



# IMSWG MEETING REPORT

MARINE SPATIAL PLANNING FOR ACHIEVING SDG 14 IN GHANA

## Introduction

Ghana has a coastline of about 550km, and along this stretch are several ecosystems on which various coastal communities depend for their livelihoods. About 25% of Ghana's population reside within the coastal zone. Until recently, there has been intensified use of Ghana's marine space for different activities, both economic and social. Consequently, shared resources have resulted in conflicts among users of the marine space, notably, between the different categories of fishers overfishing space. This is exacerbated by the menace of pollution and the dismal effects of climate change. Pollution, especially from upstream activities in the form of industrial, agricultural and domestic effluent and plastic waste, and the effects of climate change, resulting in coastal erosion from sea-level rise and ocean acidification, are pertinent issues of concern in the coastal and marine areas in Ghana. A major conflict that exists in Ghana's marine space, which continues to persist, is the constant clash between the Oil and Gas and Fisheries sectors. With the designation of more areas for oil exploitation and the decline in fisheries resources which drives fishermen in pursuit for fish everywhere (including the safety restricted areas around oil rigs), this conflict requires urgent intervention. Furthermore, a central point of coordination is needed to establish and coordinate activities of the various institutions with a mandate to use the marine space. The situation has underscored the need for a Marine Spatial Plan to curb and address current and emerging issues from use of the ocean space.

## Sustainable Development Goal 14 and the Role of MSP in meeting its Targets

The ocean space is busy and not uniform in terms of impacts of activities engaged within it. This 3-dimensional space—which encompasses the sea surface, water column, sea bottom and the subsoil beneath it—requires a complex planning process which considers the environment, economic, social and administrative aspects of management in a comprehensive legal framework, incorporating cultural and social information. Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) is a tool for managing activities in such a complex environment.

“Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) is a public process of analyzing and allocating the spatial and temporal distribution of human activities in marine areas to achieve ecological, economic and social objectives that are usually specified through a political process” – *Ehler & Douvere, Visions for a Sea Change, UNESCO International Workshop on Marine Spatial Planning 2006*. If developed well, MSP will improve the planning and coordination of the various actors within the marine and coastal space, reduce conflicts created by the lack of an MSP, improve collaborative management and harmonize the legal and regulatory framework for Ghana's marine space. This will enhance marine conservation and maximizing productivity for the development of Ghana's blue economy.

Sustainable Development Goal 14 enjoins states to sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems from pollution, address the impacts of ocean acidification and enhance conservation and the sustainable use of ocean-based resources through international and national laws. An effective Marine Spatial Plan is core to the achievement of the 7 targets spelt out for achieving SDG 14. Through the process of Marine Spatial Planning, Ghana can carve out

plans to specifically manage the various sectors and facilitate their coexistence in the marine space.

By far, Ghana has not been able to fully meet the targets meted out by SDG 14. Most of the targets set to be addressed by 2020 have not been achieved. For example, Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported Fishing continue to be a critical challenge facing the fisheries sector in Ghana. Also, Ghana is still providing fishing subsidies to a tune of about GHS 300 million yearly, against targets 14.4 and 14.6 of SDG 14.

It is important that the MSP is embedded in the framework of an ecosystem approach to management, which ensures that the Plan is integrated, participatory, adaptive, strategic, future oriented and geographically specific. MSP goes beyond an academic mapping exercise. To commence the MSP process, it is key for the implementing country to address the following questions, “where are we today?” “where do we want to be?” That would help in developing a management plan that addresses the resulting question, “how do we get there?” A country needs to decide on what the goal for developing its MSP is. The goal could be economic development, sustainable development, conservation, conflict avoidance, or available funding. The goal set for developing an MSP should be communicated clearly and effectively to all stakeholders from the onset of the process.

## **Mandate for Establishing MSP in Ghana**

The Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority was established in 2016 by the Land Use and Spatial Planning Act, 2016 (Act 925), to oversee planning for the sustainable use of Ghana’s land and marine space. The mandate for spatial planning was also to achieve Goal 14 of the SDGs, which purports the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. A number of agencies and institutions in Ghana have the mandate for use and management of marine space. Their activities have direct bearing on the marine space and thus they make provision for its management. The Land Use and Spatial Authority collaborates with these institutions and leads in the conduct and preparation of plans, taking into consideration the different aspects of their management mandate. All these institutions work together in developing spatial plans.

The Land Use and Spatial Planning Act, 2016 (Act 925) was passed to consolidate the laws on land use and spatial planning and also include the marine space as a planning area. The law that previously governed spatial planning in Ghana, CAP 84, did not have an aspect for marine planning, however, with the passage of Act 925 in 2016, the marine space has been defined and included as a planning area. The “marine space” refers to the jurisdiction of the maritime waters of Ghana extending up to 200 nautical miles from the shorelines of Ghana as prescribed by the United Convention of the Law of the Sea.

