



WWF

POSITION
PAPER

SEPTEMBER

2016

Succeeding in oceans governance

The WWF vision is for global oceans that are biodiverse, productive and resilient, where effective, equitable and transparent governance of marine resources drives sustainable development. An integrated ecosystem approach is the baseline for any Blue Economy strategy, informed by science, social, economic and legal evidence to deliver dynamic and robust governance for tomorrow's oceans.

Despite significant progress in the governance of Europe's seas, our global oceans remain in crisis. Competing and escalating demands for marine resources are compounded by the tragedy of the commons, data deficiency, and a single sector approach to ocean management.

Transformation of ocean governance is fundamental to achieving ecosystem recovery, long-term sustainable management and a thriving blue economy. Tackling over-exploitation of ecosystem goods and services, unintended impacts of human activities, ocean acidification and weak legislative structures are essential to support long-term, responsible economic, social and environmental use of marine resources.

The EU has been a global leader, developing ambitious legislation to deliver good environmental status and sustainably managed fish stocks by 2020. The policies and practices adopted by the European Commission (EC), individual European member states, and the private sector have significant influence on the long-term fate of marine ecosystems, both within European Seas and around the world. Unfortunately, Europe is also home to some of the largest drivers impacting the health of the global oceans and the ocean economy. The international community has recently focused considerable diplomatic and political capital to reverse ocean degradation trends. However, there remains a significant disparity between the intension behind international commitments and the reality of global implementation.

The 2015 'State of European Seas' report by the European Environment Agency concludes that the EU is not achieving sustainable use of its seas but has the policy framework, knowledge and expertise to do so. In addition to the critical environmental status assessment, the WWF 'Reviving the Ocean Economy Report' illustrates the economic case for ocean conservation with compelling evidence. The value of coastal, marine and oceanic ecosystems and environments is valued at US\$2.5 trillion annually with the global ocean asset valued at 10 times more.

This paper highlights WWF's recommendations to the European Commission to deliver truly integrated ocean governance, to restore ocean health and secure a prospering and sustainable blue economy. It details specific strategies and recommends new legislation to deliver the targets defined by SDG 14: Life below water.

SECURING A SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY

Over the past 30 years, our perspective of the oceans has evolved from an inexhaustible resource, able to absorb numerous impacts from humankind to an imperiled one with a finite capacity to buffer the compound pressures. **Responsibility falls on our shoulders to deliver clean, healthy, productive and biologically diverse seas and oceans for future generations.** This obligation requires an extraordinary international commitment to deliver sustainable development, resource extraction and governance.

The Blue Economy is emerging against a background of rapid economic growth in marine and maritime sectors increasing pressure on global ocean ecosystems. The EU has placed great emphasis on the sustainability of their Blue Growth agenda. And, although sustainability metrics for some marine and maritime sectors such as fishing (maximum sustainable yield) and maritime transport (zero-waste and/or zero emissions) are clearly defined, other industrial sectors have no sustainability criteria articulated. Most importantly, the **sustainability of the Blue Economy agenda must be evaluated at a regional or ocean basin scale** rather than sector-by-sector. The regional approach will appropriately evaluate the individual and cumulative impacts ensuring that the Blue Economy operates within the physical, chemical and biological limits required to maintain healthy and productive ecosystems.

“The EU’s Member States have the world’s largest exclusive economic zone and a maritime economy worth €500 billion and providing nearly 5 million jobs. So together with our environmental responsibility we have a strong business case to protect the growth base of our blue economy: our oceans.” Commissioner Vella, Our Oceans Conference, Valparaiso, Chile, 2016.

To achieve a sustainable Blue Economy, it is essential that the EU:

- 1) Sets clear, measurable, and internally consistent goals and targets
- 2) Assesses and communicates the performance of the blue economy as a whole as well as of its sectors towards these goals and targets
- 3) Creates a level, legislative playing field that provides the Blue Economy with adequate incentives & rules
- 4) Plans, manages and effectively governs the use of marine space and resources, applying inclusive methods and the ecosystem approach
- 5) Promotes the application of best sustainability standards and technologies by the blue economy actors

The **Blue Economy, must operate in a way that it restores, protects and maintains the diversity, productivity, resilience, core functions and intrinsic values of marine ecosystems.** It must also be based on clean technologies, renewable energy, and circular material flows to secure its economic and social performance over time, while keeping within the limits of one planet. Ensure that existing, and new or increased activities are possible within environmental limits, **a precautionary approach must be used when information is not available.**

IMPLEMENTING AN OCEAN GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

The EU has a comprehensive assemblage of legislation and management tools focused on distinct elements of ocean governance including; the Integrated Maritime Policy, Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported Fishing Regulation (IUU), Marine Spatial Planning Directive (MSP), Natura 2000 Network, and the Circular Economy Action Plan, with ambitious objectives to deliver ocean conservation and sustainable use of marine resources. Yet, **EU regional seas remain in a critical state** with over exploitation of resources, too many pollutants, biodiversity loss, degraded habitats, invasive species, declining coastal communities, and conflict between marine sectors. European seas are a long way from securing good environmental status, sustainably managed fish stocks and biodiversity protected by an integrated and coherent network of well managed marine protected areas.

