



# Blue horizon of Latin America and the Caribbean 2025

Progress and challenges  
regarding the targets of  
Sustainable Development Goal 14

14 LIFE BELOW  
WATER



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# Introduction

This publication offers a regional summary of the progress made and challenges remaining in relation to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14, “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”. SDG 14 plays a strategic role in achieving all the other Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda.

With a view to fostering a broader understanding of the link between the ocean and the services it provides for well-being, the economy and sustainable development in Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC offers here a selection of updated key indicators in a concise and accessible format.<sup>1</sup> This summary is intended to be easily consulted by diverse audiences, increase readily available knowledge, and support informed decision-making. In order to provide a comprehensive analytical overview, the status and trends of the indicators are presented by country, subregion or fishing area. For each target, measures are recommended to guide and coordinate national and regional efforts towards the design and implementation of public policies, and for research and local actions capable of driving the transition towards a blue economy, understood as being sustainable, equitable and inclusive.

The ocean supports crucial functions for life and development within various global cycles, such as the absorption of atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), climate regulation, the water cycle, and the provision of food and livelihoods for millions of people. Despite their importance, until recently the ocean and marine resources have not figured at the heart of public policies or the administrations of the countries in the region.

The global marine economy is expanding rapidly, indeed more quickly than the rest of the economy. In the region, a significant role is played by trade in marine goods and services –including coastal and marine tourism, fisheries, aquaculture, and seafood products, as well as logistics and port services linked to maritime transport. However, these sectors have seen declines in production, productivity, employment and contribution to GDP, largely owing to unsustainable production practices.

The region has a valuable ocean heritage, hosting 47 of the world’s 258 marine ecoregions. The sea area exceeds the land area in 23 of the region’s 33 countries, over 27% of the population lives in coastal areas, and at least 2.3 million people engage in fishing activities. These conditions offer strategic advantages that must be protected and leveraged to drive sustainable blue growth, with a more equitable distribution of benefits for communities, countries and future generations.

The evidence presented indicates that the region’s marine ecosystems are experiencing persistent degradation and an accumulation of environmental liabilities driven by a combination of overfishing, increasing levels of chemical and plastic pollution, and ocean warming and acidification. These processes interact and amplify each other, affecting the health of marine ecosystems and reducing their ability to continue providing essential services to the economy, coastal communities and global cycles.

Many of the main drivers of change originate outside the region or are exacerbated by the actions of distant fleets, such as illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, plastic pollution carried by sea currents or greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that contribute to ocean warming.

In this context, it is urgent to speed up efforts to reduce pollution from land-based and marine sources, strengthen protection and sustainable use in areas that are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and gradually eliminate overfishing and subsidies that are harmful to marine and terrestrial ecosystems. Given the fluid nature of the oceans –in continuous interchange with land and the atmosphere– it is essential to frame international cooperation within comprehensive solutions and implement effective multilateral instruments under the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

<sup>1</sup> A more detailed analysis may be found in Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. (2025). *Panorama del océano, los mares y los recursos marinos y su contribución al desarrollo sostenible de América Latina y el Caribe* (LC/TS.2025/30/Rev.1) and in its statistical annex.

*Blue horizon 2025* also provides evidence of progress and strengths: increases have been achieved in the coverage of marine protected areas and in the protection of some marine ecosystems in the region, artisanal fisheries have gained a stronger role in responsible fishing and better access to fishery resources, and some multilateral instruments have been ratified.

With a comprehensive approach to development, ECLAC supports an ocean agenda that combines environmental sustainability, social inclusion and productive transformation. To this end, it is crucial to accelerate the transition towards a blue economy by means of public policies, civil society action and the transformation of units of production.

The Latin American and Caribbean region can strengthen its leadership by driving joint solutions to protect the ocean and address global challenges. This necessarily requires progress on the ratification of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction and towards agreements on fisheries subsidies. The region is playing a leading role in these endeavours: Costa Rica co-chaired the 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference with France; Chile aspires to host the secretariat for the Agreement in Valparaíso and will co-chair the fourth United Nations Ocean Conference with the Republic of Korea in 2028; Colombia chairs the Convention on Biological Diversity until 2026; and Brazil will preside over the thirtieth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. These actions reflect a commitment to strong marine and climate governance, aimed at strengthening regional and international cooperation, fostering innovation and promoting sustainable production transitions in harmony with marine ecosystems, encouraging compliance with multilateral commitments.

# Prevent and reduce marine pollution



GOAL 14.1

The target seeks, by 2025, to prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution, in particular from land-based activities. The region is seeing increasing pollution, primarily composed of plastic waste, organic residues and chemicals dumped directly into the sea or carried by rivers and winds. This pollution is harmful to species, to the integrity of marine ecosystems, and to economies and coastal livelihoods. The region's seas also receive pollution carried by ocean currents from outside their territory: this requires a concerted global response based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

## > What is happening?

- Globally, 80% of marine pollution comes from land-based sources. Plastics make up 85% of ocean debris.
- The oceans are estimated to contain between 75 million and 199 million tons of plastic, and this amount could triple by 2040.
- Ocean currents intensify inadequate local waste management and concentrate waste accumulation in the Caribbean, where plastic pollution is 3.5 times higher than the global average.
- The cost of managing marine debris worldwide (including waste removal, repairing damage to affected productive sectors, and mitigating impacts) could exceed US\$ 100 billion annually.
- The lack of adequate infrastructure for waste management and its limited incorporation into circular economy schemes on land and in coastal areas increases pressure on the oceans.
- Excess nutrients and fertilizers –such as nitrogen– cause eutrophication and affect the functional dynamics and biodiversity of marine ecosystems, compromising the sustainability of the marine economy, especially in the Gulf of Mexico, northern Brazil and the Caribbean.

