UN environment programme ACP MEAs 3 Monthly Information Digest | MAY 2021
VOLUME 1: ISSUE 4

A Monthly Information Digest of the ACP MEAs Programme Funded by the European Union and Coordinated by UNEP

Dear Reader,

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is pleased to present you the fourth issue of the ACP MEAs 3 monthly Digest published on the first Monday of every month. As an informative publication, the Digest provides a collation of key information from various sources, including from project partners on issues related to Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), environmental governance, sustainable development and South-South Cooperation relevant for the implementation of the ACP MEAs 3 Programme.

The key highlights of this month's issue include the recognition of human rights to sustainable development, post-COVID-19 green recovery, market-based approach to biodiversity conservation, chemicals and wastes management financing mechanisms and plastic credit to fight marine pollution.

If your organization/department wishes to showcase any of your activities and/or share key information, please send a summary text by the 20th of the month to Mr. Ladu Lemi, communications focal point for the programme at ladu.lemi@un.org

Happy reading!

Sustainable Development Highlights

Driving a green COVID-19 recovery in the Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the development of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) is yet an additional threat to the livelihoods of the region which has been enduring the disastrous impact of climate change. Given their high degree of vulnerabilities, SIDS has for decades influenced international decisions towards international collective action to curb climate change. A paper published by the Australian National University (ANU) Department of Pacific Affairs showed how SIDS through the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) are continuing their international advocacy to focus on climate action along with governments' COVID-19 recovery planning which aims to promote a green post-COVID-19 recovery agenda to ensures climate action remains at the forefront of international policymaking, by linking economic stimulus and recovery with climate action under the Paris Agreement. Read more

Escazu Agreement on Human Rights to Sustainable Development Takes Effect

Negotiated based on the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and Principle 10 of the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, Latin American and Caribbean countries have recognized the importance of multilateralism in advancing regional actions for Sustainable development through a Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters adopted in Escazu Costa-Rica. The Agreement is the first of its kind in the world that has incorporated environmental protection issues with provisions on human rights defenders in environmental matters as well as linking the need for capacity building through South-South cooperation with strengthening global and national frameworks for improved policy and decision-making processes on rights of individuals to a healthy environment. Read more

Global Spending on COVID-19 Pandemic and Option for Sustainable Recovery

For more than a year since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, lockdown measures to contain the virus have continued to suppress economic activities globally. Despite the fact that these measures are contributing to saving lives from the pandemic, they have disproportionately threatened the lives and livelihoods of the most vulnerable low-income and marginalized communities by increasing poverty as a result of job losses, exacerbating

inequalities, and damaging long-term economic growth. A report titled "Are We Building Back Better? Evidence from 2020 and Pathways for Inclusive Green Recovery Spending", has provided an analysis of the global COVID-19 recovery trajectory by examining fiscal policies to understand the level of green spending by leading economies. The report noted that, despite the available evidence that environmentally restorative fiscal policies are effective tools for economic recovery, very little green spending was announced in 2020. It stresses on the significance of green recovery in strengthening economic growth in the wake of the devastation caused by the pandemic, while promoting the achievement of global environmental targets and tackling structural inequality. Read more

Biodiversity Conservation Highlights

State of Environment and Conservation in the Pacific Islands

The biodiversity of the Pacific islands is among the world's unique hotspots in which a strong relationship between the people and their natural environment exist due to the services that the local ecosystems provide. In the recent years, however, the local traditions, environment, and the biodiversity are being threatened by several factors including changing global and regional pressures. Growing human population, ecological degradation, societal changing demands, and the impact of climate change. The Pacific Islands' State of the Environment and conservation report published by SPREP Secretariat provide an assessment of the trend and conditions of the environment using 31 indicators composing of seven thematic areas to improve decision-making on key global, regional, and national issues. The report shows areas of success and failure in the regional's conservation efforts to achieve an effective sustainable environmental management; and calls for the need to obtain, assess, and apply high-quality national and regional environmental information using science, appropriate technologies, and education to effectively plan, implement, and monitor progress towards sustainable environmental outcomes. Read more

Conserving Biodiversity using Market-Based Approach

The continuous decline of biodiversity over the past decades indicates that the existing global efforts to prevent biodiversity loss have been insufficient due to competing interests of local communities and government policies. One option to halt the biodiversity loss can be the application of market-based mechanisms for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. An article titled "Integrating a Market-Based Approach to Biodiversity Conservation" published by the Asian Development Bank showed that adopting market-oriented measures such as participatory conservation and ecotourism can help maintain biodiversity while promoting sustainable livelihoods for local communities. Read more.

