



ACTION FRAMEWORK

for Accelerating Marine Spatial Planning
in the Western Pacific and its Adjacent Areas
(2025-2030)





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**Towards achieving an
ecosystem-based approach to
ocean resource management,
sustainable blue economy, and
the 2030 Agenda as a whole.**



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FOREWORD

This Action Framework was developed based on discussions held during the first meeting of the International Group of Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) Experts in the Western Pacific (November 2023, Qingdao), and an MSP Decade Action workshop at the 2nd UN Ocean Decade Regional Conference & 11th WESTPAC International Marine Science Conference (April 2024, Bangkok). The Action Framework was subsequently adopted by Member States in the region at the 15th Intergovernmental Session of the IOC Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific (WESTPAC-XV, 11-13 March 2025, Tokyo, Japan).

The Action Framework cannot be, and is not prescriptive, given the dynamic nature of socio-economic development and ocean governance in the region. It is intended to provide a portfolio of enabling actions that the IOC Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific (IOC/WESTPAC), together with its Member States in the region and partners, will take to accelerate the MSP processes towards building effective pathways for boosting sustainable blue economy and fulfilling both national and international ocean-related commitments.

We look forward to a collective effort among all MSP practitioners, particularly in the region, throughout the development and implementation process.



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BACKGROUND

Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) has become increasingly important worldwide as it is recognized as an effective way to balance rising demands for marine and maritime spaces with the need to preserve ocean ecosystems.



Definition of MSP

‘A public process of analyzing and allocating the spatial and temporal distribution of human activities in marine areas to achieve ecological, economic and social objectives.’

----- Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, 2009

To promote and advance MSP worldwide, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (UNESCO-IOC), in partnership with the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE) adopted a ‘Joint Roadmap to Accelerate Maritime/Marine Spatial Planning Processes Worldwide (MSProadmap) in 2017 and updated it further in 2022. To support the implementation of the MSProadmap, an MSPglobal initiative was launched in 2018 to develop and implement the MSPglobal International Guide on Marine/Maritime Spatial Planning. To date, the MSPglobal initiated its first phase (MSPglobal1.0, November 2018- October 2021) and second phase (MSPglobal 2.0, July 2023-June 2025).

The Western Pacific is home to the world’s highest level of marine biodiversity and productivity. The region is densely populous, rapidly developing, and highly vulnerable. Coastal countries in the region rely on the ocean for food, job opportunities, economic growth, and cultural heritage.

