

**Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change
(Environment and Climate Change Division)**

Inputs

Ocean Action Panels at the 2025 United Nations Conference

b. Conserving, sustainably managing and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems including deep-sea ecosystems.

Mauritius has established comprehensive standards for managing coastal resources and environmental quality through domestic and international legal frameworks. Local legislation, such as the Environment Act 2024, provides a policy framework for environmental stewardship and sustainable development. This legislation covers the coastal zone, granting authority for integrated preservation and conservation through enforcing environmental standards, particularly those related to pollution control and prevention. Under this legislation, activities that could potentially impact the marine and coastal ecosystems require an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to ensure that development projects or resource exploitation are environmentally sustainable.

In addition, the Environment Act 2024 provides for the establishment of an Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) Coordinating Committee with a mandate that will impact the effective regulation and management of coastal ESAs.

By adhering to SDG 14, target 14.5, of the United Nations, the Republic of Mauritius has committed itself to attaining the set target for the conservation and protection of its coastal and marine areas.

Mauritius has robust ICZM legislation backed by the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management, and Climate Change. This ensures institutional sustainability, underscoring the Government's dedication to safeguarding the country's coastal environment. The Environment Act supports collaboration through the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Committee, which comprises stakeholders from the Government, private sector, local authorities, parastatals, and NGOs.

Effectively managing Mauritius' coastal resources involves close collaboration among several institutions. These include the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping, Beach Authority, the Mauritius Ports Authority, and the Prime Minister's Office, in conjunction with ministries such as Agro-Industry, Food Production and Security, Housing and Land Use Planning, and Tourism.

A continuous coastal protection and rehabilitation programme is also being undertaken by the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, at priority eroded sites in an integrated manner to safeguard the natural assets for the benefits of the citizens and for the tourism industry. Site specific coastal protection and rehabilitation works are being implemented using mixed approaches and taking into consideration ecosystem-based management and nature-based solutions such as coral reef and seagrass restoration, and mangrove plantation. The coastal protection and

rehabilitation works are also essential to consolidate seafront edge, improving beach use and access to the sea, reducing risk to the public and infrastructure, as well as increasing the resilience of the coastline to the impacts of climate change and sea level rise. The engineering measures which are proposed cater for future sea level rise and have been designed with a life span of 50 years, taking into consideration requirements of the coastal inhabitants.

Over the last 10 years, some 13 km of eroded shoreline have been rehabilitated. For the coming 5 years, some 31 km of eroded shoreline will be rehabilitated at some 33 priority degraded sites.

c. Promoting and supporting all forms of cooperation, especially at the regional and subregional level.

Mauritius is contracting party to the Nairobi Convention and Indian Ocean Commission.

The Nairobi Convention for the Conservation and Protection of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) provides a vital platform for promoting regional cooperation and collaborative actions. Since adhering to the Convention in 2000, Mauritius has been actively involved, with the Ministry of Environment serving as the National Focal Point.

In terms of ocean governance, a Regional Ocean Governance Strategy for the WIO region was developed following extensive consultations with Contracting Parties and stakeholders. Adopted at the 11th Conference of Parties in August 2024, this strategy outlines a framework for collaborative actions and policy decisions in sectors such as the blue economy, maritime security, fisheries, tourism, and climate change.

The protocols under the Nairobi Convention also serve as essential tools for promoting ocean governance, including:

- Protocol for the Protection of Wild Fauna and Flora in the Eastern African Region (1985)
- Protocol for Cooperation in Combating Marine Pollution in Cases of Emergency (1985)
- Protocol for the Protection of the Marine and Coastal Environment from Land-Based Sources and Activities (LBSA Protocol, 2015)
- Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM, 2024)

The Indian Ocean Commission is an intergovernmental organisation which, for 40 years, has been implementing regional programmes, many of which concern the sustainable management of marine and coastal ecosystems. To this end, the IOC has supported the creation or activities of thematic regional networks that mobilise non-state actors, scientists and national administrations to better manage/preserve fragile ecosystems. Similarly, the IOC supports the initiatives of the Nairobi Convention and maintains important relations with regional structures such as WIOMSA.

