

LME COMMUNITY MEDIUM-TERM FRAMEWORK STRATEGY

First Draft

MISSION

The purpose of the Large Marine Ecosystem (LME) Community is to improve global ecosystem-based governance of Large Marine Ecosystems and their coasts; generate new and exchange existing knowledge and best practices and lessons learned from LME and other projects, GEF and non-GEF financed; assist in building the respective capacity; and improve conditions for development of an efficient Blue Economy. Major aim of the LME Community is to assist reaching the Sustainable Development Goal 14 targets until 2030 and beyond.

VISION

The LME Community will be an important actor in making our oceans as rich, healthy and abundant as they once were. The awareness of the Large Marine Ecosystems will be raised, the support of its actions will gain wide acceptance among the larger strata of interested communities and the LME and regional ocean governance will become a norm and a model for successful management of our marine resources.

PREFACE

On several occasions, participants at the LME annual consultation meetings have emphasized the need to have a more structured approach towards active engagement of the community gathered around efforts to improve the state of Large Marine Ecosystems. On one hand, significant resources, including financial, have been employed in that endeavor while, on the other, very often there was a sense that there was inadequate cohesion and synergy among those efforts. The LME operatives have been meeting regularly, on an annual basis, for more than two decades. While these meetings were a good opportunity to exchange views on the current issues and problems the LME practitioners were confronted with, they felt that there is a need for a more strategic approach to realise the full potential of a resource that has been gradually built over more than 20 years. Therefore, the 21st LME Annual Consultation Meeting (LME21), held in Cartagena, Colombia, has discussed the need to devise a relevant strategy and made a decision to adopt one in the near future.

The world oceans regulate many of the earth's key biological, chemical and physical cycles, substantially influence and are impacted by climate variability and change, support a substantial proportion of the world's biodiversity, and provide for the livelihoods and food security of billions of people. Marine and coastal ecosystems are estimated to provide 63% of global 'ecosystems services', with a global market value of \$3 trillion per year, equivalent to 5% of global GDP, and a non-market value of \$22 trillion per year. Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs) occupy coastal ocean space around the margins of the continents. They produce 80 per cent of the world's annual marine fish catch, are overfished, polluted, and subject to nutrient over-enrichment, acidification, accelerated warming from climate change, loss of biodiversity and key habitats under stress, including sea grasses, mangroves, and coral reefs.

LMEs are transboundary in nature by virtue of interconnected currents and movement and migration of marine resources. They are relatively large areas of ocean space of about 200,000 km² or more, adjacent to the continents and extending out to the break in a continental shelf or the seaward extent of a current system and characterized by their unique undersea topography, current, marine productivity and food chain interactions. Finally, they harbour important biodiversity and provide important ecosystem services and tangible benefits, including livelihoods, food security, carbon sequestration and storage, marine transport and recreational opportunities. There are 66 LMEs identified so far.

The system of LMEs has been developed by the US National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to identify areas of the oceans for conservation purposes. The objective was to use the LME concept as a tool for enabling ecosystem-based management to provide a collaborative approach to management of resources within ecologically-bounded transnational areas. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) has contributed a significant amount of financial resources in recent decades to assist countries in integrated management of the LMEs, in particular through development and implementation of Transboundary Diagnostic Analyses (TDA) and Strategic Action Programmes (SAP).

A combination of anthropogenic and natural pressures is degrading the health and productivity of LMEs, compromising the sustainability of LME market and non-market ecosystem services. In the majority of cases, these pressures are accelerating, and without

concerted action their impacts could become irreversible. The root causes of the overutilization and degradation of LMEs stems from failures in governance of the relevant sectors (fisheries, tourism, shipping, agriculture, etc.), including inadequate policies and legislation, poor enforcement, weak institutions, and insufficient participation of civil society in the management of both marine and freshwater systems. Prompt and large-scale action is needed to achieve integrated adaptive ecosystem-based management and governance of transboundary resources, to overcome the downward trend of losses of goods and services, and to mitigate the degradation of the LMEs in the face of the accelerating effects of climate change.

The **LME Community** is an informal group of stakeholders that brings together marine and coastal practitioners involved in LME, Marine Protected Area (MPA), Marine Spatial Planning (MPA), Integrated Coastal Management (MMA) and other related projects; corresponding Regional Seas and Regional Fisheries Bodies representatives; international and national organizations and institutions; NGOs; business community; as well as general public and other interested individuals and organisations).

