



## A New Approach to Ocean Governance

### Practical ways to fast track the Green Economy

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#### Introduction

The ocean is an essential part of the world economy – from the important goods and services it supplies to the wealth of resources it contains to the activities it supports. The essential role of the ocean reaffirms a critical need to improve coherence across the social, economic and environmental pillars of sustainable development. But this will have to be approached in a fundamentally different way from the manner in which modern society has historically viewed the balances and linkages. The Green Economy model provides such an approach, and the time is right to take strong actions. We have to find practical ways to feed the more than 7 billion people on the planet, confront the challenges in the global economy, and grow sustainably and resiliently. The ocean is central to such a transformation and the Commonwealth has a global leadership role to play in making this happen.

Commonwealth countries have jurisdiction over globally significant ocean areas containing a diverse range of habitats, species and marine resources. Many, particularly Small Island Developing States (SIDS), are dependent on ocean resources. Long recognised as a key

provider of important goods and services, oceans rely on a quality environment to sustain supplies. We now know that the state of the ocean is in decline due to human pressures. In short, the vulnerability of the ocean is increasing while the capacity of many Commonwealth countries to cope with such changes has not kept pace. The framework for ocean governance and management needs to respond to this challenge. This paper provides a basis for discussion to help this happen.

#### Box 1. Making Nature Economically Visible

Biodiversity in all its dimensions – the quality, quantity and diversity of ecosystems, species and genes – needs to be preserved not only for societal, ethical or religious reasons but also for the economic benefit it provides to present and future generations. We should aim to become a society that recognises, measures, manages and economically rewards responsible stewardship of its natural capital.

Source: [TEEB 2010: 29](#)

## Oceans in Decline

### *Future opportunities being lost*

The backdrop to applying the Green Economy model to the ocean is one of generally declining economic, ecological and social values resulting from inadequate existing governance and management frameworks. It is now recognised that the ocean of today is greatly changed even from what it was just 40 years ago.

Scientific data reveal a host of predominantly negative trends: increases in ocean temperatures are already altering the distribution of habitats and species, many of which have special economic and social relevance for dependent industries and communities. There have been dramatic changes and losses in fundamental species such as phytoplankton and krill, changes in the growing season, and population distributions of commercial species are already changing in some ocean regions, driving dependent extractive industries to adapt.

Oxygen levels are declining resulting in an increasing number of dead zones on the seabed (over 400 to date) and now lowering oxygen levels ('oxygen sags') in surface waters. Ocean chemistry is also changing, and at a rate faster than at any other time over the past 55 million years. As the seas absorb more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, lower pH levels – ocean acidification – are expected to retard rates of shell formation and growth. All these changes are acting synergistically to threaten entire food chains and dependent communities and industries. Regionally significant impacts are predicted to be less than a decade away in some places, especially higher latitude polar waters. The ocean is less able to resist such impacts as it is more stressed than 40 years ago. This is due in the main to sedimentation, pollution and over-fishing. Industrial fishing within the exclusive economic zones – featuring practices such as bottom trawling and long-lining – has already led to widespread

depletion of fish stocks and the habitats that sustain them. These practices have now spread to the high seas, where, if left unchecked, are likely to result in the commercial extinction of a significant number of fish species, including many that are crucial for the sustenance of millions of people. The European Commission estimates that for stocks with sufficient data for assessment, 78.5 per cent are exploited unsustainably with 43 per cent outside of safe biological limits. A review of 48 stocks managed by regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs) found that 32 (67 per cent) were overexploited or collapsed.

Statistics on the trends of the state of fish stocks globally show an increase in the numbers of fully exploited and overexploited or collapsed stocks in contrast to a decreasing in the number of stocks that still have the potential for exploitation. This has been accompanied by an expansion of fisheries both across latitudes and into greater depths. The associated impacts can be seen in the waters of many Commonwealth states as fish biomass is removed and other large-scale environmental impacts of fishing occur. Even if responsible agencies were to adopt fish conservation regulations, it would be in the context of the same current governance and management arrangements that have resulted in ineffective to non-existent enforcement capabilities, and left unaddressed the rapidly growing problem of sophisticated IUU operations (i.e. illegal, unreported, unregulated fishing).

Other economically important habitats have fared equally badly. Losses of coral, coral reefs, and reef-dependent species have accelerated in recent years at an unprecedented rate, both in tropical surface waters and in the colder deep sea. Warming seas, ocean acidification, over-fishing and habitat destruction are all taking a dramatic toll. Socially, through such effects current practice is depriving future generations of key elements of their natural

inheritance, and poor nations are being deprived of a vital renewable source of human nutrition.

