



Large Marine Ecosystems Approach: An Essential Management and Partnership Tool for Achieving SDG14

A Side Event for the Ocean Conference

Organizing Partners

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) - *lead convener*
Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO (IOC)
Global Environment Facility (GEF)
UN Environment
Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
Benguela Current Commission (BCC)

Thematic Focus

Large Marine Ecosystems

Detailed Description

SDG 14 addresses a wide breadth of issues confronting oceans worldwide – unsustainable fisheries, habitat degradation, pollution and impacts of climate change. Already at the forefront of addressing these complex challenges are Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs), which bring together multiple nations at the ministerial level to work together toward shared ocean governance. Most of the world’s 66 LMEs are typically multi-national and often individually cover over 200,000 km². These LMEs include near-shore coastal waters from river basins and estuaries, and reach the seaward boundaries of continental shelves and outer margins of major ocean current systems. LMEs encompass areas with unique undersea topography and seabed characteristics, high productivity, important fisheries resources and a range of food chain interactions. LMEs harbor significant biodiversity and provide important ecosystem services, including food security, shoreline protection, and recreational opportunities. Taken together, LMEs contribute about \$12 trillion in goods and services to the global economy. LMEs are important because they could be considered as a unique “platform” that brings countries together, at a high level, to work toward shared ocean governance.

In 1995, the Global Environment Facility adopted the concept of Large Marine Ecosystems — the majority of which are transboundary — as a conceptual and biogeographic framework for promoting sustainable, ecosystem-based management of the world's oceans and coasts. The LME approach promotes the creation of new and/or reformed institutions, the reform and implementation of marine resource and environmental management policies and legislation, and the leveraging of public and private sector investment for LME restoration and protection. At a regional scale, the GEF has supported 23 of the 66 recognized Large Marine Ecosystems in which multiple countries collaborate on strategic, long-term ocean governance of transboundary resources.

LME projects apply an integrated, cross-sectoral, ecosystem-based and transboundary approach while engaging the private sector, non-governmental organizations and multilateral institutions. They help solidify powerful approaches of working from ridge to reef and from village chiefs to cabinet ministers. In doing so, these projects are taking innovative approaches showing how regionally agreed frameworks may produce global environmental and sustainable economic benefits. The transboundary approach is unique in bringing together countries to identify threats, problems and issues through a structured, common fact-finding and process dialogue between governments, academia, civil society and the private sector.

These projects, implemented through strategic partnerships with both countries and international organizations, have encouraged governmental and non-governmental stakeholders around the world to embrace the LME approach as a mechanism to address, through a cross-sectoral perspective, issues related to overfishing, habitat degradation and loss, and pollution, among other serious threats.

Many LME projects have followed the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis-Strategic Action Programme(TDA-SAP) Process. Participating countries first prepare a TDA through a consultative process in which they determine the root causes of the transboundary problems affecting their shared water body. This formal and inclusive process analyzes all pertinent factual and scientific information to set priorities for action. Once the TDA is complete the focus shifts from gathering scientific evidence to developing a country-driven SAP. During implementation of the SAPs, the countries implement agreed governance reforms and work towards long-term institutional and financial sustainability. The SAP includes a regional policy framework and the legal/institutional arrangements needed to address the priority actions identified in the TDA. Countries then agree upon National Action Programs (NAPs); a set of country actions necessary to implement the SAP at the national level. To date TDAs and SAPs have been developed and signed at the ministerial level in 13 LMEs.

It is the uniqueness of this transboundary approach that well positions the LMEs, and more particularly the regional multi-stakeholder partnerships established to manage them, as an essential partner in the achievement of the SDG14 targets. A significant percentage of the existing LME project portfolio has facilitated countries to reach regional agreements (the afore-mentioned SAPs), which contain specific country-commitments to policy, regulatory and other governance reforms. For example, in the Benguela Current LME, South Africa, Angola and Namibia, following the TDA/SAP process, the three nations established the Benguela Current Commission and adopted the Benguela Current Convention.

The existing relationships established through project implementation, including the coordination provided by various types of regional entities to continue dialogue, enable the various LME partnerships to help countries incorporate the various SDG14 targets into existing dialogue and policy. LME partnerships can provide a forum not just for dialogue, but also a focus for the exchange of experience and results with the achievement of SDG14 targets. Importantly as well, cooperation for management at

the LME level also provides a focus to scale-up existing investments and catalyze resources towards the achievement of SDG14 targets.

SDG14 is one of the most ambitious of the 17 SDGs particularly in terms of the accelerated time frames for achieving several of the targets. Successful implementation of SDG14 requires replication and rapid scaling up of proven strategic approaches that can deliver on one or more SDG14 targets. Drawing from the LME experience, this interactive side event will first, offer a brief introduction to the LME portfolio in the context of SDG14 (and other associated SDGs), highlighting such proven approaches that have succeeded in reversing large scale dead zones, moved global tuna stocks towards sustainability, reduced the impacts of shipping on the marine environment, and introduced integrated, ecosystem-based approaches to sustainable ocean and coastal management at both local and multi-country scales.

The first, opening, segment of the session will present an overview of where we stand with the LMEs today, how it links to existing frameworks and why this approach can be useful to deal with the ocean issues. The second, technical, segment of the session will focus on the SDG14 targets themselves, and how they can be achieved in the respective LME partnerships across the globe. It will start with an inspirational keynote speech defining the concept of LME and charting its future, to be continued with a facilitated and interactive dialogue featuring LME practitioners from various regions and agencies as well as the audience itself. These discussants will include the Caribbean Sea, Bay of Bengal, Canary Current, Benguela Current and Mediterranean Sea Large Marine Ecosystems. Each discussant will focus on a collective LME response to SDG14 targets framed with examples from their specific context. The goal will be to engage all session participants in formulating actionable recommendations to further guide actors in the global LME partnership forward on SDG14. Finally, in support of the Ocean Conference Partnership Dialogues, the session will also highlight new LME partnership opportunities emerging in the period leading up to 2030.

Speakers/Presenters

Opening (15'):

Vladimir Ryabinin, *Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO, Executive Secretary*
Andrew Hudson, *United Nations Development Programme, Head, Water and Ocean Governance Program*
Christian Severin, *Global Environment Facility, Senior Environmental Specialist*
Lisa Svensson, *United Nations Environment, Director Ocean*
Senior FAO ocean official

Technical Dialogue (70'):

Facilitator: Ivica Trumbic, GEF LME:LEARN PCU, Chief Technical Advisor
Didier Dogley, Minister of the Environment, Seychelles
Kenneth Sherman, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, United States
David Vousden, Professor, Rhodes University, South Africa
Hashali Hamukuaya, Executive Director, Benguela Current Commission, Namibia
Patrick Debels, Caribbean Sea Large Marine Ecosystem (tbc), Colombia
TBD, Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem
TBD, Mediterranean Sea Large Marine Ecosystem
TBD, Canary Current Large Marine Ecosystem

Closing Summary (5'):

Mish Hamid, GEF IW/LME:LEARN PCU, Project Manager