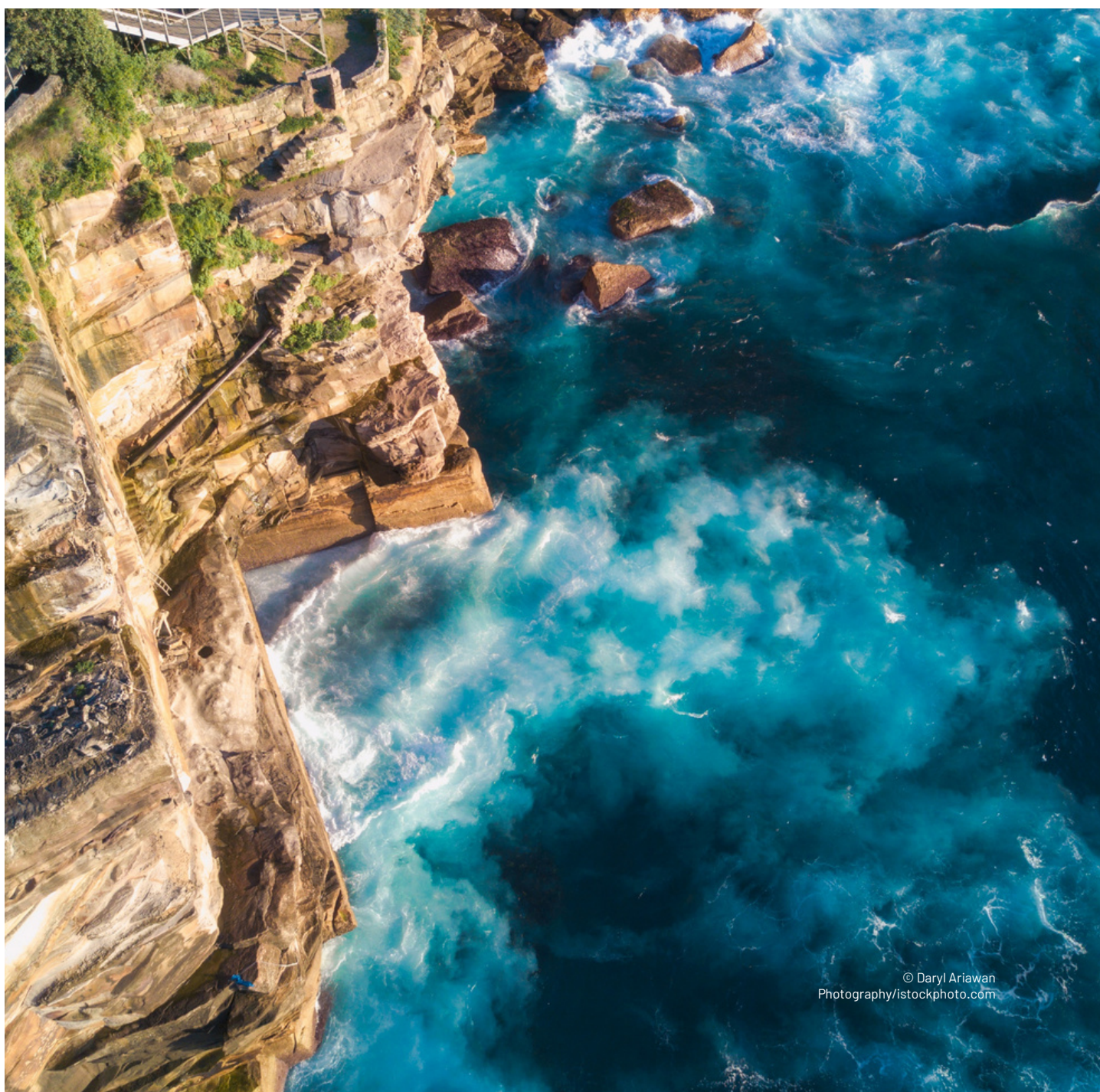
However, conflicts among multiple sectors for sea area use are intensifying in many coastal areas. Against this backdrop, demands for accelerating marine spatial planning processes in the Western Pacific were repeatedly expressed by countries in the region.

Responding to countries’ needs, the IOC Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific (WESTPAC) initiated the UN Decade Action - ‘Accelerate Marine Spatial Planning in the Western Pacific’ (UN21) at the 13th Intergovernmental Session in 2021. The UN Decade Action - UN21 will build upon the achievements of the MSPglobal initiative and further promote and accelerate MSP in the Western Pacific region. It is intended to assist Member States in adopting an ecosystem-based approach to ocean resource management, fostering a sustainable blue economy, and achieving the 2030 Agenda as a whole.



The need for a regional action framework emerged from discussions among a regional group of MSP experts convened by WESTPAC in November 2023. This MSP Regional Action Framework (2025-2030) aims to provide a portfolio of enabling actions that WESTPAC, along with its Member States in the region and various national and international partners, will undertake to accelerate MSP processes, with the goal of creating effective pathways for ecosystem-based management, a sustainable blue economy, and the fulfillment of both

national and international ocean-related commitments, such as the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement), and the Paris Agreement. Please refer to Annex 1, and Annex 2 for more details on the contribution of MSP to relevant international frameworks and the UN 2030 Agenda.



PRIORITY AREAS OF ACTION

This Action Framework (2025-2030) focuses on four ocean & people - centered priority areas:

1. Cooperation and collaboration;
2. Knowledge support;
3. Capacity development, awareness, and engagement;
4. Demonstration and good practices.