### Ecosystem Goods and Services

#### *Significance for growth and social development*

The ocean provides a variety of goods and services essential to economic growth and social development. These include resources that can be extracted for commercial trade (such as oil, gas, seabed minerals and fish), services that provide for economic activity (tourism) or recreation, as well as ecological services that can provide human protection (storm protection) and the recycling of nutrients or cleansing of pollution. The sustained supply of goods and services from the oceans is central to our future wellbeing and prosperity. This supply depends not just on the presence, but also the quantity and quality of marine biodiversity. In addition to the diversity of species, genes and ecosystems, it is the abundance of individual animals and plants, as well as the extent of ecosystems that are critical components of 'natural capital' and key determinants of the scale and nature of the benefits derived.<sup>1</sup>

## The sustained supply of goods and services from the oceans is central to our future wellbeing and prosperity

In recent literature<sup>2</sup> the links between nature and the economy are often described using the concept of ecosystem services, or the flows of values to human

societies as a result of the state and quality of natural capital. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment provides a useful four-category framework within which to view ecosystem services that contribute to human wellbeing, each underpinned by biodiversity:

- **Provisioning services** (e.g. wild foods, crops, freshwater and plant-derived medicines)
- **Regulating services** (e.g. filtration of pollutants by wetlands, climate regulation through carbon storage and water cycling, pollination and protection from disasters)
- **Cultural services** (e.g. recreation, spiritual and aesthetic values, education)
- **Supporting services** (e.g. soil formation, photosynthesis and nutrient cycling)

Maintaining stocks of natural capital allows for the sustained provision of ecosystem services and thereby ensures future human wellbeing. Some, such as provisioning services, can be valued in financial terms, whilst others are often influential in decision-making but rarely valued in monetary terms.

If appropriately governed and managed the ocean can make a significant contribution to society as a whole through:

- **Food security** – adequate scales and levels of marine resource protection, management and enforcement will provide a long-term sustainable and renewable supply of food;
- **Sustainable economic growth** – the sustained supply of goods and services provides the basis for a range of economic activities, primarily marine tourism, which can be a major contributor to GDP for islands and coastal areas.

<sup>1</sup> As the international research initiative, TEEB (The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity), points out in (2010) Mainstreaming the Economics of Nature: A synthesis of the approach, conclusions and recommendations of TEEB and (2009) The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity for National and International Policy Makers – Summary: Responding to the Value of Nature.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, TEEB (2010), van Beukering et al. (2007) and OECD (2011).

- **Energy security** – ocean currents and wave energy can be captured to provide a sustained source of energy, the ocean supplies a place to site wind farms relieving pressures on land, and in remote small island states energy from renewable sources could reduce a near-total dependency on imports of diesel and other fuels.
- **Climate change mitigation** – shallow coastal water ecosystems, such as mangroves, tidal marshes and even sea grass meadows, were often considered to consist of unattractive mud but are now seen as a critical aspect of managing essential natural carbon sinks.
- **Disaster risk reduction and mitigation** – coastal habitats such as coral reefs, mangroves and coastal marshes provide significant protection from episodic events such as cyclones and hurricanes. Through appropriate management, such ecosystems are natural solutions to coastal erosion and flooding caused by storms and increasing sea levels.
- **Poverty reduction** – healthy marine ecosystems lead to healthier local communities because they supply more and better quality food in the form of fish protein and generally harbour fewer harmful pathogens.

### Box 2. Energy from the ocean: marine renewables

Energy is the driver of all economies and access to sustainable energy is a prerequisite for a Green Economy. The marine environment already provides energy sources through offshore petroleum reserves but the ocean's potential for renewable energy resources remains largely untapped. Investing in marine renewable energy could transform energy security in many Commonwealth countries, particularly SIDS, some of which are currently

partially or wholly dependent on fuel imports to meet their current energy needs. Ocean sources of renewable energy can take many forms, including:

- Wave
- Tidal (rise and fall, currents)
- Ocean currents
- Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion (OTEC)
- Salinity gradients (osmosis)
- Marine-based biomass (e.g. algae)

Source: UNEP et al. 2012: 58

Humans are still in the early stages of exploring, let alone understanding, global ocean ecology and geology and many future benefits have not yet been assessed. Recent discoveries of new ecosystems, complex linkages and intricate biochemical cycles reveal the importance of the global ocean system to sustaining life on Earth. Deep, dark places once thought to be of little biological interest are now revealed as sites for complex and novel habitats. Species previously thought to be of little value or relevance may now become sources of bio-fuels and new powerful pharmaceuticals, or solve age-old problems such as fouling of ships hulls, potentially removing the need for the use of toxic anti-fouling paints.

