Provisional Draft Concept Note and Programme

UNCRD - UN DESA Side Event at 2025 HLPF, UN HQ, New York

Theme: ***3R (Reduce, Reuse and Recycle) and Circular Economy towards Sustainable and Resilient Coastal and Marine Ecosystems in Asia and the Pacific – Implications towards SDG 14 (Life Below Water)***

Date: **15 July 2025 (Tuesday)**

Time: **13:15-14:30 p.m.**

Venue: **Conference Room F at UN HQ Building**

Co-organizers:

- The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Maldives to the United Nations,
- The Permanent Mission of the Republic of the Philippines to the United Nations,
- The Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations,
- UN HABITAT,
- United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD)-DSDG/UN DESA.

Supporting Organizations:

- The Ministry of the Environment, Government of Japan
- All Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia (APPGM) – SDG

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Coastal and marine ecosystems are incredibly important for both the environment and human societies. These ecosystems provide a wide range of services that contribute to the health of the planet and the well-being of people. Their sustainability is vital because of their important roles such as – maintaining biodiversity, stabilizing climate, providing coastal protection, providing economic benefits, ensuring food security, maintaining water quality, preserving cultural values, supporting tourism and recreation, supporting global water cycle, and climate change resilience, among others.

Marine species provide many ingredients for food, medicines and industrial products such as cosmetics, chemicals and dyes. Coastal ecosystems such as coral reefs, mangroves, sea-grass bed, estuaries, coastal lagoons and wetlands serve as nursery grounds to commercial fish species and also play important roles in providing protection from storms and tidal waves. The major threats to the health, productivity and biodiversity of the marine and coastal environment result from human activities on land and inland activities such as physical alterations of the coastal zone. Most of the

pollution load in the ocean originates from land-based activities, including municipal, industrial and agricultural wastes and runoff and atmospheric deposition.

At the same time, the growing issue of plastic pollution in marine environments is a critical concern for global sustainability. Plastics in the marine environment progressively break down into micro plastics making their management increasingly difficult. As per UNEP, under a business-as-usual scenario and in the absence of urgent action and necessary interventions, global plastic waste could almost triple, reaching around 1.2 billion tonnes by 2060, and as per the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, if we don't act now, by 2050 there could be more plastic than fish in the oceans. To this regard, the ongoing efforts of the UNEP led Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) to develop an international legally binding treaty to end plastics pollution by addressing the full life cycle of plastic, including its production, design, and disposal, have gained significant momentum at international level.

The Small Island Developing States (SIDS) also face a varying degree of waste management and sustainability issues in view of their unique geographical features, remoteness, resource limitations and scale of vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters. Pacific Island Countries (PICs), for instance, are facing critical challenges in managing increasing and diversifying wastes due to changing lifestyle and concentration of the population in urban areas. Plastics in the costal and marine environment are of increasing concern because of their persistence and effects on the oceans, marine species and potentially humans. Mismanaged plastic debris can enter into the ocean via inland waterways, wastewater outflows and transport by winds or tides in PICs. It is therefore urgent to address sustainable solutions and measures to avoid the island countries from being progressively affected by various waste streams and pollution in line with the objectives of the S.A.M.O.A. Pathway and the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS) aimed at fostering resilient prosperity among the SIDS.

In the context of coastal and marine ecosystems, the application of circular economy principles is crucial for achieving sustainability and resilience. The shift toward a circular economy can help mitigate these pressures and ensure the long-term health of these ecosystems. Circular economy principles encourage the reduction, reuse, and recycling of materials, helping reduce the amount of waste that ends up in the oceans, particularly plastics. Reducing plastic production and improving waste management systems can prevent plastics from polluting coastal waters.

By rethinking product design to be more sustainable, products can be made to last longer, be reused, or be easily recycled at the end of their life. This reduces the amount of waste that enters marine ecosystems.

The transition towards a circular economy plays a crucial role in mitigating this crisis, fostering sustainable and resilient coastal and marine ecosystems, and contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14): Life Below Water. For instance, the circular economy of plastics aligns with the targets under SDG 14 by:

- Reducing Marine Pollution (Target 14.1): Preventing plastic leakage into oceans through improved waste management and sustainable product designs;

- Protecting Marine and Coastal Ecosystems (Target 14.2): Ensuring that marine environments remain resilient against pollution and habitat destruction;

- Supporting Sustainable Fisheries (Target 14.7): Maintaining clean marine environments to sustain healthy fish stocks and fishing economies; and

- Enhancing Global and Regional Cooperation (Target 14.A): Promoting research, innovation, and partnerships for sustainable marine plastic solutions.

The Circular Economy and Blue Economy are highly complementary frameworks, both aiming to foster sustainability, resource efficiency, and the long-term health of marine ecosystems. By incorporating circular economy principles into blue economy activities, countries can create more resilient ocean ecosystems, reduce pollution, and ensure that marine resources are used sustainably without compromising the ability of future generations to enjoy their benefits.

