



2022 United Nations Ocean Conference Side Event

[Ocean Sand: Risks and Opportunities for Sustainability and Equity]

[29th June 2022, 09:00 WESR, Lisbon & online]

Organized by: The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), the Stockholm Resilience Centre at Stockholm University (SRC), the United Nations Environment Program's Finance Initiative (UNEP FI) and UN Global Compact (UNGC).

TWO PAGE MAXIMUM

Background on the event (one paragraph)

Little attention is paid to one resource that lies at the centre of a growing ocean crisis: *sand*. Sand is today the most mined mineral in the marine environment. Across marine and coastal environments, sand delivers key ecosystem services, controls coastal erosion, maintains biodiversity, and is a key ingredient in construction. Yet, as pressure is mounting on terrestrial resources, sand is increasingly dredged from the ocean for construction, land reclamation, beach nourishment and coastal defence projects. Poor monitoring and weak governance result in numerous and often overlooked socio-ecological impacts on ecosystems and the communities who depend on them, including biodiversity loss, habitat modification, shrinking deltas, threats to freshwater and marine fisheries, salinisation of coastal aquifers, change in livelihoods and the occurrence of illegal activities. Improving sand governance has consequently been described as one of the most pressing resource issue of the 21st century, and one that is essential to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)

- The importance of sand in the ocean economy, and its ensuing issues of equity and benefit sharing in this scramble for ocean resources.
- The impacts of sand's extraction and land reclamation on ecosystems and coastal communities;

- The roles and opportunities for dredging companies and financial institutions in incentivising better industry practices;
- Promising breakthroughs in monitoring and impact assessments.

Key recommendations for action (5 - 6 bullet points)

- Include and strengthen the voices of all people impacted by policy, action, and advocacy for ocean sand sustainability. This requires:
 - Ensuring that any forms of governance or international partnerships pay particular attention to the equity dimension of ocean sand (i.e., an intersectional understanding of those who participate in, are dependent upon, or face the consequences of ocean sand mining).
 - Involving all relevant actors in decision-making and in the design and implementation of programs and policies at scale, including in monitoring and evaluating the impacts of sand extraction.
- Establish, centralise, and encourage the use of best practices. This includes:
 - Learning from and disseminating existing industry guidelines that have proven to be successful.
 - Increasing transparency and monitoring of sand mining activities to improve governance and bolster accountability.
 - Establishing an international standard on sand extraction in the marine environment.
 - Banning sand mining in vulnerable active beach-nearshore sand systems.
- Encourage financiers and insurers to seek out opportunities to partner with relevant organisations to help reduce negative social and environmental impacts from dredging. Several areas may be considered, which represent strong business opportunities for financiers:
 - Recognize the importance of a healthy marine ecosystem for a healthy society and economy.
 - Focus on green infrastructure and the active development of nature-based infrastructure solutions.
 - Emphasise the importance of marine spatial planning (MSP) and multi-stakeholder decision-making.
 - Invest in alternatives to aggregate materials for concrete.

Voluntary Commitments (one paragraph)

NA.