

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 goals, 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.

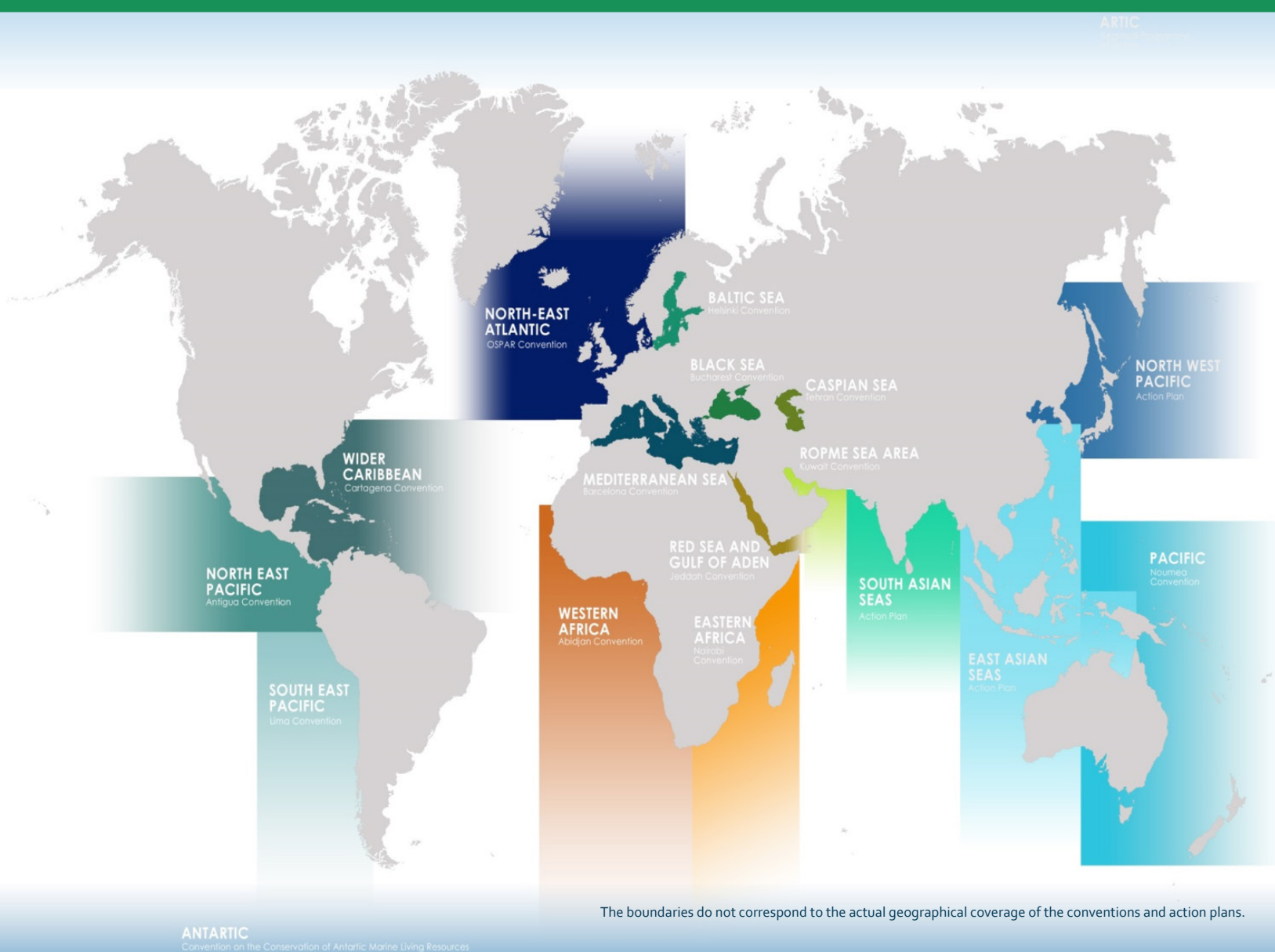
Improving the adaptive management of our coasts will help the world transition to a more sustainable future. Achieving sustainability is, however, a challenging undertaking, particularly in the coastal zone where hundreds of millions of people continue to face increasing pressure from the cumulative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

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 for 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 by member states 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 promote integrated, ecosystem-based ocean policies and strategies and the sustainable use of marine and coastal resources, through initiatives such as 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.



