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# **A role for the Regional Seas Programme under the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework**

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This document summarises the key findings of a study exploring the potential contributions of UNEP's Regional Seas Programme to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity's post-2020 global biodiversity framework (GBF).

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# A role for the Regional Seas Programme under the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

A case is made to make best use of UNEP's Regional Seas Programme for the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) under development by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Key findings are based on an overview of the work of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAPs) of relevance to the GBF, highlighting the RSCAPs' potential for addressing and strengthening the marine and regional outlook of the GBF. Recommendations are made to the CBD, UNEP/RSP, RSCAPs and States on their mutually reinforcing roles in supporting a regional biodiversity dimension.



*Lionfish: an invasive species that threatens the well-being of coral reefs and other marine ecosystems  
Turks & Caicos Islands, Atlantic Ocean*

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## List of acronyms

ABNJ	Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction	PERSGA	Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea & Gulf of Aden Region
ABS	Access and benefit sharing	RBSAP	Regional Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan
BBNJ	Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction	RFB	Regional fisheries body
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity	RFMO	Regional Fisheries Management Organisation
CCAMLR	Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources	ROPME	Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment
COBSEA	Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia	RSCAP	Regional Seas Convention and Action Plan
COP	Conference of Parties	RSP	Regional Seas Programme
CPPS	Permanent Commission for the South Pacific	SACEP	South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme
CSI	Core Set of Indicators	SBSTTA	CBD Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice
EBM	Ecosystem-based management	SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
EC	European Commission	SPREP	South Pacific Regional Environment Programme
EU	European Union	UN	United Nations
EEZ	Exclusive economic zone	UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	UNEA	United National Environment Assembly
GBF	Global biodiversity framework	UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
GES	Good Environmental Status	UNEP-CEP	UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme
HELCOM	Helsinki Convention	UNEP-MAP	UNEP Mediterranean Action Plan
IAS	Invasive alien species	WIO	Western Indian Ocean
ICZM	Integrated coastal zone management		
IMAP	UNEP/MAP's Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme		
IMO	International Maritime Organization		
LME	Large Marine Ecosystem		
MEA	Multilateral environmental agreement		
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding		
MPA	Marine protected area		
MSFD	Marine Strategy Framework Directive (of the European Union)		
MSP	Marine spatial planning		
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan		
NIS	Non-invasive species		
NOWPAP	Northwest Pacific Action Plan		
OSPAR	Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic		
PAME	Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment Working Group		

# Executive summary

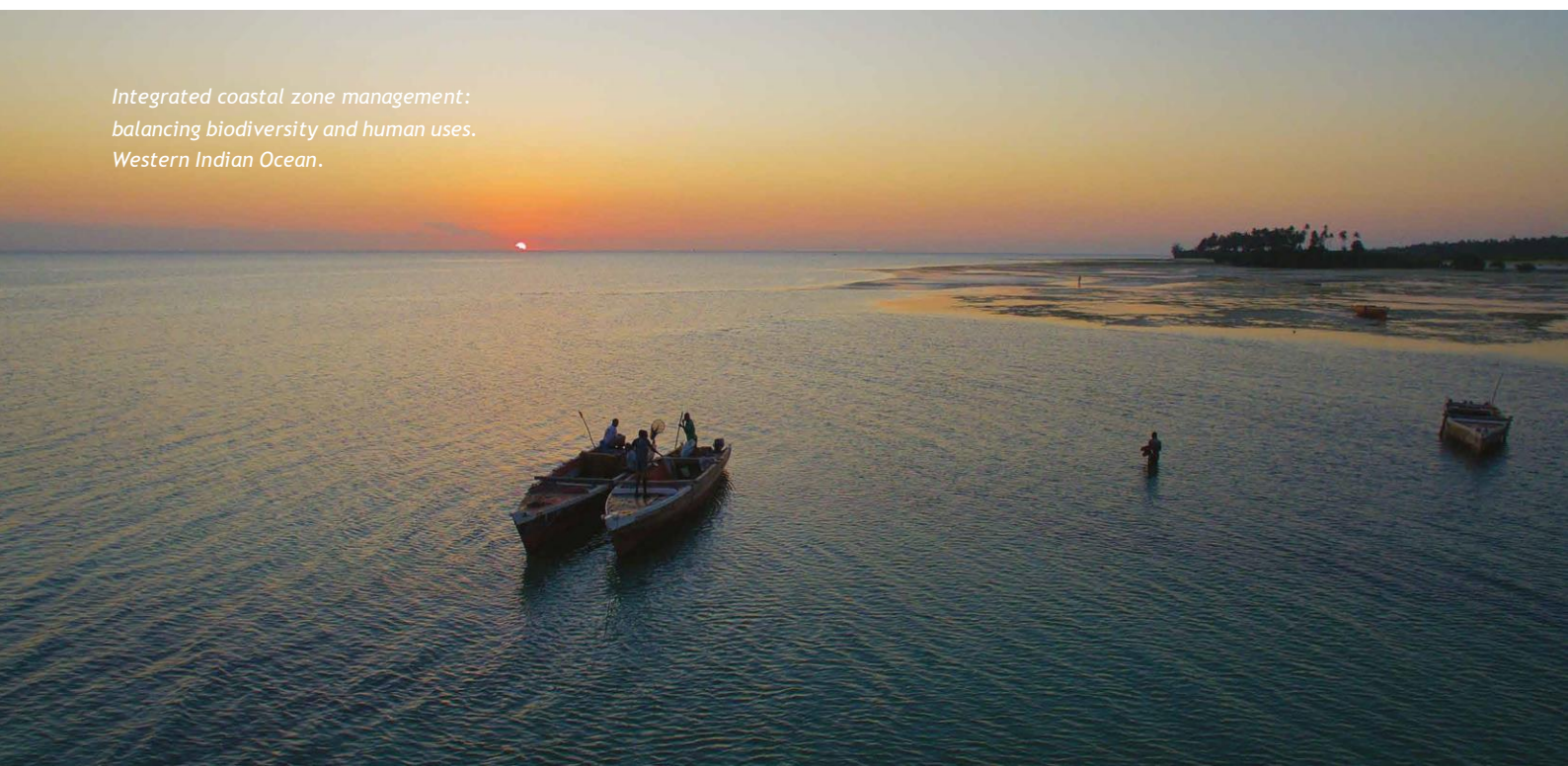
Despite a decade of global efforts to protect and restore biodiversity, not one of the 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets was fully achieved by the 2020 deadline and biodiversity loss continues at an unprecedented rate. The Convention on Biological Diversity's post-2020 global biodiversity framework (GBF) is the ambitious successor of the CBD's 2011-2020 Strategic Plan for Biodiversity. Development of the GBF and its associated monitoring and reporting framework is on-going, involving a comprehensive preparatory process. The GBF Zero Draft considers land-water-marine linkages, recognising the importance of marine biodiversity elements and reflecting these in the GBF monitoring framework. It also highlights the urgency of policy action at all levels (including regionally) to transform economic, social and financial models, to curb global biodiversity loss. Within the GBF's proposed monitoring and reporting framework, there are important marine aspects to be further addressed and there is a need for a strengthened regional dimension to help States and competent regional organisations operationalise the targets and better align them with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

UNEP's Regional Seas Programme (RSP) and its 18 Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAPs) are in a unique position to support States to achieve ocean-related elements of the GBF, building on a recognised body of work and achievements established over a 45-year period. RSCAPs can provide coordination and cooperation at the regional scale, agreed methods to monitor state of

the environment trends and measures to reduce threats, taking into account the trans-boundary commitments of ecosystem-based management (EBM). Furthermore, the RSP and the RSCAPs have governance mechanisms in place, regional convening power, extensive expert networks, and an established track record of environmental protection. This includes the establishment of regional goals, targets and indicators, and associated monitoring and reporting. There is clearly also value added in aggregating data at the regional scale, with many aspects of biodiversity (e.g., networks of marine protected areas (MPAs)) requiring an eco-regional assessment.

However, it is also clear that RSCAPs vary in capacity, and that a range of gaps need to be addressed to allow them, and the RSP as a whole, to fully deliver regionally relevant targets of the GBF. We propose a three-tier construct within which individual RSCAPs can place themselves in terms of capacity needs, including: legal support to address the GBF, dedicated human and financial resources, aligning strategic documents with the GBF, adopting practical and harmonised indicators to allow coordinated monitoring and reporting, improved communication with national focal points and enhanced regional cooperation. Suggestions on how to overcome these capacity needs are presented as a toolbox, synthesised in our recommendations, highlighting a potential role for all those involved: the CBD, UNEP/RSP, RSCAPs and other regional organisations, and individual States.

*Integrated coastal zone management:  
balancing biodiversity and human uses.  
Western Indian Ocean.*



# 1

## The Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

Global Biodiversity Outlook 5 concluded that despite a decade of global efforts to protect and restore biodiversity, not one of the 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets has been fully achieved and biodiversity loss continues at an unprecedented rate, requiring urgent and innovative action<sup>[1]</sup>.

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) post-2020 global biodiversity framework (GBF), currently under development, is the ambitious successor of the CBD's 2011-2020 Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and the associated 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets. The GBF is built around a theory of change, which recognises that urgent policy action globally, regionally and nationally is required to transform economic, social and financial models so that biodiversity loss will stabilise by 2030. If successful, this will allow for the recovery of natural ecosystems, with net improvements by 2050, to achieve the CBD's vision of living in harmony with nature by 2050, whereby "*biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored and wisely used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people*"<sup>[2]</sup>. The GBF supports the overarching framework established by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and fosters a common purpose of sustainable development through the promotion of ecosystem health and status, adopting an ecosystem approach<sup>†</sup>.

