REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION FOR OCEAN & SEAS INITIATIVE

BACKGROUND

Coastal and marine systems are increasingly exposed to warming, sea-level rise, acidification, biodiversity loss, pollution and land-based pressures, yet regional climate cooperation on regional and semi-enclosed seas remains fragmented. Existing policy and finance architectures do not adequately connect marine science, joint data systems, adaptation planning, blue finance and implementation-ready project pipelines. Coastal protection still relies largely on carbon-intensive grey infrastructure, while maritime and coastal tourism sectors remain both vulnerable and emissions-intensive. Oceanographic and environmental data compound the problem, remaining siloed across institutions and preventing local authorities from accessing the integrated insights required for climate change adaptation planning and disaster risk reduction (DRR).

A substantial governance architecture already exists, offering a strong foundation to build on. The Regional Seas Conventions and the UNEP Regional Seas Programme provide well-established coordination across regional and semi-enclosed seas; their mandates were not designed to extend to region-specific climate investment pipelines, which remain to be developed alongside them. The Nairobi Work Programme provides an established platform for knowledge exchange and technical cooperation; however, a dedicated pathway for advancing marine and coastal adaptation implementation is still needed. The Marrakech Partnership Ocean and Coastal Zones theme and initiatives such as the Ocean Risk and Resilience Action Alliance set valuable high-level frameworks and targets, which could be complemented by interoperable climate-risk data, measurable climate-resilience targets, blue adaptation finance instruments and a COP-linked project pipeline. The Initiative is designed to build on and strengthen these frameworks rather than duplicate them.

The Initiative responds to Article 7 of the Paris Agreement and contributes to the implementation of the Global Goal on Adaptation, as operationalized through the United Arab Emirates Framework for Global Climate Resilience adopted by decision 2/CMA.5 at CMA 5, held in conjunction with COP28 in Dubai in 2023. In particular, it contributes to the Framework's targets related to climate-informed decision-making, the resilience of ecosystems and human settlements, and the protection of biodiversity and coastal and marine ecosystems. The determination shown in bringing the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Agreement into force indicates that conditions for ocean cooperation are favourable.

Türkiye is well placed to convene this work, with direct experience across three marine basins, the Mediterranean, the Black Sea and the Aegean, and established capacity through academia, marine research institutes and public institutions supporting observation, modelling, monitoring and policy design.

OBJECTIVE

The Regional and International Cooperation for Ocean Initiative is a Türkiye-led initiative, launched under the COP31 Presidency, that positions seas and ocean not as a narrow environmental subtopic but as a strategic climate domain linking adaptation, resilience, biodiversity, finance, data and sustainable development. The Initiative will establish a practical cooperation framework for regional and semi-enclosed seas, connecting marine science to adaptation to climate change planning, blue finance and implementation-ready projects.

By bringing mitigation, adaptation to climate change, biodiversity and pollution dimensions into a single delivery framework, the Initiative aims to create an action space that connects governments, research institutions, cities, investors, development banks and civil society around measurable results to 2030, and to turn marine climate concepts into implementable cooperation tools: shared indicators, digital twins, open data standards, early-warning capacity, blue carbon portfolios and adaptation-ready investment windows.

INITIATIVE OUTLINE

1. Implementation pillars

The Initiative will combine four mutually reinforcing pillars, delivered under the leadership of COP31 Presidency with the support of national institutions, regional partners and international financial institutions.

Pillar 1	**Regional cooperation platform and governance** Establish a convening structure for governments, research institutions, local authorities, development banks and civil society working on regional and semi-enclosed seas, connected to existing regional seas governance frameworks and relevant climate coalitions.
Pillar 2	**Marine climate data and digital capacity** Develop a shared architecture for interoperable data and monitoring standards, regional digital twin networks, and open-data-enabled early warning capacity, including a Climate-Resilient Coasts Digital Portal and a Nature-Based Solutions Library.
Pillar 3	**Blue carbon and ecosystem-based solutions** Advance a portfolio of ecosystem-based adaptation measures with emphasis on seagrass meadows, coastal habitats and restoration-linked resilience benefits, alongside technical work on Blue National Determined Contribution (NDC) and Blue National Adaptation Plan (NAP) options.
Pillar 4	**Blue adaptation finance and project pipeline** Design a dedicated financing window or blended approach for ocean and coastal adaptation investments, developed with development banks and international financial institutions alongside a screened pipeline of implementation-ready pilot projects.

2. Delivery

Expected outputs

Each pillar will deliver its own outputs.

Pillar 1 will produce a formal governance structure with designated focal points and an agreed workplan, alongside a partnership map and outreach plan connecting the Initiative with regional seas governance frameworks, UN-linked platforms and relevant climate coalitions.

