Aims of the Global Programme of Action

The GPA is designed to be a source of conceptual and practical guidance to be drawn upon by national and/or regional authorities for devising and implementing sustained action to prevent, reduce, control and/or eliminate marine degradation from land-based activities. The GPA aims at preventing the degradation of the marine environment from land-based activities by facilitating the duty of States to preserve and protect the marine environment.

More specifically, it is recommended that States undertake the following activities:

A. Identify and assess problems related to the:

- nature and severity of problems in relation to: food security and poverty alleviation; public health; coastal and marine resources and ecosystem health, including biological diversity; and economic and social benefits and uses, including cultural values.
- severity and impacts of contaminants including sewage, persistent organic pollutants, radioactive substances, heavy metals, oils, nutrients, sediment mobilization and litter.
- physical alteration, including habitat modification and destruction, in areas of concern.
- sources of degradation, including: coastal and upstream point sources; coastal and upstream non-point (diffuse) sources; and atmospheric deposition caused by transportation, power plants and industrial facilities, incinerators and agricultural operations.
- the affected or vulnerable areas of concern such as critical habitats, habitats of endangered species, ecosystem components, shorelines, coastal watersheds, estuaries, special protected marine and coastal areas, and small islands.

B. Establish priorities for action by assessing the five factors above, reflecting the relative importance of impacts upon food security, public health, coastal and marine resources, ecosystem health, and socio-economic benefits, including cultural values in relation to (i) source categories, (ii) the area affected and (iii) the costs, benefits and feasibility of options for action.

In the process of establishing priorities, States should (amongst others):

- Apply integrated coastal area management approaches, including provisions to involve stakeholders.
- Recognize the basic linkages between the freshwater and marine environment through, application of watershed management.
- Recognize the basic linkages between sustainable development of coastal and marine resources, poverty alleviation and protection of the marine environment.
- Apply environmental impact assessment procedures in assessing options.
- Integrate national action with any relevant regional and global priorities, programmes and strategies.

C. Set management objectives for priority problems for source categories and areas affected on the basis of established priorities. On the basis of the priorities established, States should define specific management objectives, both with respect to source categories and areas affected. Such objectives
should be set forth in terms of overall goals, targets and timetables, as well as specific targets and timetables for areas affected and for individual industrial, agricultural, urban and other sectors.

D. Identify, evaluate and select strategies and measures to achieve these objectives. Strategies and programmes to achieve these management objectives should include a combination of:

- Specific measures, including, as appropriate: measures to promote sustainable use of coastal and marine resources and to prevent/reduce degradation of the marine environment; measures to modify contaminants or other forms of degradations; and, measures to prevent, reduce or restore degradation of affected areas.
- Requirements and incentives to induce action to comply with measures, such as: economic instruments and incentives, taking into account the "polluter pays" principle and the internalization of environmental costs; regulatory measures; technical assistance and cooperation; education and public awareness.
- Identification/designation of the institutional arrangement with the authority and resources to carry out management tasks associate with the strategies and programmes.
- Identification of short-term and long-term data-collection and research needs.
- Development of a monitoring and environmental-quality reporting system to review and, if necessary, help adapt the strategies and programmes.
- Identification of sources of finance and mechanisms available to cover the costs of administering and managing the strategies and programmes.

E. Develop criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of strategies and measures. A key element in successful strategies and programmes is to develop ongoing means of determining whether they are meeting their management objectives. Criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of such strategies and programmes should be tailored to the objectives, as mentioned under C. In addition, they should address: environmental effectiveness; economic costs and benefits; equity; flexibility and effectiveness in administration; timing.