At present, the GBF has four long-term goals for 2050, each with two milestones to assess progress towards the goals in

2030, and corresponding proposed indicators<sup>[5,6]</sup> (Table 1).

The draft GBF proposes 20 action-oriented targets for 2030, regarding the status and trends of biodiversity, the benefits biodiversity provides to people, as well as the conditions necessary for implementing the GBF. If achieved, the targets will contribute to the 2030 milestones and to the outcome-oriented goals for 2050. Table 2 summarises the 20 GBF targets and how they potentially relate to Aichi Biodiversity Targets and to the targets for SDG 14, Life Below Water.

The GBF's monitoring framework is a work in progress. For each goal/milestone and target, there is a suite of indicators that can be used for tracking progress at national, regional and global levels. Currently, the indicators are separated into three groups:

- Headline indicators (*a minimum set of high-level indicators which capture the overall scope of the goals and targets of the GBF*).
- Component indicators (*for monitoring each component of each goal and target of the GBF*).
- Complementary indicators (*for thematic or in-depth analysis of each goal and target; some indicators have significant data collection gaps or are highly specific*).

<sup>†</sup> The ecosystem approach, also referred to as ecosystem-based management, is defined by the CBD as "*a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way*", which i.a., "*recognises that humans, with their cultural diversity, are an integral component of ecosystems*" [3,4].



**Table 1: GBF 2050 Goals, 2030 milestones and proposed indicators (as at November 2020)**

GBF 2050 Goals	GBF 2030 Milestones	GBF Proposed headline indicators
Goal A. The area, connectivity and integrity of natural ecosystems increased by at least [X%] supporting healthy and resilient populations of all species while reducing the number of species that are threatened by [X%] and maintaining genetic diversity	i) The area, connectivity and integrity of natural ecosystems increased by at least [5%] ii) The number of species that are threatened is reduced by [X%] and the abundance of species has increased on average by [X%]	A.0.1 Extent of selected natural ecosystems (forest, savannahs and grasslands, wetlands, mangroves, saltmarshes, coral reef, seagrass, macroalgae and intertidal habitats) A.0.2 Living Planet Index A.0.3 Red List Index A.0.4 Species habitat index A.0.5 The proportion of populations maintained within species*
Goal B. Nature's contributions to people have been valued, maintained or enhanced through conservation and sustainable use, supporting the global development agenda for the benefit of all people	(i) Nature contributes to the sustainable nutrition and food security, access to safe drinking water and resilience to natural disasters for at least [X] million people (ii) Nature is valued through green investments, ecosystem service valuation in national accounts, and public and private sector financial disclosure	B.0.1 Population benefiting from ecosystem services* B.0.2 Value of all final ecosystem services (Gross Ecosystem Product)*
Goal C. The benefits, from utilization of genetic resources are shared fairly and equitably	(i) Access and benefit sharing mechanisms are established in all countries ii) Benefits shared increased by [x%]	C.0.1 Amount of monetary benefits (in \$USD) received from countries from utilisation of genetic resources as a result of an ABS agreement, including traditional knowledge C.0.2 Number of research and development results or publications shared as a result of an ABS agreement
Goal D. Means of implementation is available to achieve all goals and targets the Framework	(i) By 2022, means to implement the Framework for the period 2020 to 2030 are identified or committed. By 2030, means to implement the Framework for the period 2030 to 2040 are identified or committed	D.0.1 Index of coverage of national biodiversity strategies and action plans with formal processes for ensuring that women, indigenous and local communities and youth are engaged and which capture means of implementation* D.0.2 National funding for implementation of the GBF*

\* Not fully developed or operational

## Gaps and challenges


The GBF Zero Draft encourages Parties to consider land-water-marine linkages, recognising the importance of marine biodiversity elements and their contribution to the targets. However, within the GBF's proposed monitoring and reporting framework, there are important marine aspects that need to be further addressed going forward. As the monitoring framework develops, greater emphasis is likely to be given to marine elements within the proposed monitoring framework to help reflect their importance, to help States and competent regional organisations prioritise their assessment, and to better align the targets with the SDGs.

Also, the present CBD reporting system mostly lacks a regional dimension. States focusing on their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs; aligned to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and SDGs) report directly to

the CBD, and the CBD's Global Biodiversity Outlook reports (effectively periodic litmus tests of collective progress against targets) do not include or compare regional evaluations.

- » Failure to incorporate important marine-specific indicators and to incorporate a regional (ecosystem-based) approach can impair the GBF's capacity to deliver on its proposed targets and goals/milestones.
- » An opportunity exists to strengthen the regional level of implementation of the GBF in the marine environment, namely through regional coordination initiated by UNEP's Regional Seas Programme and its component Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAPs), as well as by their specific region-targeted actions.

**Table 2: Relation of draft GBF 2030 targets (as at November 2020) to Aichi Biodiversity Targets and SDG 14 targets**

Related Aichi targets	Draft GBF 2030 targets: By 2030	Related SDG14 targets
	<b>1</b> [50%] of land and sea areas globally are under spatial planning addressing land/sea use change, retaining most of the existing intact and wilderness areas, and allow to restore [X%] of degraded freshwater, marine and terrestrial natural ecosystems and connectivity among them	
	<b>2</b> Protect and conserve through well connected and effective system of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures at least 30% of the planet with the focus on areas particularly important for biodiversity	
	<b>3</b> Ensure active management actions to enable wild species of fauna and flora recovery and conservation, and reduce human-wildlife conflict by [X%]	
	<b>4</b> Ensure that the harvesting, trade and use of wild species of fauna and flora is legal, at sustainable levels and safe.	
	<b>5</b> Manage, and where possible control, pathways for the introduction of IAS, achieving [50%] reduction in the rate of new introductions, and control or eradicate IAS to eliminate or reduce their impacts, including in at least [50%] of priority sites	
	<b>6</b> Reduce pollution from all sources, including excess nutrients [by x%], biocides [by x%], plastic waste [by x%] to levels that are not harmful to biodiversity and ecosystem functions and human health	
	<b>7</b> Increase contributions to climate change mitigation adaption and disaster risk reduction from nature-based solutions and ecosystems based approaches, ensuring resilience and minimising any negative impacts on biodiversity	 
	<b>8</b> Ensure benefits, including nutrition, food security, livelihoods, health and well-being, for people, especially for the most vulnerable through sustainable management of wild species of fauna and flora	   
	<b>9</b> Support the productivity, sustainability and resilience of biodiversity in agricultural and other managed ecosystems through conservation and sustainable use of such ecosystems, reducing productivity gaps by at least [50%]	
	<b>10</b> Ensure that, nature based solutions and ecosystem approach contribute to regulation of air quality, hazards and extreme events and quality and quantity of water for at least [XXX million] people	

Related Aichi targets	Draft GBF 2030 targets: By 2030	Related SDG14 targets
	<b>11</b> Increase benefits from biodiversity and green/blue spaces for human health and well-being, including the proportion of people with access to such spaces by at least [100%], especially for urban dwellers	 
 	<b>12</b> Increase by [X] benefits shared for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity through ensuring access to and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge	  
  	<b>13</b> Integrate biodiversity values into policies, regulations, planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts at all levels, ensuring that biodiversity values are mainstreamed across all sectors and integrated into assessments of environmental impacts	  
	<b>14</b> Achieve reduction of at least [50%] in negative impacts on biodiversity by ensuring production practices and supply chains are sustainable	  
	<b>15</b> Eliminate unsustainable consumption patterns, ensuring people everywhere understand and appreciate the value of biodiversity, and thus make responsible choices commensurate with 2050 biodiversity vision, taking into account individual and national cultural and socioeconomic condition	  
	<b>16</b> Establish and implement measures to prevent, manage or control potential adverse impacts of biotechnology on biodiversity and human health reducing these impacts by [X]	 
	<b>17</b> Redirect, repurpose, reform or eliminate incentives harmful for biodiversity, including [X] reduction in the most harmful subsidies, ensuring that incentives, including public and private economic and regulatory incentives, are either positive or neutral for biodiversity	
 	<b>18</b> Increase by [X%] financial resources from all international and domestic sources, through new, additional and effective financial resources commensurate with the ambition of the goals and targets of the framework and implement the strategy for capacity-building and technology transfer and scientific cooperation to meet the needs for implementing the post-2020 GBF	
 	<b>19</b> Ensure that quality information, including traditional knowledge, is available to decision makers and public for the effective management of biodiversity through promoting awareness, education and research	 
	<b>20</b> Ensure equitable participation in decision-making related to biodiversity and ensure rights over relevant resources of indigenous peoples and local communities, women and girls as well as youth, in accordance with national circumstances	

# 2

## A potential role for UNEP's Regional Seas Programme in implementing the GBF

The Regional Seas Programme (RSP) was launched in 1974 by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to address the accelerating degradation of the world's ocean. Since then, the RSP has developed in response to growing awareness and appreciation of the transboundary impacts of pollutants and human activities on the marine environment. The RSP reflects political will for coordinated action and provides a legal framework to tackle common marine environmental issues at the regional scale. In addition to addressing common threats, each region has its own specific challenges and priorities. In this respect, the RSP supports individual States of a shared sea basin in exercising their duties and obligations under UNCLOS, as well as providing an interface with global multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), such as the CBD and the GBF.

