

Ad-hoc Expert Group Meeting
Implementing Rio+20:
Integrated Planning for Sustainable Coastal Area Management
in the Caribbean Region

Co-organized by:
United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA),
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and
UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and its Regional Secretariat for
the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions Sub-Commission IOCARIBE

Venue:
Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, ECLAC
Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago
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Aide-Mémoire

A. Background

The outcome document of Rio+20 “The Future We Want” set the stage for the development agenda for decades to come. Among others, Member States stressed the importance of the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and seas and of their resources for sustainable development. Oceans, seas and coastal areas form an integrated and essential component of the Earth’s ecosystem and are critical to sustainable development, while covering more than two-thirds of the earth’s surface and containing 97% of the planet’s water. Oceans contribute to poverty eradication by creating sustainable livelihoods and decent work. Over three billion people depend on marine and coastal resources for their livelihoods.¹ In addition, oceans are crucial for global food security and human health. They are also the primary regulator of the global climate, an important sink for greenhouse gases and they provide us with water and the oxygen we breathe. Finally, oceans are huge biodiversity reservoirs.

Yet, there are increasing, complex challenges in preserving and maintaining healthy, resilient and productive oceans for the prosperity of present and future generations. Main threats to the oceans can be divided into five broad categories: (1) Unsustainable extraction of marine resources; (2) Marine pollution from a number of marine and land-based sources; (3) Alien invasive species; (4) Ocean acidification and climate change impacts and (5) Physical alteration and destruction of marine habitat. Please refer to the TST issues brief on Oceans and Seas for further information.²

Many economic benefits are realized through access to the oceans and related ecosystems. The related activities include maritime transport, coastal fisheries, tourism and recreation, human settlements which are often concentrated in the coastal areas. Currently, about 40% of the world’s population lives within 100 kilometers of the coast. Some of the largest urban

¹ Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2012): *Booklet: Biodiversity for Development and Poverty Alleviation*

² See: <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1549>

agglomerations are already based in coastal areas and coastal settlements are expected to expand. This will increase the pressure on the oceans and their resources. In this context, integrated coastal area management is an important tool in achieving sustainable development. The management of coastal areas is too complex to be dealt with through traditional sectoral planning and management. Different activities by various actors are ongoing in coastal areas and planning for integrated coastal area management must therefore be coordinated between sectoral implementing agencies and involve all stakeholders. In this regard, the Rio+20 outcome document “The Future We Want” stressed the need to consider the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development in a balanced and integrated manner at all levels in order to transition to sustainable development. National sustainable development strategies, or their national equivalents, are hereby important mechanisms for translating a country’s goals and aspiration of sustainable development into concrete policies and actions.

Already Agenda 21 in chapter 17 called for integrated management and sustainable development of coastal areas. Each coastal State was to consider establishing, or where necessary strengthening, appropriate coordinating mechanisms for integrated management and sustainable development of coastal and marine areas and their resources, at both the local and national levels. Such mechanisms should include consultation, as appropriate, with the academic and private sectors, non-governmental organizations, local communities, resource user groups, and indigenous people. The Mauritius Strategy and the Barbados Plan of Action also highlighted the importance of sustainable conservation and management of coastal and marine resources.

In follow up to the Rio+20 Conference, DESA organized a successful “*Expert Group Meeting on Oceans, Seas and Sustainable Development: Implementation and follow-up to Rio+20*”, in New York from 18-19 April 2013. It aimed to provide an opportunity for different stakeholders to engage in discussions on how to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and their resources and on how to implement and follow-up Rio+20 decisions.³ Meeting participants agreed that oceans-related measures, such as integrated coastal area management, are playing a crucial role in addressing increasing, complex challenges faced by the oceans and their marine resources.

In the Caribbean region, coastal countries are highly dependent on the oceans and their coastal and marine resources and are therefore particularly vulnerable to above-mentioned challenges. Many threats to the region’s marine and coastal ecosystems persist, such as unsustainable coastal development, climate change, overfishing, and marine pollution. Furthermore, weather and climate extremes, sea-level rise as well as coastal flooding and erosion, continue to negatively impact the tourism industry, which is an important contributor to employment, foreign exchange and economic growth in the region. In many Caribbean countries visitor earnings can account for more than 25% of GDP. For coastal countries of the Caribbean region, integrating coastal area management in national planning processes is therefore critical to the protection and preservation of the natural environment, their economies and development prospects for generations to come.

