

ESCAP statement in Partnership Dialogue

Marine ecosystems are an important source for livelihoods, employment, nutrition and opportunities for economic growth in Asia and the Pacific Region but are increasingly under threat due to climate change, ocean pollution and unregulated fishing. About 60 per cent of coral reefs in the region are at risk and an estimated 60 per cent of mangrove forests, which constitute the first level of defence against coastal hazards, have been cleared. Countries in Asia Pacific have mandated ESCAP to promote regional cooperation for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific and support implementation of SDG 14.

Within this mandate the ESCAP Secretariat is undertaking two activities:

- The first is the development of an assessment of capacity development needs of the countries in Asia and the Pacific for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14. A side event during this Oceans Conference was organized and experts from member states and other stakeholders have provided specific recommendations to ESCAP on the elements of this assessment.
- The second activity is a proposal to establish an **Oceans Account Partnership for Asia Pacific** bringing together member States, expert institutions and other partners. Through this new partnership, member States will be supported to develop an “Oceans Account” as a means of integrating information from across scientific domains, policy frameworks and institutions to inform progress on SDG14. The Oceans Account would ultimately serve countries develop policies that optimize the sustainable use of oceans while minimizing the risk of ecological collapse and natural disasters. ESCAP has already submitted a voluntary contribution on the basis of this activity.

The focus of the proposed Partnership is to support member states and therefore countries will be the main Partners. To support the work of the Partnership, technical partners, funding partners and others will be invited to join. The offered services to partner member states will be the following:

- a. Assessment of capacity, data availability and institutional arrangements
- b. Training and technical support
- c. Regional exchange and share experiences on SDG 14 reporting and Oceans Account development with other Partners.

ESCAP is welcoming expression of interest from member states, technical partners and funding organisations to join the partnership and support the implementation of SDG 14 in Asia and the Pacific.

ESCAP is also proud to have supported Fiji and the Pacific island countries prepare for this conference including in conjunction with the regional Asia-Pacific in-depth review of SDG14 that took place during the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development and will be an input to the High Level Political Forum on SD this year.