

# Global and Regional Initiatives to Tackle Marine Pollution: Existing Frameworks and Way Forward

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Marine pollution is a global environmental issue that affects the entire world. It is caused by the release of various forms of waste and contaminants into the ocean, such as oil spills, plastic litter, chemicals, and sewage. This pollution poses a threat to the marine ecosystem and wildlife, as well as to the health of humans who depend on the ocean for food and livelihood. Various international frameworks have been established to tackle marine pollution. One of the most important international frameworks for combating marine pollution is the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL). Established in 1973 and amended in 1978 and 1997, MARPOL is the leading international treaty to prevent pollution from ships. It sets out specific requirements for ship design, construction, and operation to minimize their impact on the marine environment, including releasing pollutants into the ocean. The Convention covers several forms of marine pollution, including oil, chemicals, and garbage. It requires ships to carry appropriate equipment and materials to prevent or minimize pollution in the event of an accident.

Another important international framework to reduce marine pollution is the London Convention and the London Protocol. Established in 1972, the London Convention is an international treaty aimed at preventing and reducing marine environment pollution from dumping waste and other matters. The Convention was amended in 1996 to include the London Protocol, which extends the scope of the Convention to cover the dumping of certain hazardous substances. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is a landmark international framework that also addresses the issue of marine pollution. UNCLOS sets out the legal framework for using the ocean and its resources, including protecting and preserving the marine environment. It also provides for the cooperation of states in protecting the marine environment, including preventing and reducing marine pollution and settling disputes relating to protecting the marine environment.

There are various agreements that are aimed at protecting the marine environment against different forms of marine pollution. For example, the UN Fish Stocks Agreement 1995 aims to

ensure the sustainable management of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks and to prevent marine pollution from fishing activities. Another UN treaty, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD 1992), aims to conserve and sustainably use the world's biological diversity, including marine biodiversity, and prevent marine pollution. Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (GPA 1995): This initiative aims to prevent and reduce marine pollution from land-based activities, such as agriculture, sewage discharge, and industrial wastewater.

In addition to these international frameworks, various regional agreements and initiatives have been established to address marine pollution. For example, the OSPAR Convention is a regional convention to protect the North-East Atlantic and its marine environment from pollution. The Convention covers a range of issues, including reducing emissions of hazardous substances, the management of waste from ships and offshore installations, and preventing and controlling marine pollution. Another regional initiative to address marine pollution is the Mediterranean Action Plan, an initiative of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to address marine pollution in the Mediterranean Sea. The Barcelona Convention 1976 was formulated to prevent and combat marine pollution from ships and aerial sources in the Mediterranean Sea.



South Asia is home to distinctive marine and coastal ecosystems, which are critical for the environment and people of this region. Marine pollution poses a threat to the marine ecosystem and wildlife, as well as to the health of the people of this region who depend on the ocean for food and livelihood. The nature of the problem of marine pollution resembles transnational impacts, which are not contained within the areas under national jurisdiction. Thus it becomes impossible to tackle the issue single-handedly, and it mandates regional cooperation. However, South Asia is not conducive to the idea of regional integration, as any initiative fails to yield substantive results due to political mistrust. The danger of regional non-cooperation can be huge in the case of marine pollution. Most South Asian countries are at high risk of maritime accidents induced oil spillage, which has the potential to endanger the marine environment. It is high time the countries took the issue seriously and opted for effective political cooperation.

Various regional frameworks have been established in South Asia to tackle the issue of marine pollution. The South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP) was founded in 1982. It has established a number of initiatives and projects aimed at reducing the amount of pollutants entering the ocean and preserving the marine environment for future generations, including the development of joint policies and legislation, the implementation of targeted projects and activities, and the promotion of cooperation and coordination among countries in the region. The South Asian Seas Programme (SASP) is a regional initiative to address marine

pollution in South Asia. It is a collaboration between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) that seeks to promote cooperation and coordination among South Asian countries in their efforts to protect and conserve the marine environment.

Another regional framework to tackle marine pollution in South Asia is the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). This initiative was established in 1997 and aimed to enhance economic and technical cooperation among the countries of the Bay of Bengal region. One of the main goals of the BIMSTEC is to promote sustainable development and reduce marine pollution in the region. The BIMSTEC has established several working groups to address specific environmental issues, including marine pollution, and is working to develop regional policies and legislation to address this issue. Although the efficacy of SAARC is seriously questionable, it has established several working groups to address marine pollution. The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) is another regional framework that works on the issue of marine pollution in South Asia. The IORA has established several working groups to address specific environmental issues, including marine pollution, and is working to develop targeted projects and activities to address this issue.

In conclusion, marine pollution is a global environmental issue that affects the entire world, and it is essential that international and regional frameworks are established to tackle this issue. These frameworks provide a basis for cooperation and coordination among countries. There are several existing regional frameworks aimed at tackling marine pollution in South Asia. These regional frameworks have to be reinvigorated in order to yield substantive results. By working together, these organizations can significantly reduce marine pollution in South Asia and ensure the long-term health of the marine environment and the people who depend on it. At the same time, newer forums on issues like oil spillage and climate change have to be explored to expedite the preparedness of the countries to tackle the adverse impacts.

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The article was published in [PAAL Magazine](#), Volume 06, Issue 01, April 2023