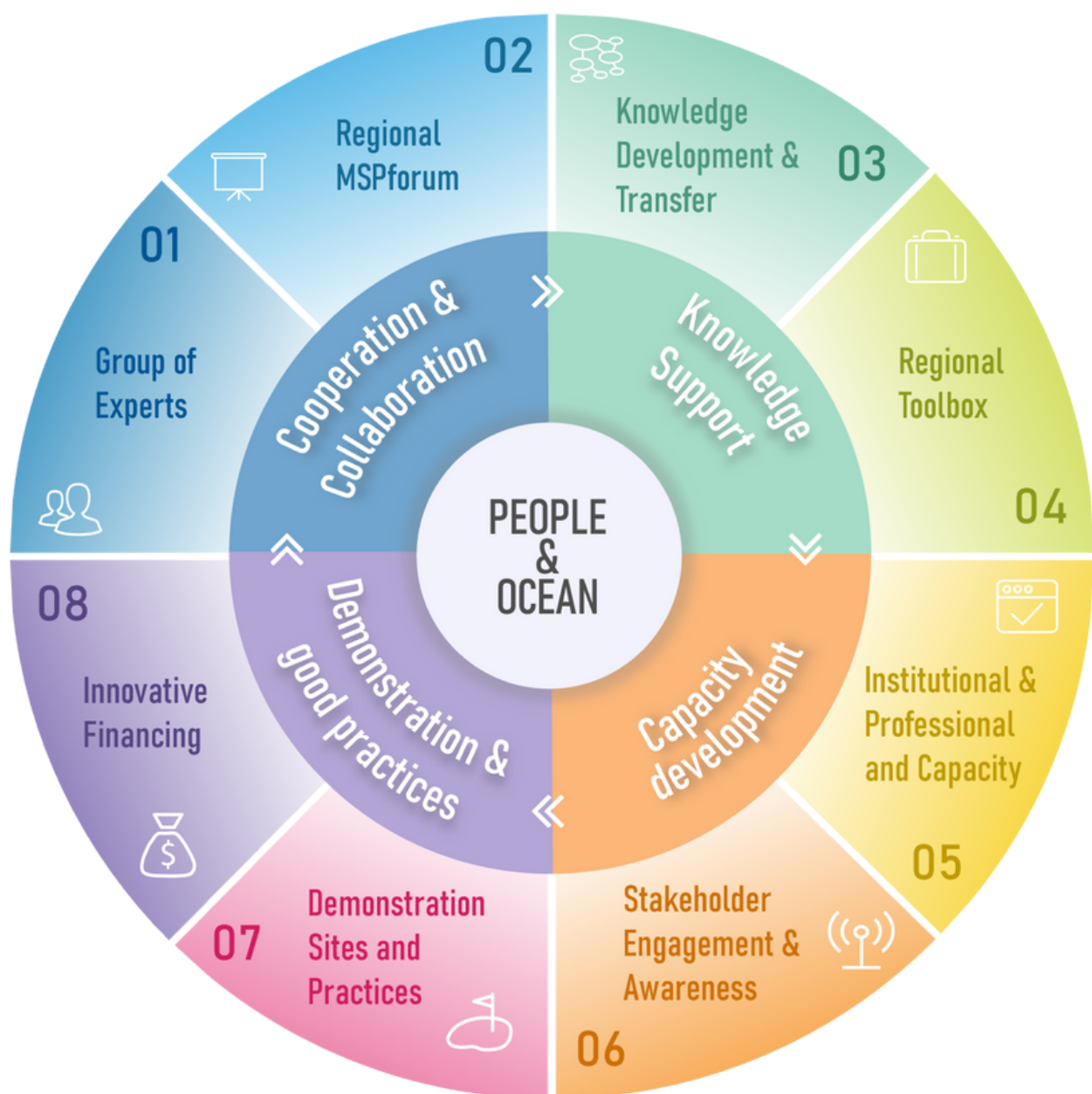


Figure 1

Action Framework for Accelerating MSP in the Western Pacific and its Adjacent Areas

Priority Area 1: Cooperation and Collaboration

UNESCO-IOC is committed to catalyzing transformative ocean science-based solutions for sustainable development. MSP has been globally recognized as an effective area-based tool/process to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Given that MSP processes in most countries in the region are still at an early or intermediate stage, there is an urgent need to promote international cooperation for the sharing of information, tools, and practices, and to foster trust and interactions among communities and stakeholders.

- **This priority area aims to develop and strengthen an international MSP cooperative mechanism to engage Member States, government agencies, academic and research institutions, relevant stakeholders, and both UN and non-UN organizations in the MSP process.**

Action 1: Strengthen the Role of the Open-ended Group of Experts on Marine Spatial Planning

The WESTPAC established an open-ended Group of Experts (GoE) on Marine Spatial Planning in 2023, composed of experts nominated by Member States and partners in the Western Pacific and its adjacent areas. The GoE is expected to provide strategic advice and insights on the development and implementation of the UN Decade Action-UN 21 and to accelerate marine spatial planning processes in the Western Pacific.

