

# Global and Regional Ocean Policy and Governance Overview

---

Pacific Regional Ocean Policy and Governance Dialogue

---

By Nancy Soi, UNEP  
21 - 24 August 2023, Virtual

# UNEP Mandate: Role/Mission

- UNEP has been the world's leading environmental advocate for over 50 years
- Technical expertise: providing science, data, knowledge and experience needed to monitor and manage the world's environmental challenges
- Global policy: setting the global agenda on the environment through international agreements and local policy to protect and restore our shared environment
- Solutions: delivering new thinking and science-based policy and action on the environment from the global to the local level



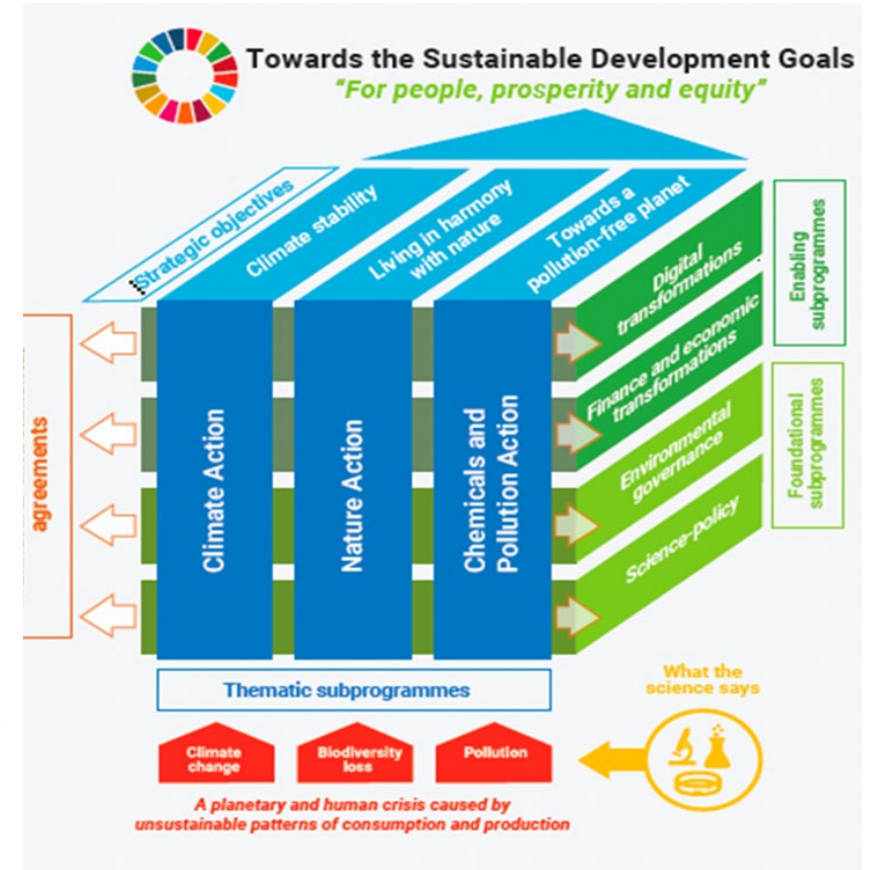
# UNEP' Medium Term Strategy 2022-2025

Goals: Healthy, productive and resilient environment/ocean underpinning well-being of human societies

- Invest in **nature and system transformation**
- To address the **three planetary crisis**, climate change, Biodiversity loss and pollution

## UNEP 's strategies

- **Achieve transformational change** in each of the systems driving environmental degradation
- **Create opportunities** for multiple global environmental and development benefits,
- **Leveraging** MEAs, Global Commitments and Sustainable Development Goals to raise ambition
- **Integrated approaches** across sectors and jurisdictions, policies and programmes
- **Institutional coherence** in delivering durable, long-term global environmental outcomes.



