable financing during and after GEF and associated donor funding. The following aspects are considered in such an endeavor: involvement and participation of stakeholders; maximizing the benefit of programme activities with given resources (i.e. cost-effectiveness); country ownership of the programme; leverage funding from other sources; regular monitoring and evaluation as part of the programme framework; sustainable long-term project funding; and inter-linkages with other projects.

The GEF is not a project financier but a project co-financier, providing new and additional funds. Therefore necessary costs for action will need to be shared by multiple sources. All GEF projects are required to sustain the project impacts even after the lifecycle of GEF funding. UNEP/GEF pursues financial sustainability through: strategic partnerships that involve stress reduction measures; the use of co-financing; economic valuation with the possible application of economic and policy instruments; emphasizing inter-linkages with other environmental projects and stressing the multiple, global environmental benefits of its programmes.

It was noted that many of the transboundary marine and coastal systems, particularly those covered by the Regional Seas Programme, have now been covered by GEF projects. The importance of cost-effectiveness and

maximizing project inter-linkages and benefits, especially through activities related to biodiversity or climate change, was stressed.

The RS Secretariat in collaboration with the UNEP/GEF is currently developing a training programme to increase the understanding of the GEF funding process, and enhance efficiency of implementation of GEF projects. The purpose of the training, is to train the RSPs on how to better prepare project proposals and implement the projects to fit GEF requirements. Three elements are involved: the compilation of information on all RS/GEF projects to increase possible synergies and knowledge-sharing; the development of a training manual on how to develop and implement GEF projects (within a Regional Seas context); and region-based training workshops to be delivered in the second half of 2006.

IMO–GloBallast Partnerships (GBP): International Maritime Organisation (IMO) presented the GloBallast Partnership Project, the main objective of which is to prepare countries to deal with invasive species transfer through ships' ballast water. It was suggested that RSP be one of the platforms for regional implementation of GBP, involving coordination and facilitation; and linking the GBP with initiatives such as Global Marine Initiative. The RS welcomed the offer of partnership with IMO's GloBallast programme. RSPs expressed interest in having a more global perspective on invasive species, the need for a consistent regional and global approach. Suggestions were made to invite other relevant organizations such as FAO to partner with GloBallast. In order to raise awareness of ballast water, the RS Secretariat agreed to distribute more information to COPs regarding the importance of this issue, including a recent BBC documentary.

Investment project cycle management and resource blending: The Nordic Development Fund presented the investment project cycle – moving from project idea to project investments. The World Bank (WB) project cycle was also explained: the appraisal process, the negotiation and approval processes, the implementation and supervision phase, and the evaluation phase, along with country support in preparing Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and Country Assistance Strategies (CAS). The WB has opened up its CAS process over the last ten years. For a project to obtain funding, the proposal has to fit into CAS otherwise it will not be considered. The following aspects were noted as important during the project cycle: bringing in the WB at the earliest possible stage of the project; taking full advantage of the more accessible CAS process; contributing to country dialogue at consultative group meetings; and procurement analysis.

Closing: Dr. Vandeweerd thanked HELCOM for hosting the meeting and thanked participants for a successful and interactive session. The general sentiment among the participants was positive. Many commented that the exchange of experiences and newly learned practices will be valuable for RSPs in their efforts to obtain long-term sustainable programme financing, with continued collaboration and support from the Regional Seas.

Next Meeting: The 8th Global Regional Seas Meeting will be held back to back with the 2nd Intergovernmental Review Meeting of the GPA (IGR2), 16 – 20 October 2006 in Beijing, China. The proposed dates of the Global Meeting to be held before the IGR2 are **12-14th October 2006**. PERSGA graciously offered to host the 9th Global Regional Seas meeting in Jeddah and the meeting accepted the invitation.