### Box 3. Algae to energy: alternative fuels

There has been significant progress in research into energy from marine algae. With the rising cost of energy, governments and businesses have shown interest in its potential as a renewable source of energy. Within the last two years billions of dollars have been injected into alga-culture or algae farming around the world.

Algae live on a high concentration of carbon dioxide and nitrogen dioxide, which are

pollutants released by industries such as cement plants, breweries, fertilizer plants, and steel plants. These pollutants can therefore serve as nutrients for the algae. Algae capture light energy through photosynthesis and in the process produce vegetable oils called lipids. It is these lipids that can be converted into biodiesel or ethanol.

Source: Deanna Donovan, Joint Nature Conservation Committee

In cases where the ocean's goods and services have been valued the estimates of worth are significant. For example, going beyond aesthetics the TEEB study (2010) documents the different values associated with coral reefs as follows:

- Natural hazard management (up to US\$189,000/hectare/year);
- Tourism (up to US\$1 million/hectare/year);
- Genetic materials and bio-prospecting (up to US\$57,000/hectare/year);
- Fisheries (up to US\$3,818/hectare/year).

Estimates for other marine ecosystems will vary but they are known to be high for many of the wetland habitats, such as salt marshes and mangroves. The potential damage from storms, coastal and inland flooding and landslides can be considerably reduced by a combination of careful land use planning and

maintaining and restoring ecosystems to enhance buffering capacity. For example, planting and protecting nearly 12,000 hectares of mangroves cost US\$1.1 million but saved US\$7.3 million on annual expenditure for dyke maintenance. If fisheries were better managed they could increase earnings by US\$50 billion annually. The benefits of changing towards ocean governance and management that better integrate such values into overall decision-making are considerable and clear.

The economic valuation of ecosystem goods and services is a challenging task but one where even approximate estimates of the values of ecosystems used in decision-making can lead to better resource management and policy, especially where the alternative assumption is that nature has zero (or infinite) value. More holistic valuations are needed in relation to: taking decisions at more appropriate ecological scales (often larger than current systems of governance, and frequently needing to cover the land/sea divide); ensuring that the full range of values are incorporated into decision-making; and sharing of best practices on resource management, promoting initiatives to provide access to monitoring, research, education and training, and technical and policy expertise.

Given the uncertainty about critical thresholds or tipping points into ecosystem collapse, a greater degree of precaution is also needed in governance and management to maintain ecosystems in a healthy state and sustain the continued flow of goods and services for human use.

### **Opportunities for Action, Barriers to Progress and Consequences**

The decline in ocean health, set against the importance of the goods and services being provided, is starting to erode the benefits to national and regional economies and the support the ocean can provide to Commonwealth member countries in

**The decline in ocean health, set against the importance of the goods and services being provided, is starting to erode the benefits to national and regional economies**

meeting the multiple challenges they face. The decline is also putting at risk future options for growth and for realising new benefits. Given the decline in the productive capacity of the oceans, are the current governance arrangements fit-for-purpose?

The existing international ocean governance framework is complex, comprising a network of international and regional agreements, intergovernmental and civil society organisations and economic/market-based drivers. The basic international framework governing the oceans is provided by the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (LOSC)<sup>3</sup>, which establishes a comprehensive framework for the use and development of the oceans. The Convention defines jurisdictional zones and sets out rights and obligations of countries on the basis of those zones. There are also complementary international agreements that address specific activities or regions. These include the 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and Chapter 17 of Agenda 21. Four sectoral conservation treaties are also relevant: the Ramsar Convention on wetlands, the World Heritage Convention on sites of universal value, the CITES Convention on endangered species, and the Bonn Convention on migratory species. The World Trade Organization is concerned with trade restrictive policy measures affecting market access (subsidies) and labelling (fishing practices). At the regional level, the UNEP Regional Seas Programme and a range of regional marine environmental programmes address the use and protection of the marine environment. In certain regions, regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs) have been established to develop and implement conservation and management measures for fisheries.