We will keep engaging qualified experts and convene the GoE regularly to review MSP development, identify gaps, challenges, and opportunities, formulate action plans, and inform decisions of the Sub-Commission and partners. While the WESTPAC Office (also the Decade Coordination Office for the region) acts as the primary coordination unit, decentralized MSP Support Offices may be established in our Member States, as needed, to provide technical, logistical, and financial support for the MSP development in the region.



Action 2: Establish the Regional MSP Forum

The Regional MSPforum facilitates dialogue on marine spatial planning among practitioners in the region, while ensuring alignment with the priority areas outlined in this Action Framework (2025–2030). It provides an opportunity to build understanding and learn from one another's experiences in marine spatial planning processes undertaken in different contexts.

WESTPAC, together with its parent organization, established the Regional MSPforum for the Western Pacific and its Adjacent Areas in 2022. The forum serves as a platform for all Member States, MSP practitioners, partners, and initiatives, to act

collegially in the region, thereby reinforcing transboundary management frameworks at the regional level.

We will convene the Regional MSPforum regularly, either as a stand-alone forum or alongside other major gatherings, to bring together MSP practitioners and stakeholders in the region, including local and national authorities, research and academic institutions, the private sector, NGOs, and foundations. Specifically, the Regional MSPforum will examine national and international MSP development, exchange experiences and lessons learned, showcase relevant tools and innovations, and explore opportunities for strengthening cooperation among Member States in the region.

Priority Area 2: Knowledge Support

Marine Spatial Planning is a knowledge-based tool/process that relies on a wide range of data and technologies. Knowledge is essential for countries to address the dual challenges of conflicts over sea use and emerging issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, ecosystem degradation, and ocean pollution. However, the capacity for MSP data collection and analysis, as well as research and technological innovations, varies among countries in the Western Pacific, and requires further strengthening. UNESCO-IOC, particularly its joint MSPglobal initiative with the European Commission, has generated MSP-related knowledge that can be adapted to regional and national contexts for applications and demonstration. Additionally, available research outputs in the region will be consolidated to facilitate the generation and transfer of MSP-related knowledge to inform policy and decision making. This includes integrating into MSP processes the latest ocean research, remote sensing technology, and ecosystem-based and climate-smart MSP approaches.

- **This priority area will assist Member States in building or enhancing their MSP knowledge base and developing practical MSP tools and guidelines to inform policy development and decision making.**

Action 3: Promote Knowledge Development, Sharing and Transfer

MSP baseline knowledge is essential for all stakeholders to engage effectively in the MSP process. We will compile key MSP baseline knowledge, covering MSP concepts, processes, basic data requirements, and decision support tools, to facilitate the transfer of knowledge to stakeholders in the region.

We will co-develop specific guidance on integrating knowledge and science-based solutions into MSP to address common common priorities in the region, including a sustainable blue economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity conservation, ecosystem restoration, and land-sea interaction and planning.



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We aim to support the development and enhancement of geographic data infrastructure and systems for MSP by sharing relevant technologies and experiences across the region, leveraging available international resources, and promoting the use of open-source tools and platforms to ensure affordability and accessibility.

Action 4: Co-develop MSP Toolbox

MSP tools encompass approaches, methodologies, and software that bridge theory and practice by evaluating current and future conditions of planning areas and supporting evidence-based decision making. However, limited knowledge and capacity often hinder their effective use in the Western Pacific. To address this challenge, this action entails collaborating with partners to co-develop an integrated MSP toolbox, specifically

tailored to the region's ecological, economic, and social needs.

The MSP toolbox will consolidate existing tools, such as InVEST, Marxan, and remote sensing technology, which, while versatile, require specific adaptation for MSP applications. It will also incorporate cutting-edge technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Digital Twins, to provide innovative solutions for addressing future challenges and opportunities in marine spatial planning. In addition, the toolbox will integrate participatory mapping tools that help transform Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge into usable data. To support its practical application, the MSP toolbox will include guiding principles, user manuals, and case studies to demonstrate the application of tools in key MSP activities, such as situation analysis, cumulative impact assessment, scenario simulation, and conflict resolution.