## > Key findings and indicators for Latin America and the Caribbean

- Between 2017 and 2022, the proportion of waste from land-based sources ending up on beaches rose from 62% to 67%, 3 percentage points below the global average (70%). In 2022 alone, 1,557,000 tons of waste were washed up on beaches. Over the same period, the amount of waste being washed into the ocean decreased from 38% to 33% (771,000 tons in 2022) (see figure 1A).
- The Caribbean, which has only 6.2% of the region's population, accounts for 14% of the total waste on beaches and 21% in the ocean.

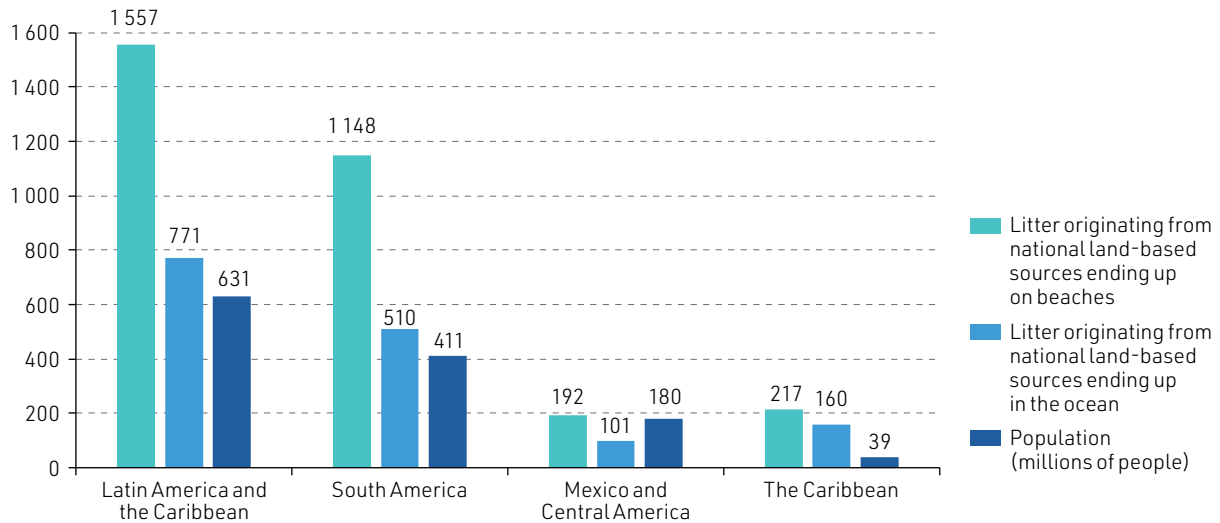
- Between 2000 and 2021, the use of fertilizers and pesticides in the region increased by a factor of almost 2.6: fertilizers from 18.3 kg/ha to 47.5 kg/ha, and pesticides from 83.4 kg/ha to 220.8 kg/ha (see figure 1B).
- Compared with the period 1990–2021, fertilizer use quadrupled and pesticide use increased 3.6-fold.

**Figure 1**

Latin America and the Caribbean: impacts of land-based pollution on the marine environment

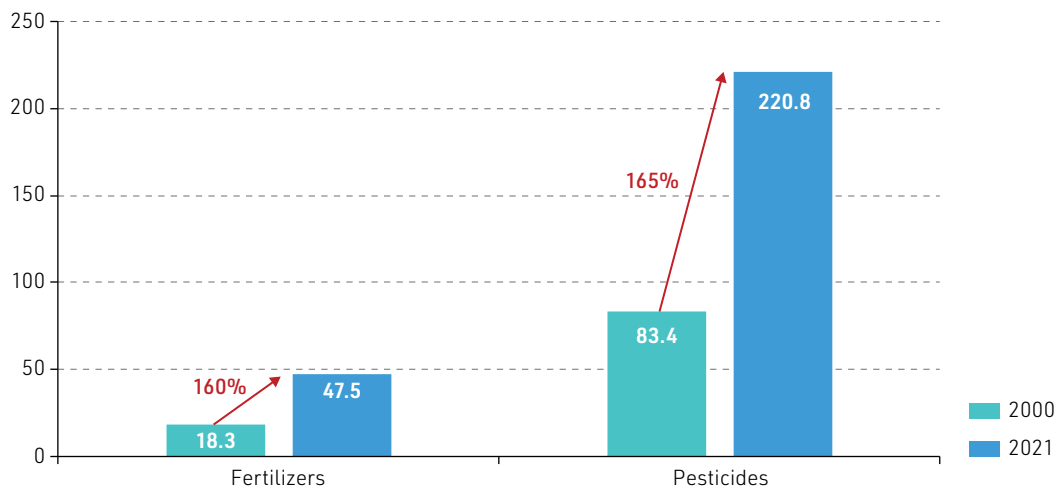
**A. Beach litter originating from national land-based sources ending up on beaches and in the ocean and population size, by subregion,<sup>a</sup> 2022<sup>b</sup>**

(Thousands of tons and millions of persons)



**B. Consumption of fertilizers and pesticides, 2000 and 2021<sup>c</sup>**

(Kilograms per hectare of agricultural surface area)



**Source:** Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. (2024). *Regional data bank for statistical follow-up to the SDGs in Latin America and the Caribbean*. <https://agenda2030lac.org/estadisticas/banco-datos-regional-seguimiento-ods.html?lang=en>; and Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. (2025). CEPALSTAT. [https://statistics.cepal.org/portal/cepalstat/dashboard.html?indicador\\_id=2039&area\\_id=727&lang=en](https://statistics.cepal.org/portal/cepalstat/dashboard.html?indicador_id=2039&area_id=727&lang=en).