The framework is comprehensive but remains poorly implemented. There are a number of reasons for this including, but not limited to:

- Non-transparent and non-accountable systems of governance and decision-making in fisheries management in most countries;
- A focus on single species in fisheries management, thereby failing to address the wider effects of fishing impacts;
- Non-compliance with regulations, especially for fisheries and the management of marine protected areas;
- A lack of integration of fisheries management with the management of other human activities in the ocean;
- The proliferation of perverse subsidies for fisheries.

Extractive industries, such as oil, gas and aggregates, also play a significant role. In this case, 'greening' their economic activities would require adopting measures to reduce or eliminate impacts on renewable resources, implementing the highest standards in environmental protection and management, and providing leadership in good ocean governance.

The current system of governance and management is in need of urgent and significant reform. Solutions must be found to overcome such barriers and to create greater capacity to respond. This is required at all levels, from political leadership to new, practical, co-operative and more integrated arrangements to enforce and implement new systems of governance and management for greater overall benefits.

This process can only be fully achieved if it is strategically driven from the heart of government across all sectors. A key role for environment ministers is to highlight the potential and opportunities that exist to deliver on economic and wider development objectives through a Green Economy applied to the ocean. Another is to build political will across the whole of government and amongst governments.

## Integrated Ocean Governance and the Green Economy

The concept of the Green Economy – that future economic development is inextricably linked with both environmental and social considerations – is arguably even more important for the ocean than the land. This is because in the sea, with its fluid three-dimensional environment, the inter-linkages among economic sectors, human impacts, and all aspects of environmental health are stronger and more challenging to manage.

Although there is no universally agreed definition of what the Green Economy as applied to ocean resources might look like, a number of features would be prominent if such an approach were being implemented:

- Protection and recovery of ocean ecosystems and biodiversity would be achieved, including the ocean beyond national jurisdictions;
- Integrated cross-sectoral spatial planning, including coastal zone management, would be in place for all sea uses (including oil and gas mining, and cables) both within and outside national jurisdictions;
- Fisheries and aquaculture management would achieve equitable, non-subsidised, and sustainable practices;
- Adaptation planning would be in place for rising sea levels and foreseeable climate change impacts;
- Existing ocean industries (e.g. shipping and offshore petroleum) would have ‘greened’ their activities and be ensuring that their operations cause least environmental damage and meet the highest levels of sustainable practice;
- Increasing sustainable use of bio-resources, including biotechnology, would be occurring;
- Recognition and adoption of ocean/coastal carbon sinks would be occurring, and the markets for trading ‘blue carbon’ would be in place;

- Market mechanism would achieve dramatically enhanced recycling of major ocean pollutants such as nutrients;
- Greater adoption of renewable energy from the ocean would be happening (resulting in a shift away from a land-based focus).

A recent study by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) into the benefits of transitioning to a Green Economy<sup>4</sup> highlighted three broad conclusions that are relevant to the ocean:

- In a transition to a Green Economy new jobs are created, which over time exceed the losses in ‘brown economy’ jobs;
- Transitioning to a Green Economy not only increases wealth over the long term, but also produces a higher rate of GDP growth;
- There is a clear link between poverty eradication and better protection and restoration of habitats, marine fisheries resources and biodiversity.

The challenge is where to start in order to alter course to achieve a Green Economy for the ocean and in so doing to develop or strengthen social, economic and environmental linkages and reform current governance arrangements. This will require some fundamental changes in the way the ocean is managed at national, regional and global levels, to create a more harmonised and integrated approach.

## Transitioning to a Green Economy

The current approach to ocean governance and management is a complex web of interrelated, converging and competing demands and interests. Traditionally ocean governance has been developed in a fragmented, unco-ordinated manner by agencies

<sup>3</sup> Also referred to as UNCLOS.

<sup>4</sup> UNEP et al. 2012.

with sector-specific management responsibilities. Since many marine resources and activities related to them occur in the same maritime space, different sectors often have incompatible priorities and interests. As a result, traditional management approaches have failed to address the complexities of marine ecosystems and they continue to limit the economic potential that can be realised from the ocean, while the decline in associated social and environmental values persists.

The transition to a Green Economy for the ocean will require reformed governance structures and institutional coherence. These are crucial to effectively respond to growing pressures on the world's ocean and remove barriers preventing progress, and they are inextricably linked with the goals of economic development. Many governments have responded to this challenge by taking a more integrated and ecosystem-based management approach to developing ocean policy frameworks, where resolving conflicts between the wide variety of ocean interests and values can be better accommodated.