Act 925 spells out provisions for sustainable use of land, of which the marine space is part, in a 3-tier planning system. The framework for spatial planning in Ghana comprises a broad Spatial Development Framework (SDF) or Visionary plan (developed at National, Sub-National, Regional and District levels) from which Structural Plans (SP), or zoning plans are developed, which also provides basis for designing Local Plans (LP) or subdivision plans. In developing Ghana’s MSP it is

essential to decide on the context (level of detailing) in which the plan should be developed in accordance with the structure of planning in Ghana. Should Ghana's MSP be designed at a broader Spatial Development Framework level; or at the Structure plan level, which considers a broad sea zone for particular activities; or at a smaller detailed subdivision plan level? Generally, developing a marine spatial plan requires contextualizing a developmental framework either for broad zones for particular activities or smaller subdivision plans which focuses more on details. This is critical to ensure effectiveness of implementation.

The process for conducting spatial planning in Ghana is similar to the UNESCO MSP process. Ghana's spatial planning process particularly necessitates 3 mandatory stakeholder engagements to be conducted during the planning process within the work plan at different levels:

- Stakeholder validation workshop on existing situation
- Consultation with stakeholders on projections and gaps.
- Stakeholder workshop to validate the draft final plan.

This is to engage key stakeholders to harness their ideas in the development of plans that governs their activities.

## **Marine Spatial Planning in Ghana**

Ghana, together with Benin and Cote D'Ivoire, are currently involved in the MAMI WATA (MW) project aimed at developing an Integrated Ocean Management Approach for West, Central and Southern Africa, as pilot countries. The MAMI WATA project is managed by GRID ARENDAL and the Abidjan Convention Secretariat. The project employs 3 tools—Ecologically and Biologically Sensitive Areas (EBSAs), State of Marine Ecosystems (SoME) and Marine Spatial Planning (MSP)—facilitated by expert institutions to support and advise the pilot countries through capacity building towards achievement of their objectives. The toolkit developed for MSP in the 3 pilot countries is spearheaded by the expert institution, IOI South Africa. The first 5 steps of IOC UNESCO's 10 steps have been emphasized by the IOI to establish a strong foundation for MSP in the 3 pilot countries. Each of the pilot countries are central to the implementation of the project in their countries so that all activities meet the real needs of the countries.

Ghana's participation in the MW project is fronted by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in a pilot project titled, "Ecosystem Based Approach to Marine and Coastal Environment Management in Ghana", aimed at providing a framework for an integrated use of marine resources to support economic growth. Particularly, the project seeks to identify and describe ecologically and/ or biologically significant areas within the plan area, prepare a state of marine environment report and develop a marine spatial framework for the plan area. The project is co-funded by the Government of Ghana, the German Federation for Environment and Nature Conservation, and Building Nuclear Safety (BMU) with technical support from the Abidjan Convention Secretariat and GRID Arendal.

The project provides the necessary platform for engaging all stakeholders to gain a common understanding of the MSP process and a space where the opinion and perceptions of people are

respected and integrated in the process. Ghana's MSP process is being piloted in the Western Region of Ghana to address the challenges confronting the coastal and marine space in that area. The pilot project is designated for 4 out of the 7 coastal districts in the Western Region of Ghana (Ahanta West, Ellembelle, Nzema East and Jomoro districts) and is based on the 50 m contour inland, extending to 200 nautical miles offshore. The success of this pilot project will provide the necessary platform for scaling up Ghana's MSP process.

The pilot project will address the key issues to be considered in Ghana's MSP:

- the level of planning (district, regional or national);
- the coverage of planning (3,9,12 or 200 nm);
- the type of spatial plan to develop (SDF, SP or LP);
- key institutions to be involved in the planning;
- the role of industries and the private sector in the development of the plan; and finally,
- the sources of funding for developing the plan.

So far, Ghana has been able to identify and map out the current use of the marine and coastal environment. Ghana has made some important strides in implementing MSP and the success stories should be shared with other African countries. For Ghana's Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning to be effective and sustainable, efforts must be put in place to involve local teams and experts, and provide requisite resources and motivation to prepare the plan by internal capacities and sustain the Plan.

## **Lessons Learnt from Ghana's MSP Pilot Project**

1. MSP is recommended because it is designed to be adaptive and flexible, which helps to be realistic about what can be achieved.
2. The process can start with "easy-wins" and realistic goals that can be achieved in a relatively short time frame to build stakeholder confidence in the concept.
3. It is important to take the knowledge and information forward to policy implementation.
4. The Plan needs to be constantly visited and adapted. It doesn't need to be perfect in the first instance. MSP should be a learn-by-doing management plan.
5. Include an appropriate monitoring and evaluation of the implemented plan. Communication and meaningful engagement is key.
6. MSP is not a magic fix all tool. It is part of a suite of tools, harnessed to work together for integrated Ocean Management.
7. MSP is not easy, it is not quick, but it is essential.