TRANSFORMING OUR COASTAL FUTURES THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS TO FOSTER SUSTAINABILITY

Since 1974 the Regional Seas programme has been striving to achieve healthy productive and resilient oceans. Now focusing on the sustainable development foals, the Regional Seas are reinforcing regional oceans governance to help member states deliver cross sectoral policies that protect and enhance transboundary resources, including those along the coast.

For three decades, Future Earth Coasts, a platform for translating sustainability knowledge into action, based on a global network of coastal scientists and practitioners from all disciplines, has been dedicated to enable sustainable development of our coastal zones.

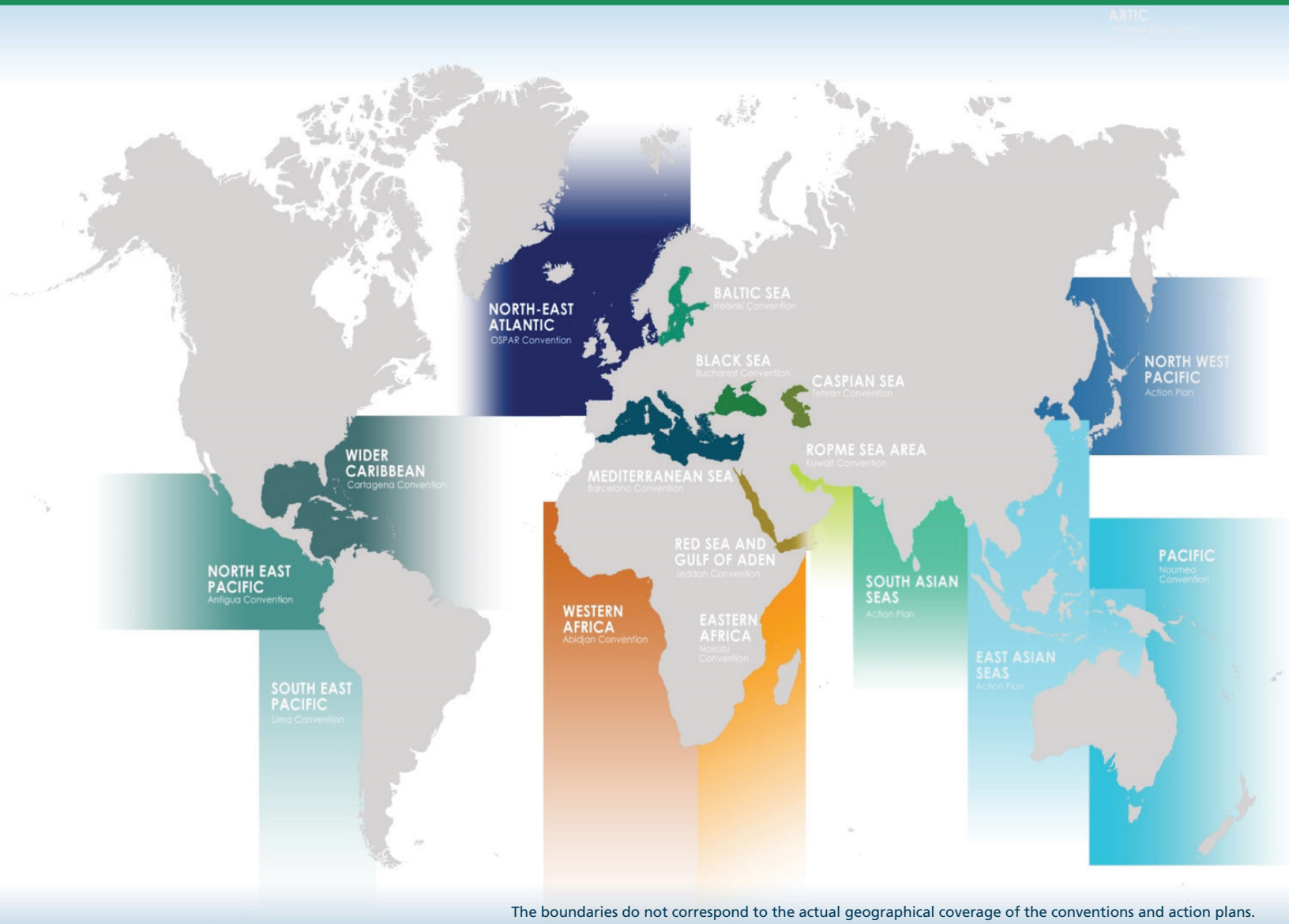
Improving the adaptive management of our coasts will help the world transition to a more sustainable future. Achieving sustainability is, however, a challenging undertaking, particularly in the coastal zone where hundreds of millions of people continue to face increasing pressure of cumulative impacts from multiple stressors.