<sup>a</sup> Includes all countries in the region except the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Paraguay.

<sup>b</sup> Data for Mexico refer to 2021.

<sup>c</sup> Data are not available for Cuba, Dominica, Grenada, or Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

## > Recommended action

- ✔ **Promote integrated monitoring systems from watersheds to the ocean**, to support an understanding of the physical, chemical and climatic dynamics that influence marine pollution. This will facilitate the development of science-based responses, with a multi-scale approach and shared responsibility within the region and beyond, in critical contexts such as the Greater Caribbean and Rapa Nui. These systems may be complemented by awareness-raising initiatives to provide solutions from the local to the regional level. For example, the “Científicos por la Basura” initiative brought together people and scientists from 11 countries bordering the Pacific to collect and analyse litter on 136 beaches in Latin America.
- ✔ **Improve waste management, wastewater treatment and the circular economy** by promoting innovation and sustainable production practices with ad hoc financing. Initiatives such as Chile’s REP Act –which holds producers responsible for the waste they generate– and opportunities to implement actions such as ECLAC-supported initiatives for methane recovery in wastewater treatment plants in small municipalities in Mexico and El Salvador, offer examples of the benefits of circular practices that diversify markets, generate green jobs, are financially viable and contribute to reducing marine pollution.
- ✔ **Accelerate, ratify and accede to multilateral agreements to address plastic and nutrient pollution**, including binding legal frameworks that encompass the entire pollutant cycle. In this regard, it is important to accelerate implementation of the Protocol concerning Pollution from Land-based Sources and Activities to the Cartagena Convention, and global plastics treaties that promote technical and financial cooperation, especially for the most exposed countries, such as those in the Caribbean.



## GOAL 14.2

# Sustainably manage and restore marine and coastal ecosystems

Target 14.2 seeks, by 2020, to sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems in order to restore the health and productivity of the ocean. However, the region's ecosystems are deteriorating primarily due to overfishing, pollution and the impacts of climate change, compromising their ability to continue providing marine resources and services necessary for the economy and people's livelihoods. The region's Ocean Health Index score dropped from 71 in 2015 to 68 in 2024, placing it slightly below the global average (69 in 2024). The sub-goals that make up the index for the region this decade have evolved in a very mixed manner.

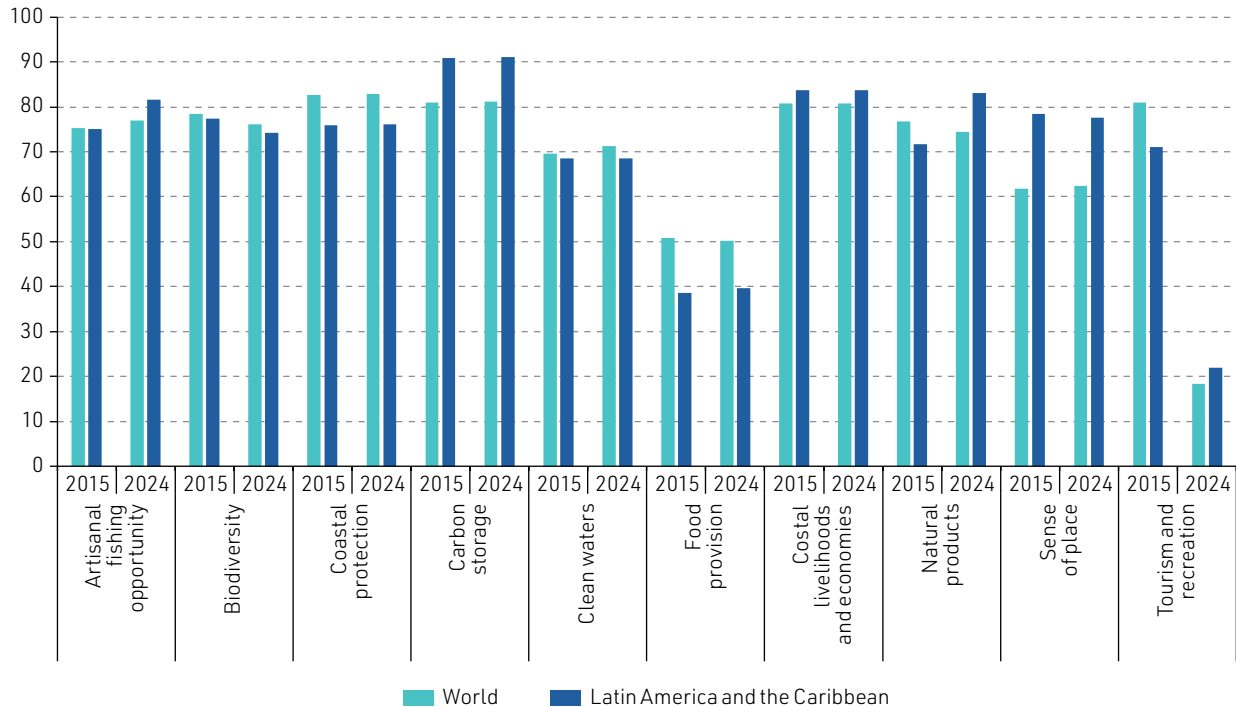
### > What is happening?

