

UN-OHRLLS contribution to the SG's background note for the preparatory meeting of the UN Conference to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal

14

Activities, challenges and opportunities for the implementation of SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

2 (a) Introduction

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 calls for Conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. Oceans, seas and marine resources play an important role in human wellbeing and socio-economic development including the ecosystem. Over 3 billion people across the world depend on coastal and marine resources, which generate many jobs in various industries such as shipping/transportation, tourism, biotechnology, fishing, and deep sea mining. Oceans play an important role in the absorption of carbon dioxide, which is one the main drivers of global warming. The unsustainable use of oceans negatively affects food security, livelihood sustainability and aggravates climate change including desertification, ocean acidification, sea-level rise, all of which disproportionately affect developing countries including LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

At the United Nations, the SIDS and oceans agenda are intertwined. SIDS 'special case for sustainable development was initially recognized under chapter 17 of Agenda 21—the Chapter on oceans. In turn, it was SIDS who initially advocated for a standalone SDG on oceans. All SIDS, who are able to do so, have signed and ratified UNCLOS, with Fiji being the first to ratify the convention. The Cook Islands and Niue have also ratified UNCLOS, despite them not being Members of the UNGA.

Almost all SIDS have ocean spaces that are larger than their terrestrial spaces. SIDS are heavily dependent on oceans, coasts and marine resources for their livelihood and economic growth. The three UN agreed programmes of action—from the Barbados Programme of Action, its Mauritius Strategy of Implementation, and the SAMOA Pathway—all prioritize oceans and marine resources as one of the keys to their sustainable development.

• Why it is important for SIDS and LDCs?

SDG 14.7 calls for specific attention to SIDS and LDCs. These targets reflect the commitments made in SAMOA Pathway as well as the Istanbul Programme of Action. For SIDS, efforts such as the Vessel Day Scheme (VDS) currently being implemented by the eight Pacific Islands countries who are parties to the Nauru Agreement and from who's ocean spaces 50% of world tuna are harvested should be supported by the international community is generating US\$400 million a year¹. The VDS allows SIDS to benefit from the tuna

¹ <http://www.pnatuna.com/About-Us>

resources in their jurisdictions and the global community also benefits from the tuna harvested with revenues between 2010 and 2015 rising from US\$60 million to close to US\$400 million per annum².

While SDG 14 calls for the protection and conservation of 10% of oceans spaces by 2030, a number of SIDS are looking to conserve a higher percentage of their ocean spaces. These SIDS will need the continued support of the international community to manage and conserve these vast tracts of ocean space, which a number of SIDS are working to conserve. Currently Kiribati's Phoenix Island Protected Area of some 408,250 sq.km expanse of marine and terrestrial habitat is the largest natural heritage site listed by UNESCO. Other SIDS are looking to protect ocean spaces including through innovative debt for nature swaps as Seychelles has recently agreed upon with their Paris Club partners, which will trigger a US\$31million funding package that will benefit critical marine conservation work in Seychelles.

The tourism industry in SIDS is overwhelmingly based on their ocean, coasts and marine resources. The number of international tourists visiting SIDS destinations increased from 28 million in 2000 to 41 million in 2013³. Tourism accounts for over one quarter of the GDP in many SIDS and represents 9% of the overall exports. Depending on the development of the tourism industry in any given SIDS, it provides jobs at the national level for SIDS, including up to 15,000 in Belize, 28,000 in Mauritius and up to 216,000 in the Dominican Republic⁴.

SIDS population are some of the worst affected by food insecurity. If we look at the progress made towards the MDG Goal to half the proportion of people suffering from hunger, the evidence speaks for itself. Over the 15 years life period of the MDGS, proportion of malnourished people in SIDS fell by 26% compared with 41% fall globally.

Properly managed, aquatic resources are a significant source of highly nutritious fish and aquatic plants in SIDS. Food production associated with small-scale fisheries and coastal fisheries play a crucial role in food security, poverty alleviation, assuring jobs and livelihoods. Measures are needed to enhance food security to support growing populations of SIDS and to lessen impacts associated with climate change.

For SIDS that are also LDCs, their low income and high vulnerability conditions demand that these vast ocean resources are protected and equally used so as to reduce their vulnerabilities. SIDS need support for sustainable development of small-scale fisheries, while at the same time, shifting towards more effective management of coastal fisheries and marine resources, and engage in initiatives that add value to output from fisheries and enhance access to markets which is critical for structural transformation of economy in LDC SIDS.

• Relevance of SDG 14 to LLDCs

² ibid

³ <http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/docpdf/unwtotourisminsidsa4wtables.pdf>

⁴ ibid

Although landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) do not have direct access to the sea because of their geographical location, they can derive benefits from use of the ocean space and resources under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) 1982. The UNCLOS gives rights to the landlocked states (described as States that have “no sea-coast”) including: right of access of land-locked States to and from the sea and freedom of transit; right of land-locked States in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of coastal States; right of land-locked States to grant their nationality to ships; and the freedom of the high seas and the common heritage of mankind.

Out of the 32 landlocked developing States (LLDCs) eighteen⁵ had either ratified or acceded to UNCLOS as at September 2016. Some seven⁶ are signatories and six⁷ LLDCs are observers. As contracting parties, the LLDCs are bound by the UNCLOS including provision relating to use and conservation of the marine environment.