Securing sustainable fisheries and biodiverse ecosystems

- The EU must champion a holistic vision for European seas which effectively **links and integrates all marine (and associated) policies** (MSFD, MSP, CFP, WFD, N2000, etc) and ensure their **implementation in a truly inclusive, transparent and accountable manner**
- Demonstrate leadership and commitment to **achieve MSY for all assessed fish stocks by 2020**, by **preventing Member States from exceeding scientific advice** on quota allocation
- Prioritise **investment in fisheries data collection to increase evidence underpinning management measures**
- Achieve **effective ecosystem based management of fisheries** that delivers **Good Environmental Status (GES)**
- **Establish an ecologically coherent network of MPAs in all European Regional Seas with effective management plans**
- **Deliver transparency on all seafood products through the implementation of an electronic catch certificate system**
- **Leverage market and finance mechanisms to drive sustainability standards**
- Ensure **pragmatic science-based tools, and cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder processes underpin all decision making.**

EU LEADERSHIP ON THE OCEAN SDG

Last year, 2015, was a momentous year for environmental sustainability and global ocean governance with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and a universal, legally-binding global climate deal at the Paris COP. One of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 14) is dedicated to the conservation and sustainable use of seas, oceans and marine resources. This is the first time that sustainable management of the oceans, coastal and marine resources is featured in the global governance agenda. The EU can 'lead by example' and **develop new, robust and transparent legislation to ensure global governance remains on track to deliver the SDG targets and secure rapid recovery of both European Seas and Global Oceans.**

The **EU has the opportunity to provide unprecedented leadership on the ocean governance and sustainability agenda** by delivering meaningful commitments at prominent international events such as the 'High-Level UN Conference to Support Implementation of SDG 14' in Fiji, June 2017 and the 'Our Ocean' conference hosted by Commissioner Vella in Malta, October 2017. This year's 'Our Ocean' conference (Washington, September 2016) will engage invited nations from across the world and focus on some of the key ocean issues of our time – marine protected areas, sustainable fisheries, marine pollution, and climate-related impacts on the ocean. Numerous ocean stakeholders from business and civil society demand better protection and management of our shared ocean assets and they can be engaged in partnerships and initiatives needed to deliver integrated ocean management and influence the 2017 'Our Ocean' agenda.

EU legislation & activities required to achieve SDG 14 targets

Champion sustainability via existing governance & management frameworks

- Prioritise implementation and ratification of existing legal mechanisms such as the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea – UNCLOS
- Strengthen governance of the Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) and hold them accountable for conservation and sustainable management of international fish stocks.
- Implement a new RFMO for the Arctic Ocean
- Provide leadership and ensure coherence between the Regional Seas Conventions to deliver the 2020 sustainability targets of good environmental status and sustainably managed fish stocks. Establish synergies between the scientific bodies that provide advice to these fora

Close legal loopholes in high seas governance

- Provide leadership to develop an internationally legally binding instrument to ensure conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction

Reduce marine pollution

- The 2015 EU Action Plan for the Circular Economy missed an opportunity to target one of the most pervasive pollutants in the marine environment - micro plastics which are not only a direct source of pollution but they also have unknown consequences in the marine food chain.
- We therefore recommend an immediate, complete ban on inclusion of microplastics in all personal care products sold in the EU and all plastic particles <2 mm replaced by natural alternatives.
- We would also like to see further objectives and activities associated with the aspirational target of “reducing marine litter by 30% by 2020 for the 10 most common types of litter found on beaches”

Eliminate harmful fishing subsidies

- Prohibit fisheries subsidies that lead to overfishing and to eliminate subsidies that contribute to IUU fishing by 2020. Sanctions should be applied to vessels that have received subsidies promoting unsustainable fishing. Strengthen reporting and transparency measures

Minimise the impacts of climate change on the oceans

- The EC, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the UNFCCC in addition to individual member states have not given sufficient attention to the impacts climate change is having on the ocean (including ocean acidification, warming coastal and oceanic areas, sea-level rise and more frequent & higher intensity storms)
- We recommend development of an action plan addressing the future potential impacts of climate change on European coasts and oceans and regionally appropriate mitigation strategies to be delivered in 2017

WWF is working across its global network with the public and private sectors to identify priority actions towards the successful implementation of the SDG goals and welcomes further exchange with the Commission on this point. **WWF is delighted to see the EU raise the issue of integrating the ocean governance issues in its aid and development policies.** The EU should continue to provide capacity-building measures for developing countries, in particular with regards to ocean governance, with a view to enable these countries to actively contribute to the ongoing discourses on shaping the global ocean governance framework and to become active and effective partners for delivering ocean governance. It will also be beneficial to ensure that there is a strongly harmonised approach to work within the European Commission and its services to deliver all of the SDGs.

WWF is extremely well situated, as the largest international environmental NGO and an active presence in 20 EU Member States to support the EU deliver sustainable solutions and an innovative, comprehensive ocean governance programme to ensure we achieve biodiverse and productive oceans by 2020. We stand ready to mobilize our network to support EU efforts and progress towards the actions and recommendations specified herein. To this end, we would welcome the opportunity to follow-up at regular intervals to review progress towards our shared objectives and explore ways in which we can both sustain and increase ambitions and delivery.



Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

www.wwf.eu

For further information:

Dr Samantha Burgess

Head, Marine Policy WWF European Policy Office, Brussels
sburgess@wwf.eu +32 479607868