

One of important achievements of the Barcelona Convention in 2023 is the . Tunisia is now the 13th country to ratify the Protocol following its adoption in 2013 in Madrid, Spain.

Significant progress has been reported on strengthening ratification of the Cartagena Convention and associated Protocols, both by Contracting Parties and Non-Contracting Parties. The Government of Suriname prepared a submission for ratification of the Cartagena Convention and its three Protocols, and provided technical support to the Governments of Saint Kitts and Nevis and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to assist with the ratification of the Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities. Discussions are also ongoing with Costa Rica, Guatemala, Jamaica, Mexico, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Suriname and the territories of the United Kingdom regarding their ratification of the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA). The Secretariat has also convened a series of consultative workshops to promote ratification of the Convention and its Protocols by Non-Contracting Parties i.e., the 6th Project Steering Committee (PSC) Meeting of the GEF Integrating Water, Land and Ecosystems Management in Caribbean Small Island Developing States (IWEco) project (18-20 July 2022), and the Meeting of the Directors and Heads of Maritime Administrators of the Caribbean (28-29 July 2022).

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UNEP is developing a novel approach and capacity-building resource to support Member States in transitioning to environmentally sustainable, resilient and equitable blue economies. A

framework outlines core elements and enabling conditions to design and initiate steps towards a sustainable, resilient and equitable blue economy tailored to countries' unique settings and needs. The Framework organizes the development and implementation process into three practical phases. At its core is a policy-coherence and integrated policy framework that helps countries unpack the impact of the triple-planetary crisis of climate change, nature loss and pollution on water-related ecosystems. The goal is to maintain and sustainably use the primary natural assets provided by healthy marine, coastal and freshwater systems as a prerequisite for long-term sustainable blue economic development. The Framework further helps countries articulate and operationalize a tangible whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to mainstreaming biodiversity into integrated ocean, coastal and freshwater policy and action.

As an initial step "zero", a Rapid Response Assessment (RRA) approach helps provide a clear picture of a country's existing policies, legal frameworks, systems and political landscape and how these would facilitate a sustainable blue economy transition. It identifies key gaps and outlines recommendations for getting started, including the types of resources required. In short, the RRA provides governments with a focused snapshot of how to make the transition tangible and real. This approach has been trialled in two SIDS countries, Antigua & Barbuda and Trinidad & Tobago, in a collaboration between UNEP and the Commonwealth Blue Charter programme. The results have just been presented in two country studies. Further upscaling in countries and regions is under way.

The Secretariat supported the development of the full-size GEF PROCARIBE+ project proposal "Protecting and Restoring the Ocean's Natural Capital, Building Resilience and Supporting Region-wide Investments for Sustainable Blue Socio-Economic Development" which is a follow-up to the UNDP GEF CLME+ project. PROCARIBE+ aims to develop sustainable and resilient ocean-based economies through marine spatial planning, marine conservation, sustainable fisheries and addressing land-based sources of pollution, while also considering issues such as gender and climate change. Subject to approval, implementation is expected to start in 2023.

The Cartagena Convention Secretariat signed an agreement with the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI) to implement a small grants programme in support of some activities under the Multilateral Environmental Agreements in ACP Countries – Phase III (ACP MEAs 3) project. Out of the 26 proposals submitted, nine small grants were awarded to Belize, Columbia, Cuba, Honduras, Jamaica and St. Lucia for MPA management effectiveness, capacity assessments and marine litter.

The 75th Annual Meeting of the GCFI took place in Florida, USA, on 7-11 November 2022. The Cartagena Convention Secretariat organized a technical session on Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). The Secretariat aimed to enhance synergies with GCFI by sharing its work on MPAs, identifying future partnership opportunities, and supporting implementation of effective management strategies.

The resumed session of the 25th Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM) of COBSEA held in Hanoi, Viet Nam, in October 2022, guided efforts to collectively address marine litter, marine and coastal ecosystems, and nutrients management. IGM 25 established the East Asian Seas Regional Node¹ of the Global Partnership on Plastic Pollution and Marine Litter (GPML) as a knowledge management and networking hub and established the Regional Capacity Center for Clean Seas (RC3S) in Bali, Indonesia, as a regional capacity centre on marine pollution.