Together the Regional Seas and Future Earth Coasts are working to develop a strategy for knowledge exchange that will lead to more effective adaptive management and governance of our coasts.

REGIONAL SEAS PROGRAMME & FUTURE EARTH COASTS

Since its establishment, the **Regional Seas Programme** has become UN Environment's most important regional mechanism for the protection and management of the marine and coastal environment. UN Environment is mandated to coordinate the eighteen Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, in which 146 countries participate. According to the 2017–2020 Regional Seas Strategic Directions, these conventions and action plans aim to reduce marine pollution in all its forms in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG 14 (life underwater). They also facilitate the development of integrated, ecosystem-based regional ocean policies and strategies for sustainable use of marine and coastal resources, including blue growth.

Future Earth Coasts is a global research project of Future Earth, a platform for translating sustainability knowledge into action. Future Earth is governed by a number of UN agencies, intergovernmental bodies and organisations such as the International Council for Science. Future Earth Coasts is a global network of coastal scientists and practitioners from all disciplines of the natural and social science, engineering, law, and the humanities, who are dedicated to addressing the challenges of sustainability of our coastal zones. The work of Future Earth Coasts provides a global platform for international scientific collaboration that: Strengthens global partnerships between researchers, funders, and users of research; enables integrated research on grand challenges and transformations to sustainability; and communicates science to society and society to science.



The boundaries do not correspond to the actual geographical coverage of the conventions and action plans.

A STRATEGY TO PROMOTE KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

Intergovernmental organisations, national governments, conservation groups, and research networks across the world are implementing actions to reduce human impacts on the coast. Despite these efforts, transition towards more sustainable practices is not happening quickly enough to ensure the maintenance, restoration, and regeneration of these vital ecosystems for future generations. There us a need to foster novel partnerships and knowledge exchange approaches to deliver a better future for our coasts that builds on existing processes and collective experience. The Future Earth Coasts initiative 'Our Coastal Futures' through partnerships aims to co-design efforts working toward coastal and marine sustainability. The four steps outlined below provide a potential transformative pathway for effective collaboration with the aim to produce actionable and desirable scenarios through a process of collective learning that is culturally appropriate and rooted in profound understanding of place.

A FOUR STEP APPROACH

STEP 1

Bring regional coastal stakeholders together to agree on a way forward

STEP 3

Build shared understanding about the coast and identify plausible coastal futures

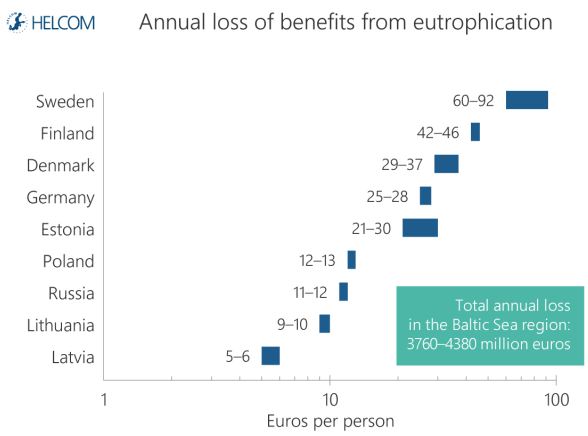
STEP 2

Co-design robust coastal sustainability strategies

STEP 4

Co-produce innovative coastal sustainability interventions and enable transition pathways

THE BALTIC SEA



Lost recreational benefits due to deterioration of the marine environment. The total losses of recreational values are 1-2 billion euros annually for the Baltic Sea region.