- The Ocean Health Index (OHI) is prepared annually at the global and national levels, based on 10 goals that assess economic, social, physical and biological dimensions related to the services and benefits that the oceans provide to people (see figure 2). An index value closer to 100 reflects a better status and a more favourable trajectory in terms of ocean health and the oceans' capacity to provide these services.
- The global average of the OHI in the last decade (2015–2024) decreased from 74 to 68, while that of the region decreased from 71 to 68.
- The year 2024 saw the largest year-on-year decline in 13 years of estimates of the global OHI value, primarily due to a significant drop in tourism, given that the indicator is updated with a two-year lag, so does not yet reflect the post-pandemic recovery.

### > Key findings and indicators for Latin America and the Caribbean

- Between 2015 and 2024, the region exceeded the world average in the sub-goals: "sense of place" (over 15 points), "carbon storage" (~10 points), and "coastal livelihoods" (~3 points).
- The region remains 10 points below the world average on the goals of "food provision," possibly due to the negative trend in sustainable fisheries, and slightly below the global average in "coastal protection," "clean waters," and "biodiversity."
- Compared to the global level, the region saw a notable rise of over 10 points in its score on "natural products", above the world average. The tourism score declined less sharply during the pandemic than at the world level, and a moderate improvement occurred with respect to artisanal fishing opportunities.

**Figure 2**  
Latin America and the Caribbean: Ocean Health Index compared to the world, 2015 and 2024



**Source:** Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, on the basis of Halpern, B. S., Longo, C., Hardy, D., McLeod, K. L., Samhouri, J. F., Katona, S. K., Kleisner, K., Lester, S., O'Leary, J., Ranelletti, M., Rosenberg, A., Scarborough, C., Selig, E., Best, B., Brumbaugh, D., Chapin, F. S., Crowder, L., Daly, K., Doney, S., Zeller, D. (2012). An index to assess the health and benefits of the global ocean. *Nature*, 488, 615–620. doi:10.1038/nature11397; Ocean Health Index. (2024). *ohicore version: core Ocean Health Index functions* [December 2024]. National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis, University of California. <https://github.com/OHI-Science/ohicore/releases>.

## > Recommended action

- ✓ **Strongly promote sustainable marine tourism and fisheries and substantially increase the treatment of wastewater that is discharged into the ocean.** These measures address the region's three lowest OHI scores, while tourism and fisheries are among the three categories of marine goods and services trade in which the region has a positive trade balance, testifying to these sectors' gaping sustainability gap and jeopardizing present and future possibilities of economic and social development.
- ✓ **Adopt comprehensive marine management policies** to foster multi-stakeholder governance and increase regional and subregional cooperation, along with joint monitoring and sharing of best practices. For example, numerous responsible fisheries projects have been developed by the small-scale fishing sector, bringing together contributions from government, academia and cooperation agencies, grouped within national or regional entities or regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs).
- ✓ **Capitalize on the strengths of sense of belonging**, foster the production of natural products, blue carbon storage and artisanal fishing, and deploy cross-cutting ocean education initiatives to generate positive change within society.



GOAL 14.3

# Minimize and address the impacts of ocean acidification and warming

This target seeks to minimize and address the impacts of acidification caused by the rise in atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> which, when absorbed by the ocean, reduces the pH of seawater. Acidification, together with gradual ocean warming, affects biodiversity, compromises the integrity of coral reefs and puts key fishery species at risk, with impacts on productive sectors such as tourism, fishing and coastal economies. Given its close relationship with climate change, progress on this target depends chiefly on substantial reductions by the higher-emissions countries and therefore faces significant challenges.

## > What is happening?

- Globally, ocean acidity has increased by 15% since 1985, affecting marine ecosystems to different extents. It is estimated that up to 99% of coral reefs could disappear by 2050 if the global temperature rise exceeds 1.5 °C.
- Ocean temperatures rose at a record rate for 13 consecutive months between 2023 and 2024, reaching the highest levels in 65 years. Global coral bleaching in 2023 was the fourth most severe event ever and the second of the past decade.
- Coral reefs host 25% of marine species and are facing severe bleaching owing to the combination of acidification, temperature rise and pollution.
- Acidification and climate change (including seawater warming and the intensification of extreme events, marine heat waves and reduction in oxygen levels) affect fisheries, the availability of molluscs, algae and crustaceans, as well as aquaculture, compromising food security and coastal livelihoods (see table 1).