Currently, the RSP consists of 18 RSCAPs, in which 146 countries participate. Fourteen RSCAPs are established under UNEP auspices and four are partnering programmes (Figure 1).

Most of the RSCAPs deliver their obligations through Action Plans and/or Strategies, which are adopted by member governments/Contracting Parties (littoral and upstream States) to establish a comprehensive framework for protecting the marine environment and promote sustainable development of their region. An Action Plan outlines the strategy and substance of the framework, based on a region's particular environmental challenges as well as its socio-economic and political situation. Such Action Plans are usually underpinned by a legally binding Regional

Convention (14 Regional Seas have adopted Conventions) that expresses the commitment and political will of signatory governments to tackle their common environmental issues through joint coordinated activities. Most Conventions have associated Protocols (or Annexes) that form legal agreements addressing specific issues. In the case of some regions (e.g., Seas of East Asia – COBSEA; Arctic Ocean - PAME), adopted Action Plans/strategies are recognised by States as soft legal instruments.

Efforts have been made by several RSCAPs to harmonise their agreed targets and indicators with Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Relevant issues covered by RSCAPs also show significant overlap with many of the GBF targets and are uniquely relevant to advancing many aspects of the GBF (Table 3; also see examples in boxes 1 and 2). All functioning RSCAPs develop work related to MPAs (GBF Target 2), to the recovery and conservation of wild species of fauna and flora (GBF Target 3), and to pollution from various sources, including marine litter (GBF Target 6). The vast majority also develop work relevant to the sustainable harvesting, trade and use of wild species of fauna and flora (GBF Target 4), to invasive alien species (GBF Target 5) and to spatial planning, including Integrated Coastal Zone Management and Marine Spatial Planning (GBF Target 1). Some RSCAPs are also starting to explore possibilities related to monitoring and reporting on ecosystem services (GBF Target 10).

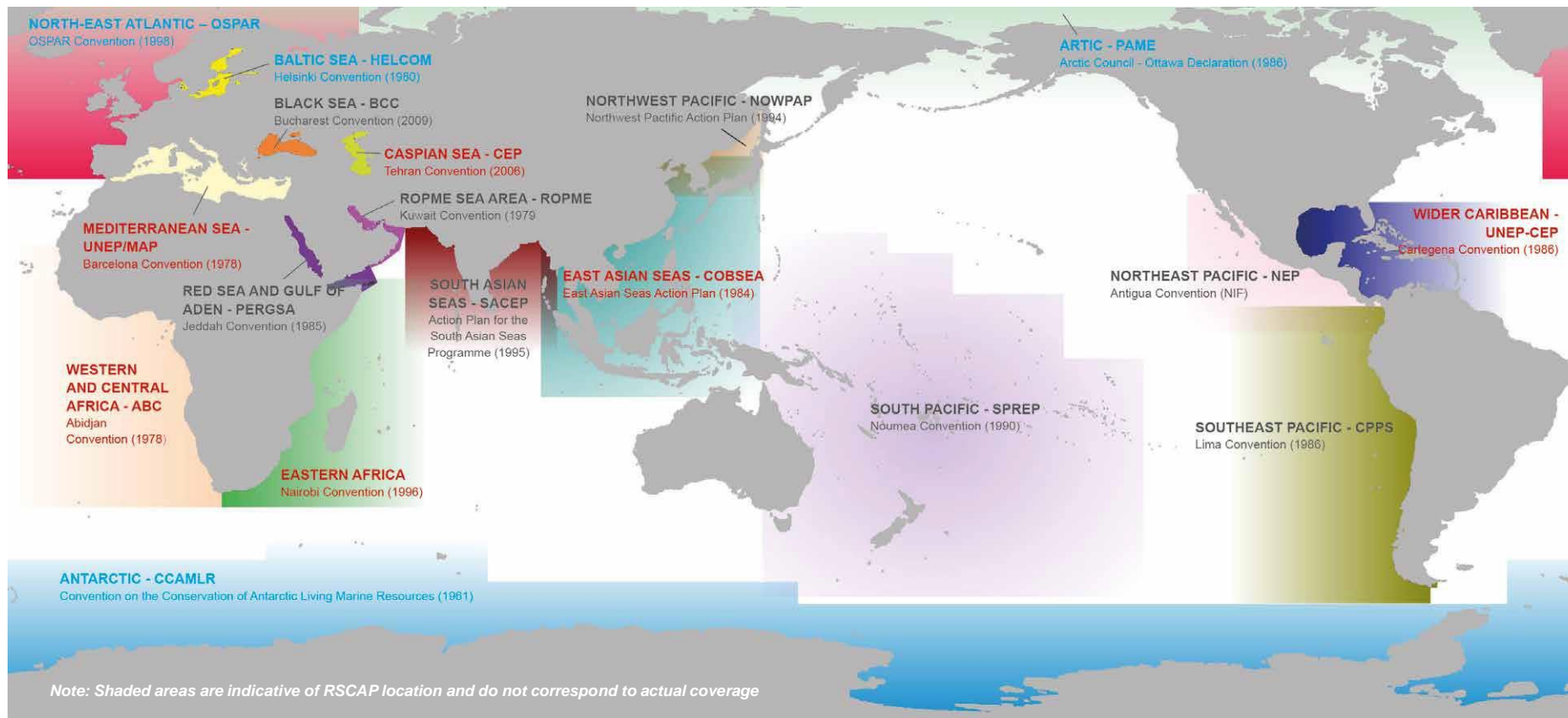
RSCAPs can help demonstrate how Parties and Member States are contributing marine elements to the GBF, reacting to gloomy assessments of ocean health and condition by the

Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) <sup>[7]</sup> and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and delivering on commitments that align with the SDGs. Additionally, the RSP can help highlight regional efforts by non-Parties to the CBD, which while not directly bound to the CBD, by being Parties to RSCAPs and via their corresponding regional commitments, significantly contribute to the CBD.

Opportunities exist to strengthen regional alliances and their implementation of EBM, including incorporation of relevant Large Marine Ecosystem (LME) projects, which are almost entirely located within RSCAPs. Similar opportunities exist to enhance collaboration with Regional Fisheries Bodies (RFBs): around half of the RSCAPs have signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with the RFBs, in various cases building on an initial platform for dialogue provided by the CBD's Sustainable Ocean Initiative.



*Seagrass meadow, Wakatobi National Park  
Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia*



**Figure 1:** Global coverage of the Regional Seas Programme. Shaded areas are indicative of location and do not correspond to actual coverage. For each RSCP: region and acronym; corresponding Convention or Action Plan (date entered into force); NIF = not in force. In red: UNEP administered RSCAPs; in grey: non-UNEP administered RSCAPs; in blue: independent programmes/partners. On-going efforts are being made to address gaps.

**Table 3: GBF targets and linkages to the mandate of functioning RSCAPs. Cells shaded blue show areas of RSCAP work that are relevant to the GBF.**

GBF targets (topics)*	RSCAPs																
	Mediterranean/UNEP-MAP	West Africa/Abidjan Convention	Wider Caribbean/UNEP-CEP	East Africa/Nairobi Convention	East Asia Seas/COBSEA	NW Pacific/NOWPAP	Caspian Sea/Tehran Convention	ROPME/Kuwait Convention	SE Pacific/CPPS	Red Sea & Gulf of Aden/PERGSA	South Pacific/SPREP	Black Sea/Bucharest Convention	South Asian Seas/SACEP	Baltic Sea/HELCOM	NE Atlantic /OSPAR	Antarctic Ocean /CCAMLR	Arctic Ocean /Arctic Council (PAME)
1. Spatial planning																	
2. Protected areas																	
3. Recovery/conservation of wild species																	
4. Sustainable harvest																	
5. Invasive alien species																	
6. Reduce pollution																	
7. Climate change mitigation																	
8. Sustainably managed wild species																	
9. Sustainability managed ecosystems																	
10. Nature-based solutions and Ecosystem Approach																	
11. Benefits from biodiversity																	
12. Benefit sharing																	
13. Integrate biodiversity in PPPs																	
14. Sustainable supply chains																	
15. Eliminate unsustainable consumption																	
16. Reduce adverse impacts of biotechnology																	
17. Eliminate harmful incentives																	
18. Increase financial resources, capacity-building																	
19. Quality information and traditional knowledge																	
20. Equitable participation in decision-making																	

\* As at November 2020. For the full text of the targets, see Table 2

§ Policies, plans, projects

## Indicators, monitoring and reporting

There is a body of work and knowledge within the purview of the RSP that can be harmonised with the GBF and thus support global-scale indicators. Many RSCAPs have established functioning monitoring and reporting mechanisms, supported by existing data and information systems, with corresponding indicators (for examples, see Box 3 and Box 4).

UNEP has also established a core set of 22 indicators for the RSP and matched them with relevant SDG 14 targets (Table 4). Additionally, UNEP is a co-custodian agency for

the development and monitoring of SDG indicators 14.1.1 and 14.2.1 and intends to use the network of the RSCAPs to collect necessary reporting related to those indicators.

Use of a limited subset of the core set of 22 indicators that can be up-scaled and linked with the GBF goals and targets on themes such as integrated coastal zone management and marine spatial planning, marine protected areas, invasive alien species, marine litter, and ecosystem services (Box 5) is one practical suggestion to utilise the knowledge held within the RSP and RSCAPs.

