

DRAFT OUTLINE

- I. **Introduction**
- II. **Status and Trends**

- 1. *Status and trends including key milestones*

Contributions are sought on the status of progress and trends in the implementation of SDG 14, since the UN Ocean Conference held in Lisbon in 2022. Entities are requested also to provide updates on the key milestones achieved of relevance to SDG 14 in their respective areas since 2022.

The ocean absorbs one-third of carbon dioxide produced by humans and 90 percent of heat created by global warming. The resulting acidification and rise in sea temperature, when combined with unsustainable fishing, pollution and other illegal and criminal activities taking place across the ocean, leads to detrimental impacts on marine life and ecosystem services. And despite an increase in marine conservation efforts, most coastal States still lack the basic resources and capabilities needed to adequately govern and monitor their maritime domains and regulate the activities taking place within them.

In line with its mandate, UNODC continues to support Member States in addressing issues of crimes in the fisheries sector and marine pollution, and maritime crime, therefore directly contributing to the efforts toward the achievement of Targets 14.1, 14.4, 14.5 and 14.c.

Addressing crimes in the fisheries sector and IUU fishing

While significant progress has been made to achieve Target 14.4, the fisheries sector remains highly vulnerable to unsustainable exploitation and multiple crimes, including corruption, document fraud, illegal fishing, and human trafficking. Criminality and unlawful activities linked to the fisheries sector not only threaten the health of the ocean but also, increasingly, have a negative impact on the economies of coastal countries, fuel corruption and create conditions in which further crime - including serious and organized crime - can be perpetrated. To succeed in the fight against these crimes, and in addressing IUU fishing, the traditional fisheries management approach needs to be complemented by a criminal justice approach. In completing the work of FAO in addressing IUU fishing and as part of a voluntary commitment registered in the lead up to the 2022 UN Ocean Conference, UNODC has been supporting Member States through targeted interventions aimed at enhancing the law enforcement response at sea and judicial capacity to address crimes in the fisheries sector, as well as covering areas including improvement of legislative frameworks, enhancing interagency cooperation fighting corruption and raising awareness at national, regional, and international level. This includes the launch in June 2023 of the second phase of UNODC's flagship project aimed at enhancing developing countries' capabilities to address crimes in the fisheries sector, covering areas from improvement of legislative frameworks to capacity building and fighting corruption. The project is currently supporting six countries at national level and ten at regional level with tailored interventions from specialized programmes on crimes that affect the environment, maritime crime, passenger and cargo control, anti-corruption, and legislative assistance.

Addressing marine pollution

In addition, concerning Target 14.1, UNODC has identified an increased convergence between certain organized crime activities and marine pollution, with illicit operations ranging from local activities to large-scale intercontinental trafficking worth millions USD. While significant efforts have been made to prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution, ocean dumping persists as a looming threat. Pollution crimes in the marine environment include activities that cause harm to the marine environment through the dumping or releasing of toxic material or other pollutants into the ocean, including the intentional or direct dumping of waste and other toxic substances, such as heavy oil. In the lead up to the 2022 UN Ocean Conference and in support of Target 14.1, UNODC registered a voluntary commitment to support Member States to prevent, address and respond to incidents of marine pollution. Since then, UNODC has implemented activities in support to strengthening the criminal justice systems' response to maritime pollution in Northern Africa, including through a maritime pollution control exercise in the Mediterranean Sea to enable authorities involved in combating maritime pollution to identify legal and operational strategies to enhance coordination and capabilities from pollution detection to prosecution.