Pillar 2 will produce a roadmap for a regional digital twin and marine climate data cooperation architecture, the Climate-Resilient Coasts Digital Portal for real-time monitoring, digital replicas of high-risk gulf areas to simulate climate scenarios, and a Nature-Based Solutions Library for coastal protection.

Pillar 3 will produce a technical package and policy messaging on Blue NDC and Blue NAP options, blue economy, blue finance, blue carbon and ecosystem-based solutions, including options to extend the Zero Waste approach to to marine and coastal systems.

Pillar 4 will produce a prioritised pilot project portfolio with implementation readiness levels and funding pathways, covering coastal cities, marine protected areas, microplastics, invasive species, black carbon, drought-fire-marine interactions, illegal fishing and land-based pollution, together with a pre-feasibility framework for a blue adaptation finance window and an investor engagement package.

Demonstration sites

Pilot regions will provide the evidence base for the wider framework, with data harvesting from priority coastal zones. Positioning highly industrialised coastal hubs as demonstration sites is intended to show that ecological restoration, green port transformation, clean maritime operations and regenerative ecotourism can be delivered together as a financially viable pathway to coastal resilience.

Targets to 2035

Subject to partner engagement and governance arrangements, the Initiative will pursue measurable targets across four areas:

- **Ecosystem restoration.** Restoration of coastal dune ecosystems, *Posidonia oceanica* and Zostera meadows, with at least 20% of degraded priority coastlines ecologically restored, thereby stabilising sediments and reducing the impacts of storm surges.
- **Green ports and clean maritime operations.** Implementation of green port infrastructure upgrades and transition to clean maritime energy at pilot port facilities, with regional shipping and tourism investments achieving at least 30% compliance with climate adaptation and green finance standards.
- **Early warning and coastal safety.** Deployment of an integrated oceanographic mooring and sensor network, with the full at-risk population in targeted coastal zones covered by a sensor-backed early warning system for marine inundation and extreme weather.

- **Socio-economic transition.** Establishment of re-skilling programmes creating new blue-collar jobs for local communities moving from traditional, vulnerable coastal sectors into sustainable blue economy fields.

Progress will be tracked through an indicator framework and monitoring dashboard covering coastal risk reduction, ecosystem restoration, ecological connectivity of marine protected areas, data accessibility and institutional capacity development.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE AND PARTNERS

The Initiative will be led by the COP31 Presidency, facilitating its initial coordination. Its governance arrangements will be developed in consultation with participating countries and relevant partners, with a view to ensuring continuity beyond COP31. These may include a Steering Committee to provide strategic guidance, an Advisory Committee for technical support, and thematic working groups to facilitate implementation.
Implementation will connect to regional seas governance frameworks, including the UNEP Regional Seas Programme including the Barcelona Convention as well as the Bucharest Convention systems, and to relevant UN-linked platforms and climate coalitions.

Each pillar will operate as a working group responsible for its own outputs and outcomes. Working groups will be composed of experts in the relevant field, including academics, non-governmental organizations, and private sector and maritime sector representatives, and will be expanded to include all relevant national and international stakeholders.

Informed by ongoing consultation and exchange with stakeholders engaged in *Axis 2: Stewarding Forests, Ocean, and Biodiversity* of the Global Climate Action Agenda, the Regional and International Cooperation for Ocean Initiative will support efforts to advance the Agenda's objectives.

PARTICIPATION

The Regional and International Cooperation for Ocean Initiative will bring together governments, international organizations, research institutions, port authorities, development finance actors, civil society and the private sector around a common agenda for climate resilience in regional and semi-enclosed seas. Stakeholder groups identified for engagement include:

- Local authorities;
- Port authorities and operators;
- International organizations;
- Universities, marine and climate research institutes and data centres;
- Civil society organizations, marine protected area actors and local stakeholder platforms;
- Local fisheries and tourism cooperatives;
- Private sector investors;
- Non-governmental organizations;
- Relevant philanthropic and private investment platforms;
- Development banks and international financial institutions.

Participation is open to coastal and sea-basin states and to institutions from the regions concerned, engaging according to their areas of interest and technical capacity, whether through policy ownership and implementation, scientific and technical contribution, hosting of demonstration activity, financing, or engagement on the socio-economic dimensions of coastal transition.

Rather than establishing new membership structures, the Initiative will work through existing regional and international marine governance mechanisms, including the UNEP Regional Seas Programme and the Regional Seas Conventions, with participation channelled through those frameworks and through the Initiative's working group and committee arrangements where a direct route is required.

Parties wishing to participate in the initiative are kindly requested to submit their request through their respective UNFCCC national focal point, by e-mail to the address indicated below. The same address may also be used by other interested stakeholders to express their support of the initiative.

CONTACT

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