UNFCCC COP 25

Concept Note
Action Event:
Climate Action and SDG 14 and SDG 15

Climate Action and Life below Water and on Land – linkages with human activities

Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action

9 December 2019
11:30-13:00

Organizers
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
Future Ocean Alliance

Supporting Organizations: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Global Alliances for Water and Climate Alliance of Basin for Climate, International Chamber of Commerce, International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO), International Union for Conservation of Nature, Navigating a Changing Climate, SIWI/AGWA, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

Version 25`November

Climate Action and Life below Water and on Land – linkages with human activities

Description:
This event discusses how ecosystem-based approaches, inclusive of users and uses, and nature-based solutions (NbS), can deliver climate action and, at the same time, build social, economic, and environmental resilience, when integrated and mainstreamed into the planning human activities in ocean and coastal zones, and in land-use and habitats.

The event will consider the interplay between land and ocean areas and the compound impact of climate change. Since 80% of ocean pollution is land-based, the event will focus on the impacts that the use of land resources and land-based pollution have on biodiversity and the quality of ocean and coastal zones, and how ecosystem approaches to climate action can reverse negative impacts.

Participants at the roundtable will share challenges and cross-cutting experiences from human settlements, especially the ones bordering riparian and coastal zones, and transitional habitats (e.g. deltas, estuaries, and wetlands). Strengthening nature's resilience of these areas will improve economic and social development, with mitigation co-benefits, because these are sources of biodiversity, food security, leisure, carbon sinks, and provide natural protection against extreme meteorological events.

Background
Land-use and land-based human activities generate cumulative impacts that compound with impacts by anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) and climate change. In addition to anthropogenic GHGs emissions, 80% of ocean pollution is land-based (municipal, industrial and agricultural run-off, wastewater and solid waste). These sources of ocean pollution adversely impact the biodiversity and ecosystem services of the ocean, and of the *territorial continuum* between land and sea (coastal zones and transitional habitats, such as estuaries and deltas). These impacts are particularly visible in areas under pressure from land use action, such as large cities and megacities, extensive areas of agriculture, large river basins ending at sea, which are often associated with intense industry and port activity. Large urban areas are particularly vulnerable to storms (life loss, floods, infrastructure destruction) and, concurrently, they offer opportunities for regional and local action for enhanced management of such impacts. Planning and management of human activities should streamline mitigation and adaptation action in anticipation to climate change impacts projected for the 1.5°C global warming scenarios (*ad minimum*). These approaches address related impacts in a preventive manner, generate cost-effective co-benefits, and can deliver long-lasting resilience.

Ecosystem-based approaches/NbS use the natural features of ecosystems to establish systemic transformation by enhancing the resilience of human and natural systems and reducing carbon footprint of human activities. Land-use linked with the sustainable management of ecosystems and their users, and conservation and restoration of terrestrial, coastal and riparian ecosystems, are uniquely placed to help countries deliver on ***both global climate goals for mitigation and adaptation and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development***. For example, sustainable agriculture can support natural soil conservation, improve crop yields, and increase carbon storage and water retention, while

reducing soil erosion and nutrient pollution into waterbodies, including the ocean. Ecosystem-based approaches/NbS distinguish themselves because they can address both mitigation and adaptation as follows:

When used as an approach to mitigation, ecosystem-based approaches/NbS are applied to management of human activities, conservation and restoration, and deliver improve land / marine / riparian / coastal zones ecosystem management. The sustainable management and restoration of upland ecosystems, such as peatlands, soil health and fertility, forests, agroecology, and climate-smart agriculture, are now recognized as means to support climate change mitigation. Similarly, the sustainable management and restoration of coastal marine ecosystems, such as wetlands, coastal forests, mangroves, coral reefs, seagrasses and saltmarshes, have now been recognized as means to support climate change mitigation, too. Coined under the term *blue carbon*, coastal and marine systems are very efficient in sequestering and storing carbon and they release significant amounts of carbon back into the atmosphere and the ocean if destroyed or disturbed. Beyond mitigation, these systems also support climate adaptation, as well as other ecosystem benefits for local communities and big businesses alike (blue economy).

When used as an approach for adaptation, ecosystem-based approaches/NbS also function as water quality regulators and as cost-effective adaptive infrastructure for the protection of riparian and coastal zones, populations and the livelihoods therein; concurrently they enhance marine and coastal biodiversity conservation and resource management. The health of aquatic ecosystems is closely tied to the adaptation abilities and resilience of coastal communities that rely on them for food, protection from natural hazards and source of livelihoods. Climate smart investments in blue carbon – whether mangrove forests, sea grass beds, other coastal wetland restoration or climate resilient fisheries – and the restoration of coastal habitats (e.g. coral reefs) can serve two purposes: (healthy) food production and biodiversity conservation.

Objectives of the event towards the following: the pre-2020 action, Climate Action Pathways, NAZCA, Yearbook, and the 2019 United Nations Climate Action Summit

This event will contribute to:

1. *Raising awareness **to the solutions /success stories of ecosystem-based approaches/NbS** to the cumulative impacts of land-based pollution and the impacts on ocean and coastal areas, as well as in transitional systems (deltas and estuaries) and climate change;*
2. *Identifying practical ways forward and exchange experiences of transformative solutions by using **ecosystem-based approaches/NbS** to adaptation and mitigation, mindful of the local communities. Discusses **how these approaches can bring us to a 1.5-degree climate resilient world**.*
3. *Raising awareness for the need **of a coherent and coordinated framework** between the initiatives for sustainable development goals and climate action that leads to systemic transformation for oceans and land.*
4. *Taking forward the UN SG Summit initiatives that complement each other and help to enhance their contributions to raising ambition, creating synergies with the forthcoming 2020 UN Biodiversity and the 2020 UN Ocean Conferences on shaping the post-2020 era.*

5. *Developing actionable recommendations for raising ambition and building social, environmental and economic resilience through mitigation and adaptation to climate change in ocean and coastal zones, while seizing opportunities towards climate resilient communities and their green/blue economies.*
6. *Identifying emergent issues derived or associated to the impacts of anthropogenic GHGs emissions and climate change, not covered by the UNFCCC and in need to be further addressed under the umbrella of global climate action and the UN 2030 Agenda.*

Type and Profile of Speakers:

Type and Profile of Speakers and Participants in the Roundtable

To deliver a knowledge to policy dialogue format, the event brings together experts and decision-makers, from public and private sectors, and policy levels focused on action and solutions.

a) MPGCA Speakers: coordinators of relevant thematic event (Ocean and Coastal Zones, Land Use, Water, Human Settlements, Transport and Industry).
b) Experts with scientific knowledge of impacts of land-based and freshwater pollution on oceans and coastal areas, and the impacts of climate change on those areas and related food production systems.
c) Practitioners and implementers addressing impacts of climate change on land, sea or coastal zones on the ground at different levels, including private sector and NGOs that can speak to the challenges and opportunities associated with integrated ecosystem management
d) Decision and Policy-Makers, such as representatives of various levels of governments, who are leading integrated approaches (including ecosystem-based approaches/NbS) and can speak to how marine and land biodiversity, and habitat restoration, are being addressed in their national, regional and local climate change policies at different stages.

Overall Structure:
Setting the Scene: 30-40 mins
Dialogue: 45 mins
Conclusions/Take-away messages: 5 minutes