



# The Global Forum on Oceans, Coasts, and Islands

Reports from the Third Global Conference on Oceans, Coasts, and Islands

January 23-28, 2006, UNESCO, Paris

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE THIRD GLOBAL CONFERENCE

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### Background

The *Third Global Conference on Oceans, Coasts, and Islands: Moving the Global Oceans Agenda Forward*, organized by the Global Forum on Oceans, Coasts, and Islands, was held January 23-28, 2006 at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, France. The Conference included over 400 participants from 78 countries, with 38 ministers and high level government representatives in attendance. The Conference brought together key national level officials, regional organizations, UN agencies, donors, industry, non-governmental organizations, and scientists to assess progress achieved and obstacles faced in the implementation of international targets on oceans, coasts, and small island developing states (SIDS), especially those related to the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and other related agreements.

### Assessment of Progress Achieved on World Summit on Sustainable Development Targets and Millennium Development Goals

Participants at the Third Global Conference agreed that progress toward implementation of global targets related to oceans, coasts, and islands has been slow, but there are some promising developments. Conference panelists and participants noted that:

- The targets of eliminating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and fishing overcapacity by 2004 and 2005 have not yet been met, and 75% of fish stocks are classified by FAO as fully exploited, over exploited, or depleted. Participants said that while the WSSD targets had been set unrealistically early, there was particular concern over insufficient national actions implementing the fisheries targets. Participants did note that there has been recent promising action by several nations and also at the international level as some efforts have been launched to improve progress towards these targets.
- In many of the poorest countries, a cycle of extreme poverty coupled with excessive exploitation of the environment needed for

### Global Conference Statistics

**Total participants: 403**

**From:**

**78 countries (33% developing countries;  
29% developed countries; 27% SIDS;  
10% countries in transition)**

**38 Ministers/High Level participants**

**Background of participants:**

**33% from government organizations**

**30% from NGO and academic sector**

**24% from international organizations**

**7% from private sector**

**6% from journalism sector**

*GEF MSP: Fostering a Global Dialogue on Oceans, Coasts, and SIDS,  
and on Freshwater-Coastal-Marine Interlinkages*

survival still prevails, contributing to marine pollution, as the United Nations Special Advisor Jeffrey Sachs told the conference.

- SIDS, which have stewardship over vast ocean areas, are having difficulty enforcing conservation policies and controlling development in their marine environment due to logistical and financial constraints which have worsened due to declines in overseas development assistance.
- The goal of establishing representative networks of marine protected areas by 2012 will not be met until 2085 at the present rate of designation, according to a study discussed at the conference. Fortunately, some countries, such as Australia, Palau, the Cook Islands, and Costa Rica, have made significant progress in establishing marine protected areas with a view toward protecting marine and coastal biodiversity.
- Although half of the world's 43 SIDS, as well as a number of other countries, have adopted ecosystem-based management and coastal and ocean management programs, no international organization is responsible for tracking progress in the establishment of these programs. In addition, there is no regular collection of information on the social and economic well-being of coastal communities.
- While there are now more than 700 Integrated Coastal Zone Management initiatives in more than 90 nations around the world, there are no standardized evaluation criteria for measuring their performance in achieving the MDG and WSSD goals, although there are efforts towards this direction.
- Sixty states have initiated national plans of action to address land-based sources of marine pollution under the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities, which accounts for 80% of marine pollution.
- Regarding the implementation of Integrated Water Resource Management, encompassing both marine and land-based management: 14 countries demonstrated "good progress," 51 have "taken some steps," while 43 are in the initial stages of implementation.
- South-South cooperation on marine issues among SIDS has been increasing, notably with the establishment of a Consortium of Universities linking the Pacific, Caribbean, and Indian Ocean regions.
- The establishment of a process for regular, global reporting on, and assessment of, the marine environment, including socioeconomic aspects - the Global Marine Assessment (GMA) - initially set for 2004, has finally taken off after initial delays related to differences in opinion among the countries concerned.
- According to the U.N. Millennium Project, urgent action is needed to achieve the MDGs, but it remains to be seen if sufficient action has occurred to move closer towards their achievement. Much effort has been put into the development of indicators to measure achieve-

ment toward the targets and goals, but little emphasis has been placed on oceans, coasts, and coastal populations.

## Special Topics Discussion

### *Linking Freshwater to Oceans*

During the Third Global Conference, there was much emphasis on the need to link freshwater and coastal issues. There was particular focus on progress toward the implementation of the UNEP Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (GPA) and preparations for the GPA Intergovernmental Review (IGR-2). Discussions largely concentrated on the need to address these interlinkages at two upcoming events, the 4th World Water Forum (WWF4) and the IGR-2. The meeting participants further agreed to suggest paragraphs on freshwater to oceans themes for inclusion in the Ministerial Declaration for the WWF4. It was ultimately recommended that the freshwater and oceans communities should create stronger partnerships, for example through collaboration between the Global Forum and the Global Water Partnership.