Priority Area 3: Capacity Development, Awareness, and Engagement

The WESTPAC views capacity development in MSP as a process that enhances the skills and knowledge of institutions and individuals over time, enabling them to support, engage in, and lead MSP development. Given the limited capacity for MSP in most Member States, capacity development is crucial for accelerating MSP processes in the Western Pacific. Activities must be tailored to specific environmental, social, economic, and cultural contexts, and co-designed with Member States, building on existing initiatives and tools. Additionally, raising awareness and communicating with broader society, particularly local communities, businesses, and Indigenous knowledge holders, will play a vital role in increasing ocean literacy, engaging diverse stakeholders, and garnering support for MSP.

- This priority area aims to enhance the capacity of Member States to accelerate the MSP processes.

Action 5: Institutional and Professional Capacity Building

The institutional capacity of MSP significantly influences legislation, sustainable financial arrangements, inter- and intra-sectoral coordination, and public awareness—all vital for the effective implementation of and compliance with marine spatial plans. The Sub-Commission will encourage Member States to strengthen their national institutional arrangements for MSP and provide strategic and technical support to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and innovation into institutional assets. Demand-driven MSP training will be co-designed and conducted at regional, national, and sub-national levels for various groups of professionals, including policy makers, planners, experts, and sectoral managers, to ensure adequate and continuous capacity building. Regional training courses will focus on bridging capacity gaps and will incorporate knowledge and experiences from the region's MSP practices. The possibility of integrating the MSP topic into the education curriculum should be explored with Member States to ensure a pipeline of skilled ocean professionals and the continued implementation of MSP by future generations.

Action 6: Stakeholder Engagement & Awareness

We will raise awareness and enhance knowledge about the ocean and MSP across society through a variety of activities and communication channels, including social media. A series of accessible communication materials will be developed to share knowledge with relevant stakeholder groups, promoting understanding of the intent, scope, potential benefits, and initiatives of MSP in the region.

We will collect and disseminate good practices of stakeholder engagement to assist Member States in promoting MSP stakeholder engagement and consultation. At the local level, community-led projects or on-site knowledge transfer events will be organized to actively involve Indigenous peoples and local communities, leveraging their traditional and local knowledge to ensure culturally informed and inclusive MSP processes.



Priority Area 4: Demonstration and Good Practices

Demonstration serves as a vital two-way knowledge exchange model, showcasing the transfer of knowledge to MSP practitioners and highlighting its benefits. This process facilitates the sharing of tools and knowledge while generating valuable experience and lessons learned, thereby fostering the replication of good practices in the region and beyond. In light of the current status of MSP development and the UN Ocean Decade, the Sub-Commission initiated the UN Ocean Decade Action - 'Accelerate Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) in the Western Pacific' (UN21) in 2022, and will support more projects and practices in Member States under the UN Ocean Decade. Demonstrations and solutions from MSP-related projects will provide valuable experience and encourage countries without marine spatial plans to initiate the MSP process on a smaller scale, eventually leading to nationwide adoption.

- This priority area aims to achieve substantial progress in MSP across Member States and to promote knowledge and experience exchange.

Action 7: Establish Demonstration Sites and Make Twinning Arrangements

The establishment of demonstration sites was proposed at the first meeting of the regional Group of MSP Experts in November 2023, as a priority action to accelerate MSP in the Western Pacific. Six sites were initially identified: Kedungsepur and Muara Demak in Indonesia, Chonburi in Thailand, Jeollanam-do in South Korea, Qinzhou in China, and Koh Rong Marine National Park in Cambodia.

Indonesia will showcase best practices in establishing national MSP institutional arrangements through a hierarchical planning system. The Kedungsepur Strategic Area MSP of Indonesia will demonstrate how to operationalize zoning plans synchronized with blue economy development across interregional areas, while the Muara Demak detailed MSP will focus on addressing the needs of local communities for sustainable coastal and marine resource management. Chonburi in Thailand and Jeollanam-do in South Korea will represent provincial MSP practices, with Chonburi emphasizing effective stakeholder engagement and the integration of disaster prevention, and Jeollanam-do exploring applications of new technologies and methods for MSP assessment and development. Qinzhou in China

will share lessons learned on evaluating the benefits of MSP and optimizing spatial allocation. Koh Rong Marine National Park in Cambodia will demonstrate the zoning of MPAs and local community engagement. Twinning arrangements will be established among demonstration sites to exchange knowledge and experiences, build networks, collaborate, and create opportunities in the MSP process. Demonstration sites will be selected on a rolling, voluntary basis. Member States are encouraged to initiate pilot MSP practices and embark on substantial MSP processes, including transboundary MSP initiatives.