Making such a shift in thinking and scale may seem like a daunting task, but by identifying and providing leadership on just a few issues, environment ministers could significantly drive and enable progress in that direction. Recognising that progress on integrated ocean governance arrangements are at different stages of readiness, this paper proposes a five-part practical action framework to help achieve significant progress in building the Green Economy model for the ocean.

### **A transition framework for a Green Economy applied to the ocean**

The framework sets out the following practical actions that will lead to a transformation in the governance of oceans:

- Recognise 'natural blue capital' and its potential for growth;

- Apply marine spatial planning;
- Transform patterns of economic investment;
- Create integrated approaches to ocean governance;
- Develop appropriate institutional and human capacities to act.

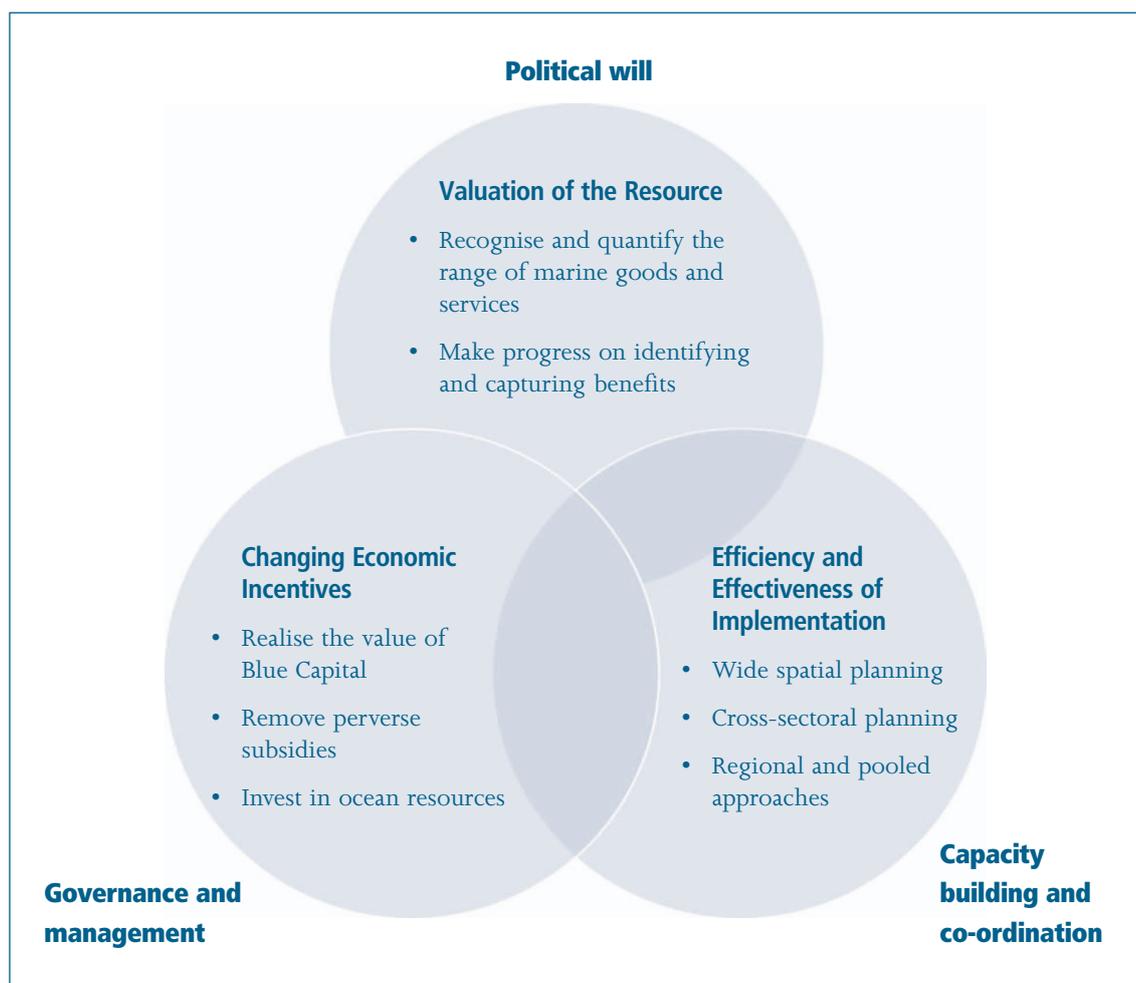
The framework is drawn from the previous work of UNEP, the World Bank and others on the Green Economy, but sets this within a new context of ocean governance reform. The first three elements of the framework establish a forward-looking policy environment at national and regional levels within which the Green Economy can flourish. In this framework the goods and services offered by the ocean are better valued and set more directly within a development and government-relevant context. It implements actions in a more spatially beneficial context, and re-deploys perverse incentives to create investment in the productive capacity of oceans. Alongside this, the reform of governance approaches and the development of capacity and co-ordinating mechanisms will enable rapid and effective transition processes. It is important to note that the framework, to be successful, requires a holistic approach driven at a strategic level from the centre of government.

