



**United Nations
Environment
Programme**

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6th Global Meeting of the Regional Seas
Conventions and Action Plans

Istanbul, Turkey 30th November – 2nd December 2004

**REPORT OF THE
6TH GLOBAL MEETING OF THE REGIONAL SEAS**

UNEP/RS - Istanbul, Turkey, 2004

Report of the Meeting

The 6th Global Meeting of the Regional Seas, graciously hosted by the Permanent Secretariat to the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution, was held in Istanbul, Turkey, from 30th November to 2nd December 2004. The first day of the meeting comprised a high-level session of the chairpersons/representatives of the COPs and/or the governing bodies of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action plans (RSCAPs), most of who eventually attended the entire meeting.¹

The main outcomes of the meeting are attached to this report as the following annexes: Annex 1 - The final version of the Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2004-2007; Annex II – Programme of Work (POW) of the Regional Seas, summarising the outcome of discussions at the High-Level Session of the Chairpersons/representatives of the COPs and recommendations of the rest of the meeting on the global Strategic Directions.

Opening of the Meeting

As Head of the Regional Seas Programme (RSP), Dr. Veerle Vandeweerd opened the meeting on behalf of Dr. Klaus Toepfer, Executive Director of UNEP and introduced the Chairperson of the meeting, Dr. Abdul Rahman Al-Awadi, Executive Secretary of ROPME. After each of the participants introduced themselves, formal discussions began.

Finalization of the text of the Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2004-7, as agreed upon at the 5th Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Secretariats in Nairobi, Kenya, 26-28 November 2003

The six Regional Seas Strategic Directions were discussed individually and slight changes were made to the text after additions or clarifications made by participants were agreed upon. (The final document is Annex I). In order to elucidate the sixth Strategic Direction pertaining to development and promotion of ecosystem approaches, Dr. Ken Sherman, Director of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) Narragansett Laboratory, presented information about Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs).

In depth discussion of the RS Strategic Directions, focusing on the proposed actions of the COPS/Governing Bodies

Taking into account that this was the first meeting to include the Chairs of the COPS/Governing Bodies of the RSCAPs, Dr. Vandeweerd invited the Meeting to consider how the COPS/Governing Bodies can support the implementation of the Regional Seas Strategic Directions. (Proposed actions for support are outlined in Annex II). After input and exchange of experiences from the Chairs of the COPs or their representatives, the actions outlined in the global Strategic Directions were generally supported with some amendments. There was a concurrence that the COPS/Governing Bodies could assist in implementing the new Strategic Directions, increasing awareness of RSCAPs and in incorporating the RS Strategic Directions into other facets of national management.

¹ This participation was covered by the support from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), to implement the global Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2004-2007.

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Presentations from individual regions on the implementation of the RS Strategic Directions

Representatives from each region gave presentations on their Regional Seas Programme's current activities and the progress in implementing and incorporating the Strategic Directions into their programmes of work. The sharing of individual RS experiences concluded the first day of the meeting.

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Global Review of the Regional Seas Programme

The meeting reviewed the Terms of Reference (WP.6), for a consultant to undertake a global review of the Regional Seas Programme, with the goal to distil lessons from how different RSPs have addressed the common challenges to their coastal and marine resources. After assessing these, the meeting proposed changes to the text, and generally welcomed the review. The final text is available upon request.

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Regional Seas Database/Partnerships and updated Website

Ms. Annie Muchai, Associate Liaison Officer for the RSP, presented a database of major actors in the field of management and conservation of the marine and coastal environment in each region, which was welcomed. It was generally agreed that the database needs to maximize the information that is already available, including links to individual RS websites, the Global International Waters Assessment website and the LME website. Additionally, the Meeting expressed the need to update the database frequently. The database was presented along with the new Regional Seas Brochure and the updated Regional Seas website <http://www.unep.ch/regionalseas/> which also carries profiles and links to the individual RSPs.

Guidance on implementing legislation

Ms. Amy Hindman, Legal Officer for the RSP, presented the main issues of Working Paper 4, "Outline for Guidance on the Review and Elaboration of National Legislation to Implement Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans." Ms. Hindman stressed the importance of feedback from the RSPs so that she may provide relevant assistance, both for the purpose of revising the draft guidance and setting a framework for future legal support. A discussion of legal issues was then held in which individual RSPs detailed difficulties in their regions and asked a variety of questions regarding legal issues relevant to RSCAPs that Ms. Hindman addressed. Several RSPs expressed an interest in legal workshops or meetings that would train individuals to subsequently take back expertise to their specific programmes. The Meeting was notified of two institutions that provide legal training, the World Maritime University in Malmö, Sweden and the International Maritime Law Institute in Malta.

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In a note related to the prevalence of ongoing GPA/LBA projects in RSPs, Dr. Vandeweerd proposed a network of LBS protocols in the RSPs and that the relevant RSPs designate a focal point. The Meeting concurred with this suggestion.

Guidance on the integration of civil society

Mr. Olivier Deleuze, Chief of Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch, DPDL, UNEP, gave a presentation about the importance of civil society and its potential role within the framework of the RSCAPs, highlighting possible criteria on how to decide NGOs' accreditation. It was added that the organization must show it can contribute to the Regional Seas in a beneficial manner; it must have membership in a widespread number of contracting parties and an organized internal structure. In this way, civil society can be invited to meetings as experts and observers and thereby incorporated into the RS process. It was also mentioned that HELCOM holds seminars for participation of the general public

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and media. This form of enhanced awareness and mutual exchange between civil society and the Regional Seas may be helpful in other regions.

