

Ocean Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions: What is appropriate for Small Island Developing States?

Peter Gross, Christine Lancaster, Jason McNamee, Bart Simmons, and Leonard Sonnenschein
Ocean N.A.M.A. Network



pic: John Frease and the World Aquarium

As part of the agreed outcome of COP18 in Doha (Qatar), developing country parties agreed to voluntarily develop Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) in the context of sustainable development subject to the availability of adequate financing mechanisms. NAMAs refer to measured, reported and verified actions that reduce carbon emissions in developing countries. NAMAs are supported and enabled by technology, financing, and capacity-building and are aimed at achieving a reduction in emissions by 2020.

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are especially vulnerable to climate change. Ocean acidification and increased ocean stratification due to warming are changing ecosystem dynamics and impacting fish stocks. Sea level rise is a serious problem – in the case of some low-lying SIDS nations, it could potentially be life-threatening to people and damaging to ecosystems. The strength and frequency of extreme weather events is also of increasing concern. It is acknowledged that SIDS only contribute minimally to greenhouse gas emissions but SIDS are demonstrating leadership to the rest of the world in relation to both mitigation and adaptation activities.

On average, SIDS nations have 28 times more sovereign ocean space than land space. The ocean provides a large proportion of SIDS' citizens' protein; is a key employer through the tourism and fishing industries; and plays a significant role in the day to day life of the people of SIDS nations.

We note that a mechanism has been developed under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) for developing countries to voluntarily adopt NAMAs which have the potential to assist SIDS, with the appropriate financial assistance, to implement emission reduction activities. A review of the NAMAs that have been developed for SIDS nations shows that NAMAs have been developed for forestry, housing, transportation, renewable

energy, and land management. However, there are currently no ocean-related NAMAs being put forward for financing. Of the renewable energy NAMAs, none relate to the generation of energy from the ocean. Given the importance of oceans and ocean ecosystems to SIDS nations, NAMAs must be developed to provide a funding mechanism to support ocean-based renewable energy sources and programmes to restore ocean ecosystems (including planting of mangroves and seagrass, and protecting reef systems and sea life). It is well known that restoration of ocean ecosystems improves food security, job security, and biodiversity; and alleviates poverty while providing greater insight into ocean ecosystem function and carbon sequestration.

In honor of the Third International Conference on SIDS, we are asking SIDS to consider signing the following Declaration on Oceans:

We affirm the position stated in the Rio Ocean Declaration of 16 June 2012 that there is a need to:

1. Scale up successful ecosystem-based management/integrated ocean conservation in national and regional marine and coastal areas;
2. Develop an integrated approach to addressing the interlinked issues of ocean conservation, climate change and food security; and
3. Enhance the capability of small island developing states (SIDS) and developing coastal countries to benefit from, and sustainably manage, their marine resources in order to adapt to climate change.

We continue to note with great concern that many threats and negative drivers are compromising the ability of the oceans to continue providing essential resources, food and nutrition.

We declare that oceans are essential to supporting life on Earth and are of great economic, social and cultural significance to all SIDS and that it is important to SIDS that ocean-based NAMAs are developed to support ocean-related energy generation and ocean restoration activities in coastal waters.

We call on all countries to support SIDS and coastal developing countries by providing technical and financial assistance to develop ocean-related NAMAs as a core component of each SIDS NAMA programme.

We call on the UNFCCC to acknowledge the importance of the role of coastal marine ecosystems in relation to mitigation and to ensure that the significance of this role is highlighted in the new legally binding framework to be finalised by 2015 ■