# Global Ocean Governance & Resolutions Directing UN Agencies to support Member States implementation

- UNCLOS – Part XII- Protection and preservation of the Marine Environment – Article 197 on *Cooperation on a global or regional basis*
- *SDG 14- Life below water*
- UN General Assembly resolutions:
  - BBNJ Agreement adopted under UNCLOS on June 19, 2023
  - UNGA Resolution 76/212 on Integrated Coastal Zone Mgmt
  - UNGA Resolution 77/248 on Oceans and Law of the Seas
  - UNGA Resolution 69/15 on SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action [SAMOA] Pathway
- UNEA resolutions
  - Plastics and micro plastics
  - Pollution, land-based sources and activities, nutrients, wastewater
  - Nature based solutions
  - Mangroves, coral reefs, peatlands,
- Regional Seas Conventions & Action Plans



© Brian J Skerry / National Geographic

# Global Institutional framework for Oceans

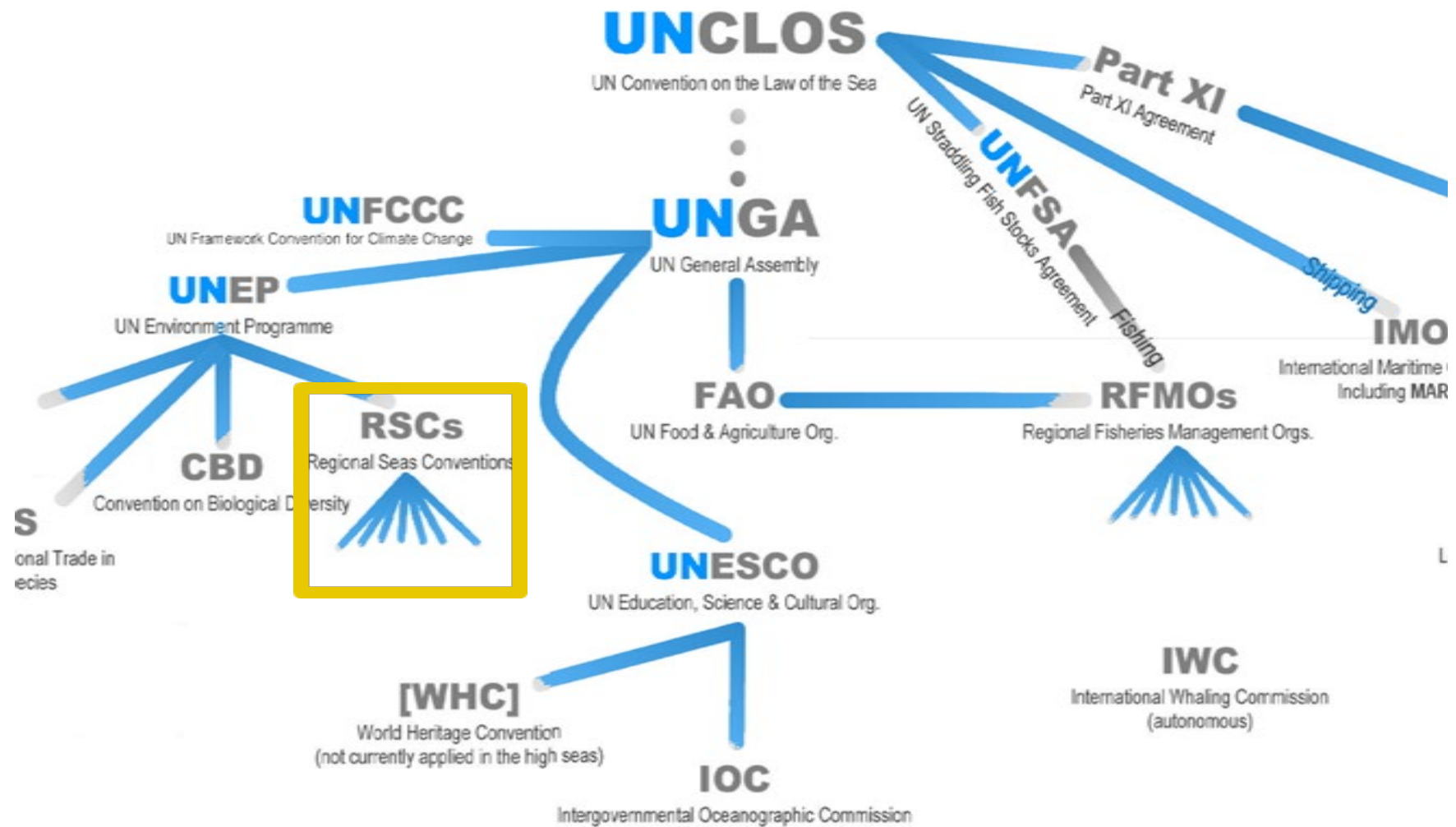
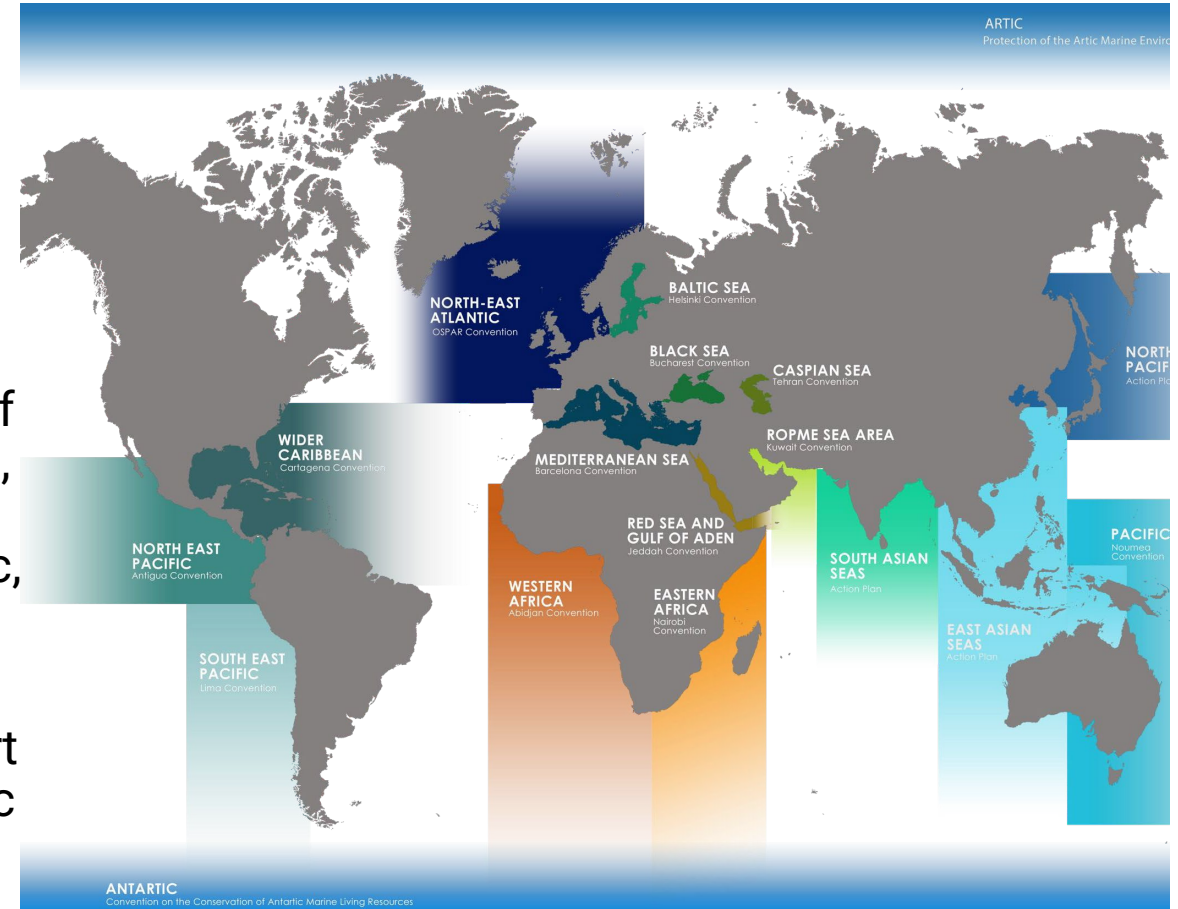


