

What Lies Ahead for Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources

Posted by Joan Russow

Wednesday, 08 June 2016 06:17 - Last Updated Wednesday, 08 June 2016 06:24

By [Andrew Hudson](#)



Two fisherwomen walk along the seashore in Nemmeli, India. Credit: Stella Paul/IPS

UNITED NATIONS, Jun 5 2016 (IPS) - In September 2015, the international community adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 14:

[Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development](#)

As we mark the World Oceans Day on 8 June, let us see how we can begin this new 15 year era for global sustainability and the Ocean SDG targets by considering which concrete actions and deliverables will actually be required to achieve them.

Achieving Target 14.1 of reducing nutrient pollution and marine debris, will require transformational change in nutrient and solid waste management across multiple sectors at all levels of governance. The private sector, driven by the right kinds of enabling policies, will need to play a pivotal role in moving management of both types of resources – not waste – towards a much more ‘circular economy’.

Thirty percent of all man-made carbon dioxide emissions dissolve into the oceans. So the good news is, if we can achieve the Paris Climate agreement leading to sizeable reductions in CO₂ emissions, we will in turn make substantial progress on Target 14.2 – minimize and

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address ocean acidification.

There is a strong relationship between Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, overfishing and weak fisheries governance. Achieving Target 14.4 to end IUU and overfishing will require reducing the proportion of overexploited stocks by an average of 6 percent per year and reducing IUU by 4 percent per year, both by 2020. This will require significant efforts to strengthen fisheries governance at regional, national and local levels.

Target 14.5 calls for 10 percent of the ocean to be made into Marine Protected Area (MPA) by 2020, we are presently at about 3.5 percent. The world added an average of 0.26 percent per year from 2004 to 14; to achieve 10 percent by 2020 we need to place 1.3 percent more ocean area under MPA per year. That's 4.7 million square km per year, or five times the 2004-14 rate.

At present, about \$16 billion per year is spent on destructive fisheries subsidies (tax breaks, fuel subsidies, etc.) that overcapitalize the sector and lead to overexploitation. To achieve Target 14.6, by 2020 prohibit destructive fish subsidies, these subsidies will need to be reduced to near zero through WTO mediated processes – that have been underway since the year 2000.

Target 14.7 calls for increasing economic benefits to Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) from marine resources by 2030. SIDS exports of fish products hit \$1.75 billion in 2012, representing 7 percent of exports and 1.7 percent of GDP and a 50 percent increase over 2006 levels. Recent SIDS tourism exports amount to \$24 billion, representing 50 percent of their services exports, and hotel related FDI to SIDS increased to \$0.5 billion in 2012. However, fisheries in SIDS are subject to as much as \$872 m. per year in harmful subsidies; about 60 percent of SIDS stocks are considered overfished leading to realization of only 48 percent of potential economic benefits in their EEZs. To reach Target 14.7, SIDS need assistance from the international community in developing and implementing their 'blue economy' strategies to create jobs, reduce poverty, and sustainably grow their economies in their new roles as "Large Ocean States".

Target 14.b calls for providing access for Small Scale Fisheries (SSF) to marine resources and markets. SSF supply almost half the world's seafood supply and employ about 90 percent of those involved in the sector, contributing to far more livelihoods on a per volume seafood basis than large scale fisheries. SSF use a quarter the energy of large scale to catch the same volume of fish, making them far more climate friendly. However, most SSF are selling raw products to domestic and international markets so are gaining little in added value.

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Small scale fisheries are disadvantaged by much greater subsidies to large scale fisheries, lack of co-management arrangements, lack of access to markets even domestically, and a lack of pricing power. To achieve 14.b, SSF have significant capacity building and financing needs. Governments need to enact legislation to incentivize wholesalers and processors to source fish from SSF. Fish pricing needs to be more transparent and accessible.

The above analysis underscores what we already knew – achieving SDG14 is extremely ambitious and in several cases achieving its targets requires transformational changes in ocean management and governance, at all levels.

UNDP's [Ocean Governance Programme](#) is strongly aligned with SDG 14. We support the creation of an enabling policy environment for ocean restoration and protection through the development and delivery of ocean, coastal and linked watershed management strategic planning tools and methodologies at all scales, from Large Marine Ecosystems to Small Island Developing States.

UNDP helps build upon and advance existing or anticipated regional or global multilateral agreements to address threats to large-scale ocean sustainability such as invasive species and ocean acidification. We support countries in the creation or strengthening of Marine Protected Areas (MPA) and promote knowledge and experience sharing to improve the management of ocean ecosystems.

Lastly, we foster the creation of partnerships, with UN agencies, intergovernmental organizations, the Global Environment Facility, NGOs, and the private sector, that leverage technical, financial, institutional and other resources for ocean sustainability. We have a pretty good grasp on what we need to do, to achieve SDG14. Our challenge is to do more, do it better, and do it sooner.

Andrew Hudson is Head of the Water and Ocean Governance Programme at the UN Development Programme Bureau for Policy and Programme Support.

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