The framework is depicted visually in Figure 1, and set out in greater detail below.

#### **Element I: Recognising 'natural blue capital' and its potential for growth**

Transform the approach to biodiversity in the ocean from one based on habitats and species to one based on 'blue capital', where biodiversity and other ocean goods and services have multiple values and can act as natural solutions to inform and answer wider challenges.

The importance of making this shift is to ensure that the true value of biodiversity is revealed and valued in government, and to attract more investment.

**Figure 1: A framework for transformation to a Green Economy applied to the ocean**

Source: Commonwealth Secretariat. 2012. 'A new approach to ocean governance: practical ways to fast track the Green Economy'. London. January. CCGE(12)1, 19 pp, mimeograph.

#### **Box 4. Mud matters: blue carbon opportunities**

Coastal wetlands – mangroves in the tropics and salt marshes in more temperate regions - and seagrass beds sequester large amounts of carbon ('blue carbon') within plants above and below sea level as well as within soils. Occupying only 2 per cent of seabed area, vegetated wetlands represent 50 per cent of carbon transfer from oceans to sediments.

Addressing emissions from coastal wetlands complements the global approach to natural carbon management for climate change mitigation. Acting to conserve these habitats now is critically important and represents a shift to the Green Economy built on ocean resources by developing new carbon markets, creating new investment streams, new jobs, and delivering on biodiversity targets.

Source: Crooks et al. 2010

*Practical issues to consider:*

**Recognising the true values of marine environment goods and services.** Some values like the financial worth of sectors such as oil, gas, fisheries and tourism are easier to calculate, whilst indirect values to communities – from a sustainable supply of food, social values via recreation and tradition, and aesthetic values from landscape appreciation – are more difficult to quantify. New values are also being discovered all the time, such as the investment potential of blue carbon. Governments should work at national and regional levels to recognise and quantify the full range of marine environment goods and services using expert analysis and accepted standards and approaches.

**Element 2: Applying marine spatial planning**

Reinvest in a wider spatial perspective to management and governance of the ocean area by linking the ocean to coastal and inland issues in such a way that previous conflicts, barriers and costs are reduced or removed, and new multiple benefits and new growth are promoted.

This shift is necessary to ensure that resources and industries are managed at the appropriate spatial scale to maximise benefits across social, economic and ecological perspectives.

*Practical issues to consider:*

**Providing greater leadership to create better marine spatial plans.** Current approaches to governance and management are often disjointed and piecemeal leading to conflicting and poor decision-making. This results in resource degradation or loss and increased user conflicts. Governments should work at national scale to establish a single lead agency for marine spatial planning, and harmonise associated legislation and policies to deliver better and sustainable planning at the coast and in the sea.

**Delivering a more appropriate scale for marine spatial planning.** Watershed management is particularly important, bringing into spatial plans activities that happen in the coastal zone or inland and which have an impact on coastal and ocean resources and communities. Maximising agriculture, for example, can lead to soil erosion and run-off, pollution by nitrates, flooding and other impacts downstream that negatively affect tourism and resource dependent communities. Integrated management can optimise opportunities across the land/sea junction while maintaining environments and protective functions of the coastal zone, which could otherwise be damaged by step-changes to less sustainable economic models. Governments at the national and regional scale should ensure that the

## Ocean management is hampered by incentives and investments that lead to resource degradation and social decline

Deriving greater benefits from marine environment goods and services. Some sectors such as oil and gas have already been brought into the financial framework at governmental level through leases and taxation. In a number of countries a small charge is made on access to spectacular marine biodiversity sites to contribute to continued management, surveillance and monitoring. Other important goods and services have yet to be recognised but the principles of incorporation exist through the ability to charge for use or access. Governments should work at national and regional levels to expand existing schemes and devise further mechanisms to realise this potential based on the values of marine environment goods and services as contributors to the economy.

scope of spatial plans is sufficiently broad to manage the full range of threats and impacts to a more sustainable model of operation.

