



SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development in Latin America and the Caribbean¹

Key regional statistics on SDG 14

- The coastline of Latin America and the Caribbean extends over 70,000 km and is where many of the region's largest human settlements are located.
- The sea accounts for 60% or more of the sovereign territory of 22 countries in the region.
- Fishing, tourism and port activity are heavily dependent on coastal ecosystem services. In 2012, Chile, Mexico and Peru combined accounted for just over 11% of total global capture fisheries production and are among the 18 main producer countries that account for approximately 80% of global capture.
- In Latin America and the Caribbean, shipping accounts for around 90% of trade in terms of volume and 80% in terms of value, and the region's ports handle 9% of global container throughput.
- The sector plays an important role in food security in small island developing States and also contributes significantly to the tourism sector in the Caribbean, where more than 45% of cruise shipping worldwide takes place.
- More than 14,000 ships per year pass through the Caribbean Sea on their way to or from the Panama Canal, and this traffic is predicted to double in 15 years. Furthermore, one third of world oil shipments passes through the Caribbean, with the attendant risks of spills.
- The region has increased the extent of protected marine and coastal areas, especially countries such as Chile and Mexico, which have surpassed the 10% target set in Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 within the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity (at least 10% of coastal and marine areas conserved through a system of protected areas by 2020). Meanwhile, the global average for the coverage of marine protected areas in exclusive economic zones is above 15%.

¹ The analysis of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) presented here is the outcome of the discussions held within the framework of the third meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and Caribbean on Sustainable Development, convened under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in Santiago, from 24 to 26 April 2019.



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- During the period 2006–2012, the top forms of marine litter collected in the Caribbean were plastic drinks bottles (19.6%), plastic and paper bags (16.9%), caps and stoppers (11.4%), utensils, glasses and plates (9.6%) and glass bottles (6.7%). Together with cigarette butts, these are among the top items collected in global cleanup campaigns.
- In Chile, research has shown that there are 5,000 pieces of plastic per square kilometre within 1,000 km of the coast, while in the waters of Easter Island these figures reach 50,000 pieces per square kilometre.
- The Caribbean is home to 26,000 km of coral reefs, representing 7% of these ecosystems worldwide. According to the World Resources Institute, 75% of coral reefs in the Caribbean currently face medium and high threat levels. About 10% of coral reefs are on the verge of collapse and show no live coral cover. Moreover, 70% of beaches in the region are rapidly eroding.
- Between 70% and 85% of waste present in the Caribbean Sea originates from inland sources and consists mainly of plastic. Along with agrochemical runoff and domestic sewage, plastic is one of the three main pollutants in the entire Caribbean region.
- Caribbean economies' dependence on coastal and marine resources is among the highest in the world. In 2016 alone, the Caribbean travel and tourism sector accounted for US\$ 56.4 billion of the region's GDP (14.9%) and 13.4% of total employment.

Key messages from the region on the issues addressed by SDG 14 and its targets

- Throughout history, oceans and seas have been vital conduits for trade and transportation. Careful management of this essential resource is a key feature of a sustainable future.
- Despite their contribution to the economy, there is limited awareness of the state of the oceans and seas. The quality of nearshore marine waters is affected by the dumping of solid and liquid wastes by ships, abandoned fishing nets and ballast water discharges, river effluents containing runoff from agricultural chemicals, inadequate wastewater treatment, deforestation and coastal development.
- Furthermore, the transfer of invasive aquatic species through the exchange of ballast water is one of the four greatest threats shipping poses to the world's oceans and can cause severe environmental, economic and public-health impacts.
- Coastal areas around the world are being affected by pollution from inland sources, including wastewater and nutrient runoff, which causes coastal eutrophication (accumulation of organic waste that causes certain types of algae to proliferate), degradation of water quality and deterioration of coastal marine ecosystems. Analysis of the clean water indicator, which measures ocean pollution levels, shows that water quality problems are extensive, but more serious in some equatorial areas, particularly in parts of Asia, Africa and Central America.
- The Caribbean Sea is second only to the Mediterranean Sea in terms of plastic pollution.

Challenges and opportunities for the implementation, follow-up and review of SDG 14 and its targets

Challenges

- At present, coastal waters are in continual decline owing to ocean pollution and acidification, which has an adverse impact on ecosystem functioning and biodiversity, and also on small-scale fishing.



- Infrastructure development in coastal areas (ports and tourism and production facilities) has degraded or destroyed ecosystems such as mangroves and seagrasses, which act as natural barriers by filtering out harmful pollutants, absorbing nutrients from runoff and trapping sediments to increase the clarity and quality of marine waters.
- Although there are instruments covering the disposal of plastic waste generated on-board ships (Annex V of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships and the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter and its 1996 Protocol), there are no known protocols or standard operating procedures on the day-to-day management of litter. Since analyses of the costs and impacts of marine litter from tourism have been limited to small, localized studies, further research is needed.
- Despite their fundamental contribution to nutrition, food security and local livelihoods, many small-scale fishing communities remain marginalized.

Opportunities

- More and more companies are joining the fight against excess plastic in the oceans, through initiatives ranging from the development of new biodegradable materials to replace plastic, to the search for enzymes and organisms that can break it down. Other examples are sports shoes and T-shirts made from abandoned fishing nets, biodegradable containers and eco-friendly packaging.
- The Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which will be held in December 2019 in Santiago (COP25), has been dubbed the “Blue COP”, to place emphasis on the protection of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development and the fight against climate change.

Lessons learned and good practices with respect to SDG 14 and its targets

- The plastic bag bans in a growing number of countries —including Argentina, Chile and Mexico— are a step in the right direction towards the achievement of SDG 14.
- The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Seas Programme includes three initiatives in the region: the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region, the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Area of the South-East Pacific, and the Convention for Cooperation in the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Marine and Coastal Areas of the Northeast Pacific. Action plans on marine litter have been implemented under the first two conventions and one is being drafted with respect to the third.

Recommendations from Latin America and the Caribbean to achieve SDG 14 and its targets

- To achieve SDG 14 by 2030, governments should identify the areas of greatest risk and the most comprehensive and cost-effective adaptation strategies.
- Protected marine areas should be managed effectively and supported by sufficient resources and regulations that reduce overfishing, pollution and ocean acidification.





- Mangroves and coral reefs also provide important protection services from extreme events and climate change. Like terrestrial ecosystems, marine ecosystems also require protection by balancing the sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity and habitats.
- Scientific information and better data should be encouraged, along with the development of best practices. The development and implementation of area-based management tools should be combined with other appropriate conservation measures, to avoid negative impacts in other areas.