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, the 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 is 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. Through partnerships the Future Earth Coasts initiative 'Our Coastal Futures' aims to co-design activities that work towards coastal and marine sustainability. The four steps outlined below provide a potential transformative pathway for effective collaboration. The aim is to produce realistic scenarios that can identify pathways to more sustainable options for coastal communities that are culturally appropriate.



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



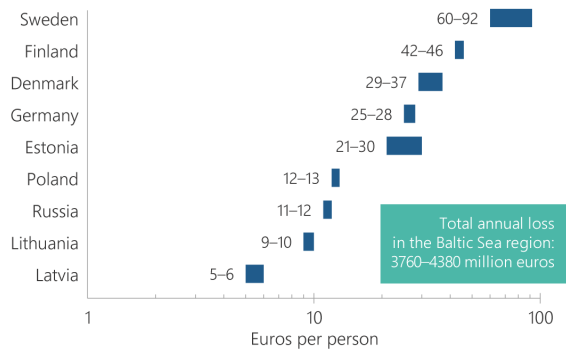
STEP 4

Co-produce innovative coastal sustainability interventions and enable transition pathways

THE BALTIC SEA



Annual loss of benefits from eutrophication



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.



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 Marine 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 the HELCOM report (2017): First version of the 'State of the Baltic Sea' report, which shows that if the deterioration of the marine environment continues the related loss in recreational values is 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 impacts. Development in the coastal zones is heavily dependent on the environment, and multiple pressures have become major concerns. These include coastal urbanization, mass tourism, overexploitation of freshwater resources and salinization, marine pollution and litter, overfishing, expansion of marine traffic, and encroachment of invasive species.

The Mediterranean is also a region characterized by inequality and contrasts, with widening economic 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.

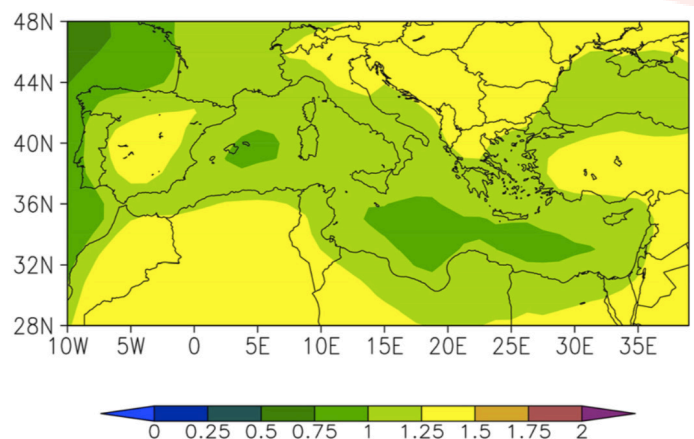
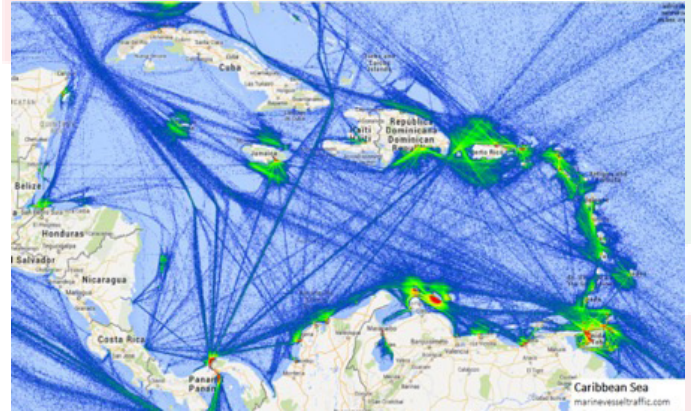


Fig. Spatial distribution of the rate of change of mean annual temperature in the Mediterranean relative to global, between 1901 and 2100, based on observational data and simulations (Lionello and Scarascia 2018).

