

Recommendations from Expert Group Meeting on “Implementing Rio+20: Integrated Planning for Sustainable Coastal Area Management in the Caribbean Region”¹



Photo: Expert Group Meeting participants, ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago, 2014.

The Expert Group Meeting on “Implementing Rio+20: Integrated Planning for Sustainable Coastal Area Management in the Caribbean Region” was organized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) in 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. It was held at the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago on 17-18 March 2014. The Meeting was attended by 29 participants from 12 countries. Special invitees from the Pacific and AIMS regions also attended to facilitate inter-regional information exchange and peer learning. The presentations made during the meeting are available under the topic “Oceans and Seas” at United Nations sustainable development knowledge platform: <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org>.

The ocean territories of Small Island Developing States are often significantly greater in size than their land territories, making them highly dependent on the oceans and their coastal and marine resources, while having a large concentration of people, economic and environmental assets in coastal areas. They are therefore particularly vulnerable to the numerous challenges facing oceans and coasts, including increased population density and economic activity in coastal areas, climate change, ocean acidification, alien invasive species and pollution from a number of marine and land-based sources. Therefore, Agenda 21, the JPoI, the Barbados Plan of Action and the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation, among others, called for the integrated management and sustainable development of coastal areas.

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The following recommendations were considered for the integrated planning and sustainable management of coastal areas. While region specific, these were seen as being transferrable to other countries.

- SIDS concerns and issues must form an integral part of, and inform, the global deliberations on sustainable development, including the OWG SDGs, the post-2015 development agenda and specifically the Third International Conference on SIDS to be held in Samoa.
- Integrate coastal zone management strategies into national sustainable development strategies or their equivalents taking into account national priorities and the challenges of sustainable development. Adequate land use planning strategies should hereby also be implemented.
- Implement and enforce strong, supportive, adequate and effective policies, regulations and legal frameworks, which are periodically reviewed (e.g. land use policies, permits, fines for littering), and conduct legislative reforms if necessary (e.g. outdated legislation).
- Establish strong institutions with effective institutional coordination mechanisms among entities engaged in coastal area management under the highest possible authority (e.g. linked to national strategy under Prime Minister's office, or President's office). Institutionalize engagement with budget and planning entities to ensure proper consideration in context of national priorities.
- Apply a human-centered approach to integrated coastal area management in an effort to balance economic development, social needs and environmental protection, while also taking into account cultural aspects.
- Make disaster risk reduction and management an integral element of integrated coastal area management, including by determining and enhancing the resilience and adaptive capacity of coastal communities, ecosystems and infrastructure (e.g. required setbacks, shoreline protection measures).
- Effectively apply an ecosystem-based approach and the precautionary approach, utilizing the best available scientific information, in the management of activities that impact on the coastal areas and the marine environment.
- Apply a spatial approach to integrated coastal area management in order to support policy integration and coherence among sectors within coastal areas with the aim of promoting sustainable activities.
- Take into account the land-sea interface, including watershed management practices, hillside development and hillside squatting, as activities on land are affecting the coasts and marine ecosystems (e.g. marine pollution from land-based sources).
- Implement water quality management and monitoring as well as sustainable waste water management and solid waste management systems and provide related incentives (e.g. "give value to rubbish" such as bottle refund mechanism).
- Support the development of sustainable tourism, including the increased emphasis on familiarizing tourists with cultural aspects of visited countries and the implementation of different forms of sustainable tourism (e.g. eco-tourism, World Heritage site tourism).
- Use legislation that calls for environmental impact assessments (EIAs) to ensure compliance with integrated coastal zone management strategies.
- Involve all relevant stakeholders, including local government and town planners, public and private sector, local communities and youth, to promote ownership and accountability, in the development and implementation of integrated coastal area management plans through multiple means suitable for the specific target group (e.g. public hearings) and support building of capacity where required.

- Strengthen the science-policy interface in order to support evidence based decision-making. Building on existing available statistics and indicators and taking into account local/traditional knowledge, collect area-specific, timely and accurate data, statistics and indicators on a regular basis and make modelling tools (e.g. simulation of storm surges) available. Maintain records and data continuously (e.g. coastal inventories) so as to keep them updated and have information readily available and accessible. In this regard, countries will require financial resources and tools for the generation and updating of information, including GIS, cartography and mapping.
- Strengthen the involvement of the private sector in particular in the area of innovative and eco-friendly solutions to sustainability challenges.
- Take into account the rights and concerns of local communities when approving new development projects (e.g. guarantee access to beaches).
- Promote local ownership and awareness raising through the provision of incentives (e.g. official recognition for environment-friendly actions), the implementation of community measures (e.g. “adoption” of beaches, community clean-up of beaches) and effective communication strategies, which use social media, TV and radio and are based on collected data and indicators (e.g. State of the Environment Reports).
- Promote public education and awareness on integrated coastal management nationally, including through the inclusion of an environment component in school curricula from early childhood education to university.
- Address challenges facing oceans and coasts, which are oftentimes cross-boundary in nature, not only at national but at regional and global levels in a coordinated manner, to efficiently utilize limited resources and develop technical capability.
- Enhance marine scientific research efforts and promote ongoing research to improve knowledge and understanding of the oceans and coastal areas.
- Conduct economic evaluation of the value and benefits of ecosystem services, and not only of economic losses due to destruction of ecosystems, in order to support decision-making and reinforce arguments targeted at conservation.
- Enhance the sharing of national data within countries as well as regionally and inter-regionally (free of cost where feasible) and maintain (collective) databases in order to minimize costs and enhance effective decision-making. Promote networking, sharing of best practices/experiences and peer learning at the national and regional level through multiple means such as online learning, face to face meetings and workshops, when feasible.
- Urgently enhance the building of local capacity (e.g. coastal engineers) and provide sufficient financial and technical resources, including for the implementation, monitoring and enforcement of existing regulations as well as climate change mitigation and adaption measures, while making use of different forms of financing, including innovative ways (e.g. debt-swap for climate change mitigation activities).
- Make better use of existing regional programmes, financing mechanisms, initiatives and networks in order to access information and resources as well as encourage the networking of existing institutions to achieve synergies.
- Develop genuine partnerships and networks to support integrated planning and sustainable management of coastal areas at the national and regional level (e.g. sharing of knowledge and human capacities such as coastal engineers) in order to allow for the pooling of resources, which is particularly important as some countries might be unable to address challenges independently, and to avoid duplicative efforts.