**Table 1**  
Sea and ocean acidification: impacts on biodiversity and risks to fisheries and aquaculture

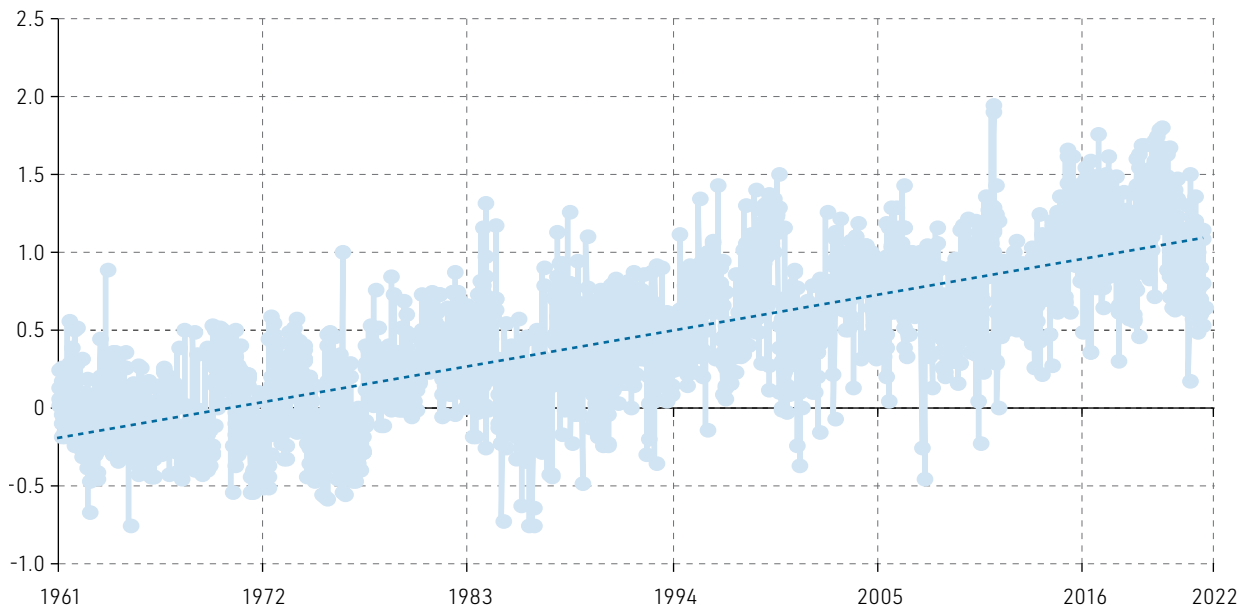
Impact on biodiversity	Risk to fisheries and aquaculture
Affects coral growth and structural integrity.	Decline and/or permanent loss of capture of different species depending on the reef.
Affects the growth and development of gastropods (snails and suchlike), bivalves (such as mussels), and echinoderms (sea urchins and starfish).	Malformations and/or mortality in larvae and juveniles, mainly in the farming of bivalves. Losses in production and capture of species from these groups.

**Source:** Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, on the basis of Reyes-Bonilla, H., Fueyo MacDonald, L., Abas, M., Vázquez Vera, L., Pataán Ramírez, D., Aranceta Garza, F., Marín Monroy, E. A., Cruz Piñón, G., Morzaría-Luna, H. N., Martínez Castañeda, C., Vergara Solana, F. J., Ojeda Ruiz de la Peña, M. A., Calderón Alvarado, J. M., Anaya Reyna, G., Nah Orozco, M. L. and Portilla, J. (2021). *Cambio climático en México: recomendaciones de política pública para la adaptación y resiliencia del sector pesquero y acuícola*. Environmental Defense Fund Mexico, Comunidad y Biodiversidad A.C., Confederación Mexicana de Cooperativas Pesqueras y Acuícolas, Programa Marino del Golfo de California, The Nature Conservancy and World Wildlife Fund México.

## > Key findings and indicators for Latin America and the Caribbean

- The Eastern Pacific Ocean, from Mexico and Central America down to the coasts of Ecuador, registers the world's lowest ocean surface pH levels in the world.
- Acidification is projected to increase significantly, especially in the Caribbean, home to 10% of the world's coral reefs, where serious bleaching and loss of sensitive species are already occurring.
- Projections for 2050 point to a sharper rise in sea levels in the subtropical north and south Atlantic, with moderate rises in the Pacific.
- Despite the variations, there is a clear trend towards higher ocean surface temperature (see figure 3).
- Estimates of the change in the volume of fishery captures and aquaculture production by 2050 under a fossil-fuel-powered development scenario (IPCC scenario SP5) indicate that average regional losses would be 8%, with greater impacts (between 15% and 11.2%) in Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Barbados and Saint Lucia.
- Twenty-four countries have prioritized coastal and ocean areas in their nationally determined contributions (NDCs) in relation to climate change adaptation, but they are not among the sectors prioritized in relation to mitigation.

**Figure 3**  
Latin America and the Caribbean: variation in average ocean surface temperatures, 1961–2022  
(Degrees Celsius)



**Source:** Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, on the basis of Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2024). FAOSTAT. <https://www.fao.org/statistics/en> and Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. CEPALSTAT. <https://statistics.cepal.org/portal/cepalstat/dashboard.html?theme=3&lang=en>.

## > Recommended action

- ✓ **Significantly reduce GHG emissions**, recognizing common but differentiated responsibilities and the ocean as part of the solution. Include marine and coastal areas in national, regional and global climate policies, including mitigation and adaptation measures within NDCs, blue carbon sink strategies and the signature and ratification of annex IV of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships. These policies should combine marine conservation, ocean justice and the rights of coastal communities, ensuring that they can participate in climate governance.
- ✓ **Invest in the restoration and conservation of key marine ecosystems**, such as mangroves, seagrasses, coral reefs and marine forests, which provide ocean-based solutions to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and reduce the impact of hydroclimatological disasters. For example, investment in coral restoration and recovery in Mesoamerica could generate US\$ 35 billion by 2030, from its benefits to tourism, fishing and coastal development, as well as protecting biodiversity. Programmes should also include ex situ conservation for critically endangered species, in order to fully protect and recover the marine heritage.
- ✓ **Develop long-term regional monitoring systems**, with early warning mechanisms, and strengthen both international scientific and citizen-based networks, with initiatives such as the Research Network of Marine-Coastal Stressors in Latin America and the Caribbean (REMARCO). Collaboration between governments, the scientific community, productive sectors and local communities is essential to build and maintain official statistical series and adopt preventive measures to protect marine biodiversity and local livelihoods. This would make it possible to anticipate and adapt to impacts on priority sectors for sustainable development, such as fishing and aquaculture, and adjust public policies to local situations based on evidence, increasing social, economic and environmental resilience.

