



United Nations Division for Sustainable Development Goals
Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP)

*An expert group meeting in preparation for the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2018:
Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies*

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Conference Room 9

Background Note

Session 4: SCP and Ocean Action

Background

Oceans, seas and their resources support human well-being and livelihoods and underpin poverty eradication, food security, employment, tourism and protection from natural disasters. However, pressures on marine and coastal ecosystems arising from anthropogenic activities, including pollution from land-based and sea-based activities, overexploitation of fisheries resources and associated adverse impacts on related ecosystems, and impacts of climate change and ocean acidification, have considerably increased in the recent years. In fact, as the General Assembly noted with concern in its resolutions on oceans and the law of the sea, the first World Ocean Assessment found that the world's ocean is facing major pressures simultaneously with such great impacts that the limits of its carrying capacity are being, or, in some cases, have been reached, and that delays in implementing solutions to the problems that have already been identified as threatening to degrade the world's ocean will lead, unnecessarily, to incurring greater environmental, social and economic cost.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 and other ocean-related goals and targets provide opportunities for addressing the above threats. Actions aimed at meeting SDG 12 and SDG 14 targets and other ocean-related goals are closely interlinked. On the one hand, as an example, environmentally sound waste management on land may effectively reduce sources of land-based marine pollution, including plastics. Likewise, sustainable fisheries management can effectively address the by-catch and discards problem, as well as post-harvest losses. There is a potential to address negative impacts on the marine environment by redesigning value chains which either extract resources from oceans, or create pollution which (ultimately) impacts them.



On the other hand, there remains a need to consider actions aimed at achieving some targets which might negatively affect progress in achieving other targets. For example, while increasing aquaculture production may contribute to economic benefits and to reducing pressures on natural aquatic resources, it may also result in undermining food and nutrition security and livelihoods of subsistent, small-scale and artisanal fishers. Coastal fishing communities and marine and coastal ecosystems can be adversely affected if feedstocks for aquaculture are sourced in an irresponsible manner. In view of these interlinkages (both co-benefits and trade-offs), it is important to examine the positive impacts of actions for SCP on coastal and marine ecosystems and how ocean activities can be undertaken in a manner that ensures SCP.

The Ocean Conference

The high-level United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development (The Ocean Conference) took place on 5-9 June 2017 at UN Headquarters. The Conference raised global consciousness on ocean issues, produced strong ambitious outcomes, including an intergovernmentally agreed political declaration “Our ocean, our future: call for action”, the co-chairs’ summaries of seven partnership dialogues, and over 1400 voluntary commitments from Governments, the UN system, IGOs, the Major Groups and other stakeholders - individually or in partnership – to advance the implementation of SDG 14 and related targets. The political declaration “Our ocean, our future: call for action” was adopted by the General Assembly on 6 July 2017 through resolution 71/312.

The “Our ocean, our future: call for action” adopted at the Conference highlighted the importance of addressing the issue of SCP in the context of ocean action. In particular, it calls on all stakeholders to “[p]romote waste prevention and minimization; develop sustainable consumption and production patterns; adopt the 3Rs – reduce, reuse and recycle – including through incentivizing market-based solutions to reduce waste and its generation, improving mechanisms for environmentally sound waste management, disposal and recycling and developing alternatives such as reusable or recyclable products or products that are biodegradable under natural conditions” (para. 13(h)). In addition, numerous voluntary commitments made at the Ocean Conference also address SCP.

Follow-up to the Ocean Conference

Currently, a variety of follow-up work on the voluntary commitments is ongoing. In particular, in November 2017, the nine thematic multi-stakeholder Communities of Ocean Action were launched to follow-up on the implementation of voluntary commitments made in the context of



the Ocean Conference; to catalyze and generate new voluntary commitments; and to facilitate collaboration and networking amongst different actors in support of SDG 14. Several of these Communities relate to SCP, including Communities on marine pollution, sustainable fisheries and sustainable blue economy.

Questions

Guiding questions to frame the discussion:

- What factors should be taken into account in ensuring that actions aimed at meeting SDG 12 and SDG 14 targets and other ocean-related goals maximize co-benefits and minimize negative trade-offs?
- How can Communities of Ocean Action contribute to maximizing co-benefits and minimizing negative trade-offs?