Source: Czajkowski et al. (2015). State of the Baltic Sea Report - first version 2017. http://stateofthebalticsea.helcom.fi/about-helcom-and-the-assessment/downloads-and-data/Czajkowski, M., H. Ahtiainen. Janne Artell, W. Budzinski, B. Hasler, L. Hasselstrom, J. Meyerhoff, T. Nommann, D. Semeniene, T. Soderqvist, H. Tuhkanen, T. Lankia, A. Vanags, M. Zandersen, T. Zylics.

HELCOM STATE OF THE BALTIC SEA
- HOLISTIC ASSESSMENT -
First version 2017

The Baltic Sea and its coastal areas provide significant benefits to national economies and welfare to citizens in the region. Use of the sea has created pressures and their cumulative impacts have jeopardized the health of the ecosystem. For decades, the Baltic Marin Environment Protection Commission HELCOM has conducted thematic and holistic assessments of the status of the Baltic Sea, and established regional action plans to improve the situation. However, the status of the Baltic Sea continues to be unsatisfactory. Therefore, there is commitment to update the Baltic Sea Action Plan and to further enhance regional and international collaboration by implementing the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Convention on Biological Diversity. The social and economic impacts of these commitments will also be considered and analysed. The results of social and economic analysis are presented in to the HELCOM report - (HELCOM (2017): First version of the 'State of the Baltic Sea' report" which show that if the deterioration of the marine environment continues, the related loss in recreational values is only 1–2 billion euros annually.

THE MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN

The Mediterranean is a rare and fragile ecoregion of unique cultural heritage and a hot spot for biodiversity and climate change. Development in the coastal zones is strictly dependent on the environment, and multiple compound pressures have become major concerns. These challenges include coastal urbanization, mass tourism, fresh water overexploitation and salinization, marine pollution and litter, overfishing, expansion of marine traffic, and invasive species.

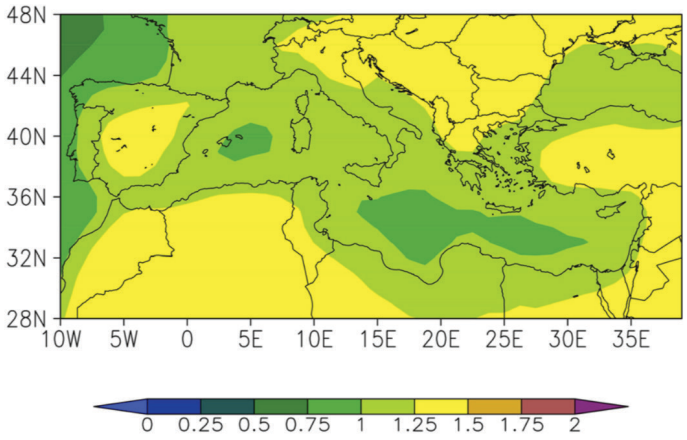


Fig. Spatial distribution of the rate of change of mean annual temperature in the Mediterranean relative to global, between 1901 and 2100, based on observational data and simulations (Lionello and Scarascia 2018).

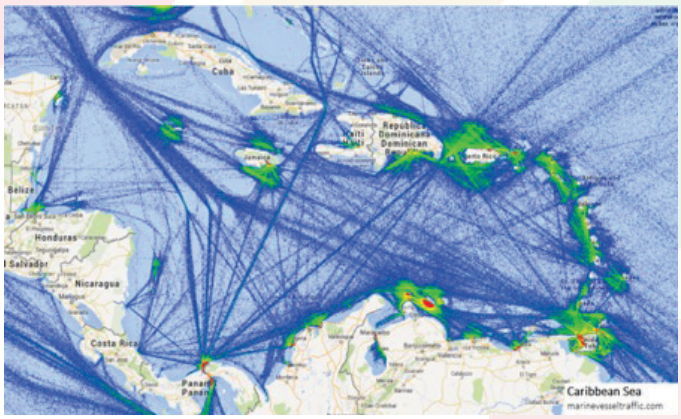
The Mediterranean is also a region characterized by inequality and contrasts, with widening divides and interdependencies. However, the region can count on 40 years of collaboration on environmental issues through the Barcelona Convention, 7 Protocols, shared action plans, a protected area network, and a common Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development.