*Seal colony, Namibia*





**Table 4:** Potential synergies between draft GBF 2030 targets and headline indicators, and the RSP's core set of indicators (CSI) or RSCAP specific indicators†.

Draft GBF 2030 targets*	Proposed headline indicator	RSP CSI no. and category or RSCAP specific indicator	
<b>1. Spatial planning</b>	1.0.1 % of land covered by landscape scale land-use plans for terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems*	22	National ICZM in place: National ICZM guidelines and enabling legislation adopted
<b>2. Protected areas</b>	2.0.1 Protected area coverage of important biodiversity areas	21	Critical marine habitat under protection: % marine protected areas designated
	2.0.1 Species Protection Index	-	-
<b>3. Recovery/ conservation of wild species</b>	3.0.1 Protected areas management effectiveness	-	-
	3.0.2 Species recovery programmes*	-	-
<b>4. Sustainable harvest</b>	4.0.1 Proportion of traded wildlife that is legal and safe (not poached, illicitly trafficked or unsustainable)	-	-
	4.0.2 Proportion of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels	5	Fish landings
		12	Level of exploitation of commercial fisheries
		20	Fish harvested within safe ecological limits
	13	Species replacement due to fisheries	
<b>5. Invasive Alien Species</b>	5.0.1 Rate of invasive alien species spread	-	<i>Examples of RSCAP specific indicators (NOWPAP):</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• environmental impact of alien species</li> <li>• ratio between alien species and native species and their interaction at the level of ecosystem, habitats and species</li> </ul>
	5.0.2 Rate of invasive alien species impact		
<b>6. Reduce pollution</b>	6.0.2 Plastic debris density	3	Marine litter: quantification & classification of beach litter items
		18	Incentive to reduce marine litter at source
	6.0.3 Proportion of water with good ambient water quality (freshwater and marine)	1	Total inputs of N and P: Chlorophyll a concentration
		9	Eutrophication status
	6.0.3 Pesticide use per area of cropland	2	Inputs of marine chemical pollution
		10	Pollution hot spots
6.0.4 Proportion of municipal solid waste collected and managed in controlled facilities out of total municipal solid waste generated by cities	17	Wastewater treatment facilities	
	16	National Action Plans to reduce input from land-based sources	
<b>7. Climate change mitigation</b>	7.0.1 Total climate regulation services provided by ecosystems*	4	Ocean warming
		19	Climate change adaptation
		11	Ocean acidification
<b>9. Sustainability managed ecosystems</b>	9.0.1 Proportion of agricultural area under productive and sustainable agriculture	6	Aquaculture
		7	Aquaculture
<b>10. Nature based solutions and Ecosystem Approach</b>	10.0.1 Population living in areas with clean air and clean and accessible water*	-	<i>Ecosystem service indicators are being developed by various RSCAPS, including the Abidjan Convention, the Nairobi Convention, UNEP-CEP and SACEP</i>
	10.0.2 Ecosystems providing reduced coastal erosion, flood protection and other services)*		
<b>11. Benefits from biodiversity</b>	11.0.1 Average share of the built-up area of cities that is green/blue space for public use for all	8	Population pressure / urbanisation

\* As at November 2020. For the full text of the targets see Table 2.

† It should be noted that UNEA5 (2022) will consider adopting relevant measures and indicators.

## Gaps and challenges

It is important to recognise the existence of gaps, some of them extraneous to the RSP, that limit the potential of the RSP as a whole and of individual RSCAPs in particular in addressing the GBF:

- **Geographic gaps:** Vast expanses of the ocean are currently outside areas covered by RSCAPs, such as the majority of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) and important coastal stretches in the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian oceans (Figure 1). Proactive on-going efforts are being made to address gaps. Concerning ABNJ, several RSCAPs either have a mandate for the High Seas (e.g., OSPAR, CCAMLR, SPREP, and UNEP/MAP) or have given particular consideration to adjacent ABNJ (e.g., Nairobi Convention, Abidjan Convention), but the majority do not. This is another reason closer links between the RSP and the LMEs (which also cover sections of ABNJ) would be helpful. The on-going negotiations under UNCLOS to

secure an International Legally Binding Agreement for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) will likely have implications for future implementation of the GBF. For example, the proposed 30 x 30 (30% protection of the ocean by 2030) target for protected areas presents a very significant challenge for many regions and will require consideration of the High Seas and other effective conservation measures, requiring collective effort from all intergovernmental organisations and MEAs.

- **Implementation gaps:** Even where RSCAPs are in place, implementation gaps exist. For example, the Antigua Convention (Central America) was adopted in 2002 but has still not entered into force. Equally, RSCAPs without biodiversity protocols and (or) those that are not sufficiently engaged (e.g., with contributions outstanding), cannot actively contribute to the GBF.
- **Data gaps:** For many marine areas (and particularly in the deep sea) data are sparse, and data gaps are exacerbated by problems with reporting and data collection. Under-representation of ecosystems and biodiversity in deep-sea areas (and deep-sea knowledge gaps) is an on-going scientific challenge. Much of the marine realm lies outside EEZs, where there is little in situ monitoring and the environment is not always amenable to country reporting, often deferring to remote sampling techniques and proxies.
- **Communication gaps:** Communication is a transversal and universal challenge: between UNEP's various branches/divisions/units, between UNEP headquarters and the RSCAPs, between the RSCAP secretariats and their Parties, among RSCAPs, and between national focal points. Communication with civil society is also needed, to raise the public profile of concerns with marine biodiversity and to engage the interest and investment of foundations and donors/private sector and enhance ocean literacy.

*Atlantic Puffin and Razorbills  
Machias Seal Island, North Atlantic Ocean*



**RECOMMENDATION:** *UNEP and RSCAPs facilitate efforts to address gaps in regional coverage and engage proactively in BBNJ discussions in support of their Parties.*



*Whale shark, Maldives*

### Box 1: Highlights of work by the OSPAR Commission (North-East Atlantic) relevant to the GBF

OSPAR's work will contribute to a range of the proposed GBF's Goals and Targets, such as:

- OSPAR's network of MPAs has been ground-breaking, including the designation of MPAs in ABNJ. OSPAR intends to enlarge the network, and to strengthen the ecological coherence and management effectiveness of existing MPAs.
- OSPAR's list of threatened and/or declining species and habitats for priority conservation action, bringing in protective actions for features not contemplated under other legal regimes, and supporting coordination of protection of features covered by other legal instruments, e.g., in the European Union (EU).
- OSPAR's common indicator on non-indigenous species (NIS). OSPAR has engaged with HELCOM through a joint task group on ballast water management, to develop a scheme for managing ballast waters to limit introduction of NIS taking into account the risk in neighbouring sea areas.
- OSPAR's legal instruments to regulate the use of hazardous substances and measures to reduce eutrophication have led to pollution reduction in the region over the last 25 years. Contracting Parties are developing an updated and harmonised approach to assess eutrophication and to establish new nutrient targets.



- OSPAR is a leading actor in assessing pollution from marine litter by developing indicators, and by taking actions to reduce input and mitigate harm through the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter. OSPAR's beach litter monitoring was instrumental in providing an evidence base for the EU's Single Use Plastics Directive.

### Box 2: Highlights of work by the Nairobi Convention (Western Indian Ocean) relevant to the GBF

The Nairobi Convention's work in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region covers many aspects that are relevant to the GBF, such as:

- WIO MPAs Outlook on current formal and informal MPAs, threats and challenges to their protection and management, overview of MPA effectiveness and options for proposed future MPAs.
- Guidelines for restoration of degraded critical habitats (mangroves and seagrasses) in the WIO.
- Guidelines on Environmental Flows Assessments including building capacity for Integrated Water Resources Management.
- Climate change vulnerability assessment toolkit for the near-shore marine social-ecological system in the WIO.
- Development of a WIO regional ocean acidification action plan.
- Implementation of a regional marine litter action plan and development of national/local marine litter action plans.
- Development of a strategic framework for marine water quality management in the WIO, to enable marine aquaculture, industrial use, recreational use, as well as biodiversity protection and ecosystem functioning.



- Guidelines on methodologies for the valuation of coastal and marine ecosystems.
- Active engagement and empowerment of coastal communities, to reduce stress on marine resources and promote sustainable resource management.
- Assessment of the Contribution of Maritime Sectors to the Blue Economy: Values, Potentials and Governance Frameworks.

### Box 3: Integrated monitoring and assessment programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and related assessment criteria

In 2016, at their 19<sup>th</sup> COP meeting, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention adopted an Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Seas and Coast and related Assessment Criteria <sup>[9]</sup> (IMAP). IMAP describes the strategy, themes, and products that the Parties are aiming to deliver during the second cycle of the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach Process (2016-2021), with the ultimate goal of assessing the status of the Mediterranean sea and coast, as a basis for enhanced action. IMAP set out 11 comprehensive regional Ecological Objectives (EOs) and related common and candidate indicators.

IMAP is considered a key achievement for the Mediterranean region, enabling for the first time a quantitative, integrated analysis of the state of the marine and coastal environment, including pollution and marine litter, biodiversity, non-indigenous species, coast, and hydrography, based on common regional indicators, targets and Good Environmental Status (GES) descriptions. IMAP implementation relies on cooperation between countries and with key regional partners such as fisheries bodies, and on the application of Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) principles, both at national and regional level, and on the development of an IMAP-compatible Integrated Data and Information System within UNEP/MAP.