Figure 2: Adapted from 'Poster on 'Ocean Governance: Sustainability Pathways for the High Seas' by Sebastian Unger, Jeff Ardron, Katherine Houghton, IASS Potsdam 2014

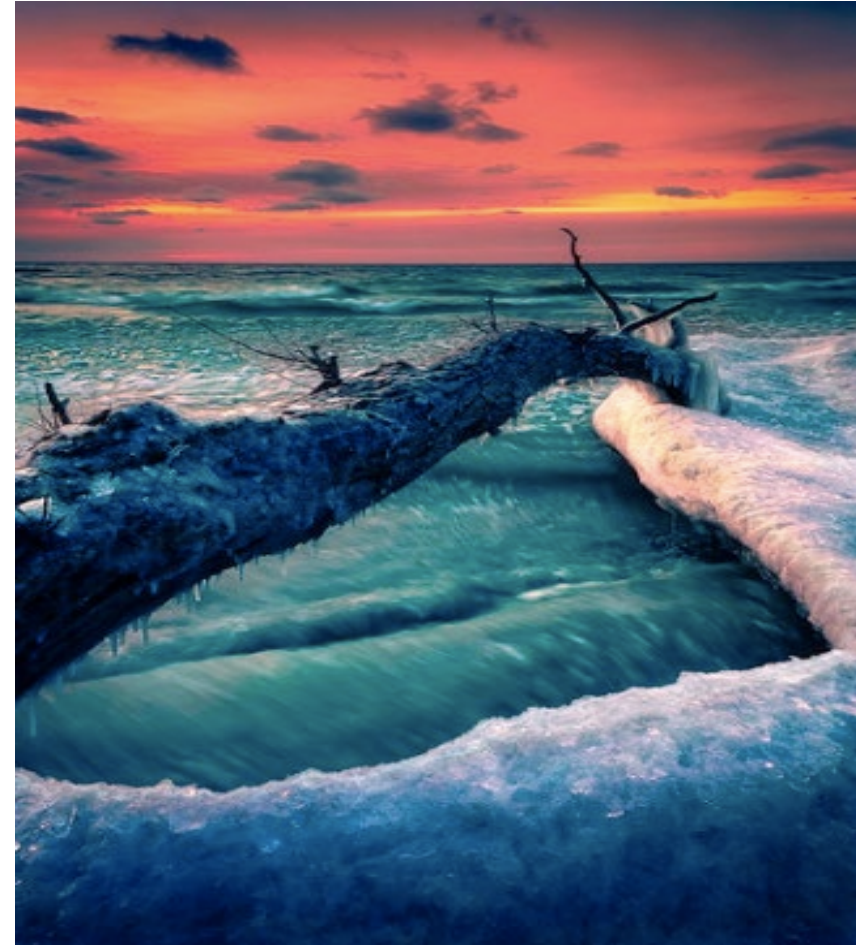
# UNEP Regional Seas Programme

- RSP was launched in 1974 soon after UNEP was established and has since grown to become one of the UNEP's celebrated flagship Programme.
- RSP has grown over the years and now covers 18 regions globally, with over 146 participating countries.
- The 14 were established by or under the auspices of UNEP: Black Sea, Wider Caribbean, East Asian Seas, Eastern Africa, South Asian Seas, Caspian Sea, ROPME Sea Area; Mediterranean, North-East Pacific, North-West Pacific, Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, South-East Pacific, Pacific and Western Africa.
- 4 are independent partner programmes forming part of the UNEP global regional seas programme: Arctic region, Antarctic region, Baltic Sea, and North-East Atlantic region.



