



G20

SOUTH AFRICA 2025



Sherpa Track

ISSUE NOTE

Environment and Climate Sustainability Working Group

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PRIORITY 5: OCEANS AND COASTS



1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

“Global problems are moving faster than the institutions designed to solve them”.

Poverty, unemployment, hunger, inequality, environmental degradation, and climate change are but a few of the complex issues challenging the world today. While there are several international frameworks, such as the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the implementation thereof is not in harmony with the speed and efficiency that is required to effectively address these challenges. Environmental protection, ecosystem restoration, and climate change mitigation and adaptation, however, can serve as key solutions in addressing several of these challenges. The impacts of biodiversity loss, pollution, soil erosion, ecosystem degradation, and the interlinkages with the severe impacts of climate change have rippled across the globe, affecting fauna and flora, livelihoods, and vital ecosystem services to people.

The theme for South Africa’s Presidency of the Group of Twenty (G20) is *Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability*, which is underpinned by the need to focus on a number of key areas, such as global governance reform, environment and climate finance, trade, health, and financing for development, among others. Therefore, in line with the overall theme of South Africa’s Presidency of the G20, the overarching objective of the G20 Environment and Climate Sustainability Working Group (ECSWG) is to advance the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs through a number of priorities and deliverables. This includes the enhancing of global partnerships as outlined in SDG 17 and to foster capacity building support; promotion of equitable trade; transfer of and access to science, technology and innovation; as well as mobilising financial resources.

The ECSWG will broadly focus on the following five key priorities:

1. Biodiversity and Conservation
2. Land Degradation, Desertification and Drought
3. Chemicals and Waste Management
4. Climate Change and Air Quality
5. Oceans and Coasts

PRIORITY 5: OCEANS AND COASTS

Sub-Priority: Marine Spatial Planning – Ocean Governance

Context

Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) offers an integrated approach to improving the rational planning, management and governance of the ocean space and marine resources. MSP improves decision-making and enables the co-existence of different human activities while protecting the environment. The outcomes on MSP from the Brazilian G20 Presidency include the development of a toolkit to support countries in the development of MSP as a tool to best manage marine areas. It may be imperative to build on what is achieved to share global experiences that would improve the developed toolkit to adapt to various unique socio-economic circumstances, including from, for, and in developing countries. Therefore, the G20 may be a platform to exchange best practise in establishing marine area plans and marine protected areas. In addition, the '*G20 High-Level Principles for Sustainable and Resilient Blue/Ocean-based Economies*' adopted under the Indian G20 Presidency in 2023 may be of relevance for the MSP processes.

Expected Outcomes:

- Best practices on the development of comprehensive MSP processes.
 - Identify capacity gaps or needs and interventions to improve implementation of MSP
 - Development of a guidance tool for the approach to spatial management system for marine areas planning.
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Sub-Priority: Addressing Marine Plastic Pollution

Context

Plastic pollution poses a significant threat to coastal and marine environments, affecting marine life, human health, and economies. It leads to the entanglement of animals, the ingestion of microplastics, and disruptions to industries like tourism, shipping, and fishing. Without intervention, plastic pollution will continue to increase.

International efforts are underway to adopt a legally binding global agreement to tackle plastic pollution, including its impact on marine environments. The goal is to address the entire lifecycle of plastics, with completion expected by the end of 2024.

A specific focus is on Abandoned, Discarded, and Lost Fishing Gear (ADLFG), which is primarily plastic and causes environmental harm through entanglement, "ghost fishing," and damage to the seafloor. ADLFG also contributes to the spread of invasive species and adds to the microplastic problem. Additionally, plastic waste from ships remains a key source of marine pollution despite international regulations, such as the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), which require governments to ensure proper disposal facilities at ports. Effective implementation of these rules is essential to reduce plastic pollution from maritime sources.

Expected outcomes:

- Sharing best practices, scientific research, and technologies on management of marine plastic pollution.
 - Improved understanding of plastic losses and leakage from Abandoned, Discarded & Lost Fishing Gear (ADLFG) and measures (practical and policy-based) to address ADLFG.
 - Improved management of plastic waste from ships, especially in commercial harbours
 - Strengthened implementation of the International Maritime Organisation Strategy to Address Marine Litter from Ships.
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