**Mediterranean  
Action Plan  
Barcelona  
Convention**

### Box 4: South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) indicators relevant to the GBF

In the South Pacific Ocean, SPREP has been developing various sets of indicators relevant to the GBF:

- SPREP's Inform Project<sup>†</sup> has developed a set of 29 Core National Environmental indicators, in consultation with Members for National Reporting to State of Environment, designed to be applied to other reporting obligations including SDGs and MEAs such as CBD. Indicators are monitored through member countries environment ministries. Associated data are typically available on national environment data portals and can be accessed through the Pacific Environment Portal.
- SPREP's Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme 2013-2017 outlines a regional strategy for the cooperative conservation and management of dugongs, marine turtles, whales and dolphins, implemented through dedicated action plans. Each action plans identifies objectives, distributed through cross-cutting themes, and the corresponding indicators.
- SPREP's Framework for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas in the Pacific Islands Region 2014-2020 provides guidance for the South Pacific region on "key priorities for biodiversity conservation and ecosystem management" linking Aichi Biodiversity targets and National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans, with examples of performance indicators.



**SPREP**  
Secretariat of the Pacific Regional  
Environment Programme

<sup>†</sup> [www.sprep.org/inform](http://www.sprep.org/inform)

## Box 5: A range of potentially useful indicators used by RSCAPs



### ***Integrated coastal zone management and marine/maritime spatial planning (ICZM/MSP) (GBF Target 1)***

RSP CSI Indicator 22 (National ICZM in place) recommends the use of 'National ICZM guidelines and enabling legislation adopted' as a coordinated metric for the RSCAPs. Other indicators and associated metrics potentially relevant to this topic include CSI 8 on Population pressure/urbanisation: Length of coastal modification and km<sup>2</sup> of coastal reclamation; and CSI 19 on Climate change adaptation: 1) % national adaptation plans in place; 2) Sector based national adaptation plans; 3) Number of existing national and local coastal and marine plans incorporating climate change adaptation.

In the EU, as per the MSP Directive, all coastal Member States have to implement MSP by 2021 and to report on progress every 4 years. RSCAPs in the EU, such as HELCOM, are also monitoring MSP implementation under the Directive. In the framework of UNEP/MAP, in the Mediterranean region, partly within the EU, reporting on ICZM is carried out under the ICZM Protocol and the Regional Framework for ICZM.



### ***Marine protected areas (MPAs) (GBF target 2)***

Different RSCAPs have adopted indicators for monitoring MPAs, from numbers designated and areal coverage (CPPS, SPREP, PAME, Nairobi and Abidjan Conventions), sometimes categorised (various IUCN categories, RAMSAR, EBSAs and others), to existence of management plans and monitoring and management efficiency, including if MPA management is documented, if measures are implemented, if monitoring is taking place, if MPAs are moving towards or have reached their conservation status (PERSGA, SACEP), to evaluations of ecological coherence, including geographical distribution, coverage across biogeographic regions, and representation and replication of marine habitats and species within MPAs (OSPAR, HELCOM, UNEP/MAP).



### ***Invasive alien species (IAS) (GBF Target 5)***

Invasive alien species are considered one of the greatest threats to marine and coastal ecosystems. In the EU, progress towards good environmental status (GES) under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) includes the assessment of non-indigenous species (NIS; for example see Box 3).

RSCAPs focus on various aspects of IAS and/or NIS, such as number and names of introduced NIS (Black Sea), trends in arrival of new NIS (HELCOM core indicator), changes to NIS communities (OSPAR common indicator with three associated parameters: new introductions, community abundance, and dispersal; UNEP/MAP common indicator: trends in abundance, temporal occurrence, and spatial distribution), environmental impact of alien species (NOWPAP), ratio between alien species and native species and their interaction at the level of ecosystem, habitats and species (NOWPAP). Other RSCAPs also cover monitoring and management aspects related to IAS, such as development of regional databases and IAS related training (SACEP) and availability and level of uptake of monitoring and management protocols and actions (UNEP-CEP, SPREP, Abidjan Convention).



### ***Marine litter (GBF Target 6)***

Marine litter is a global concern and a threat to all marine life. Combating marine litter is a priority challenge to preserve the marine ecosystem and human health. OSPAR, HELCOM, UNEP/MAP, and NOWPAP have identified indicators to monitor the state of marine litter in the environment (including beaches and the seafloor) and its impacts on marine life (e.g., OSPAR Ecological Quality Objectives). PERSGA monitors CSI 3 (Overall levels of marine litter; Quantification of beach litter items), CSI 16 (National Action Plans to reduce input from land-based sources), and CSI 18 (Incentive to reduce marine litter at source). SACEP and SPREP also focus, i.a., on metrics related to management such as the number of national and regional initiatives including the number of marine litter management plans, policies and rules etc., in place.



### ***Ecosystem services indicators (GBF Target 10)***

Ecosystem services – the benefits people obtain from ecosystems, and which sustain and fulfil human life – encompass a wide and complex web of processes, such that finding appropriate indicators or metrics is a significant challenge. Aichi Biodiversity Targets 11 and 14 included ecosystem services and in the GBF biodiversity-related ecosystem services are transversal to various goals and targets.

The various targets of SDG 14 do not explicitly mention ecosystem services and the CSIs also do not address them as such. However, various indicators may be used as proxies of marine ecosystem services, namely indicators for MPAs, ICZM/MSP, IAS. Several RSCAPs are already specifically addressing ecosystem services and proposing related indicators. The Abidjan Convention’s Performance Measurement Plan identifies two main types of results (outcomes) related to ecosystem services, with the corresponding indicators covering a wide range of topics, including: changes in the quantity and quality of benefits derived from marine and coastal ecosystems, the social and environmental value of exploited goods and species. The Nairobi Convention’s Western Indian Ocean LME SAPPHERE project includes outcome indicators related to ecosystem services; UNEP-CEP’s Regional Strategy and Action Plan for the Valuation, Protection and/or Restoration of Key Marine Habitats in the Wider Caribbean 2021-2030 identifies a number of ecosystem service related actions and activities, as well as the corresponding indicators; SACEP’s Marine and Coastal Biodiversity Strategy for the South Asian Seas Region for 2019-2030 Implementation Monitoring Framework identifies various axes, the first being “Ensuring Ecosystem Services and Wellbeing”, including specific indicators.

*Litter on the beach, Bali*

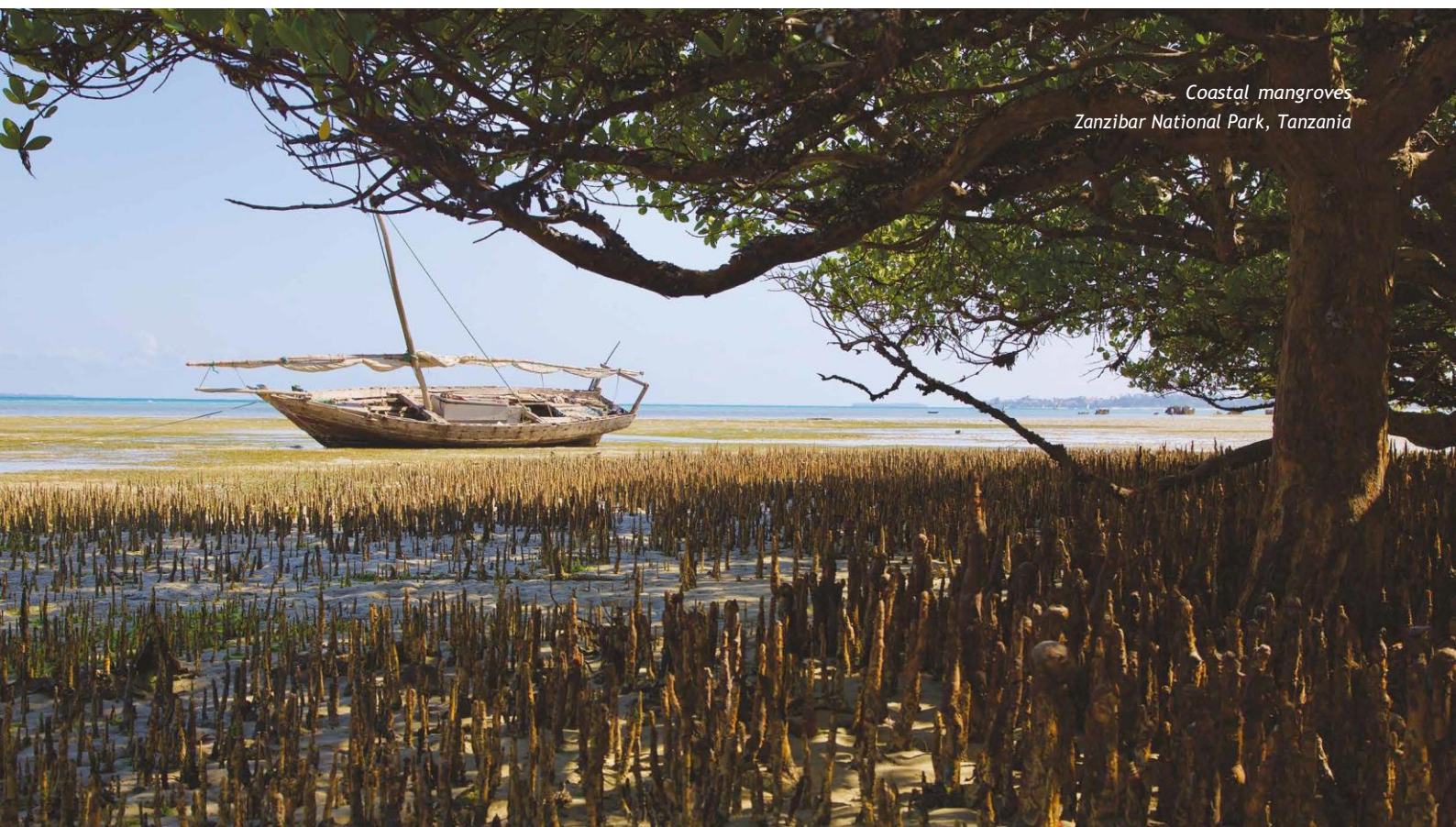


# 3

## Enhancing the contribution of the Regional Seas Programme to the GBF

The RSP and RSCAPs in particular have a role to play in coastal and ocean-related aspects of the GBF, building on a recognised body of work and achievements established over a 45-year period. At the same time, it is widely recognised that the 18 RSCAPs are not a homogenous group; they vary in capacity, knowledge, technology, financial and human resources. It is therefore important to address capacity needs and gaps in relation to the GBF to maximise the opportunities, potential and benefits available.