# End overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing for sustainable development in the region



GOAL 14.4

This target's stated aim was to effectively regulate fishing exploitation, implement sustainable practices by 2020 in order to restore fish stocks. IUU fishing reduces fishery biomass and unbalances marine ecosystems, diminishes the sustainability of ocean capture fisheries, hurts the sector's profitability and undermines its contribution to employment. These practices also pose risks to local economies and the livelihoods of coastal populations. Most fishing areas in the region are severely overexploited. Nevertheless, progress has been made on voluntary certification and in the recovery of some managed fishing areas.

**IUU fishing: Illegal fishing** refers to fishing without permission or in violation of legislation (for example, by not observing closed seasons or catching prohibited species). **Unreported fishing** is fishing that has been inaccurately recorded or not recorded at all (for example, discards). **Unregulated fishing** is fishing that takes place in areas or involving fish stocks for which there are no applicable conservation or management measures.

## > What is happening?

- The global proportion of fish stocks at biologically sustainable levels fell from 90% in 1974 to 62% in 2021.
- Global overfishing generates annual losses of 15 million tons, equivalent to US\$ 15.4 billion and 668,479 jobs.
- The primary fisheries and aquaculture sector is estimated to have employed 61.8 million people worldwide in 2022 (54% in fisheries, 36% in aquaculture, and 10% with no subsector specified). Latin America and the Caribbean provided 4% of total employment in the sector.

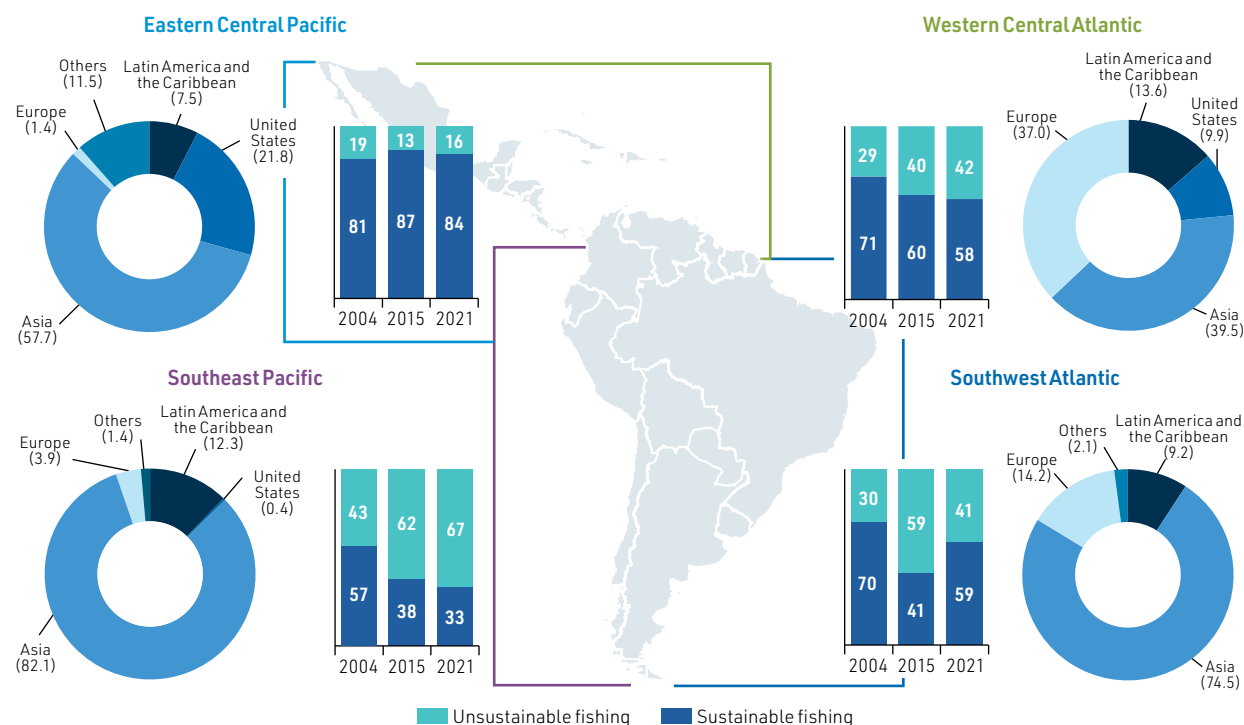
## > Key findings and indicators for Latin America and the Caribbean

- The values of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels for 2004, 2015 and 2021 show different patterns for the region's fishing areas (see bar charts in infographic 1).
- In the Southeast Pacific (from the coasts of Chile to Colombia), the indicator fell 24 points, making this fishing zone the least sustainable in the world, with only 33% of stocks within biologically safe limits. By contrast, the Eastern Central Pacific (from Panama to northern Baja California) has remained relatively stable, with between 81% and 91% of fishing being sustainable during the period 2004–2021; this is one of the two least overexploited areas globally.