WHAT IS THE LME COMMUNITY MEDIUM TERM FRAMEWORK STRATEGY?

Generally speaking, a framework strategy describes what needs to be done within a joint effort of a group of actors/stakeholders brought together to solve common problems/issues, and describes the path how that will be done. A framework strategy takes into account existing barriers and resources and will follow the overall vision, mission, and objectives of a certain strategic initiative. “Framework strategy”, unlike a fully-fledged “strategy”, is a somewhat looser type of initiative. It is usually being utilised when there is a wide network of stakeholders involved, geographically and in terms of subjects they are dealing with, which prevents the network to have a relatively rigid level of decision-making, which is needed in a fully-fledged strategy. However, the framework strategy still maintains the strategic importance as a strategy itself. It is largely defined by the importance of issues it is related to. While the framework strategy does not result in decisions that lead to clearly defined outputs and outcomes, it is still resulting in outcomes that assist its stakeholders to guide their activities within a commonly defined framework and towards achieving commonly agreed and adopted goals and objectives.

The medium-term referred to in the LME Community Framework Strategy (Strategy) covers the period of 3 to 5 years, which is considered as standard time span for the medium-term strategies. However, the achievement of individual objectives can vary, depending on the complexity of the objective, number of actors involved, resources available, priority, etc.

The Strategy will primarily respond to the needs of the LME Community. It should be a bottom up process with the “buy in” from all its stakeholders. As such it should be considered as a key resource to engage other stakeholders and guide and inspire many of their actions in the years to come. Globally and overall, it is about the ocean governance, i.e. about managing and using the world's oceans and their resources in ways that keep our oceans healthy, productive, safe, secure and resilient. However, more precisely, it should be about framing activities of the LME community in medium term within which LME projects, financed from GEF and non-GEF

sources, will contribute to, but not only them. One of the major aims of the Strategy is to expand its thematic scope by expanding the thematic realm it will be concerned with, but also to reach out to other actors that have not yet been included in this initiative. The latter aim is emerging from the understanding that one of the shortcomings of the LME Community is that it constitutes a relatively “closed” group of stakeholders whose objectives are not always easily understood by those that are considered to be outside of their “silo”, and that this situation has to change if the whole initiative wants to be sustainable in the long term.

The Strategy is a strategic framework where LME projects/initiatives are nested and/or get their strategic “inspiration”. It is about setting targets for the LME Community’s outcomes as a global community on which its progress in reaching the stated objectives could be measured. The Strategy should also be about defining how awareness about LME Community’s impacts on ecosystems in the public space can be created. And finally, Strategy will incorporate the LME Annual Consultation Meeting as its main platform where experiences will be exchanged.

OBJECTIVES OF THE MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGY

The long-term **goal** of the LME Community Framework Strategy is to establish a functioning community of practitioners and other members that will work together towards improving the state of the world oceans and the Large Marine Ecosystems, and in particular towards achieving the targets of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14, and other corresponding SDGs by 2030 and beyond.

Specific **medium-term objectives** of the Strategy are stated as follows:

- Prioritising main strategic directions for LME Community’s involvement;
- Assisting in the implementation of SDG14 targets, in particular those with an earlier maturity;
- Supporting the implementation of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, in particular by identifying the means to link scientific findings to the implementation needs on the ground, which should facilitate discussion between practitioners and decision-makers;
- Expanding the scope of LME Community, in particular by bringing in other stakeholders.

PRIORITISING MAJOR STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

While the LME Community has already been implementing a very large range of activities, considering relatively short time-span of this strategy, there is a need for prioritization:

1. Contribute to the evolution of the ocean governance framework:
 - Linking with the all relevant goals of the UN SDG agenda and ABNJ negotiations: global vs regional vs local approach;

- Improving the status of the regional ocean governance and drafting the role of the LME Community in it;
- Stimulating technical cooperation to advance Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) within and across regions;
- Furthering cooperation among regional organisations (UNEP, FAO; CBD, UN Economic Commissions, and other) and regional bodies, such as Regional Fisheries Management Organisations;
- Providing contribution of LME projects in supporting BBNJ, connecting MPAs, providing more technical framework for respective negotiation.