A three-tier construct is proposed (Table 5), within which individual RSCAPs can place themselves in terms of a range of capacity needs. For every key capacity element a potential tool is proposed. Top tier RSCAPs (High Current Capacity) are expected to have the means to fully implement regionally relevant targets of the GBF. Lower and middle tier RSCAPs should be able to use as many of the proposed tools to create the necessary conditions, across their particular range of capacity needs, to implement regionally relevant targets of the GBF (Table 5).



*Coastal mangroves  
Zanzibar National Park, Tanzania*



**Table 5:** Thresholds to assess the maturity of individual RSCAPs in relation to the implementation of the GBF and corresponding tools for capacity building.

Key capacity elements	Tiers (current capacity)			Capacity building tools
	Low capacity Tier 3	Medium capacity Tier 2	High capacity Tier 1	
Legally binding mandate	Not in place	Relevant elements exist	In place	 Legal support
Human/financial resources	Unavailable	Some but insufficient	Available and sufficient	 Dedicated staff and financial resources in RSCAP secretariat
Strategic docs aligned with GBF	Strategic documents not in place or outdated	Strategic documents partly overlap with GBF and/or can be aligned	In place and explicitly related to the GBF or to regionally relevant Aichi targets	 Revision of strategic documents
Indicators	Not defined or not agreed by parties	Defined; Some are reported sporadically	Defined and regularly monitored	 Technical guidance for headline indicators
Technical capacity and data management resources	Not in place	Some technical capacity in place but insufficient to address GBF topics selected by Parties	In place and sufficient to fully address range of GBF topics selected by Parties	 Training on harmonised data collection
Monitoring and reporting	Not in place	Monitoring contributes to State of the Environment Reporting	Monitoring contributes to Quality Status Reporting	 Training on harmonised monitoring and reporting
National Focal Point (NFP) collaboration	NFPs for the CBD and RSCAPs not designated or not in contact	NFPs for the CBD and RSCAPs have been designated and are sporadically in contact	NFPs for the CBD and RSCAPs work in close contact	 Communication strategy for national focal points
Regional Collaboration	Not in place	Some ad hoc collaboration	Strong collaboration including through MoUs	 Collaboration with other regional governing bodies

## A toolbox to help build capacity



### **Legal support**

All RSCAPs have biodiversity-related mandates, either via the corresponding Conventions or Protocols, but they may not always be enough to give RSCAPs the legal authority to impose the

consideration or integration of GBF-related topics by their Parties.

CBD could be requested to develop guidelines that would empower the RSP and its implementing RSCAPs to gather, aggregate and communicate relevant marine data, reporting against an agreed subset of targets and indicators to the CBD COP, supplementing evaluations made by NBSAPs. This should provide a regional role, encouraging national consultation to achieve additional regional supplementary information. Where no RSCAP exists, national reports could be expanded as appropriate. Care is needed to avoid adding another layer of complexity: there are already too many monitoring requirements, too many expert working groups and coordination groups, and too much duplication of effort. It is important to avoid an extra burden, particularly for developing countries and small island States. SBSTTA 24 and the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) should consider a regional dimension, encouraging the delivery of Regional Biodiversity Strategic Action Plans (RBSAPs), building from Parties' NBSAPs but incorporating additional relevant information from diverse sources (global datasets, industry, peer reviewed scientific literature). Many RSCAPs already have relevant strategic documents and produce State of the Environment or Quality Status Reports that can embrace the GBF. Parties want streamlined reporting, increasing complementarity and reducing duplication. If CBD adopts a regional reporting requirement this should be interpreted by each RSCAP and integrated with their existing governance frameworks according to their individual needs.

**RECOMMENDATION:** *UNEP propose a regional mechanism (e.g., regional reporting guidelines ensuring harmonisation and links to NBSAPs) under the GBF for consideration by CBD COP or propose to have existing regional frameworks validated by CBD COP.*



### **Dedicated staff and financial resources in RSCAP secretariats**

Dedicated human and financial resources are key for RSCAPs to implement the GBF and, for many RSCAPs, existing human and financial

resources are markedly insufficient to do so. Human resource needs to implement the GBF include: support and expertise within RSCAP secretariats, empowerment and motivation of national focal points; data gathering, analysis and reporting; twinning and exchange between RSCAPs (e.g., biodiversity liaison opportunities).

Funding is needed to support such dedicated human resources and any corresponding work plan. Mandatory contributions from Parties are key to supporting the regular functioning of Conventions/Action Plans and to foster a sense of ownership towards them, but are often insufficient to meet needs (especially in developing countries, where the payment of dues is sometimes late and/or compromised by unforeseen emergencies, such as the current COVID-19 pandemic). Funding therefore needs to go beyond mandatory contributions from Parties. Additional opportunities for resource mobilisation may come from the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, the UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration, and GEF-8. If extra-budgetary contributions are not forthcoming, the RSP should seek and embrace sustained support from the private sector, big foundations, and philanthropic groups. Through the RSP these donors can fund an established and on-going programme (instead of individual projects with set deadlines) and reach broad groups of Parties rather than individual countries, with the corresponding gains in efficiency. The design/terms of reference of any such financial mechanism is important, and could form a programmatic package with specific GBF elements, designed jointly by CBD and UNEP, that donors can be invited and encouraged to support.

**RECOMMENDATION:** *CBD and UNEP seek donor funding to support a package of capacity building support/projects including, where appropriate, dedicated staff on fixed-term contracts located within selected RSCAP secretariats to help facilitate implementation of the GBF (data collection, reporting, coordination, liaison with selected Parties), and develop a resource mobilisation strategy for confirmation by CBD COP and respective RSCAPs' COPs.*



### Revision of strategic documents

Integration of the GBF into the RSCAPs' programmes of work requires consideration on a case-by-case basis. RSCAPs can build on previous efforts and supporting further actions to conserve key ecosystems (e.g., corals, seagrasses).

Whereas some RSCAPs feel confident in their capacity to update/review their strategic documents on their own, other RSCAPs feel they need assistance carrying out such a revision. This assistance could come from UNEP headquarters and through the RSP Strategic Directions, which could include a deadline for revision of strategic documents that is compatible with the chronogram of the GBF. Mutual support could also be achieved by knowledge sharing within the RSP, taking advantage of the annual meeting of the RSP.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Individual RSCAPs review their strategic plans (and capacity building needs) to position themselves to implement the GBF, and UNEP ensures better alignment with GBF (through streamlining GBF with the RSCAPs Strategic Directions (2021-2024) and/or facilitating mutual support with the RSP).

### Technical guidance for headline indicators



There is merit in the RSCAPs collectively adopting a subset of the UNEP Core Set of Regional Seas Indicators, comprising headline or priority indicators (see section on indicators above) that are meaningful to all RSCAPs, can be monitored by all RSCAPs, and can then be used for reporting against the obligations of various MEAs. The headline indicators of the CSI could be complemented by a limited set of ecosystem indicators that are important and meaningful to Parties or Member States in specific regions (such as seagrasses, corals, macroalgae (e.g., kelp), mangroves and selected fisheries). This should avoid duplication and the risk of imposing an extra burden on Parties, whilst at the same time following trends and assessing effectiveness of management actions (i.e. measure once and use many times).

Collective consideration of relevant indicators that are new (and any that are redundant) could be envisaged by re-engaging the UNEP Indicators Working Group. This working group could consider scientific and technical issues, practicalities (such as realistic and practical metrics, standardised across all RSCAPs) and whether additional central support is needed. In the European context of the MSFD, support of this nature was provided to Parties by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and Joint Research Centre (JRC). The Working Group could report its conclusions to the annual meeting of the RSP. In other Conventions, such as the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, Parties have appreciated clearly focused, specific actions.

It is also relevant to consider timing and frequency of reporting. 'Cycles of positive feedback', including synergies with MEAs, were discussed by the CBD's thematic consultation on transparent implementation, monitoring, reporting and review (February 2020). The structure and timing of periodic reports, in the context of the GBF, is perhaps another issue for the annual RSP meeting.