Oceans and Seas Highlights

Using Plastic credits to fight marine pollution

Plastic pollution is a global issue of concern that threatens ecosystems around the world with an estimated 11 million tons of plastic waste entering the oceans annually. Studies have indicated that the crisis of plastic pollution is due to a fault in material management system that is unable to adequately recover the material entering the system. Hence, private sector strategies that contribute to the reduction of single use plastic and shifting to sustainable inputs for necessary plastic are crucial. In the recent years, efforts to combat the plastic pollution crisis have increased and new strategies, such as plastic credits that involves transfer of units representing a specific quantity of plastic that has been collected and recycled from the environment as part of a waste management process have emerged as a new market-based approach to combat plastic waste pollution. Read more

Environmental Diplomacy and UNEP's Regional Seas Programme

For several decades since the establishment of UNEP following the Stockholm Conference in 1972 on the human environment, environmental diplomacy has been the main mechanism for tackling environmental challenges, particularly those that cross international boundaries like Oceans and Seas. Such regional approach to ocean governance has by far presented greater achievements in the sustainable management of marine ecosystem. A report published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) has discussed in detail how UNEP's Regional Sea programme has accelerated cooperation among regional countries on pollution prevention and coastal zone management. It further observed how regional cooperation and partnerships with other multilateral environmental agreements, local governments, the private sector, and other stakeholders involved in environmental protection, can improve the conservation of ocean ecosystems. Read more.

Chemicals and Wastes Highlights

Financing the Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste

Despite concerted global efforts to managed chemical and wastes, the challenges associated with their sound management continue to mount. Most governments particularly in the developing world where the impact of chemicals and waste is severely felt lack sufficient management capacities and infrastructure to effectively develop, implement and enforce laws, policies and regulations governing the sound management of chemicals and wastes. In order to achieve a chemical and wastes free planet, financial resources equivalent to the scale of the chemicals management challenge must be mobilized, and the chemicals industry be involved through an integrated financing approach of mainstreaming, industry involvement, and dedicated external financing. The internalization of sound chemicals and wastes management costs within relevant producer industries through minimum tax regime and redistribution mechanism among key countries can be sustainable in generating significant revenue sufficient to implement sound management of chemicals and wastes. Read more.

Tackling Plastic Pollution: Legislative Guide for the Regulation of Single-Use Plastic Products

Plastic pollution is the most widespread environmental problem affecting the marine ecosystem and threatens ocean health, food safety and quality, human health, coastal tourism, and contributes to climate change. Given these environmental and social concerns about the harm caused by plastic wastes pollution, legal efforts involving laws and policies have been made at the international and national levels to address marine pollution. One of these documents is the recently launched Legislative Guide by UNEP and the World Resources Institute that provides four policy and legal approaches for countries to use in their national legislative processes and planning to reduce plastic waste within their jurisdiction. Read more

News from Partners and Associates

InforMEA's French SDG 16 Free Course

InforMEA celebrated Earth Day and the entry into force of the Escazú Agreement, on 22 April 2021, with the launch of a new French version of our SDG 16 course. The course explains the Rio Principle 10 Access Rights, compares them to SDG 16 targets and indicators on access to information, public participation, and access to justice, and looks at how these are incorporated in the Aarhus Convention and now the Escazú Agreement, specific to the Latin America and Caribbean region. Register for the course here.

Call for Proposals on Sustainable Fisheries

Unsustainable fishing practice is one of the major challenges of oceans and seas governance that threatens the stability of marine ecosystems. SDG 14 calls for efforts to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development with

targets 14.4 and 14.7 to end overfishing by 2020 and increase the economic benefits by 2030 respectively. The Ocean Innovation Challenge (OIC) mechanism that has been designed to accelerate progress on SDG14 by identifying, financing, advising and mentoring innovative, entrepreneurial and creative approaches to ocean and coastal restoration and protection that sustains livelihoods and advances the blue economy has launched a call for proposal worth $250,000 for innovative solutions that address issues related to SDG 14. Application details can be found here

New EU/Africa-Caribbean-Pacific Partnership Agreement Concluded

On 15th April 2021, the European Union and the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) reached a new Partnership Agreement known as the Post-Cotonou Agreement. The Agreement modernizes the cooperation and extends the scope and scale of the EU and OACPS' ambitions to better address current and future challenges by setting the political, economic and sectorial cooperation framework for the next twenty years. Unlike the previous collaborations, the new Agreement includes a strong new regional focus and governance structure, tailored to each region's needs with strategic priority areas of focus such as Human and social development, Environmental sustainability and climate change, Inclusive sustainable economic growth and development, among others. Read more

Upcoming Events Under the ACP MEAs Project

Regional technical workshop for CITES and CMS national authorities in the Caribbean, 19-20 May 2021 (Contact: teshia.jnbaptiste@caricom.org and shunae.samuels@caricom.org)

Third Regional workshop Clean Pacific Roundtable, May 2021 (Contact: joped@sprep.org and anastacias@sprep.org)

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