### *The Tsunami Disaster and Disaster Preparedness*

Conference panelists and participants discussed the lessons learned from the December 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, including discussion of why some areas were impacted less severely than others. It was noted that the severity of impact varied considerably according to the specific physical parameters of the shores, and, as part of the process of risk assessment, there is a need for detailed mapping. In addition, efforts should be made to conserve and, wherever possible, rehabilitate mangroves, sand dunes and coral reefs as they provide a natural barrier against tsunamis and storm surges. In general, no effective warning systems were in place at the time of the December 2004 event. There are many basic education measures that can be undertaken without great cost, such as inclusion of hazard awareness and emergency procedures in high risk coastal communities. Putting in place well-coordinated emergency plans that are rehearsed by local authorities and communities is paramount, though the difficulty of maintaining the necessary level of awareness over the long-term is acknowledged. Participants emphasized the need for nations and local authorities to establish strategic land-use planning and implementation in the context of integrated coastal management.

### *Sustainable Development in Small Island Developing States*

A key aspect of the SIDS discussions at the Conference focused on efforts to implement the 2005 *Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States*. Discussions also

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recommended the formal institutionalization of the Alliance of Small Island Developing States (AOSIS) and the need to promote coordination, integration, and communication at the global, interregional, regional, national, and local levels for the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. It was also noted that there is a need to deploy additional resources to assist in these efforts.

#### ***Linking National and Regional Efforts in Ocean and Coastal Management: African Perspectives***

Panels and discussions related to ocean and coastal management in African nations covered identification of next steps needed to further develop capacity and programs in coastal and ocean management, as well as ways to achieve synergy among existing regional and national efforts. Suggestions included the need to: build partnerships within the region and to use local expertise; strengthen African Universities and technical institutions to create a critical mass of ocean and coastal professionals; assist with boundary delineation of EEZs and continental shelves; promote a culture of transparency and disclosure among ocean users (industry, governments, development partners and civil society); and promote corporate responsibility through partnerships to address equitable benefit sharing from ocean use agreements.

#### ***Capacity Development***

A variety of recommendations to improve capacity for ocean and coastal management were discussed at the Conference, including the development of ocean strategy workshops for decision makers, initially focusing on SIDS senior government executives; the promotion of South-South cooperation and exchange through: 1) the exchange of existing educational materials and curricula through an e-library or clearing house, and 2) the strengthening of the ocean and coastal components of the SIDS University Consortium and other regional scientific networks. A proposal to create a UN Goodwill Ambassador for the Oceans was also made.

#### ***Improving High Seas and Deep Seabed Governance***

The panel and multi-stakeholder dialogue sessions on governance of areas beyond national jurisdiction were led by a Working Group which approached the issue from an ecosystem perspective and addressed issues relating both to the high seas and to the deep seabed, in particular governance of high seas fisheries and genetic resources of the deep seabed. There were a number of suggestions for further work, including improvement of regional governance arrangements (i.e. Regional Fisheries Management Organizations) and examination of public-private partnerships for marine biotechnology research. During the Conference, it was agreed that the Working Group would continue on as a “knowledge network” and would also consider the need for further research and analytical work. The session outcomes were presented at the UN Ad hoc open-ended informal working group to study

issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction in February 2006.

#### ***Climate and Oceans***

The Conference addressed the interlinkages between climate and oceans, and Conference participants discussed the fact that climate change mitigation is a major challenge, which includes energy, economic, technological, and development policy. The emerging threat of ocean acidification was also discussed due to concerns that it could undermine the marine food web and preclude coral development, among other things. Panelists noted that it is now apparent that, on top of pollution and overfishing, climate variability and change, including acidification, may pose significant threats to the productivity of oceans. The challenge is to understand the complex processes related to oceans and climate change and to develop adequate policies. It was also noted that on a global and regional level, climate change science and policy need to be inserted into the oceans agenda, and oceans science and policy need to be inserted in the climate agenda.

#### **Follow-up Activities of the Global Forum**

The Conference Co-Chairs Report, incorporating an assessment of progress on the oceans targets of the WSSD and MDG, will be released in June 2006. In addition, following discussions at the Third Global Conference, several new efforts are underway. These include:

- Anticipation of important ocean issues that will be the subject of UN negotiations in the next decade, and preparation of policy analyses and multistakeholder policy dialogues before the negotiations to clarify the issues, develop options, lay out various perspectives, and identify possible avenues for consensus building among disparate interests.
- Focus on ocean use agreements (for oil and gas, fisheries) in developing country contexts, such as in African EEZs, with a view to enhancing local benefits, transparency, and environmental sustainability.
- Collaboration with SIDS nations in the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy, especially: collaboration with the SIDS University Consortium to enhance capacity development in ocean and coastal management and development of ocean strategy workshops for high-level SIDS decisionmakers.
- Development of a cooperative work program between ocean institutions and freshwater institutions to enhance oceans/freshwater linkages at global, regional, national, and local levels.
- Policy analyses and multistakeholder dialogues on issues related to marine areas beyond national jurisdiction.
- Development of a Media Roundtable, akin to the Business and Industry Leaders Roundtable and the Ocean Donors Roundtable.