

Marine Regions Forum Online Workshop

Ocean Governance and COVID-19 – Building resilience for marine regions

28 January 2021, 14.00-17.30 (CET)

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted millions of people, causing significant loss of human life and unprecedented economic and social disruption. Those who depend upon the ocean for their livelihoods are no exception - all marine regions have been affected by this crisis, requiring urgent responses from international, national and regional actors. Yet marine regions and regional ocean governance may also offer joint learnings about how to address some of the key impacts, e.g. through joint efforts in coastal and marine ecosystem restoration and community-led protection or cross-sectoral collaboration between neighbouring countries. Several initial assessments of the impacts of the pandemic on the ocean economy and possible policy responses have already been published¹, but there have been few opportunities to share experiences and lessons learned from ongoing regional governance processes.

The aim of this workshop is to explore possible pathways to navigate the effects of the COVID-19 crisis in marine regions. It will bring together actors from different marine regions to (i) discuss the socio-economic and environmental impacts of COVID-19 in marine regions, (ii) explore options for immediate responses and longer-term recovery, and (iii) discuss impacts on regional cooperation and possible consequences for ocean governance.

This online workshop builds on the [Marine Regions Forum 2019](#), which gathered over 200 international ocean actors to exchange experiences on inter-regional collaboration and discuss new approaches to advance and strengthen regional ocean governance processes. It is organized by the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS), the Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI), and TMG-Think Tank for Sustainability (TMG), together with the German Environment Agency (UBA), the German Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety and the European Commission.

¹ Northrop, E.; Konar, M.; Frost, N; Hollaway, E. (2020): *A Sustainable and Equitable Blue Recovery to the COVID-19 Crisis. Report for the High Level Panel for A Sustainable Ocean Economy*; UNCTAD (2020): *The Covid19 Pandemic and the Blue Economy: New challenges and prospects for recovery and resilience*; OECD (2020): *OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19): Fisheries, aquaculture and COVID-19: Issues and policy responses*; FAO (2020), *How is COVID-19 Affecting the Fisheries and Aquaculture Food Systems*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome.

Draft Agenda

Check-in of participants: 13.45

14.00-14.15 Welcome and introduction

- Workshop organizers (IASS, IDDRI, TMG)

14.15-14.30 Opening Statements

- Lilian Busse, German Environment Agency (UBA)
- Veronika Veits, European Commission, Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

14.30-15.20 Setting the scene: the Ocean and the COVID-19 pandemic

- Jane Lubchenco, Oregon State University, Co-Chair of the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy Expert Group: Key note talk on 'Sustainable and equitable blue recovery to the COVID-19 crisis' by
- Panel discussants
 - Kerstin Stendahl, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
 - Vera Agostini, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
 - Chip Cunliffe (*tbc*), AXA XL, Co-Chair Ocean Risk and Resilience Action Alliance

15.20-15.30 Break

15.30-16.45 Breakout groups

Participants will be divided into three sub-groups that will be facilitated by co-chairs and a rapporteur. Output from the breakout groups will be further discussed and synthesized in a closing plenary.

Group 1: COVID-19 socio-economic impacts and environmental consequences in marine regions

What are the social and economic challenges facing marine regions due to COVID-19? How are ocean-dependent livelihoods and maritime sectors impacted? In this session, participants will jointly assess the socio-economic consequences of the current crisis on regional maritime sectors (e.g. tourism, fisheries, shipping) and discuss the consequences for environmental management (e.g. impacts on MPAs, monitoring control and surveillance, resource allocation).

Group 2: Exploring options for immediate responses and longer-term recovery

How could marine regions contribute to a "blue transformation" and drive the systemic change needed to build a sustainable ocean economy? This session will look into the state of play of the response plans being developed, with a particular focus on sustainability and discuss possible opportunities for sustainable long-term recovery process.

Group 3: Regional cooperation in the time of pandemic and possible consequences for ocean governance

To what extent does the current crisis affect the regional cooperation, hamper the development of new activities, limit the cross-sectoral collaboration within regions, or lead to financial gaps? What actions should be taken to compensate these impacts? This group discussion will focus on the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic for regional ocean governance frameworks and their institutions.

16:45-17.00 Break**17:00-17:30 Closing plenary**

- Discussion of key messages from breakout groups to identify:
 - Lessons learned from the crisis, key uncertainties, and common challenges; and
 - Strategic opportunities for a blue recovery of marine regions
- Key conclusions (IASS, IDDRI, TMG)
- Closing statements by Heike Imhoff, German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety

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