COBSEA participating countries recently adopted the COBSEA Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Framework. Anchored in Blue Economy, the MCE Framework will support COBSEA participating countries in achieving relevant targets in SDG 14 and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework through several efforts including the development of marine and coastal spatial plans, the strengthening and expansion of marine protected areas and a potential regional MPA Network, and the conservation and restoration of marine and coastal habitats.

HELCOM embarked on a broad scale project (2023-

area⁶ began in spring 2023 under the eMSP NBSR project. This project aims to support the coherence of maritime policy and maritime spatial plans in North and Baltic Sea Regions; support continued

ICZM. In the current biennium, the Priority Actions Programme/Regional Activity Centre (PAP/RAC - a key component of MAP), in partnership with the German Agency for International Development Cooperation (GIZ), have delivered several trainings on ICZM and MSP in Algerian coastal zones. For example, PAP/RAC delivered training to the Algerian inter-ministerial committee to support implementation of the Algerian ICZM Strategy and offered lecturers on ICZM at the National School of Marine Sciences and Coastal Planning (ENSSMAL) on 23-26 October 2022.

PAP/RAC provided a series of lectures on ICZM at the Syrian Virtual University in the third semester (September-October 2022). The lecturers targeted master's students specializing in Integrated Management of Natural Resources. The lectures covered important areas of ICZM in the

The German Agency for International Development Cooperation (GIZ), in partnership with the Nairobi
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The Go Blue project is supporting two counties in Kenya with solid waste management and wastewater treatment. The Project seeks to enhance Municipal Solid Waste Management, decrease leakage of plastic and other waste into the environment, including water bodies, and increased waste collection and recovery rates. The project supports Taita Taveta county to upgrade solid waste management recycling and aggregation facilities while supporting the involvement of women and young people in waste recycling and management. Additionally, the project – through another flagship pilot intervention – promotes the use of a constructed wetland as a low-cost technology for wastewater treatment. This intervention addresses the threat to ecosystem health and resilience of domestic wastewater discharges and provides an example of good wastewater practice for other coastal regions globally.

SPREP is participating in the ClimSA Programme "Intra-ACP Climate Services and related Applications Programme (ClimSA)", an initiative of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) and the European Union. ClimSA's objectives are to provide members and regions of the OACPS with innovative and collaborative solutions to manage climate-related risk considerations in their sustainable dev

recommendations in the document underline the need for increased technical support for Member States, peer learning and cooperation on the development of the blue economy, and public-private partnerships for conservation and resource utilization.

UNEP Early Warning and Assessment Division (formerly Science Division) and the Cartagena Convention Secretariat co-financed the development of the Saint Lucia Marine Litter Action Plan, which was endorsed by the Cabinet of Ministers in March 2023.

The Secretariat, in partnership with Adelphi, is implementing the "Prevention of Marine Litter in the Caribbean"

Nutrient enrichment is a growing environmental issue of concern for aquatic systems. While nutrients can initially be beneficial to ecosystems, continuous accumulation can result in eutrophication with a series of undesirable ecological effects. In coastal marine estuaries and bays, eutrophication has been linked to harmful algal blooms – often called “red tides” – that cause widespread fatalities in fish and other marine organisms. Therefore, monitoring and/or assessment of eutrophication is important in providing information for coastal managers to make the required management interventions.

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In 2021, UNEP and Sustainable India Trust implemented a

sources and pathways. The assessment of nutrient input ceilings (NIC) was conducted in 2022,²⁹ while assessment of the sources of nutrient inputs and results will be published by the end of 2023.

The 2023 OSPAR (acronym derived from the Oslo and Paris Conventions of 1972 and 1974) Assessment Report indicates a substantial reduction in nitrogen and phosphorus inputs to the OSPAR Maritime Area.³⁰ Reductions in total nitrogen inputs are largely due to reductions in atmospheric emissions. The reduction rate in the total input is more than twice the reduction rate of the waterborne inputs alone for the whole assessment period.