Action 8: Unlock innovative Financing for MSP Demonstration

The development of MSP requires adequate and sustainable funding. To support MSP planning and implementation on a regional scale, it cannot rely solely on national budgets; innovative financing mechanisms are also needed. Multiple channels of financial support, including investments in blue economy initiatives and sustainable marine resource management, private sector investment, funding from foundations and donor countries, and mechanisms aligned with national and international climate change adaptation initiatives, will help ensure the implementation of MSP to achieve ecological, economic and social goals.

MONITORING & EVALUATION

To monitor the implementation of this Action Framework, a biennial report will be prepared by the Group of Experts, and submitted to the biennial Intergovernmental Sessions of the Sub-Commission for consideration.



ANNEX 1 ALIGNMENT WITH RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORKS

International Frameworks	Goals, targets or actions	
UN 2030 <u>Agenda</u> <u>Sustainable</u> <u>Development</u> <u>Goals (SDGs)</u>	Goal 14 - Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development	<i>Target 14.2:</i> By 2020, sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration to achieve healthy and productive oceans. <i>Target 14.5:</i> By 2020, conserve at least 10% of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information. <i>Target 14.7:</i> By 2030, increase the economic benefits to small island developing States and least developed countries from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism. <i>Target 14.a:</i> Increase scientific knowledge, develop research capacity and transfer marine technology, taking into account the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission Criteria and Guidelines on the Transfer of Marine Technology, in order to improve ocean health and to enhance the contribution of marine biodiversity to the development of developing countries, in particular small island developing States and least developed countries.
	Goal 13 - Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts	<i>Target 13.1:</i> Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate related hazards and natural disasters in all countries. <i>Target 13.2:</i> Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning. <i>Target 13.b:</i> Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change related planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing States, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities.
<u>Kunming-</u> <u>Montreal</u> <u>Global</u> <u>Biodiversity</u> <u>Framework</u>	Global targets for 2030 1. Reducing threats to biodiversity	<i>Target 1 :</i> Ensure that all areas are under participatory integrated biodiversity inclusive spatial planning and/or effective management processes addressing land and sea use change. <i>Target 2:</i> Ensure that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of areas of degraded terrestrial, inland water, and coastal and marine ecosystems are under effective restoration, in order to enhance biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, ecological integrity and connectivity.

International Frameworks	Goals, targets or actions	
<u>Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework</u>		<i>Target 3:</i> Ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures recognizing indigenous and traditional territories, where applicable, and integrated into wider landscapes, seascapes and the ocean, while ensuring that any sustainable use, where appropriate in such areas, is fully consistent with conservation outcomes, recognizing and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, including over their traditional territories.
	Global targets for 2030 2. Meeting people's needs through sustainable use and benefit-sharing	<i>Target 10:</i> ensure that areas under agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries and forestry are managed sustainably, in particular through the sustainable use of biodiversity, including through a substantial increase of the application of biodiversity friendly practices, such as sustainable intensification, agroecological and other innovative approaches contributing to the resilience and long-term efficiency and productivity of these production systems and to food security, conserving and restoring biodiversity and maintaining nature's contributions to people, including ecosystem functions and services.
<u>UNFCCC Paris Agreement and its mechanism of Nationally Determined Contributions</u>	Overarching goal	To hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels' and pursue efforts 'to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.
	Article 7	9. Each Party shall, as appropriate, engage in adaptation planning processes and the implementation of actions, including the development or enhancement of relevant plans, policies and/or contributions, which may include: (a) The implementation of adaptation actions, undertakings and/or efforts; (b) The process to formulate and implement national adaptation plans; (c) The assessment of climate change impacts and vulnerability, with a view to formulating nationally determined prioritized actions, taking into account vulnerable people, places and ecosystems; (d) Monitoring and evaluating and learning from adaptation plans, policies, programmes and actions; and (e) Building the resilience of socioeconomic and ecological systems, including through economic diversification and sustainable management of natural resources.