Addressing other forms of maritime crime

Reinforcing the need for strengthening rule-based ocean action, UNODC has continued to support progress for achieving Targets 14.5 and 14.c by improving the capabilities of Member States' criminal justice systems to prevent, interdict, investigate and prosecute maritime crime, through a sound rule of law framework and effective international cooperation. Since 2022, UNODC has expanded and developed new initiatives for supporting coastal and island states to tackle piracy, transnational organised crime at sea, and environmental violations within Marine Protected Areas, thereby accelerating the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources while supporting implementation and enforcement of international law as reflected in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. Working in concert with partners such as the G7++ Friends of the Gulf of Guinea, the Western Indian Ocean's Contact Group on Illicit Maritime Crime and the Contact Group on Sulu and Celebes Seas, UNODC has been supporting Member States in strengthening legal frameworks, boosting inter-agency collaboration, and building capacity in maritime law enforcement. This comprehensive approach not only aims to bolster maritime security but also seeks to ensure sustainable ocean management by addressing the interconnected challenges of maritime security and ocean conservation.

III. Leveraging interlinkages between SDG 14 and other SDGs towards ocean action: challenges and opportunities

Contributions are sought on the interlinkages between the 10 targets of SDG 14 and other SDGs in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to address:

- Challenges to the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources (e.g., areas where gaps and challenges exist, where more action is needed)
- Opportunities for conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources, in particular considering interlinkages with other relevant SDGs

The importance of SDG 14 cannot be overstated, this goal is shown to be significantly connected with all other SDG's, with 38% of all SDG targets only being achievable when the SDG 14 targets have been successfully accomplished¹. In particular, it is important to

¹ [Failing SDG14: EU on a cliff edge for ensuring a sustainable ocean | WWF](#)

acknowledge the link between SDG 14 and SDG 16 on the Rule of Law as an opportunity to strengthen the prevention and integrity practices in the fisheries sector to address IUU fishing and crimes in the fisheries sector, as well as marine pollution and other forms of maritime crime. It is important to note that the achievement of SDG 14 is likely to fail unless States also take action towards achieving SDG 16, by improving criminal justice responses to crimes that affect the marine environment and mainstreaming such considerations into conservation, risk mitigation and resource management policies. There is a need to switch towards a proactive approach against maritime environmental crimes and establish rule of law at sea to protect future generations.

Challenges:

- Current efforts to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources are undermined by crime and illegality. Organized criminal groups exploits gaps in national compliance and enforcement regimes including criminal justice systems and take advantage of vulnerable value and supply chains in the natural resources sectors by engaging, for instance, in crimes in the fisheries sector and the trafficking and illegal dumping of waste in the ocean. These crimes can have far-reaching and cross-sectoral impacts on economies, security, human health, and can directly contribute to marine pollution, biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation in the oceans.
- While the effects of maritime insecurity and transnational organized crime in oceans are global, they are particularly felt by coastal and/or small island communities dependent on maritime activities and marine resources and whose institutions may lack sufficient capacity or resources to face these challenges. Concrete cases on the economic loss of IUU fishing show clear links between maritime security and ocean resilience, food security and livelihoods.
- The fisheries sector is particularly vulnerable to corruption due to the global nature of the fishing industry, the quick depletion of the fisheries resources and the lack of transparency in the sector. Addressing corruption in the sector not only strengthens regulatory and legal frameworks but also contributes to the achievement of SDG 14 and SDG 16. As with other crimes in the fisheries sector, corruption happens on land and often in a single jurisdiction, providing therefore less jurisdictional challenges. Additionally, corruption leaves a documentary and money trail which can provide concrete proof of criminal activity, and also enable higher penalties since corruption has usually higher penalties than those for other fisheries offences.
- Pollution at sea, marine environmental degradation and climate change are intrinsically interlinked and exacerbating each other, as highlighted in the [June 2023 EU joint communication](#) on threats of climate change and environmental degradation on peace, security and defense, with an increased risk of instability, insecurity and even conflict.
- Despite covering approximately 7% of our oceans as of 2021, the effectiveness of protection regimes including MPAs remains compromised without effective monitoring and robust enforcement by law enforcement agencies, especially against crimes in the maritime environment including organized crime in the fisheries sector.