2. Promotion of the Blue Economy:

- Start thinking “out of the box” and articulate contribution that LME initiatives can provide to the to Business Community and thus make it attractive for it to participate in the implementation of the LME initiatives and projects.
- Increase involvement of and the partnerships with the private sector/business sector.
- Develop the concept of the “LME Investment Forum”. The feasibility study should be made to find out how realistic is that the idea be implemented in the medium term. The steps should be carried out incrementally. It should be explored what level for the initial one would be the most efficient: national, sub-regional, regional, and/or global.
- Further the role of the Marine Spatial Planning and identify whether it will be integrated as a constituent part of an LME initiatives or the MSP initiatives will complement the LME ones.
- Rebranding of TDA/SAP approach in the framework of the Blue Economy.

3. Sustainability of the LME initiatives

- What needs to be done to improve the LME initiatives’ sustainability particularly at the national level.
- Analyse how long the dependence on GEF funds should last and what is the feasibility of starting new LME projects or prolonging the existing ones without GEF financing.
- Establish working partnership with the business community by implementing the LME:LEARN Resource Mobilisation Strategy.
- Explore further the institutional and legal arrangements that would best respond to the needs of LMEs and be commensurate with the political realities in the specific LMEs.

4. Communication and visibility

- LME concept should be increasingly recognized as being indispensable approach for governing oceans.
- LME Community should support development of an efficient and tailored communication strategy enabling it to fully demonstrate the impact of LME initiatives’ results.

- Up-stream the LME approach, in particular by making the political elites and business sector aware of its advantages.
5. Capacity development
- Update and implementation of the LME:LEARN training Strategy.
 - Support creation of the capacity development platform.
 - Promote local contributions to the capacity development efforts.

IMPLEMENTING THE SDG 14

By pursuing this strategic priority the LME Community will assist the implementation of the 2030 Agenda:

- What elements of the LME initiatives/projects need to be linked to the 2030 Agenda and implementation of SDG14?
- What is the relevance of other SDGs for the LME Community and how it could be integrated?
- Development of possible common/harmonized formats across LME portfolio for monitoring and reporting on implementation of SDG14 targets. This could build upon the work undertaken by LME:LEARN.

SUPPORTING THE UN OCEAN SCIENCE DECADE

Science in support of EBM has always been a component very important for the LME Community. LME projects do not, generally, “produce” science but are largely dependent on the scientific work undertaken by other. The forthcoming UN Oceans Science Decade offers an appropriate framework for the LME Community to provide its contribution by:

- Integrating emerging natural and social science issues in the LME Agenda.
- Cooperating and linking with other scientific initiatives (e.g. GESAMP).
- Promoting academic work with journals.
- Structuring future global meetings to emphasize the role of LMEs in science, and the need of science for LMEs.
- Focus on science and information as the basis for good decision-making.

EXPANDING THE SCOPE OF THE LME COMMUNITY

The LME Community will enlarge its scope both vertically and horizontally. Vertically, it should better incorporate regional and local stakeholders, while horizontally, it will expand the scope of its activities, in particular by incorporating social and economic aspects. The following will be done:

- Learn from the successful sub-regional and local initiatives and see how they could be better integrated in regional ocean governance initiatives. It is important to establish a link between global and local efforts. The global ones develop initiatives

that could greatly help sustainable development at the local level, while the local provide signals for the global on the issues that most important for the livelihood of coastal population.

- While the economic aspects, and recently the Blue Economy, have been a constituent elements of the LME projects, in particular through development of TDAs and SAPs, there is a need to better understand what are the real equity impacts of the LME initiatives. The social science component should become a constituent part of all LME projects in the future.

IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY

The Strategy will be implemented through the utilization of the following tools:

- Expanded stakeholders involvement through development of tools to connect to the LME Community.
- Building of partnerships, in particular with the business community, which could improve initiatives' sustainability through more stable financing.
- Continuing with the Annual LME Consultation Meeting, focusing on:
 - Networking;
 - Sharing lessons learned;
 - Mobilizing knowledge resources;
 - Promoting regional ocean governance;
 - Each meeting having its specific objectives, outcomes and outputs.
- Monitoring the implementation through development of indicators and reporting system.
- Improved visibility and communication.