

GC Decision 22/2 III
Regional Seas Programme

A.

Regional seas strategies for sustainable development

The Governing Council,

Recalling its decision 21/28 of 9 February 2001 regarding the need for the development and strengthening of regional seas conventions and action plans in promoting the conservation and sustainable use of the marine and coastal environment, building partnerships and establishing linkages with multilateral environmental agreements,

Recalling also that paragraph 74 (b) of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities,⁹ adopted in Washington, D.C., on 3 November 1995, requested the United Nations Environment Programme to revitalize the Regional Seas Programme and to promote and facilitate the implementation of the Global Programme of Action at the regional level,

Taking into account the main outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, as expressed in the relevant provisions of the World Summit's Plan of Implementation and the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development,¹⁰

Acknowledging that oceans, seas, coasts and watersheds are an essential component of sustainable economic development and that for many countries alleviation of poverty and improvement of quality of life will require sustainable management of the oceans and seas,

Acknowledging also that the regional seas programme is one of the main programmes of the United Nations that provides Governments, international organizations, global environmental conventions, global programmes and initiatives, non-governmental organizations and civil society, with an institutional platform through which regional activities and partnerships can address environmental degradation and promote sustainable development,

1. Requests the Executive Director to encourage and support regional seas conventions and action plans to incorporate the following strategic elements in their programmes of work and bring those elements to the attention of their respective Member States through their governing bodies and other relevant forums:

(a) Use of regional seas conventions and action plans as an instrument for sustainable development, such as the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development of the Barcelona Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean;

(b) Enhance countries' "ownership" over their respective regional seas conventions and action plans;

(c) Increase participation of civil society and industry with the regional seas conventions and action plans in the development and implementation of programmes and partnerships;

(d) Achieve financial sustainability;

(e) Utilize the regional seas conventions and action plans as a platform for the regional implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and global programmes and initiatives;

(f) Strengthen horizontal cooperation as well as possible twinning arrangements between regional seas conventions and action plans;

(g) Strengthen cooperation between existing regional seas programmes and initiatives within or outside the United Nations system, seeking synergies among them, as appropriate;

(h) Strengthen links, cooperation and coordination with such international organizations as the International Maritime Organization, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Convention on Biological Diversity, and support cooperation among multilateral environmental agreements;

(i) Strengthen monitoring and assessment activities and ensure that regional seas are fully involved in the development of the process of establishment of the Global Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment and of the Global International Waters Assessment;

(j) Continue the administrative support from the United Nations Environment Programme headquarters to regional seas administration;

(k) Provide legal support upon request;

(l) Develop outreach, information and public awareness;

(m) Contribute to the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States;

2. Requests the Executive Director to continue providing financial, technical and administrative assistance to regional seas conventions and action plans, in order to strengthen their secretariats and regional coordinating units and their programmes of work, and develop initiatives and activities aimed at securing long-term sustainability taking into account the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. This support should be directed primarily at strengthening regional seas conventions and action plans with special needs;

3. Calls upon all littoral states of shared inland waters to collectively establish legal instruments for the protection of the environment of the respective area as soon as possible;

4. Requests the Executive Director to support and facilitate relevant processes of establishing mechanisms and instruments with regard to the protection of inland waters mainly through the United Nations Environment Programme's regional offices;

5. Calls upon the Executive Director and countries of respective regional seas programmes in a position to do so to mobilize resources in order to support the implementation of the plans of action for the regional seas programmes;

6. Invites donor countries, international financial institutions and the United Nations system, including the United Nations Environment Programme, within its available resources, to provide financial support and expertise towards regional seas programmes;

7. Requests the Executive Director to support, upon request from relevant Governments, the establishment of new regional seas conventions and action plans, where appropriate, subject to additional funding;

8. Invites Governments:

(a) To take a more proactive role in all the stages of the implementation of the programme of work of their respective regional seas conventions and action plans and to develop “ownership” over those conventions and action plans;

(b) To strengthen their respective regional seas conventions and action plans by making their financial contributions and meeting their programmatic commitments and by providing additional resources to the secretariats in order to further implement relevant activities aimed at the sustainable use and management of the marine and coastal environment;

(c) To broaden governmental participation through the involvement of all relevant national ministries;

(d) To broaden monitoring, assessment and training activities which would serve as a scientific basis for efficient sustainable management.

⁹ UNEP(OCA)/LBA/IG.2/7.

¹⁰ *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1) chap. I, resolution 1, annex.