**Ensuring a better ecosystem approach to marine spatial planning.** The existing approach of maximising economic returns through managing individual species of economic interest to the exclusion of broader ecosystem effects leads to resource degradation and decline of the target species. Understanding ecosystem linkages and interdependences is critical to ensuring a sustained flow of marine goods and services. Governments should shift the focus from single species management to one where single species issues are viewed within the context of values, challenges and issues of the broader ecosystems involved.

### **Element 3: Transforming patterns of economic investments**

Alter the economic investment portfolio to remove perverse incentives that act as barriers to progress, recognise the financial value of natural blue capital, and reinvest the money released in new areas that achieve greater long-term growth and deliver multiple benefits on social, economic and environmental perspectives.

The importance of making this shift is to remove financial circumstances driving unsustainable operations that are causing a decline in ecosystem health, social wellbeing and the existence of industry that would be unsustainable without incentives. Readjusting financial investment is required to drive the Green Economy. This action is strongly linked to the previous two points about recognition of natural blue capital and managing resources through harmonised marine spatial planning.

*Practical issue to consider:*

**Shifting away from financial regimes that reward poor unsustainable practices.** Ocean management is

hampered by incentives and investments that lead to resource degradation and social decline. Fisheries incentives that support unsustainable fishing operations and agricultural policies that provide investment for land-based operations that increase erosion into the coastal waters and add to flows of pollutants and nutrient-enriching chemicals, are but two examples. The problem is often lack of recognition for the values, or visibility of values, of other marine goods and services, coupled with breaking the current arrangements in funding to transform investments. Governments should take decisive action at national, regional and global levels to remove such perverse incentives that lead to environmental degradation, reinvesting in approaches that support the Green Economy.

### **Element 4: Creating integrated approaches to ocean governance**

Enhancing co-operation and communications will strengthen governance at all levels and remove or reduce barriers to implementation, making growing the Green Economy more politically desirable and easier to achieve.

This shift is important because change only happens through strong leadership, especially in the case of the ocean, where resources are seen to be everyone's rights and no one's responsibility. Driving reform will need recognition of the benefits of alternative futures for the ocean and dependent communities.

*Practical issue to consider:*

**Leadership**, which is discussed in the Conclusions and Recommendations below.

### **Element 5: Growing the institutional and human capacity to act**

Devise new ways of working that lever greater capacity from current systems to make change happen, for example by increasing regional co-

operation, sharing of costs and knowledge, public/private partnerships and creating 'fast-track' approaches to translating aid into action. This shift is important because even with greater political will, nothing will happen without an enhanced capacity to take action to achieve change.

*Practical issues to consider:*

**Sharing and creating joint capacity.** Commonwealth governments have all signed up to similar commitments to sustainable growth and resource protection and management, not just at national and global scales but also at the regional level. A key 'short cut' to implementing the Green Economy for the ocean is to explore and identify like-minded governments to share capacity on issues of critical concern in a creative, effective and politically appropriate manner. Governments should plot a critical pathway of issues needed to implement the Green Economy for the ocean, and identify and work with like-minded governments to achieve this.

## New approaches to ocean governance are needed to bring together and co-ordinate activities in different sectors and connected spatial zones

**Increasing co-operation and co-ordination on ocean issues of common concern.** National, regional and global scale commitments and actions on sustainable development that underpin the implementation of the Green Economy have at their heart many issues common to Commonwealth

governments. Increased co-operation on such issues, coupled with greater co-ordination across governments will help reduce costs and speed up the transition to more sustainable governance and management arrangements. Governments should analyse current actions and commitments, and identify and implement new opportunities at regional and global scales for closer co-operative and co-ordinated working in making the transition to a Green Economy.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

Despite the complex and comprehensive framework of international law that is in place to protect oceans, the biological diversity and productive capacity of our oceans continues to deteriorate. This has profound implications for future economic and social wellbeing. New approaches to ocean governance are needed to bring together and co-ordinate activities in different sectors and connected spatial zones. The same is true for equally vital – and sometimes competing – economic, social and environmental interests. The creation of a Green Economy for the ocean provides a valuable framework for driving this governance transformation. However, progress can only be achieved if it is driven in a strategic way from the very centre of government. Commonwealth Heads of Government have already expressed their concerns on this issue and governments have a vital role to play in creating the potential for change and devising practical ways to push forward.

We are already seeing the emergence of new approaches to ocean governance in regions such as the South Pacific and the Caribbean. There can be no one-size-fits-all model since governance arrangements need to be closely tailored to the specific structures and interest groups of each country and region. However, emerging experiences provide valuable lessons to build on.