**RECOMMENDATION:** RSCAPs determine an agreed subset (either individually or collectively) of the UNEP core set of indicators that could provide the most effective and efficient starting point for regional contributions to the GBF, and UNEP provides support to all RSCAPs by re-engaging the UNEP Indicators Working Group to discuss indicators related to the GBF.

### Training on harmonised data collection, monitoring and reporting



Different RSCAPs have developed their own data protocols and database systems. Some of these are more sophisticated than others, with some regional seas having benefitted from the data demands of the EU MSFD and data support from EMODnet. Implementing the GBF can take advantage of global biodiversity data initiatives (such as the Ocean Biodiversity Information System – OBIS) and partnerships that have been built with non-governmental organisations and research centres with access to scientific knowledge and project funding.



Cape Petrels in flight, Southern Ocean

Capacity needs for RSCAPs to contribute to implementation, monitoring, reporting and review for the GBF include: access to and use of global datasets and open data portals (such as the Global Ocean Observing System – GOOS, the Ocean Biodiversity Information System – OBIS, Marine Biodiversity Observation Network – MBON), communication and reporting expertise, including translating scientific results into messages for decision-makers and policy-relevant messages. Good examples exist, such as the Baltic Sea Day that raises awareness on the work of HELCOM, but currently these are exceptions rather than the norm. A potential solution for those RSCAPs that may require assistance is a regional data capacity development programme.

**RECOMMENDATION: RSCAPs** supplement their databases, where appropriate, to allow access to and use of global datasets and open data portals and (if needed) consider regional data capacity development programmes.

Efforts to promote knowledge transfer between RSCAPs could be reinvigorated with provision of appropriate central guidance and resources. The best way to set up opportunities for cooperation with other bodies, including RFBs and Regional Economic Commissions, will vary from region to region. Mechanisms in place in various regions include MoUs, arrangements for regular meetings, bilateral discussions and platforms to promote multi-stakeholder engagement.

**RECOMMENDATION: UNEP** continue to foster and encourage knowledge transfer between RSCAPs, including sharing guidelines, methodologies and data protocols, as well as by encouraging development of MoUs with relevant RFBs and RFMOs. Strengthening of this transfer could be further encouraged by making use of the annual meeting of the RSP and/or CBD Sustainable Ocean Initiative Global Dialogues, to bring together different sectoral groups, formalise practical arrangements, secure multiple reporting benefits and inform structured capacity building efforts as appropriate.

### Communication strategy for national focal points



Experts consistently highlight the challenges of intra-national coordination by countries in addressing their global and/or regional commitments.

The various national focal points are frequently based in different sectors of an administration, sometimes even in different ministries. As a consequence, they suffer from communication shortcomings and are sometimes simply unaware of the work being done elsewhere in their country in response to international commitments. The same nation can present uncoordinated and sometimes opposing

positions in different international fora, with direct negative consequences in terms of governance. This creates unnecessary fragmentation and multiplication of efforts, and of the resources necessary to sustain them.

Coordinated communication among national focal points is therefore key. It helps to build a concerted and unified national response to international commitments and enables specific efforts or responses to be directed at the appropriate fora: fisheries-related issues are dealt with by corresponding regional fisheries bodies, regional seas-related topics are dealt with by their corresponding RSCAPs etc. Ultimately, it is up to each State to recognise the need to establish a coordinated position. However, international organisations, such as RSCAPs, can play a role in facilitating this intra-national coordination by providing directed capacity building to their constituencies. Such capacity building could include development of important skills for national focal points, such as how to prepare for and participate in meetings, negotiation and leadership skills, communication skills (including how to communicate with other national focal points and the common understanding of technical terms), and how to communicate/report on their particular commitments.

Capacity building could take place either via dedicated training (virtual webinars, workshops) and/or through a manual for focal points. Such an approach has already been attempted by organisations such as the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), with positive results.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Better coordination (communication and knowledge sharing) between RSCAP national focal points and CBD national focal points is needed. Support from **UNEP** to map the CBD national focal point and the RSCAPs national focal point could be an important first exercise to verify the level of coordination between both processes, to establish a contact directory and a mechanism for regular information exchange.



### **Collaboration with other regional governing bodies**

Increased collaboration and cooperation between evolving mandates and organisations (as enshrined in SDG 17) is essential to the success of the implementation of the ‘blue side’ of the GBF. A biodiversity liaison group could be created among the different regional seas secretariats that could help to streamline the work being done under various MEAs. This should be promoted as a means of North-South, South-South, East-West cooperation. Furthermore, assessment of how the CBD can support this through its Sustainable Ocean Initiative could provide additional resources. Stronger partnerships between RSCAPs and relevant LME projects can also consolidate baseline data against which to monitor GBF indicators. LMEs do not have any administrative or institutional bodies and lack long-term implementation, which the RSP can provide. The biennial International Waters Conference also provides another opportunity for exchange of experiences and interaction between regional bodies and projects.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The **CBD, UNEP** and **RSCAPs** should promote the successful Liaison Group of biodiversity-related conventions model’ operating at global level with a view to something similar being replicated both between the RSCAPs and at the regional scale to strengthen sectoral cooperation (e.g., between RSCAPs, RFBs and Regional Economic organisations) by acting as a biodiversity contact group for specific ecosystems (e.g., mangroves) and selected GBF targets (e.g., ICZM).

\* [www.cbd.int/blg](http://www.cbd.int/blg)

# 4

## Conclusions: A role for each level of the hierarchy

Since its formation, the RSP has championed ecosystem-based management <sup>(4)</sup> and, at the regional level, Parties have made significant efforts to tackle transboundary pressures on biodiversity, in particular from land-based pollution sources<sup>†</sup>. However, the message that “*biodiversity is existential for us*” (Mr. Danny Faure, September 2020) is not yet generalised at the various governance levels and society in general, which helps to explain the disinvestment in people and in institutions with a remit to protect biodiversity (e.g., cuts in funds and personnel in RSCAPs secretariats). Co-Chairs of the GBF accept that economic implications of the COVID-19 pandemic will likely exacerbate this situation but every actor in this framework has a role to play and all actors need to play their role to effectively implement the GBF (Table 6).

**CBD:** CBD could consider establishing a protocol or agreement that provides a clear mandate for the implementation of the GBF at the regional scale and could give clear guidance on GBF implementation, including detailed explanation of GBF goals and targets to promote harmonised interpretation and avoid misconceptions, in line with UNEA Resolution 2/10 on Oceans and Seas. It could serve to promote training/capacity-building opportunities to RSCAPs secretariats needing support to implement the GBF, and could be coupled with the provision of dedicated human resources to implement the GBF within lower and middle tier RSCAPs. CBD could also consider endorsing a resource mobilisation strategy.

**UNEP/RSP:** The multi-dimensional nature of UNEP’s remit, combined with the specificity of individual RSCAPs and exacerbated by resource constraints, has amplified differences within the RSP in recent years. As a flagship UNEP initiative, the RSP has great potential to engage with the GBF, meriting greater attention and central coordination. A role for the RSP in the GBF could provide the catalyst to improve regional ocean governance in line with the SDGs. This can be achieved in the upcoming revision of the Regional Seas Strategic Directions, giving the GBF appropriate recognition. UNEP should also promote interaction between RSCAPs, including through the establishment of a network of officers responsible for biodiversity within RSCAPs secretariats and through dedicated sessions at annual meetings under the UNEP Regional Seas Programme to evaluate progress against established objectives. To promote and communicate interaction between RSCAPs, UNEP could publish a periodic magazine to disseminate and publicise the work of regional bodies within and beyond the organisation and as a useful vehicle to help to seek funding (similar to FAO and the Regional Fishery Body Secretariats Network). UNEP could also facilitate collation of common documentation and records in a central repository with open access (a form of RSP Clearing House Mechanism) and revitalise the Regional Seas Indicators Working Group; it could also consider independent audit schemes or performance reviews of the RSCAPs (e.g., based on the performance reviews carried out by FAO, or on the Member States audit schemes carried out by IMO), which could be used as support exercises to identify and address existing implementation challenges.