2 (b) current activities towards the conservation and sustainable use the oceans, seas and marine resources, including building capacity

OHRLLS has been attending oceans related meetings and conferences to highlight the special case of SIDS and advocate for SIDS in the global discourse on oceans. It works with many partner institutions and organisations to call for greater collaboration and partnership with SIDS on oceans related issues.

Development of Partnership

The ocean is included as a thematic priority area in the UN-OHRLLS work on SIDS. Earlier this year, UN-OHRLLS launched the SIDS Global Business Network (SIDS-GBN) online platform, to strengthen private sector ties among the three SIDS regions and with the international business community. Oceans is among the seven thematic priority areas of the SIDS-GBN. The GBN platform aims to promote new and existing partnerships on conservation and sustainable use of oceans and marine resources, through scaling-up efforts to use cutting-edge technology to support marine conservation efforts such technology including the monitoring and surveillance of illegal unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in their vast ocean spaces. The network should also help to strengthen collaboration between SIDS and standard-setting agencies for sustainable fisheries and enhance their access to global markets while maintaining sustainable use of marine resources.

On the World Ocean day this year, UN-OHRLLS and Parley for the Oceans announced a partnership aimed at reducing the incidence of plastic entering the oceans in SIDS. Utilising the Avoid. Intercept. And Redesign (A.I.R.) strategy approach developed by Parley for Oceans program, the partnership aims to deploy the A.I.R approach in all 38 SIDS.

⁵ Armenia, Bolivia, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Chad, Lesotho, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malawi, Mali, Mongolia, Nepal, Paraguay, Republic of Moldova, Swaziland, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe

⁶ Afghanistan, Bhutan, Burundi, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Niger, Rwanda

⁷ Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan

The session on Oceans in the Public-Private Partnership Conference (P3a) convened by UN-OHRLLS in partnership with Government of Aruba in March 2016, highlighted that ocean focused public-private partnerships (PPP) offer huge potential for SIDS emphasising the important role of PPP's in management and conservation efforts of large ocean space, where SIDS often lack the resources and capacity needed. The role of PPPs in the realisation of SDG14 by leveraging investment towards increasing economic benefits to SIDS through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism was discussed.

In the Private Sector Partnerships Forum convened by UN-OHRLLS in the margins of the Third International Conference on small island developing States (SIDS), in Apia, Samoa, some 20 concrete partnerships were announced by partners, including partnerships to promote partnership on Oceans⁸. The Forum was a pre-conference event which brought together some 400 participants from the private sector, governments, civil society, inter-governmental organisations and the UN system. The two-day forum included a session which focused on SIDS vulnerability to ocean and coastal environmental degradation and the role of the private sector in the conservation of maritime spaces and management of marine resources. The forum also provided a useful insight to the available technology for mapping and monitoring the vast ocean spaces to overcome some of the challenges faced by SIDS in their marine conservation efforts.

OHRLLS is also supporting the work of the FAO to develop a Global Action Programme (GAP) on Food Security and Nutrition in SIDS as concrete tangible contribution to the realisation of the SDGs. To promote sustainable, healthy, productive and resilient fisheries, and healthy ocean ecosystems to improve food security and nutrition in SIDS is one of the five priority areas of the GAP.

2 (c) Challenges to the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

- On average, almost 30 percent of SIDS populations reside within five meters above sea level. While the oceans provide a substantial resource potential for SIDS, they are also the major source for natural hazards and resulting disasters. Furthermore, climate change impacts including sea-level rise pose major challenges particularly for low-lying island states.
- SIDS lack oceanographic data and access to technology which can help better manage marine resources, help protect livelihoods and benefit economies. Access to technology can play an important role in capacity building of SIDS.
- SIDS access to donor funding and climate finance - procedures for funds are often complex and timely and SIDS are at a disadvantage in implementing climate adaptation and mitigation strategies which can safeguard and protect the oceans.

⁸ See http://unohrlls.org/custom-content/uploads/2014/08/Co-Chairs-Summary_Private-Sector-Partnerships-Forum.pdf

- The rights to access however remain a challenge for landlocked countries to make meaningful use of the oceans, seas and marine resources including their conservation.
- The intrinsic characteristics of SIDS have only heightened their vulnerability of to environmental shocks and economic shocks in recent years. SIDS are confronting financial constraints in the implementation of the SDGs. Greater effort and focus are needed to allocate financial resources and improve access to resources from international institutions to meet the financial challenges facing SIDS.
- The participation of LLDCs in forums like the UNCLOS including in the meetings of the state parties and of the International Seabed Authority has also been quite limited. There is a need to consider the special challenges that landlocked developing countries face when it comes to accessing and utilizing the common resources of the seas.
- All forms of partnerships at the national, regional and international levels should be strengthened to strike a balance to conserve, protect, manage and sustainably use the oceans and its resources for the sustainable development of SIDS.

3. Possible themes for the partnerships dialogue

- Global support for and partnerships with vulnerable countries to protect oceans and ensure their sustainable use.
- Marine Protected Areas - balancing conservation with people centered approach
- Transfer of Marine Technology- from guidelines to reality
- Partnerships to support the LLDCs greater access and sustainable utilisation of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development