At the

(October 2022), Regional Seas representatives from COBSEA, MAP Barcelona, HELCOM, OSPAR, SACEP, SPREP, NOWPAP and the Lima, Abidjan, Cartagena and Nairobi Conventions reported on progress on efforts to build capacities for the management of coasts and oceans in their respective regions, highlighting the actions taken to preserve marine biodiversity and address marine pollution.

UNEP Regional Seas Programme participated in the 15th meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity held in December 2022 in Montreal, Canada. COP 15 adopted the “Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework” (GBF), including four goals and 23 targets for achievement by 2030. The Regional Seas Programme will continue to support and strengthen its collaboration with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), particularly in the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity and supporting the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal global biodiversity framework with respect to marine and coastal biodiversity. It will also contribute to monitoring, assessment and reporting on the implementation of the framework.

The ACP MEA III Programme in November 2022 launched a Toolkit on Pro-Environmental Youth Engagement³¹, developed by youth for youth, which provides hands-on guidance on how to engage in pro-environmental change.

The Nature Conservancy, in collaboration with the Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association and UNEP, developed a

strategy will strengthen the operational capacity of the Cartagena Convention network to fulfil its mandate as a Regional Seas Programme.

The CCAMLR Secretariat is implementing a range of measures to support the conservation and management of Antarctic marine living resources. At the 41st Meeting of the Commission held in Hobart, Australia, on 24 October - 4 November 2022, Contracting Parties adopted Conservation Measure 26-01 (2022) "General environmental protection to be taken by fishing vessels",³³ which prohibited fishing vessels from discharging plastics, among other waste, into the sea. Contracting Parties also adopted conservation measures to enhance protection of toothfish, icefish and krill in the Convention Area.³⁴

CCAMLR has developed an electronic catch documentation scheme (e-CDS) to track the toothfish trade and combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in the Convention Area. To ensure efficient use of the system, CCAMLR will provide a series of user training sessions in the near future.

Good progress has been made on the establishment marine protected areas (MPAs) in the Baltic Sea. The Baltic network of marine protected areas (MPAs) currently covers 16.5 per cent of the Baltic Sea, and significant increase in spatial coverage is expected in the future.³⁵ Despite the success, much work needs to be done to address the deteriorating trend in marine mammals and seabirds.

HELCOM Secretariat and UNEP MAP-PAP/RAC are participating in the EU-funded MSP4BIO³⁶ project "Improved science-based maritime spatial planning to safeguard and restore biodiversity in a coherent European MPA network (2022-2025)". The main objective of MSP4BIO is to develop an integrated and modular Ecological-Socio-Economic (ESE) management framework for the protection and restoration of marine ecosystems, within its more general objectives of promoting sustainable blue growth and integrating maritime policies. The applicability of the ESE will be validated through six pilot sites in the Atlantic ocean and the North, Baltic, Mediterranean and Black Seas. The project mainstreams biodiversity, supporting implementation of EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030, the Kunming-Montreal Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and the EU Green Deal.

The Nairobi Convention revised its Protocol Concerning Protected Areas and Wild Flora and Fauna in the Eastern African Region³⁷ with the support of the ACP MEA III programme. The first amendment

³³ <https://cm.ccamlr.org/en/measure-26-01-2022>

³⁴ https://cm.ccamlr.org/?season=2022-12-01%3A2023-1130&search_terms=&restrict_to_new=1&type=mes&search_terms=&cmc_category=All&search_terms=&op=Apply&form_build_id=formNlXpdEnUi0wGhVuYUquJvD6YW3tIRoAQ4kZJEg4bFU&form_id=conservations_and_resolutions_filter. Additionally, by-catch limits were set to protect skates and rays
<https://cm.ccamlr.org/en/measure-33-03-2022>

³⁵ <https://helcom.fi/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/HELCOM-Thematic->

meeting of this Protocol took place in the last quarter of 2022, with a second amendment meeting scheduled for the second quarter of 2023.

The ACP MEAs III programme, in collaboration with partners (The Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association - WIOMSA and the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management - SwAM), and Nairobi Convention projects (Strategic Action Programme for the protection of the Western Indian Ocean from land-based sources and activities - WIOSAP