Opportunities:

- Build on the increased awareness and recognition of the importance to address crimes that affect the marine environment

- The linkage between criminal justice, anti-corruption measures, and crimes that affect marine ecosystems has already become an integral aspect of the UN Common Approach to Biodiversity and Nature-Based Solutions.
- As recognition of the link between maritime security and sustainable ocean governance grows, responses are beginning to emerge. States are increasingly recognizing the importance of incorporating maritime security aspects into ocean conservation and blue economy plans and aligning resources to meet these priorities. There is also an increasing recognition of the need to address crime in the fisheries sector and to move beyond the traditional fisheries management approach and complement it with a criminal justice approach. This is manifested also in the increased cooperation between UNODC and FAO in this area.
- The 2023 targets outlined in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework translate to a need for enhanced governance and enforcement at sea, particularly concerning MPAs as countries aim to step up their ocean conservation efforts. This provides an opportunity for Member States to increase efforts in this area, also supported by relevant international partners with expertise in this area.
- From maritime environmental crime to climate change. As outlined in the findings of the UNODC-WWF [analysis paper](#) launched at COP27 exploring the nexus between crimes affecting marine ecosystems, biodiversity loss and climate change, it is recommended to integrate law enforcement and the criminal justice system into conservation and climate action efforts by encouraging more dialogue and cross-pollination between criminal justice actors, maritime actors and ocean science/climate experts.
- From climate change to maritime environmental crime. The intricate relationship between climate change and maritime crime necessitates a profound reassessment of our global maritime security strategies. As climate change wreaks havoc on marine ecosystems, altering fish migration patterns, it inadvertently boosts illegal fishing activities. The cascading effects of climate change, including economic hardship and displacement induced by rising sea levels and severe weather events, can amplify piracy, smuggling, and trafficking as communities seek alternative livelihoods or are compelled to migrate. Recognizing the complex dynamics at play is essential for developing comprehensive, effective strategies that address the underlying factors contributing to maritime crime. This analysis underscores the imperative for a unified approach that integrates environmental science, sociology, and criminology, aiming to craft policies that not only counteract the immediate threats but also mitigate the long-term impacts of climate change on maritime security.
- Strengthening legal frameworks, partnerships and law enforcement and judicial capacity to address crimes that affect the marine environment
 - **Strengthening legal frameworks:** Developing and enforcing international, regional, and national laws and regulations aimed at combating crimes in the fisheries sector, marine pollution, and other criminal activities harming marine ecosystems. The UNODC Legislative guides on crimes in the fisheries sector and marine pollution are useful tools to support Member States in the process of strengthening these legal frameworks.
 - **Increasing capacity:** Increasing capacity and cooperation among law enforcement agencies at various levels to effectively patrol and monitor marine areas, detect illegal activities, and prosecute offenders. This involves investing

- in surveillance technologies, training law enforcement personnel, promoting international cooperation through mechanisms such as joint patrols and information sharing, as well as increasing capacities for investigators, prosecutors and judges.
- **Enhancing international cooperation and partnerships:** Strengthening collaboration among governments, international organizations, civil society, academia, and the private sector to address crimes that affect the marine environment. This includes inter-agency collaboration both at national and regional level as well as building of partnerships at the international level to increase understanding on the trends and modus operandi used by organized criminal groups and design tailored responses.
 - Fostering innovation and technology to address crimes that affect the marine environment
 - Harnessing technological innovations such as satellite monitoring, machine learning, unmanned aerial vehicles and, data analytics to improve surveillance, monitoring, and enforcement efforts in the maritime domain. Investing in research and development of sustainable fishing practices, alternative livelihoods, and eco-friendly technologies can also help reduce pressures on marine ecosystems and fight criminality in the sector.