- The Southwest Atlantic (from Argentina to northern Brazil) saw a 29-point decline between 2004 and 2015, followed by an 18-point recovery in 2021. The Western Central Atlantic (from Guyana to northern Florida) suffered a 13-point decline.
- Distance-water fleets from Asia and Europe contribute significantly to overexploitation. In the Southeast Pacific, outside and adjacent to exclusive economic zones (EEZs), 82% of the fleet comes from Asia and only 12% from countries in the region. In the Western Central Atlantic, 40% and 37% come from Asia and Europe, respectively (see the donut charts in infographic 1).
- Regional seafood products, including processed foods, generate exports worth US\$ 20.5 billion, approximately 17% of total marine trade in goods and services, and produce a trade surplus of US\$ 12.5 billion (exports less imports).
- The average productivity of capture fisheries fell from 15.5 tons per person per year in 1990 to 5.6 tons in 2015. This decline is associated with increased employment in the sector, from 1 million in 1995 to 2.5 million in 2015, suggesting that overexploitation has eroded productivity per worker. Since 2015, approximately 252,000 people have left the sector, coinciding with a partial recovery in productivity, which reached 7.1 tons per person employed in 2022.
- Aquaculture, which currently produces a quarter of the region's seafood, has shown a steady increase in output, from 40 tons in 1950 to 4.3 million tons in 2022. In the main producer countries (Chile, Ecuador and Brazil), which account for 75% of production, the expansion has created documented environmental liabilities, including eutrophication, over-use of antibiotics and habitat destruction.

### Infographic 1

Latin America and the Caribbean: sustainability of the four fishing areas (2004, 2015 and 2021) and origin of the distance-water fleet bordering countries' exclusive economic zones (2018) (Percentages)



**Source:** Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, on the basis of Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2024). FAOSTAT. <https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/SDGB>; and Millage, K. D., Warham, M., Rubino, L. L. and Costello, C. (2021). *Distant Water Fishing Subsidy Atlas*. <http://www.dwfsubsidyatlas.org/>.

## > Recommended action

- ✓ **Implement differentiated responses to IUU fishing**, strengthen enforcement and sanctions against illegal fishing; reinforce and innovate in recording systems to address unreported fishing; and develop regulations to regulate unregulated fishing, particularly for straddling species. For example, set up rigorous port requirements, implement monitoring technologies such as satellite systems, vessel tracking devices, and coordinated patrols, and support selective fishing practices and product traceability, with support from technical cooperation and regional funding.
- ✓ **Expand sustainable and territorial co-management fisheries schemes**, with a participatory, inclusive approach adapted to local realities. Seventy-five per cent of Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs) are small-scale enterprises. It is crucial to recognize exclusive access rights, build technical and institutional capacities, and guarantee women's full participation throughout the value chain and in the income generated.
- ✓ **Promote responsible aquaculture to foster job creation and local development**. Aquaculture can reduce pressure from wild fisheries, allowing stocks and ecosystems to recover, while providing a more stable supply and creation of employment. Promote practices to prevent eutrophication, habitat destruction, overharvesting of larvae, reduction of genetic diversity, and indirect effects on other species due to the use of antibiotics and chemicals for disease control. Farming filter-feeding organisms such as oysters, mussels and algae cleans the water without the need for external feeding, and algae also capture carbon.



GOAL 14.5

# Conserve coastal and marine areas

This target originally set for 2020 seeks to conserve at least 10% of coastal and marine surface areas by establishing protected areas. Protection is essential for preserving biodiversity, safeguarding the essential functions that ecosystems provide for human well-being and the sustainability of marine resources, and for restoring damaged ecosystems. Latin America and the Caribbean has nearly 23% of its exclusive economic zones under different protection schemes, more than double the established target. However, progress is uneven and still insufficient to ensure that the target will be fulfilled everywhere.

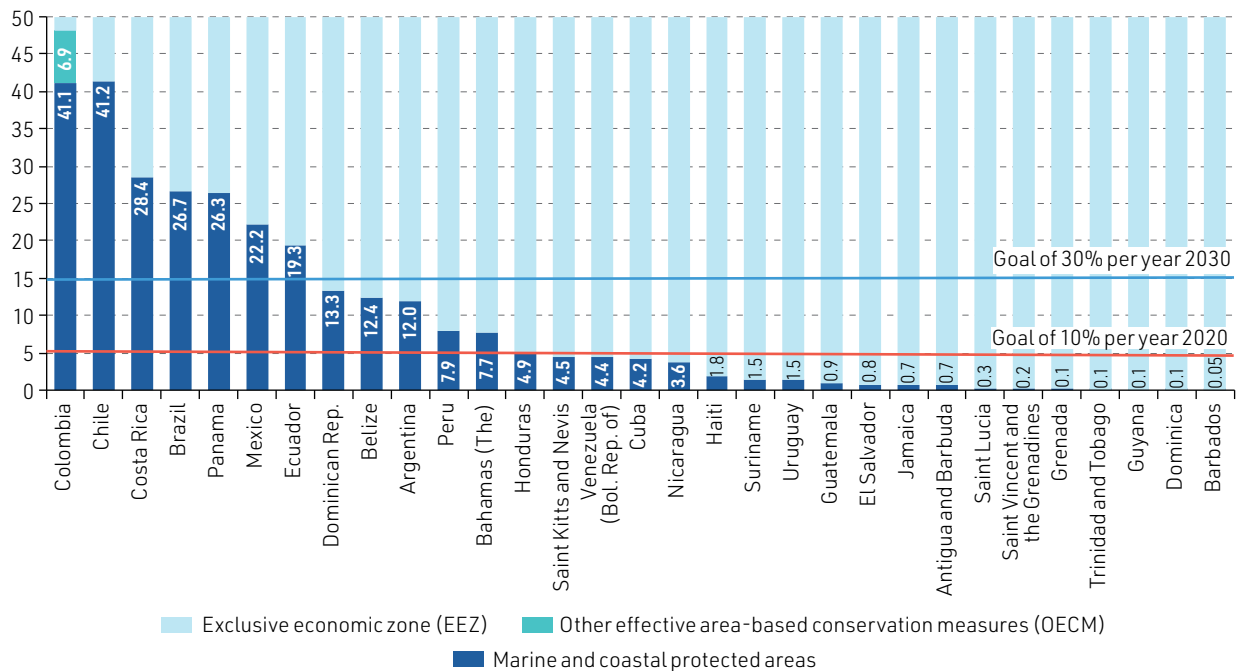
## > What is happening?