These regional networks are now being supported through the Résilience des Ecosystèmes Côtiers des Pays du Sud-ouest de l'Océan Indien (RECOS) project, which is making it possible to mobilise scientific players to support these networks and create a link with the public authorities for the integrated management/preservation of these essential ecosystems.

d. Preventing and significantly reducing marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities.

Mauritius has implemented a series of laws and regulations aimed at combating marine pollution and protecting its marine environment. The Environment Act (2024) establishes a policy framework for environmental stewardship, granting authority for the integrated preservation of the coastal zone while enforcing environmental standards related to pollution control.

Mauritius has also signed and ratified several international conventions to address marine pollution and protect its marine environment, one of which is the Regional Convention for the Protection, Management, and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Eastern African Region (Nairobi Convention). The Convention focuses on the protection and sustainable management of the marine environment in the Eastern African region, including strategies to mitigate marine pollution. Preventing pollution from land-based activities requires a coordinated global effort centered on sustainable practices and robust policy implementation. Strengthening regulations on industrial discharges and agricultural runoff is critical, alongside the adoption of best management practices in agriculture, such as integrated pest management and organic farming techniques.

Marine litter resulting from the inappropriate disposal of solid waste, including plastics, represents a challenge for the coastal and marine environment. Marine litter primarily originates from beach recreation, surface runoff in urban areas, and river discharges.

Plastic pollution, stemming from waste disposal into the ocean, poses a significant threat to various marine life forms, including fish, seabirds, whales, turtles, and virtually all marine organisms, with microplastics being a notable concern. Given the global concerns and calls to address plastic pollution, the Government introduced the Environment Protection (Banning of plastic bags) Regulations in 2020, which came into effect in March 2021. These regulations represent a stricter stance, imposing higher fines and the possibility of imprisonment for offenders. They prohibit the use, import, manufacture, sale, and distribution of petroleum-based plastic bags, with certain exceptions. Possession of banned plastic bags is deemed an offence under these regulations. Simultaneously, the Government implemented the Environment Protection (Control of Single-Use Plastic Products) Regulations 2020, which came into force in January 2021. These regulations target ten single-use plastic products, including cutleries (spoons, forks, knives, chopsticks), straws, plates, cups, bowls, trays, hinged containers, stirrers, lids/covers, and other receptacles used to contain food for immediate consumption. Possession of any of these items is considered a violation, punishable by fines and potential imprisonment. In addition, Mauritius established the Plastic Management Division in January 2021 under the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management, and Climate Change, which has a vision of making Mauritius a plastic-free country in the near future.

The Government of Mauritius signed an agreement with JICA on 17 May 2022 for “Enhancement of Institutional Capacity in Oil Spill Response for the Republic of Mauritius”. The duration of the proposed technical assistance is three years, which would be managed by the Ministry of Environment Solid Waste Management and Climate Change and co-managed by the National Coast Guard

The Government of Japan through JICA has appointed the Maritime Disaster Prevention Centre of Japan as consultant for this project. The project started on 10 August 2022 and will end in 09 July 2025.

The Ministry, with funding from UNEP, has developed a roadmap on the Circular Economy for Mauritius, for the period 2023-2033. Several rounds of consultations with stakeholders, including NGOs and business community were held in the preparation of the Circular Economy Roadmap. The Circular Economy Roadmap provides a holistic approach to socio-economic growth that promote sustainable production and consumption practices to address current challenges for a sustainable and resilient future.

e. Leveraging ocean, climate and biodiversity interlinkages.

The Republic of Mauritius boasts an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 2.3 million km², which plays a crucial role in its economy and the livelihoods of coastal communities. The coastal zone encompasses diverse marine ecosystems, including wetlands, mangroves, lagoon corals, and fringing coral reefs. However, climate change and extensive coastal development have contributed to the degradation of these vital ecosystems.

The health of these coastal resources is intricately linked to the economic well-being of Mauritius. Destruction of coastal ecosystems not only impacts livelihoods but also disrupts essential ecological functions, such as wave protection and storm mitigation. With sea levels rising at an accelerated rate of 5.6 mm per year, outpacing the global average, the country faces increasing beach erosion, threatening both tourism and community livelihoods.

