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United Nations Environment Assembly  
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## Strengthening ocean efforts to tackle climate change, marine biodiversity loss and pollution\*

*The United Nations Environment Assembly,*

*Reaffirming* United Nations General Assembly Resolution 76/296, which endorsed the declaration entitled “Our ocean, our future, our responsibility”, recognizing that the ocean is fundamental to life on our planet and to our future, and affirmed the need to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources,

*Concerned* about threats to the health of our oceans, coastal areas, wetlands and islands, as reflected by, inter alia, the Second World Ocean Assessment; the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services; and the Sixth Assessment Report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, including its special report The Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate, and about the probable increase in the foreseeable future,

*Recalling* General Assembly resolution 70/1, that adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in this regard Reaffirming the commitment to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources, as reflected in Sustainable Development Goal 14, and its contribution to the 2030 Agenda, which is integrated and indivisible in nature,

*Further recalling* that General Assembly resolution 70/1 calls for the enhancement of conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources, as recalled in paragraph 158 of “The future we want”,

*Reaffirming* the United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 2/10 on oceans and seas, and the ocean-related outcomes of its past sessions,

*Noting* United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 2/10, which took into account the contribution which the United Nations Environment Programme can make, upon request by the concerned States, to assist them in the protection and preservation of their marine and coastal environment,

*Noting* United Nations General Assembly’s Resolution 76/300, “The human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment” and noting Human Rights Council Resolution 52/23,

*Noting* that the conference of the parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity adopted decision 15/24 of 19 December 2022 on the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity,

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\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

*Welcoming* the generous offer by the Governments of Costa Rica and France to co-host the third United Nations Ocean Conference in Nice, France, in June 2025, as well as the high-level event on ocean action, “Immersed in change”, to be held on 7 and 8 June 2024 in San José, Costa Rica,

*Welcoming* the adoption of decision 15/4 whereby the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, including its goals and targets relevant to the ocean,

*Reaffirming* that addressing pollution is an important element for achieving 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals by, amongst other measures, the prevention and significant reduction of marine pollution of all kinds,

*Recalling* the importance of the work to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, through the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee convened by UNEP and welcoming the progress made with the ambition of completing that work by the end of 2024,

*Encouraged* by the decisions taken at the annual United Nations Climate Change Conferences, particularly the outcome decision of the first global stocktake and the global goal on adaptation, on the need to strengthen ocean-based climate-related action, as appropriate, and continue the work of the Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue,

*Welcoming* the adoption by the International Maritime Organization of the 2023 revised strategy on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from ships,

*Also acknowledging* the adoption on 19 June 2023 of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement), which aims to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, for the present and in the long term,

*Welcoming* the work done in the context of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystems Restoration (2021–2030) and recognizing its importance for ecosystems in marine and coastal areas and also welcoming the objectives and activities developed in the framework of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030), under the theme “the science we need for the ocean we want”,

*Noting with appreciation* the progress made in the implementation and growth of the Regional Seas Programme, since its establishment in 1974, and Recognizing the key role of the Regional Seas Programme and regional seas conventions and action plans and their importance in assisting countries and regions in applying an ecosystem approach to manage the marine and coastal environment, and noting the adoption of the new Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2022–2025,

*Determined* to acting decisively and urgently to improve the health, productivity, sustainable use, and resilience of the ocean and its ecosystems and affirming the need to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources,

1. *Encourages* Member States to, as appropriate, adopt, ratify or implement the regional seas conventions, protocols and action plans for the protection and conservation of the marine and coastal environment while promoting high visibility of the regional dimension in all relevant global processes and forums;

2. *Also encourages* Member States, as appropriate, to:

(a) Consider to sign and ratify the BBNJ Agreement at the earliest possible date;

(b) Fully and effectively implement the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity as appropriate, including its goals and targets relevant to the ocean, and increase efforts at all levels to achieve those goals and targets;

(c) Engage in the ongoing process to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, with the ambition of completing that work by the end of 2024, as mandated by UNEA resolution 5/14;

(d) Ratify, accept, approve or accede to the 1996 Protocol to the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and other Matter, 1972;

(e) Make significant efforts to tackle ocean acidification and its causes and to further study and minimize its impacts;

3. *Requests* the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, subject to the availability of resources, to:

- (a) Strengthen, without prejudice to and within UNEP's mandate, the regional seas programme to further support regional seas conventions and action plans;
- (b) Report progress by the Regional Seas Programme to the Environment Assembly at its seventh session;
- (c) Continue providing technical support to Member States and members of UN specialised agencies, upon request, in implementing their respective obligations and activities under the regional seas conventions and action plans and multilateral environmental agreements and other relevant environmental instruments, including through the dissemination and sharing of best practices;
- (d) Assist Member States and members of UN specialised agencies, upon request, in the assessment of marine biodiversity within national jurisdiction and regional seas conventions and action plan areas, in collaboration with other relevant entities;
- (e) Provide technical support to Member States and members of UN specialised agencies, upon request, for the development of marine and coastal planning and management tools within national jurisdiction, in particular marine protected areas, integrated coastal zone management, and marine spatial planning, based on the best available science including, where appropriate, traditional knowledge, innovations, and practices;
- (f) Contribute to the Early Warnings for All initiative at all levels;
- (g) Within UNEP's mandate, provide assistance to Division for Ocean Affairs and Law of the Sea DOALOS, as the interim secretariat of the BBNJ to promote better understanding of the BBNJ Agreement;

4. *Invites* the secretariats of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans to, as appropriate, upon request of their contracting parties or participating countries:

- (a) Support their contracting parties and participating countries in participating in the Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue first established at the 25<sup>th</sup> UN Climate Change conference and to consider, as appropriate, ocean-based action;
- (b) Support their contracting parties and participating countries, upon request, in contributing effectively to the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework adopted by the conference of parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity;
- (c) Further develop and implement joint strategies, and work on quality status assessments and monitoring programmes to address environmental challenges in a coordinated effort;
- (d) Develop and present joint voluntary actions for the regional seas covered by the relevant convention at the third United Nations Ocean Conference, in order to address pertinent environmental issues in the area in question;
- (e) Support their parties and participating countries in participating in the ongoing negotiations on an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment by among other things, making available relevant information;

5. *Invites* Member States to scale up means of implementation to enhance the capacity to deliver on ocean related sustainable development goals and implement the relevant conventions, particularly in developing countries, taking into account special circumstances of Small Island Developing States;

6. *Calls on* Member States and concerned parties to strengthen the ocean science-policy interface, including through action under the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science and the Regular Process, and by promoting research, collaboration and the communication of scientific knowledge to policymakers, private sector actors and civil society;

7. *Calls on* all Member States, international organizations and other stakeholders to seek the highest level of participation and ambition at the third United Nations Ocean Conference, in June 2025, and invites the Executive Director to provide the necessary input for the conference, as appropriate;

8. *Calls* for continued cooperation and coordination on marine issues among all relevant global and regional forums and organizations in order to deliver coherently on Sustainable Development Goal 14 and other relevant ocean-related Sustainable Development Goals and their targets.

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