IV. Mobilizing all actors to accelerating ocean action

Contributions are sought on ways to promote collaboration, cooperation and partnerships to accelerate implementation of SDG 14. The following issues will be highlighted:

1. Investing in SDG 14

This section will focus on ways and means to support the implementation of SDG 14. The following cross-cutting issues relevant to support the implementation of SDG 14 will be explored among others:

- Mobilizing finance for SDG 14
- Marine science and technology (including technology development and transfer) and the use of traditional knowledge for ocean health
- Capacity-building

Strengthening maritime security and ensuring a stronger criminal justice response to crimes that affect the marine environment can harness greater investment opportunities for initiatives such as marine conservation projects, eco-tourism ventures, sustainable fisheries management, and marine renewable energy initiatives that align with the global ocean conservation agenda. Additionally, enhanced maritime security is expected to create an enabling environment conducive to attracting significant private sector investment in climate and biodiversity initiatives in the ocean sphere.

Ways in which the implementation of the SDG14 through increased efforts to address crimes that affect the marine environment include:

- Supporting a broader approach to ocean governance framework by including other instruments and tools that can support the ocean governance such as the UNTOC

- Recognizing the UNTOC and the UNCAC as important complementary instruments that can help address vulnerabilities and crimes occurring in the fisheries value chain and impacting marine living resources and their habitats.
- Increasing information exchange and technical cooperation with the UNODC aimed at addressing crimes that affect the marine environment, including crimes in the fisheries sector and marine pollution as well as linked corruption.
- Strengthening legal framework, by facilitating the organization of stakeholder consultation meetings, mapping of institutions with roles and responsibilities, supporting legal reforms and SOPs and providing training on their implementation at the national level, or assisting States to develop good practices, governance frameworks and regulations, e.g., for marine pollution cases or MPAs.
- Enhancing capacity-building initiatives to improve maritime security and strengthen the criminal justice response to maritime environmental crimes, including training and development for relevant actors of the criminal justice chain.
- Strengthening national capacities for investigation, prosecution, and adjudication, by providing training to law enforcement agencies to support prosecutions and train prosecutors on crimes in the fisheries sector or marine pollution crime, including with scenarios at sea and simulated trials.
- Strengthening cooperation by developing inter-agency cooperation guidelines as appropriate or facilitating inter-agency workshops for relevant law enforcement agencies to ensure a comprehensive approach to crimes that affect the marine environment. For example, in addressing crimes in the fisheries sector, this includes enhancing inter-agency cooperation between the traditional fisheries management authorities and non-traditional agencies in the ocean governance that are involved in different stages of the fisheries value chain such as customs, tax authorities, anti-corruption agencies, law enforcement agencies, etc.
- Enhancing international cooperation and innovative partnerships with technology providers as means to enhance maritime domain awareness and support States in preventing and responding to maritime crimes. With limited patrolling and operational resources, the use of technology in the form of machine learning and unmanned system, for example, is proving to be a force multiplier in helping States identify and respond to crimes that affect the marine environment. Leveraging new technologies and creating platforms for multi-stakeholder partnerships to generate additional support for the efforts of Member States in ocean governance is a key priority for international cooperation. Such an investment will allow States to save resources in the long run and respond more quickly and effectively to maritime crimes. Technologies, including AI-driven tools, can significantly reduce many different costs (time, human, logistics and economic costs) in maritime security operations.
- Enhancing detection capacities, by providing satellite imagery to maritime law enforcement officials for improved patrolling strategies; supporting maritime domain awareness exercises in protection of identified MPAs, in cooperation with technology providers. Improving maritime domain awareness capabilities with specialized analytical training and patrolling; promoting intelligence sharing and the monitoring and flagging of vessels involved in the illegal disposal of waste at sea; delivering cross-agency trainings through exercises using case studies based on previous incidents of marine pollution.

2. Strengthening partnerships (including Voluntary Commitments)

This section will focus on key initiatives undertaken in partnership at the global, regional and national levels with a diverse set of stakeholders. Contributions may also highlight voluntary commitments made and their impact as relevant.