In this respect, UNESCO-IOC organized a Training Workshop on Integrated Coastal Area Management (ICAM), held in Barbados, 16-18 March 2011. The main objective was to build the resilience of the economies of invited Caribbean countries mainly dependent on coastal tourism while using knowledge and expertise of the CZMU of Barbados to develop their capacity to manage coastal areas. Socio-economic aspects as well as priorities with regard to

³ The summary of the meeting can be found on the DESA administered Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform: <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org> by clicking on “Topics” and “Oceans and Seas”.

climate change adaptation and coastal hazard management were hereby taken into consideration. It was decided to conduct national assessments of capacity, science and technology and governance structures which would be consolidated into a regional assessment. In addition, a 10 year project was decided upon with a 5 year implementation plan to be coordinated by IOC.

B. Objectives of the ad hoc Expert Group Meeting

Based on a vast body of knowledge available and previous activities undertaken by international actors, including DESA, ECLAC and UNESCO IOC, the overarching objective of the ad hoc Expert Group Meeting is to further enhance the awareness and capacity of national experts and decision makers in the Caribbean region to effectively integrate sustainable development priorities related to oceans and coastal areas into national planning and implementation processes that involve all stakeholders, as well as to define trans-boundary initiatives with neighboring countries. This will be achieved by examining good practice to address oceans-related challenges in coastal areas, identify existing obstacles and exchange experiences and views on ways to address these. In addition, the ad hoc Expert Group Meeting aims to provide an opportunity to engage in discussions on how to best implement and follow-up Rio+20 decisions with regard to oceans and seas.

The outcome of the ad hoc Expert Group Meeting is envisaged to provide valuable background information to:

- Ongoing considerations by Member States and other stakeholders with regard to integrated planning, coastal area management, oceans and seas;
- Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, which will be held from 1-4 September 2014 in Apia, Samoa, and where the topic of oceans and seas is expected to figure prominently in the pursuit of sustainable development.

The presentations and summary of the Expert Group Meeting will be published in electronic format on DESA's Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform: <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/> and www.cepal.org/portofspain.

C. Provisional programme and main topics for discussion

The ad hoc Expert Group Meeting will be implemented over two days emphasizing interactive dialogue among participants with a view to tease out good practice, lessons and strategies for enhancing sustainable development planning and implementation in their respective roles and capacities. It is envisioned that each session will be kicked off with a number of short statements, followed by interactive discussions and concluding recommendations.

An initial outline of the provisional programme is presented below. A detailed programme is under preparation and will be circulated among participants approximately 3 weeks prior to the meeting.

1. Opening of meeting.
2. Overview of Integrated coastal area management in the Caribbean
3. Challenges in coastal areas of the Caribbean
4. Integrated coastal area management within the context of the outcomes of Rio+20
5. Tools to support planning and implementation of initiatives in integrated coastal area management

6. Integrated coastal area management - national best practices.
7. Closure.

D. Organization

The ad hoc Expert Group Meeting will be organized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and its Division for Sustainable Development in close collaboration with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean and UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and its Regional Secretariat for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions Sub-Commission IOCARIBE.

E. Participants

Participation in this meeting is by invitation only and free of charge. It is expected that some 20-30 experts will attend this event, including:

- 2 National experts per country (middle level decision makers), one involved in national planning processes, and another linked with integrated coastal area management and planning;
- Oceans, development and environment experts;
- Experts and representatives of relevant UN and international organizations, engaged with promoting integrated planning, including as it relates to coastal areas;
- Representatives of national and international professional associations or institutions dealing with coastal management and oceans-related affairs;
- Representatives and experts of civil society and academia.

Participants are responsible for covering their own expenses for participation in the ad hoc Expert Group Meeting. Limited funding is available to support participation of national experts and resource persons from developing countries according to standard rules and regulations of the United Nations. Experts and organizations interested to participate are requested to contact the organizers listed below.

F. Submission of Papers and Presentations

All presentations should be limited to 5 minutes presentation time. Speakers are kindly requested to submit advance copies of their presentations in electronic format (together with related reports) to the e-mail address: ritz@un.org - **no later than Monday, 10 March 2014.**

The ad hoc Expert Group Meeting will be conducted in a “paper smart” manner. All presentations and other materials presented at the meeting and the proceedings will be made available to participants in electronic format and published on the webpages: www.sustainabledevelopment.un.org and www.cepal.org/portofspain

G. Languages

The Ad-hoc Expert Group Meeting will be conducted in English only.

H. Logistics - Venue and registration

The ad hoc Expert Group Meeting will be hosted on the premises of ECLAC’s Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. A separate information note for participants will be issued approximately 4 weeks before the meeting.

Contact Persons for Further Information:

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)

New York, USA Website: <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>

Substantive preparations

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