

Integrated Spatial Planning for the Oceansⁱ

1. Key Points

- Integrated Spatial Planning (ISP) is a broad term which does not seem to have a universally recognised definition. It covers a range of practical approaches to establish more rational, cross sectoral organisation of uses of the ocean space and marine resources which aims to ensure that the resources or ecosystem services are not depleted.
- Realisation of the Blue Pacific Vision and the Framework for the Pacific Oceanscape requires a regional approach to maximise benefits to Pacific Islands from the ocean. This can be most effectively realised through integrated spatial planning. This approach will reduce conflicts between uses and optimise efficient allocation of resources whilst ensuring conservation of ecosystem services and biodiversity and incorporating cultural values into decision making.
- In the context of the Framework for the Pacific Oceanscape, ISP is closely related to ecosystem-based management and ecosystem based adaptation to climate change and the inclusion of traditional and cultural values.
- Integrated spatial planning for the ocean incorporates three processes which could be viewed as a tiered approach:
 - i. Marine spatial planning (MSP) is a process to operationalise an integrated ocean policy approach, which is based on inclusive consultation and produces an operational framework for decision makers to balance competing interests associated with social/cultural value of particular marine areas, biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. Other planning and management processes that support integrated ocean management include ecosystem-based management or a community based or ecosystem approach to fisheries management. Often these processes can be used to identify appropriate area-based management tools.
 - ii. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) examines the frameworks and policies that govern existing and planned uses of the marine environment and considers these in the context of the environmental and ecological basis that supports the use of these resources.
 - iii. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) assesses the environmental, social and economic impacts (both positive and negative) of individual projects or activities and could rely on the information collected in MSP and SEA. EIA could be done without having completed MSP or SEA. This could prove, however, to be a lot more onerous and could lead to a lot of duplication between individual EIAs.
- MSP relies on good spatial data but will also include non-spatial elements which may come from modern science or traditional and local knowledge. An ecosystem-based approach will use ecosystem information, habitats maps and geomorphic features as the base layer. The intersections of these features and human uses can then be analysed to optimise the sustainable use and conservation of the ocean resources.

- It must be recognised that some boundaries in the ocean are dynamic and this needs to be considered in planning. Equally important are considerations of different temporal and spatial scales.
- SEA promotes better development plans and policies that address multiple values and needs. SEA is used in three main ways: to prepare a strategic development or resource-use plan for a defined land and/or ocean area; to examine the potential environmental impacts that may arise from or impact the implementation of government policies, plans, and programmes; and to assess different classes or types of development projects to produce general management policies or design guidelines.
- SEA has many benefits. SEA allows for the consideration of alternative development scenarios for a defined land and/or ocean area; identifies trade-offs between natural and biophysical, social, and economic aspects of the environment and enhances the chance of finding win-win options; promotes public involvement in policy development and planning; assists with identification and avoidance of cumulative impacts; and reduces the time and effort required for EIA for individual projects.

2. Challenges and Opportunities

- Marine spatial planning and SEA could identify the best management approaches for the region and identify areas where conservation goals may take precedence over human uses, and areas where certain types of sustainable uses may be preferred. Objectives may vary from protection of specific components of biodiversity or protection of whole of ecosystem functions in order to provide a sustainable future.
- The Pacific Islands are home to an unofficial network of large marine protected areas (>200,000 km²) including the Cook Islands Marine Park, Easter Island Marine Protected Area, Mariana Trench Marine National Monument, National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa, Palau National Marine Sanctuary, Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, Phoenix Islands Protected Area, and the Pitcairn Islands Marine Reserve. In addition, many EEZ are sanctuaries for marine mammals, sharks or turtles. Some PICTs have also chosen to have 100% of their EEZ.
- Conservation efforts, including through designation of MPAs and other effective conservation measures in EEZs are a positive influence in many countries and progress toward the Framework for the Pacific and the Blue Pacific Narrative
- The BBNJ process offers an opportunity to the region to gain more control of its high seas through an international legally binding instrument enabling strong regional voice on management of biodiversity of ABNJ, including through the design and establishment of ABMTs, including MPAs. It also provides opportunities for regional SEA as well as strong rules on EIA which should be beneficial to implementing the FPO.

- Suggestion for a call for a global 30x30 target and the remaining 70% effectively managed, in conjunction with a strong BBNJ instrument with effective institutions allowing for strong a regional voice, is identified as a means for more cohesive approach to management of region's oceans and avoid unsustainable efforts shifting into high seas areas where fishery regulation and compliance is more challenging. Also, there is growing understanding in the region of the relevance of progressing towards 100% of the ocean to be managed.
- Ocean governance is fragmented due to the multiplication of sectors with little coordination despite the provision of the duty to cooperate under UNCLOS. This fragmentation is apparent in how activities are managed, including in our region. Increased coordination and cooperation are needed to resolve conflicts of use and interests. By defining clear roles in the implementation, the ISP process has a key role to play in improving regional ocean governance.

3. Relationship to other SDGs, policies and Frameworks.

- Integrated spatial planning can assist in examining how sectors may be contributing to SDG's which are not necessarily directly under their mandate or jurisdiction.
- The Framework for the Pacific Oceanscape and the Blue Pacific Narrative calls for a cooperative regional and cross sectoral approach.
- SDG 14.2 calls for "sustainable management and protection of marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts by strengthening resilience and take action for their restoration in order to achieve healthy and productive oceans". MPA's and OECMs can play an important role in this. Benefits will be greatest when there is a cooperative approach including ISP.

4. Background Materials

[UNESCO Marine Spatial Planning](#)
[IUCN Paper on MSP under BBNJ Instrument](#)

¹ This brief was compiled by SPREP with inputs from relevant organisations and experts