**Table 6:** Role and actions contributing to mainstreaming the GBF (and biodiversity) at different geographic scales.

Level	Organisation	Potential Role/Actions Needed
Global	CBD/GBF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide guidance on GBF implementation</li> <li>- Legal basis for RSP to carry out GBF related work (hard-law: protocol, soft-law Agreements)</li> <li>- Offer opportunities/capacity/training to RSCAPs secretariats to implement the GBF</li> <li>- Propose resource mobilisation strategy</li> </ul>
Global/regional interface	UNEP/RSP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communication within UNEP and with the CBD and regional bodies</li> <li>- Setting clear Regional Seas Strategic Directions</li> <li>- Focusing/targeting the work of the RSCAPs in delivering the GBF through UNEP Strategic Directions</li> <li>- Promoting global and regional partnerships, including a network of RSCAP secretariats, such as a biodiversity liaison group</li> <li>- Dedicated sessions at UNEP RSP annual meetings to evaluate progress against established objectives</li> <li>- Publicising the work of the RSCAPs through a periodic publication (online magazine)</li> <li>- RSP Clearing House Mechanism</li> <li>- Revitalising the Regional Seas Indicators Working Group</li> <li>- Support/promote effectiveness evaluations of the RSCAPs</li> <li>- Allocate additional dedicated staff at UNEP headquarters</li> </ul>
Regional	RSCAPs/RFBs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Providing legal frameworks and technical support to Parties to implement GBF obligations</li> <li>- Regional reporting highlighting achievements, gaps and needs</li> <li>- Propose resource mobilisation strategies to ensure financial support to the activities at the regional and national levels</li> </ul>
National	Parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure national coordination and communication between CBD and RSCAPs focal points</li> <li>- Ensure coherent representation</li> </ul>

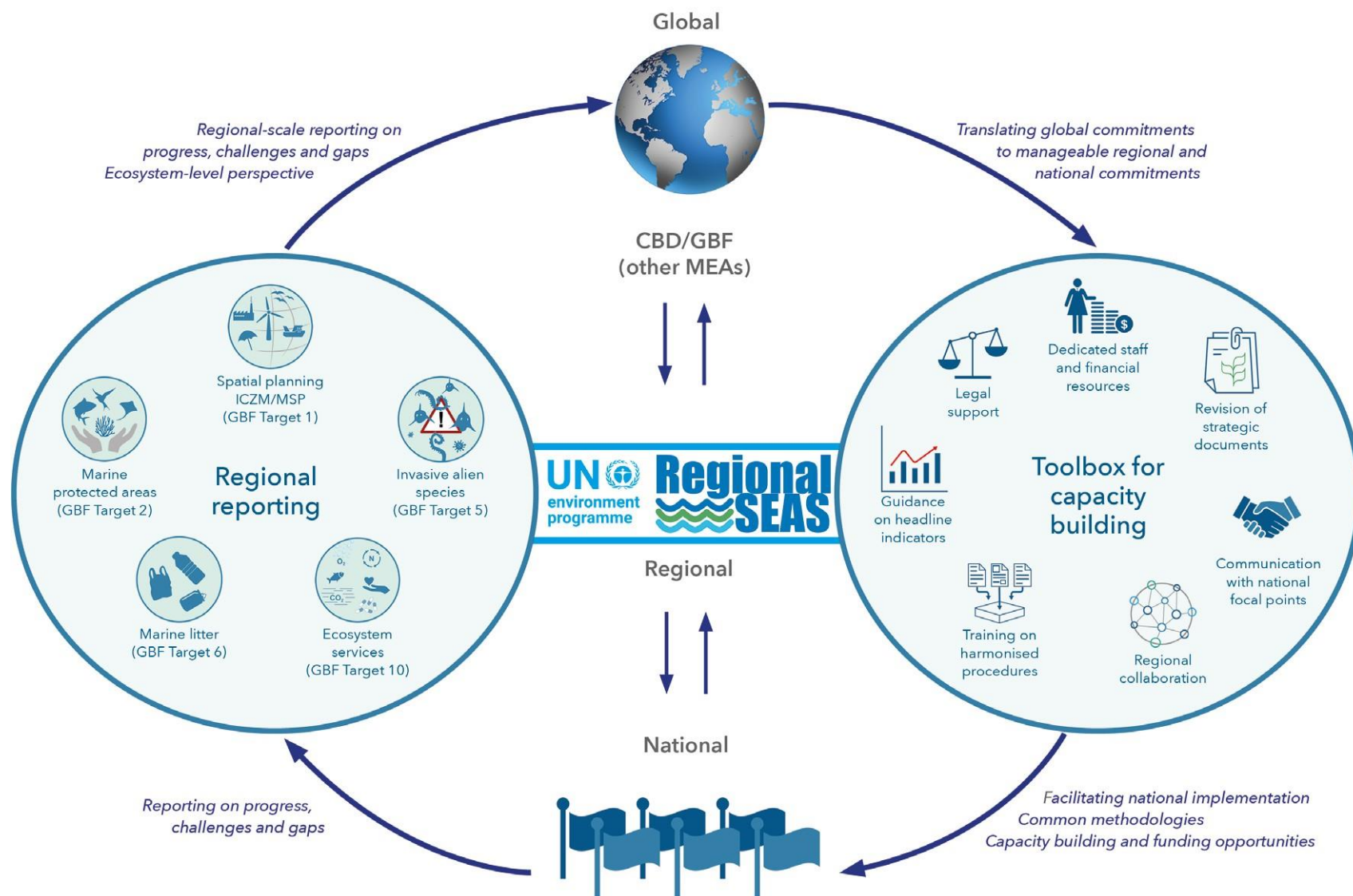
**RSCAPs (and other regional organisations):** A majority of CBD Parties are also Parties to RSCAPs (and RFBs). Pooling and concentrating resources at the regional level will help address capacity building needs (i.e., addressing the shared capacity needs of multiple countries), help RSCAPs fulfil an important monitoring role for transboundary ocean issues, and help make biodiversity data analysis more mainstream. In fact, some of the biodiversity data (especially in the marine realm) are available and collated, and are more relevant for analysis at regional levels. When considering monitoring options and reporting cycles, the thematic consultation on transparent implementation, monitoring, reporting and review for the GBF (February 2020) expressed support for a global stocktake, with discussion of alternatives such as voluntary peer review <sup>[9]</sup>. Whilst not specifically discussed, the opportunity for regional stock-taking is an option. RSCAPs would need to present resource mobilisation strategies to their respective contracting Parties, so that they can ensure financial and technical support to their Parties or Member States (including capacity building) to implement GBF obligations in a cost-effective way. Regional reporting carried out by RSCAPs can contribute to highlight achievements, gaps and needs.

**National level:** A means to achieve better coordination between CBD focal points and RSP focal points (with due regard to NBSAP priorities) would strengthen delivery. While

this is a question of national political will, it should/could be initiated by the CBD Secretariat with eventual contribution from UNEP. States can benefit from ensuring national coordination and communication among the various focal points of the international commitments they have assumed, and specifically between CBD and RSCAPs focal points. This contributes to ensuring coherent national representation across all fora and to international processes, while avoiding duplications of work and promoting cost effectiveness. This should also provide a clearer focus and sense of direction of what each State expects from its participation in the RSP.

**RECOMMENDATION:** *UNEP encourage the RSCAPs to translate the GBF into the existing regional biodiversity strategies and, where needed, into Regional Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans reinforcing the role of RSCAPs. This should be supported by efforts to achieve greater socio-economic relevance, better data management and access to additional funding streams. This includes giving attention to the ‘human needs’ dimension of the GBF (e.g., sustainable production and responsible consumption).*

## A role for the Regional Seas Programme under the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework



**Figure 2:** A role for the Regional Seas Programme under the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.



## Summary of recommendations

- **UNEP and RSCAPs** facilitate efforts to address gaps in regional coverage and engage proactively in

BBNJ discussions in support of their Parties.

- **UNEP** propose a regional mechanism (e.g., regional reporting guidelines ensuring harmonisation and links to NBSAPs) under the GBF for consideration by **CBD COP** or propose to have existing regional

frameworks validated by **CBD COP**.

- **CBD and UNEP** seek donor funding to support a package of capacity building support/projects including, where appropriate, dedicated staff on fixed-term contracts located within selected RSCAP secretariats to help facilitate implementation of the GBF (data collection, reporting, coordination, liaison with selected Parties), and develop a resource mobilisation strategy for confirmation by CBD COP and respective RSCAPs' COPs.
- Individual **RSCAPs** review their strategic plans (and capacity building needs) to position themselves to implement the GBF, and UNEP ensures better alignment with GBF (through streamlining GBF with the

RSCAPs Strategic Directions (2021-2024) and/or facilitating mutual support with the RSP).

- **RSCAPs** determine an agreed subset (either individually or collectively) of the UNEP core set of indicators, that could provide the most effective and efficient starting point for regional contributions to the GBF, and **UNEP** provides support to all RSCAPs by re-engaging the UNEP Indicators Working Group to discuss indicators related to the GBF.
- **RSCAPs** supplement their databases, where appropriate, to allow access to and use of global datasets

and open data portals and if needed consider regional data capacity development programmes.

- ➔ **UNEP** continue to foster and encourage knowledge transfer between RSCAPs, including sharing guidelines, methodologies, and data protocols, as well as by encouraging development of MoUs with relevant RFBs and RFMOs. Strengthening of this transfer could be further encouraged by making use of the annual meeting of the RSP and/or CBD Sustainable Ocean Initiative Global Dialogues, to bring together different sectoral groups, formalise practical arrangements, secure multiple reporting benefits and inform structured capacity building efforts as appropriate.
- ➔ Better coordination (communication and knowledge sharing) between RSCAP national focal points and CBD national focal points is needed. Support from **UNEP** to map the CBD national focal point and the RSCAPs national focal point could be an important first exercise to verify the level of coordination between both processes, to establish a contact directory and a mechanism for regular information exchange.
- ➔ **CBD, UNEP and RSCAPs** promote the successful Liaison Group of biodiversity-related conventions model operating at global level with a view to something similar being replicated both between the RSCAPs and at the regional scale to strengthen sectoral cooperation (e.g., between RSCAPs, RFBs and Regional Economic organisations) acting as a biodiversity contact group for specific ecosystems (e.g., mangroves) and selected GBF targets (e.g., ICZM).
- ➔ **UNEP** encourage the RSCAPs to translate the GBF into the existing regional biodiversity strategies and, where needed, into Regional Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans reinforcing the role of RSCAPs. This should be supported by efforts to achieve greater socio-economic relevance, better data management and access to additional funding streams. This includes giving attention to the 'human needs' dimension of the GBF (e.g., sustainable production and responsible consumption).



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