International Frameworks	Goals, targets or actions	
<u>United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (UN Ocean Decade)</u>	Objective 3	Increase the use of ocean knowledge and understanding, and develop capacity to contribute to sustainable development solutions. <i>Sub-Objective 3.4</i> Expand and enhance spatial planning processes to contribute to sustainable development across regions and scales.
	Decade outcome	A healthy and resilient ocean where marine ecosystems are understood, protected, restored and managed.
<u>The ASEAN Blue Economy Framework</u>	Blue Strategy 3: Blue Priority Sectors	<i>Key area III.</i> Supporting marine spatial planning. This will facilitate improved management of resources and cross-sector collaboration, ensuring inclusiveness, organizing dialogues, developing collective actions, reinforcing public-private partnerships, ensuring that decision-makers and actors possess the necessary expertise and tools, and allowing for periodic and timely evaluations of the progress made.
<u>Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries, and Food Security</u>	<u>CTI-CFF Regional Plan of Action 2.0</u>	<i>Five Year Goal:</i> By 2025, coastal communities and coastal and marine ecosystems are enabled to cope with the impacts of climate change, natural and anthropogenic threats, in the Coral Triangle region. <i>Ten Year Goal:</i> By 2030, coastal communities and coastal and marine ecosystems in the Coral Triangle region are more resilient/able to adapt to impacts of climate change, natural and anthropogenic threats, by improving food security, sustainable fisheries and coastal livelihoods.
	<u>Ecosystem Approach to Management of Fisheries (EAMF) and other marine resources fully applied</u>	<i>Target 1:</i> Strong legislative, policy and regulatory frameworks in place for achieving an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM). <i>Target 2:</i> Improved income, livelihoods, and food security in an increasingly significant number of coastal communities across the region through a new sustainable coastal fisheries and poverty reduction initiative.
<u>Pacific Islands Forum - the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent</u>	Thematic area: Ocean and Environment	<i>Goal 1:</i> the Pacific Regions Ocean and environment are sustainably managed and are resilient to threats. <i>Regional Collective Actions</i> 4 Develop as appropriate regional models for managing natural resource sectors, including ensuring that all environmental, social, and economic risks are comprehensively understood. 9 Adoption of ecosystem-based tools and customary approaches to manage and improve ecological integrity, biosecurity, sustainable productivity, and climate resilience of ocean and land-based resources.

ANNEX 2 MARINE SPATIAL PLANNING AND THE UN 2030 AGENDA

	MSP contributes to the sustainable development of maritime sectors with direct economic benefits for coastal communities, particularly in SIDS and LDCs.
	MSP facilitates the sustainable management of fisheries and aquaculture and builds on new research and technology to improve food security.
	MSP encourages the use of marine resources for health research and development, and includes early warning, risk reduction and management of health risks.
	Education provides skills and tools to enhance capacity and participation in marine economic activities, planning, science and technology and, raise awareness.
	MSP creates opportunities through science, technology and innovation to improve gender equality in ocean-related activities and decision-making.
	Synergies between integrated coastal management and MSP improve access to safe water and better sanitation, and reduce pollution caused by solid waste, wastewater and marine litter.
	MSP promotes scientific research, technology and cooperation for the development of renewable energy at sea while preserving marine and coastal ecosystems.
	MSP processes, associated with Sustainable Blue Economy strategies, facilitate opportunities for employment and growth based on ecological, economic and social objectives.
	MSP encourages the development and diversification of maritime industries and infrastructure as well as the transfer of marine technology to boost innovation.
	MSP contributes to managing access to markets and resources in a way that benefits all actors, and increases their economic prosperity, particularly in SIDS and LDCs.
	The integration of coastal management and MSP promotes a sustainable and climate-resilient transformation of coastal cities that guarantees citizens safe access to the sea and its cultural and natural wealth.
	MSP aims to establish a Blue Economy that sustainably uses marine resources and ecosystems through a circular economy and certified production.
	MSP integrates adaptation and mitigation measures to build the resilience of marine ecosystems and reduce exposure and vulnerability to climate change.
	MSP sustainably manages and protects marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration to achieve healthy and productive oceans.
	MSP applies integrated management strategies that take into account land-sea interactions in the context of an ecosystem-based approach.
	MSP is a multi-level decision making process whose successful outcome depends on and strengthens participatory, transparent and effective governance.
	MSP enhances regional partnerships at a transboundary level for the achievement of the SDGs through cooperation in science, technology and capacity building.



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