- With regards to the illegal trade in plastic waste at sea, there is a need for strengthened partnerships and inter-agency collaboration to control the trade. The transboundary movement of marine plastics and microplastics remains a major concern as plastic debris remain intact in the ocean for a long period of time, causing significant damage to marine ecosystems. This was emphasized by UNODC and the Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions (BRS) during the 2022 UN Oceans Conference.
- Promoting South-South cooperation to enable flows of know-how and expertise between countries that share similar challenges on innovative partnerships with technology providers for addressing crimes that affect the marine environment.
- UNODC and FAO have developed a solid partnership in addressing IUU fishing and crimes in the fisheries sector. This has led to the development of a unified approach on the topic and in concrete collaborations in development of resources and capacity building activities. For example, in 2024 the two organizations worked together on the development of a legislative guide on combating crimes in the fisheries sector. This partnership is crucial in succeeding in the achievement of Target 14.4, especially in the light of increased evidence on the presence of transnational organized crime in the fisheries sector.
- Since December 2022, UNODC partnered with WWF to use fisheries and targeted sector information as an enabler for more efficient and cost-effective capacity-building against unsustainable fishing activities, with a focus on crimes in the fisheries sector. UNODC and WWF are working in partnership to reduce the occurrence of crimes that affect the environment and their impact on coastal and marine ecosystems by addressing crimes in the fisheries sector and other types of maritime crime. The objective is to scale the collaboration beyond fishing to include other joint efforts that lead to improved maritime security, including at-sea maritime law enforcement against other crimes that affect the marine environment, such as related to endangered species, ghost gear, and marine pollution. The partnership demonstrates how the ocean conservation and maritime security communities can leverage each other's core competencies for greater impact in their respective fields.

3. Mobilizing all actors

This section will consider the relevant stakeholders that need to be mobilized to accelerate ocean action, with a focus on the role of women, youth, indigenous peoples and local communities to leave no one behind.

- While State actors are at the forefront of ensuring maritime security, it is increasingly important to engage with coastal communities which are the most vulnerable to organized crime, as well as civil society and academia, in developing coherent and comprehensive approaches to maritime security challenges. UNODC is working closely with coastal communities, the most vulnerable to maritime environmental crime and

other forms of maritime crime. For instance, in 2023, UNODC provided technical assistance to strengthen human security and resilience against transnational organized crime in coastal communities in the Dominican Republic.

V. Possible themes for the Ocean Action Panels

Recommendations will be made for the themes of the ten Ocean Action panels in this section, based on the input received.

- Links between SDG 14 and SDG 16 for a safe and resilient ocean: Ensuring a law enforcement and criminal justice approach for accelerating ocean action

It is important to recognize that the ocean governance agenda will not be achieved by focused on SDG 14 alone. The role of SDG 16 is directly relevant to a sustainable ocean future, because it underpins the need to consider the rule of law given the vulnerabilities that the ocean is exposed to through crimes that affect the marine environment.

UNODC supports integrating the criminal justice response to maritime environmental crimes into ocean, blue economy and biodiversity agendas. For instance, crimes in the fisheries sector, pollution crimes in the marine environment and trafficking of marine species affect the health of the ocean and economies of coastal countries by fueling corruption and creating conditions in which further crime -including serious and organized crime- can be perpetrated. There is a need to complement integrated ocean management with a criminal justice approach.

With the effects of maritime security threats being felt globally, there is an urgent need for cross-regional international cooperation in which best practices are shared and capacities are built to support developing and less resourceful countries. This includes promoting innovative partnerships to link maritime security and ocean resilience objectives.

International cooperation goes beyond improving the operational capacity of States. International initiatives to improve the capacity and effectiveness of domestic judicial systems, through the entire criminal justice chain and prevention measures, such as those of the UNODC, are fundamental to addressing maritime security challenges, including those posed by environmental crimes in the ocean, and strengthening current ocean conservation approaches.

VI. Way Ahead/Next Steps

Support Member States initiatives aimed at tackling crimes affecting the maritime environment.