

Decision IX/3–V/3

Cooperation in marine regions

The Meeting of the Parties to the Convention and the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, meeting in joint session,

Recalling the Long-term strategy and action plan for the Convention and the Protocol¹ that call for: creating and increasing synergies and cooperation; coordinating and cooperating with relevant treaties and organizations; and contributing to wider implementation of the Convention and the Protocol within and beyond the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region,

Recalling also decision VIII/2–IV/2² on the adoption of the workplan for 2021–2023, which provides for the identification of synergies and subregional cooperation opportunities in marine regions, with a special focus on the Mediterranean Sea,

Welcoming the adoption of an 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,³

Concerned about the growing environmental pressures on marine and coastal ecosystems and on islands and biodiversity loss caused by climate change, increasing litter pollution (loads), tourism, fishing, mining of minerals and energy production,

Affirming the need for a multidisciplinary, participatory and transboundary/regional approach to the protection of marine ecosystems, islands and coastal zones,

Wishing to promote cooperation among Parties within and between marine regions, as well as to strengthen contacts and cooperation with States outside the ECE region and with relevant regional sea conventions and commissions,

Convinced of the important benefits for the marine environment of widespread, effective and coherent application of the well-established procedures of the Convention and the Protocol to maritime spatial planning, strategic planning for sustainable blue economy and to other plans, programmes and projects in key development sectors in marine regions, including tourism, water and waste management, as well as energy, involving, for example, exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbons, cables and pipelines, tide and wave energy and offshore wind energy, in terms of prevention and mitigation of negative impacts, including in a transboundary context,

Acknowledging the further need to raise awareness of the benefits of the Convention and the Protocol, in particular, beyond the ECE region, and to assist countries that need support in aligning their legislation and building capacities for the implementation of the principles and provisions of those treaties,

Recognizing that strengthened cooperation in marine regions supports the implementation of the regional sea conventions and their respective protocols and work programmes with respect to both strategic environmental assessments and environmental impact assessments in a transboundary context, taking into account the related legal provisions and practice thereunder,

Expressing appreciation for the donor funding and leadership from Italy for the implementation of the workplan activities related to marine regions in 2021–2023,

¹ ECE/MP.EIA/30/Add.1–ECE/MP.EIA/SEA/13/Add.1, decision VIII/3–IV/3, annex, items II.A.5, II.B.4 and II.C.

² Ibid., decision VIII/2–IV/2, annex I, item III.A.4.

³ See advance, unedited version of agreement at www.un.org/bbnj/sites/www.un.org/bbnj/files/draft_agreement_advanced_unedited_for_posting_v1.pdf.

Expressing appreciation also for the interest and active participation of representatives of the regional sea conventions and partner organizations,

1. *Welcome* the final report identifying synergies and possible future cooperation activities in marine regions, prepared in consultation with representatives of the Espoo Convention and its Protocol; the Arctic Council and its Working Group on the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment; the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention); the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution (Bucharest Convention) and the Black Sea Commission; the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area (Helsinki Convention); the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR Convention); and the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea (Tehran Convention), and with support from the secretariat;

2. *Also welcome* the case studies from Estonia, Italy, Poland and Slovenia that illustrate good practice and lessons learned in the application of the Convention and the Protocol to plans, programmes and projects in marine regions, inviting also other Parties and stakeholders to provide further case studies;

3. *Agree* to include in the workplan for 2024–2026 selected cooperation activities in marine regions,⁴ inviting Parties and stakeholders to take the necessary actions to implement them and to report on progress at the meetings of the Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment;

4. *Request* the Bureau and the Working Group to recommend possible further activities for the workplan for 2027–2029, building on progress made and needs identified in the interim;

5. *Affirm* the importance of a coordinated international cooperation among countries, partner organizations, relevant ECE and other multilateral environmental agreements, and international financial institutions within and beyond the ECE region in assessing and addressing environmental, including health, effects, in particular in transboundary and regional contexts;

6. *Call on* Parties to promote effective and coordinated application of the provisions of the Convention and the Protocol to projects, plans and programmes, as well as, to the extent appropriate, to policies and legislation that may have an impact on marine regions, including in the framework of the regional sea conventions and commissions;

7. *Encourage* States not yet Parties to the Convention and/or the Protocol to implement their principles and, as relevant, to take steps towards acceding to those treaties;

8. *Invite* United Nations organizations and other relevant intergovernmental, as well as non-governmental organizations, to continue to facilitate the application of the principles of Convention and the Protocol in marine regions;

9. *Encourage* international financial institutions and bilateral aid agencies to ensure that their environmental assessment procedures are consistent with the Convention and the Protocol, in relation to their strategic planning and to investment projects affecting the marine environment.

⁴ ECE/MP.EIA/32/Add.1–ECE/MP.EIA/SEA/15, decision IX/2–V/2, annex I, items. III.A. 2 and 3, forthcoming.