



**Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea
Office of Legal Affairs
United Nations**

Developing and Implementing an Ecosystem Approach to Ocean-related Activities

In recent years the international community has increasingly recognized the need to manage human activities that have an effect on the marine environment and its ecosystems in an integrated and cross-sectoral manner in order to promote the sustainable development of oceans and seas and their resources. The 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development has encouraged the application of the ecosystem approach by 2010. The General Assembly of the United Nations has also emphasized the importance of applying an ecosystem approach to the management of ocean-related activities, including by integrating ecosystem approaches into fisheries conservation and management.

While there is no single internationally agreed-upon definition of an “ecosystem approach”, the concept is generally understood to encompass the management of human activities, based on the best understanding of the ecological interactions and processes, so as to ensure that ecosystems structure and functions are sustained. A number of ecosystem approaches have been developed to achieve this goal, building on existing approaches.

The Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs, United Nations, has developed an interdisciplinary manual on “Developing and Implementing an Ecosystem Approach to the Management of Ocean-related Activities”. The manual focuses on the development and implementation of an ecosystem approach to the management of human activities and their impacts on the marine environment within a national context, while meeting regional and international obligations.

Following an introduction to the concept of an ecosystem approach, including the aim and evolution of the concept (Module 1), the manual examines the science of ecosystems (Module 2); governance and socio-economic aspects of ecosystem approaches (Module 3); and the development and implementation of an ecosystem approach (Module 4).

The manual will form a basis for the delivery of a training workshop organized by the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (Train-Sea-Coast Programme) in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme:

http://www.unep.org/NairobiConvention/Training_Workshop_Ecosystem_Approaches/index.asp

and other partners, to be held in Mombasa, Kenya, from 27 October to 1 November 2008. The objective of the course is to provide government officials and managers with the necessary knowledge and skills to develop and implement an ecosystem approach to the management of ocean activities.