The economic value of coastal resources is estimated at approximately \$330 million, with the coastal tourism sector alone contributing 7.1% to the GDP, and the fisheries sector accounting for 1% of GDP and significant national exports. The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of tourism for the local economy, highlighting the need for sustainable practices.

To address these challenges, the government is committed to the Sustainable Development Goals and recognizes the critical need to leverage the interconnections between ocean health, climate change, and biodiversity. A multi-faceted approach that promotes ecosystem-based management can enhance the resilience of marine ecosystems to climate change, yielding dual benefits of climate mitigation and biodiversity preservation.

Integrating ocean and climate policies is essential for fostering synergy between marine conservation and climate adaptation efforts. Education and public awareness initiatives can empower communities to engage in sustainable practices, while international cooperation facilitates the sharing of best practices and innovative solutions. Securing funding for integrated projects that address these interlinkages will be crucial for sustainable outcomes.

By recognizing and leveraging the interconnectedness of oceans, climate, and biodiversity, Mauritius can create effective and sustainable solutions that benefit both its people and the country.

29 October 2024



Prime Minister's Office

DEPARTMENT FOR CONTINENTAL SHELF, MARITIME ZONES ADMINISTRATION & EXPLORATION

05 November 2024

From: Director-General, Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones Administration & Exploration

To: Ag. Secretary for Foreign Affairs, , Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration & International Trade (Attn: Mr. R. Appadoo)

2025 United Nations Conference to support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14

Please refer to the correspondence dated 25 September 2024 inviting member states to provide input for the concept papers of the Ocean Action Panels at the 2025 United Nations Conference, which supports the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14.

2. The Department is pleased to provide the following inputs:

- On December 2016, Cabinet agreed for the CSMZAE to elaborate a Marine Spatial Plan for the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the Republic of Mauritius in view of the increasing demand for marine space in the EEZ for various purposes, particularly, fisheries and aquaculture, tourism and leisure. The Marine Spatial Plan uses an ecosystem-based approach, and will facilitate the implementation of SDG14 target 14.2.
- Under the Marine Spatial Planning initiative, a clear and guided process is being elaborated to achieve Target 14.5 whereby Mauritius has the obligation to conserve at least 10% of coastal and marine areas. The MSP Working Group on marine conservation has computed the percentage of coastal areas under conservation for the islands of Mauritius and Rodrigues to about 9.8%. A report on SDG 14.5 objectives for the EEZ of Mauritius has been elaborated and validated by the MSP coordinating committee.
- Several initiatives including consideration of new Marine Protected Areas are being envisaged by the Republic of Mauritius to significantly increase the percentage of marine area under conservation from less than 1% to around 20% of the maritime zones of the Republic of Mauritius.


Dr. M. REZAH BADAL
Director General



Copy to: Permanent Secretary, Prime Minister's Office (Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity) (Attn: Mr. J.S. Coopoomootoo)

Dear Mr Chummun

Please note that in terms of resource mobilisation, access to funding to implement SDG 14 goals is very limited.

In the past, we have been able to mobilise some resources under climate finance which partly helped in the achievement of SDG 14. These projects are being implemented by the Ministry of Blue Economy (AFRC and MOI), executed by UNDP, as highlighted below:-

(i) Adaptation Fund whereby USD 10 M were allocated to Mauritius and Seychelles under the regional "Restoring Marine Ecosystem by Rehabilitating Coral Reefs". The funds are being used for the coral restoration and rehabilitation activities in Mauritius, Rodrigues and Seychelles and for the procurement of equipment for ocean surveys and monitoring.

(ii) EU Grant under the Ecofish project amounting to Euro 1 M.

It is to be highlighted that unlike climate finance which has dedicated multi-lateral agencies such as Global Environment Facility and Green Climate Fund, we do not have such multi-lateral agencies dedicated to ensure achievement of SDG 14.

The Global Fund for Coral Reef was recently set up. However, this is a public-private coalition deploying a range of financial solutions and support for sustainable businesses to improve the resilience of coastal ecosystems, economies, and communities. The modality to access funding by Government is difficult given that it concentrates on the use of financing instruments such as equity, debt and guarantee financing.

Thus we should militate to get more dedicated and earmarked resources to ensure achievement of SDG 14, the more so for SIDS.

Kind regards

Rachna Ramsurn

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