For 40 years, decision makers have considered shared assessments as key conditions for informed decision-making, with future studies necessary to plan ahead. Partnerships have been instrumental to deliver those assessments. In 2017, Mediterranean countries requested the Barcelona Convention Secretariat to support the preparation a new foresight study with 2050 as horizon, adopting an ambitious participatory process. This presents a promising opportunity for collaboration.

THE CARIBBEAN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

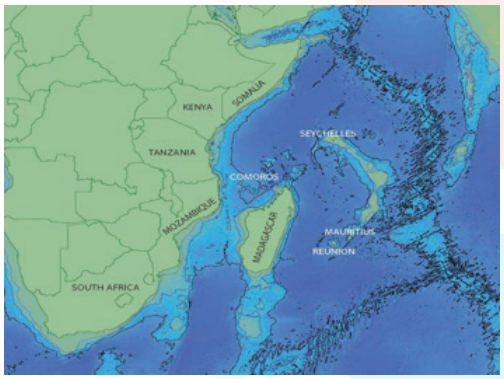
The Caribbean Islands are amongst the most disaster-prone regions of the world, and face severe challenges of resource management, species over-exploitation, and pollution. Climate change is increasing disaster vulnerability in a region already facing food, water, and livelihood security issues, energy challenges, and increasing population pressures. Regional priorities such as oil spills, specifically protected areas and wildlife, and land-based sources of marine pollution are central to the Caribbean Regional Seas Programme.

But the complexity of coordination across this incredibly diverse region, defined by numerous political influences, varied governance models, and unequal socio and economic capabilities and activities has hampered efforts to reduce risk and promote sustainable development. Therefore, there is a need and an opportunity for increased collaborative and collective action, led by institutions such as the Caribbean Regional Seas Programme and other appropriate regional and island state actors to affect change and increase knowledge transfer.



THE NAIROBI CONVENTION

The Nairobi Convention is a partnership between governments, civil society, and the private sector, working towards a prosperous Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region with healthy rivers, coasts and oceans. This vision is pursued by providing a mechanism for regional cooperation, coordination and collaborative actions, and by engaging countries that share the WIO into actions to protect their shared marine environment. The WIO region is still facing environmental threats as well as institutional, governance, and financing impediments beyond the abilities of the contracting parties. These challenges require concerted international effort to secure sources of long-term financing for the investments needed to transform to a prosperous region with well managed coasts and marine resources. The Nairobi Convention, WIOMSA, and Future Earth Coasts are collaborating to build a framework for joint activities within their respective mandates, to therefore engage with the global constituents on future assessments and leadership on ocean governance.



Uniqueness of WIO region

- Region of unique species endemism and high marine and coastal biodiversity
- Highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change
- Globally, WIO ecosystems in good ecological state but with emerging localized hotspots of planned or on-going large-scale developments
- WIO region has strong partnerships between government and conservation partners within which to foster transformational change

NEXT STEPS

The Looking for a Future in Assessment Workshop, held in University College Cork, 27th to 29th March 2018, brought together Regional Seas stakeholders, assessment organisations, and UN and other international bodies. Participants identified a strategic opportunity to work more closely together to chart desired coastal futures.

New Memorandums of Understanding will frame agreements with Future Earth Coasts within the Regional Seas governance architecture. In parallel, momentum will continue to be build toward the development and implementation of regionally specific projects, through the application of Our Coastal Futures as an overarching framework. These collaborative agreements will help to deliver common organisational interests, whilst achieving greater opportunities to translate knowledge into action on the ground.

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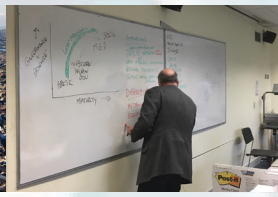

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futureearth coasts

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eri Environmental Research Institute

MaREI Centre for Marine and Renewable Energy

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