THE CARIBBEAN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

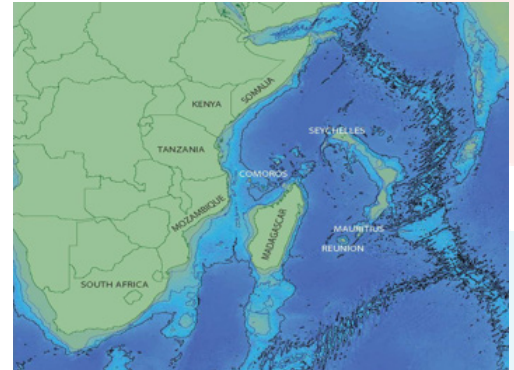
The Caribbean Islands are amongst the most (natural) disaster-prone regions of the world, and face severe challenges of resource management, species over-exploitation, and pollution. Climate change is increasing disaster vulnerability in a region already facing food, water, and livelihood security issues,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

Coordination across this incredibly diverse region is complex. Defined by numerous political influences, varied governance models, and unequal socio and economic capabilities and activities, the region has been hampered in its 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 Environment Programme and other appropriate regional and island state actors, to implement 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 delivered through a robust mechanism for regional cooperation, coordinated and collaborative actions, and the engagement of countries that share the Western Indian Ocean so that actions to protect their shared marine environment can be effectively implemented. The WIO region is facing environmental as well as institutional, governance, and financial challenges which lie beyond the capacities of the contracting parties. These challenges require concerted international effort to secure sources of long-term financing that will transform a potentially prosperous region into one with well managed coasts and sustained marine resources. The Nairobi Convention, WIOMSA, and Future Earth Coasts are collaborating to build a framework for joint activities, within their respective mandates, to engage with the global constituents on future assessments and leadership in areas such as ocean governance.



The unique characteristics of the Western Indian Ocean are typified by;

- high levels of endemism and marine and coastal biodiversity
- high vulnerability to climate change impacts
- emerging hotspots of localised development and planned or large-scale developments
- strong partnerships between government and conservation partners which can foster transformational change

NEXT STEPS

The workshop entitled 'Looking for a Future in Assessment', that was held in University College Cork, 27th to 29th March 2018, brought together Regional Seas, assessment organisations, and other international partners. Participants identified a strategic opportunity to work more closely together to identify pathways for more sustainable futures for coastal communities.

New arrangements between Future Earth Coasts and the Regional Seas will be developed to work towards implementation of regionally specific projects, underpinned by the Our Coastal Futures initiative. 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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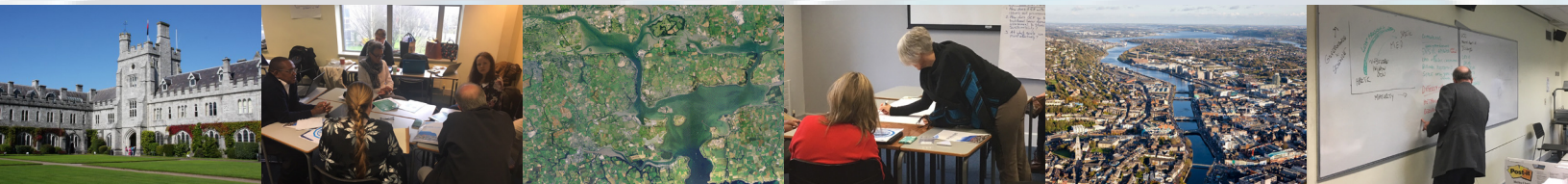


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