# Regional Seas Cooperation in ocean governance

- RSP provides a platform for countries sharing a common sea/ocean to cooperate in an integrated manner to manage their shared marine and coastal environment (even despite possible socio-political differences)
- RSP is an important mechanism for the implementation of the global Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs)
- UNEP has acted as the overall coordinator and facilitator for the development of the different instruments under the RSP, in collaboration with other international and regional bodies
- UNEP's funding, intellectual, political, facilitative leadership and convening power was instrumental in the negotiation and development of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAPs)
- In some regions, the States/Parties took over the operation of the RSCAPs, while the operations of some other RSCAPs are still managed by UNEP



# Strengths and weaknesses of global ocean policies and governance

## Strengths

- Provides the overarching legal framework for protection and management of globally shared ocean resources in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ)- (UNCLOS)
- Sets the boundaries, guiding principles and access regimes for ocean resources conceptualised as public goods i.e., delineating the EEZ, freedom of the high seas, common heritage of mankind, etc.
- Global ocean policies often inform or influence development of regional/ national policies i.e., ICZM, MPAs, MSP, etc.
- Advancing science and technology- making visible what has for long been seen invisible- remote sensing, global observation, satellite tracking, etc.
- Fostering collaboration and coordination of actions, partnerships, etc
- Mechanism and means for management and protection of transboundary resources because they transcend political boundaries.

## Weaknesses

- Global/regional mandates with mismatch in corresponding ministries at national level to support implementation especially in SIDS and LDCs.
- Limited funding to support implementation at national level.
- Not always sufficient coordination and secretariat functionality to deliver on all the directives (reporting and monitoring).
- Overburdening nations with reporting responsibilities



# How can global policies and governance support at the regional and national levels?

- Involvement of regional bodies and stakeholders support localizing global mandate to regional and national specificities.
- Tailoring global policies to suit regional contexts, while promoting ownership, coordination, and sustainability at the local and regional levels.
- Enhances regional action and stakeholder engagement, fostering collaboration and inclusivity.
- Regional bodies such as the Regional Seas strengthen the voice of countries in the region so that regional priorities are heard, and they provide a platform for regional learning and capacity building for action at national and regional level toward global goals.
- Harmonizing monitoring, reporting and assessment, Regional/National Action Plans (NAPs), enhancing capacity gaps evaluation, data comparability, transparency, and evidence-based action in localizing the global mandate
- Support country-driven capacity-building efforts in gathering information and data, responsive to specific priorities and national circumstances.
- Establishing effective mechanisms for means of implementation such as dedicated funding mechanisms with less cumbersome procedures for access,

# Opportunities for PSIDS to inform global discourse?

---

- Leverage existing mechanisms for coordinated action and support in alignment with regional frameworks and national priorities such as SIDS SAMOA Pathway, SIDS 4th International Conference, SPREP, Pacific Islands Forum, Caricom, etc.
- Working closely with global and regional entities such as UNEP, Regional seas conventions and action plans providing a platform for dialogue and information exchange between countries, scientific communities, and civil societies to promote knowledge-sharing and cooperation, including through regional preparatory meetings, Intergovernmental Meetings, working groups on marine litter, and similar.
- ACP MEA III Project –Aims to mainstream and implement the MEAs related to biodiversity and chemicals and waste such in agriculture, management of chemicals and waste, reinforce compliance and enforcement measures, strengthen implementation of the Regional Seas Convention in the ACP States.

# Thank you



---

Nancy Soi  
Programme Management Officer  
Regional Seas Unit, UNEP  
[nancy.soi@un.org](mailto:nancy.soi@un.org)

---

United Nations Avenue, Gigiri  
PO Box 30552 – 00100 GPO Nairobi, Kenya

[www.unep.org](http://www.unep.org)