Financing the future of the Regional Seas

At the onset of this discussion, Dr. Vandeweerd proposed that financial issues, specifically, mobilizing domestic resources be the focus of the 7th Global Meeting of the Regional Seas. The Meeting agreed with this proposal. A paper on “Financing the Future of the Regional Seas” (INF.11) was presented to the meeting, highlighting innovating financial mechanisms, including how to make better use of available domestic resources.

Dr. Vladimir Mamaev, Senior Programme Officer for the International Waters in the UNEP Division of GEF Coordination, made a presentation on the specific assistance the GEF can provide to the RS secretariats. One available mechanism is training (training for trainers) of the RS secretariats and participating countries in the development of GEF IW projects, including the GEF IW Operational Programmes, IW indicators, IW Strategic priorities, new formats and guidance. It was agreed that a three-day training with representation from each RS secretariat would be organized in early 2005. GEF can also provide training of the RS secretariats in the development of the TDA/SAP, using the Train-Sea-Coast training materials developed by the University of Plymouth with GEF International Waters Task Force. For these purposes a regional training will be organized, region-by-region during 2005.

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Additionally, on the subject of RS visibility and enhanced collaboration with the GEF, the Meeting was notified of the GEF Council Meetings that takes place bi-annually. RS visibility could be increased through this forum, as the GEF council members and focal points represent countries that are involved in GEF projects and may wield great influence at the meetings. The GEF will host its 3rd Biennial International Waters Conference from 13-18 March 2005 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to review GEF's global International Waters portfolio (nearly \$3 billion in total), share successes and experiences, and encourage collaboration across the International Waters portfolio. The RS were encouraged to take this opportunity to make a presentation addressing the relationship between RS and GEF.

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The pertinent issue was raised that there is no flexibility until 2008 in the GEF budget for RS projects. As this is a major concern, it was proposed that perhaps, using SIDA funding, RS could hire a consultant to perform an economic valuation of LMEs in order to reflect the economic benefit of RS activities. This proposal was accepted by the Meeting.

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The Meeting also agreed that the burden is not merely upon the GEF to provide funding, but also upon the individual countries and RSPs to co-finance projects. RS need to justify why funding is necessary by examining and presenting their own gaps and needs. They must work closely with GEF focal points and participate in their meetings.

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Finally, it was announced that a brochure providing an overview of all GEF projects in RS is under way and would be available within weeks.

The High Seas

The Meeting viewed a video, “Volcanoes of the Deep Sea” to highlight the importance of the protection of the high seas, and agreed upon its significance. The Meeting also considered the difficulty in obtaining approval from all of the RSCAPs regarding a joint RS statement on an emerging issue of environmental significance. Many key concerns were raised about the draft paper on the high seas itself as well as how the global environmental community would react to it as an annual RS statement.

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By the end of the discussion, there was a clear sentiment that the issue of high seas, important as it is, must be set-aside for a time, for further and cautious deliberation.

Monitoring and Assessment

The Meeting agreed that success in monitoring and assessment cannot be achieved only by the international community, but rather through the building of national capacities to do so. It was noted that the GIWA project would be ending in June 2005 and the report will be made available to the IW GEF Conference in Rio. Participants also expressed the need for UNEP to share best practices for monitoring and assessment. Shared practices can be found in the Report that was also made available at the meeting on 'Review of Regional Marine Pollution Monitoring and Assessment in the RSPs' prepared by the International Atomic Energy Agency/Marine Environment Laboratory (IAEA/MEL).

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Multilateral Environmental Agreements

Dr. Ellik Adler, Coordinator of the Regional Seas Programme, presented information about how RS has promoted synergies and coordinated regional implementation of relevant MEAs and global initiatives through close collaboration with IGOs, NGOs and other environmental organizations. He focused on the close relations and productive collaboration between UNEP RS and IMO, IOC of UNESCO, FAO, the CBD and other MEAs and noted that the main objective of this activity is to strengthen the links with these UN organizations and various MEAs at both the UN Headquarters and the regional levels. The guiding principle is the use of the RSCAPs as a platform for regional implementation of the various MEAs and initiatives of the IGOs. Dr. Adler also mentioned the challenge of strengthening the much-needed cooperation with FAO and the Regional Fisheries Bodies.

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Other Presentations

Dr. Sherman presented further information about LMEs and clarified in greater detail the ecosystem approach and its implications. Mr. Kent Blom, Senior Advisor at SIDA, presented SIDA's marine initiative. Both of these presentations were welcomed and are available upon request.

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Closing of the Meeting

Each of the participants made closing remarks. The overall sentiment was positive and optimistic about the Global Regional Seas Strategic Directions.

7th Global Meeting of the Regional Seas

It was proposed that the next Global Meeting of the Regional Seas be held in conjunction with the 2nd UNEP-IMO Forum in London, or in Toyama, Japan. Additionally, the proposed format of the next meeting would be four days. The first day consisting only UNEP-administered Regional Seas and the final three days covering all the RSPs and RSP partners. The focus would be on innovative financial mechanisms.