To this regard, the outcome of the High Level 12th Regional 3R and Circular Economy Forum in Asia-Pacific (3-5 March 2025, Jaipur, India) , in particular the decadal "*Jaipur Declaration on 3R and Circular Economy – Sustainable 3R and Circular Economy Goals for Achieving Resource Efficient, Clean, Resilient, Sound Material Cycle and Low-Carbon Society in Asia and the Pacific (2025-2035)*", provides a strategic framework to chart a pathway for Asia-Pacific countries to advance circular economy in the context of achieving the SDGs, the Paris Agreement, the New Urban Agenda, among others. With 13 dedicated goals, the Jaipur 3R and Circular Economy Declaration aims to act as a policy guiding framework and catalyst for countries to facilitate integration of sustainable consumption and production practices as well as circular economy principles into their overall policy, planning and development, including infrastructure development. There is an urgent need for Asia-Pacific countries to move away from the resource intensive and wasteful linear economy towards a regenerative circular economy while many national and corporate pledges toward achieving net-zero GHG and CO2 emissions by 2050 under the Paris Agreement on climate change. To this regard, the voluntary commitments expressed by member countries through the Jaipur Declaration is an important milestone while the planet faces triple planetary crises – climate change, growing pollution and nature and biodiversity loss.

In essence, the circular economy provides the tools and strategies for implementing sustainable practices in the blue economy, from reducing pollution and conserving resources to creating innovative solutions for ocean health. The successful integration of these approaches can lead to a more sustainable and regenerative relationship between humans and the ocean, aligning with global goals such as SDG 14: Life Below Water and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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Opening Session: 15 mins

- Welcome remarks by **Mr. Shigeo Murata**, Head, United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD) (3 mins)

- Opening remarks by **H.E. Dr. Ali Naseer Mohamed,** Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Maldives to the United Nations (3~5 mins)

- Remarks by **H.E. Leila C. Lora-Santos,** Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of the Philippines to the United Nations (3~5 mins)

- Remarks by **H.E. Mr. Takatoshi Mori**, Minister, Economic Affairs, Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations (3~5 mins)

Presentations: 50 mins

Moderator: **Choudhury Rudra Charan Mohanty**, Environment Programme Coordinator, UNCRD-DSDG/UN DESA

1. *Maldives' path to circular economy – Integrating 3R practices for the protection and restoration of marine ecosystems* – by Representative of the Government of Maldives (6 mins.) (tbc)

2. *Plastic pollution and Its impacts on the coastal and marine environment, and circular economy solutions* – by **Ms. Mara Murillo**, Senior Programme Officer of Intergovernmental Affairs**,** United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), New York Offic (6 min.)

3. *Toyota City's experience to contribute to the achievement of SDG 14 – River-to-sea ecosystem including coastal protection of rivers and management of water quality* – by **Mr. Toshihiko Ota,** Mayor of Toyota City and **Mr. Toshitaka Kitagawa**, Chairperson of Toyota City Council (6 min.)

4. *Critical role of mangroves in combating climate change, protecting coastal areas from erosion, and supporting biodiversity – Case of Pantai Kelanang Selangor SDG Localization Project in Pantai Kelanang, Selangor, Malaysia* – by **Dr. Teo Sue Ann,** All Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia (APPGM) – SDG Malaysia (6 min.)

5. *Marine debris and plastic waste management – International experiences from coastal cities* – by **Mr. Andre Dzikus,** Officer-in Charge, New York Office and Chief of Section, UN HABITAT (6 min.)

6. *Jaipur Declaration (2025-2035) on 3R and circular economy & the SDGs – Lessons learned from Swachh Bharat Mission (Clean Indian Mission)* – by **Ms. Roopa Mishra,** Joint Secretary, Swachh Bharat Mission (Clean India Mission), Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MOHUA), Government of India *(pre-recording video)* (6 min.)

7. *Circular cities towards realizing a new green society – Initiative of Yokohama City* – by **Mr. Masahiro Nishikawa,** Director of the Office of the City of Yokohama Representative to the Americas, City of Yokohama, Japan (3~5 min.)

8. *Role of faith-based organizations in advancing circular economy and zero waste societies* – by **Mr. Kalyan Ray,** Advisor, Sri Satya Sai Central Trust, Andhra Pradesh, India (6 min.)

9. *Intervention* – by **Mr. Upendra Tripathy**, IAS (Retd.), Adjunct Professor, National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru, Former Founding Director General, International Solar Alliance, Former Secretary MNRE, Government of India (3 min.)

Panel Discussion /Open Discussion: 10 mins

1. *What are the biggest challenges countries in the Asia-Pacific region face when trying to reduce marine pollution through 3R and circular economy practices? How can these be overcome?*

2. *What role do government policies and regulations play in promoting 3R strategies and circular economy initiatives for marine ecosystems? Can you provide examples of effective policies from the Asia-Pacific region?*

3. *How can international cooperation, particularly between Pacific Island Countries (PICs) and other Asia-Pacific countries, help advance circular economy practices in marine ecosystems?*

4. *What is the role of the private sector, particularly industries like fishing, tourism, and shipping, in embracing circular economy principles to reduce marine pollution and promote sustainability?*

5. *What opportunities exist for using frontier technologies such as artificial intelligence, or other advanced technologies in the reduction of marine pollution and the protection of coastal and marine ecosystems in the Asia-Pacific region?*

6. *How do we measure the success of circular economy initiatives in coastal and marine ecosystems? What metrics are important for tracking progress towards SDG 14 in the Asia-Pacific context?*