### **Box 5. Co-ordination and co-operation: the Pacific Island Seascape Initiative**

Increasing co-operation, reducing costs, and building greater capacity to act have become essential pre-requisites to support the shift to the Green Economy. At the 40th Pacific Islands Forum convened in Cairns, Australia in August 2009, Pacific Heads of State (including a number of Commonwealth members) adopted the [Pacific Oceanscape framework](#). The 'Oceanscape' includes not only the area within the 200 nautical miles Exclusive Economic Zone boundaries circumscribing Pacific island countries, but extends to the ocean and coastal areas encompassing the marine ecosystems that support the region. The 'ocean' is defined to include the waters of the ocean, the living and non-living elements within, the seabed beneath and the ocean atmosphere and ocean-island interfaces. This is a significant initiative. It demonstrates what can be achieved and could act as inspiration for co-operative ocean ventures between countries elsewhere.

Source: SPREP, 2010

This paper has presented a framework for practical action that could help countries realise the value of their ocean resources, address barriers to change, improve the effectiveness and efficiency of institutional and governance arrangements, and free-up resources for investment to protect and expand the productive capacity of oceans. Governments have a critical role to play in encouraging and supporting transformative actions around the three policy tools of blue capital, marine spatial planning and economic incentives, whilst providing strong, visionary leadership to create the political circumstances and capacity to allow this to occur.

In the near-term, policy-makers can provide leadership by visioning the transition to a Green Economy for the ocean. They can change the debate using new language developed collectively amongst different groups of stakeholders, and they can make their case jointly at the highest levels of government – nationally, regionally and internationally. Following are some specific actions that could be adopted.

1. A first vital step is to re-orientate the current debate from one focused on the costs of marine protection to one about economic growth, social and environmental goals and the contribution that ocean goods and services can play in delivering sustainable and resilient growth and development:
  - Commission studies on the value of ocean goods and services, drawing especially on multidisciplinary teams of economists, social scientists and environmental specialists;
  - Host cross-sectoral and cross-party debates on economic and development objectives for ocean resources;
  - Build a comprehensive case for the value of ocean resources to national development for consideration by cabinet colleagues;
  - Develop and use a new language to create consensus and momentum towards a Green Economy applied to the ocean.
2. Promote a shift from the traditional sector-specific approaches to management to a more integrated 'whole government' approach to governance that recognises the contribution the ocean economy can make to national development goals:
  - Set out for wider consideration, new governance options that take ocean management beyond line ministries into a more co-ordinated approach;

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- Commission studies on the political economy of ocean resources and options for brokering change;
  - Build a 'coalition of the willing' around champions within government that recognise the significant benefits from change and transformation to a Green Economy applied to the ocean;
  - Explore the new capacity and skills requirements for a Green Economy applied to the ocean, quantifying these and engaging local and regional universities to explore whether current curricula can deliver what is needed in the future across government.
3. At the regional scale promote efforts to build co-ordination and reduce duplication, increase effectiveness and create greater capacity by pooling resources to reduce costs and sharing knowledge, thereby increasing speed and effectiveness of implementation of the Green Economy concept:
- Pool technical information and expertise in resource contracts and licensing;
  - Elaborate new integrated governance arrangements at a regional level;
  - Implement wider spatial planning.
4. Highlight priority concerns within international organisations and international processes, including the need for:
- Quantitative and qualitative assessments of the role of ocean resources in achieving national development goals and quantifying 'opportunities' from the Green Economy applied to oceans, through a better understanding of 'blue capital';
  - Practical policy tools for applying values and concrete mechanisms for capturing the value of ecosystem services to re-invest in ocean resources;
- Evolution and experiences with new approaches to governance.
- Real issues of social, economic and environmental dimensions are at stake. If the status quo does not change then Commonwealth countries highly dependent on the ocean for wealth and jobs will suffer first, but ultimately all members will feel the effect through global markets. Given that most Commonwealth countries have direct relationships to the ocean, it is a matter of considerable relevance to ensure that the contribution of ocean resources to national development is placed on the highest agenda.
- The Commonwealth Secretariat has for over 25 years advised member countries on the delimitation of maritime boundaries and issues related to the law of the sea and the management of natural resources. Recognising the increasing importance of the oceans to the sustainable development of many member countries, the Commonwealth Secretariat has now expanded these existing work areas to incorporate broader aspects of ocean governance.
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