- Globally, the coverage of marine protected areas (MPAs) reached 8.4% in 2024, approaching target 14.5 in August 2024, and has more than doubled in the region.
- The proportion of marine key biodiversity areas protected increased from 26% to 46% between 2000 and 2023 worldwide and from 23% to 44% in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework set a target to protect 30% of coastal and marine areas by 2030 through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs).
- The Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction, adopted on 19 June 2023, was open for signature by Parties until 20 September 2025. A wave of ratifications took place in June 2025 (by 23 of the 50 States that have ratified it), within the framework of the 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference, bringing it close to the threshold of 60 necessary for its entry into force.
- Progress on conservation is often measured using area-based indicators and monitoring of other aspects is still limited. Less than 0.01% of marine protected areas worldwide have been assessed in relation to governance.

## > Key findings and indicators for Latin America and the Caribbean

- The region has made significant progress, with MPA coverage reaching 22.9% of its EEZs. Some countries have achieved coverage of some 30% or more of their EEZs, such as Chile and Colombia, with 41.2% and 41.1% respectively.
- However, 61% of the region's countries have protected less than 5% of their marine area (half the target), and of these, 14 countries have protected less than 2% (see figure 4).
- As of June 2025, 11 countries had ratified the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas (The), Barbados, Belize, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Jamaica, Panama and Saint Lucia.
- In terms of key marine ecosystems that are protected for their numerous ecosystem services, mangroves (70.3%), salt marshes (64%), tropical corals (43%) and seagrasses (36%) exceed the 30% protected target established under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. By contrast, underwater forests (6%) and cold-water corals (16%) have historically been underrepresented and require greater protection.
- Given the importance of marine biodiversity and high vulnerability to multiple simultaneous threats that increase the risk, protection measures for tropical corals and mangroves are positive but insufficient.
- Colombia reported three OECMs for its protected areas, totalling 47,364.02 km<sup>2</sup>.

**Figure 4**  
Latin America and the Caribbean (31 countries): marine protected areas and OECMs as a proportion of each country's exclusive economic zone  
(Percentages)



**Source:** Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, on the basis of United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre and International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. (2024). *Protected Planet: The World Database on Protected Areas*. [www.protectedplanet.net](http://www.protectedplanet.net).

## > Recommended action

- ✓ **Expand the coverage and representativeness of marine protected areas**, prioritizing underrepresented ecosystems such as cold-water corals and underwater forests, to protect at least 10% of the marine surface area and increase the level of ambition to 30% to comply with other international agreements and initiatives such as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the political declaration adopted at the 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference (Nice Ocean Action Plan) and the High Ambition Coalition, along with other effective conservation measures.
- ✓ **Strengthen the effectiveness of MPAs by means of updated management plans**, stable financial resources, adaptive monitoring, and OECMs to increase their interconnectedness, and management tools, aligned with international standards such as the IUCN Green List, to optimize conservation and maximize ecological, social and economic benefits. MPAs should be evaluated periodically for effectiveness.
- ✓ **Enhance inclusive governance and include local communities**, Indigenous Peoples and private actors in the management of MPAs and OECMs, promoting conservation and livelihoods through strong regulatory frameworks, environmental certifications and local stakeholder engagement. For example, ecotourism and scientific and vocational education initiatives, in conjunction with local cooperative tourism organizations, contribute to local benefit retention, generate higher incomes than traditional tourism, and enable the integration of remote areas by promoting extended stays, local employment and conservation. Promoting co-management of MPAs with coastal communities and Indigenous Peoples has yielded positive outcomes in numerous cases in the region.

# Control subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing



GOAL 14.6

This target aims to prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, and eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. These subsidies encourage overexploitation by artificially reducing the cost of fishing operations. Although Latin American and Caribbean countries account for only 6% of the global total of such subsidies, their marine resources and fishing communities face a disproportionate impact due to highly subsidized foreign fleets.

**Subsidies benefiting fisheries:** these include support for research and development, the establishment of closed seasons or temporary closures, and the strengthening of schemes to improve sustainable resource management.

**Ambiguous subsidies:** these are generally social transfers to fishers, such as family income support, social security programmes or retirement funds. This support is targeted at rural fishing communities.

**Subsidies promoting overfishing:** these consist of support to increase income or reduce operating costs associated with fishing activities. They include fleet modernization and equipment, the development of port, storage and marketing infrastructure, tax exemptions, fuel subsidies and other incentives that artificially increase profits or reduce costs.

## > What is happening?

- Information on subsidies is often scattered and not easily accessible, making it hard to conduct periodic and cross-sector assessments. Furthermore, lack of transparency regarding government fisheries management, fishing vessel activity and product traceability are underlying drivers of poor practices in the fishing sector.
- Estimates at 2018 for 143 members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) indicate that US\$ 22.1 billion was allocated annually in fisheries subsidies that promote overcapacity and overfishing, primarily to support distant-waters fleets and the fossil fuels they use. Of this global total, the 31 coastal countries of Latin America and the Caribbean accounted for just 6%, equivalent to US\$ 1.3 billion.
- Of the fishing subsidies given out worldwide, 30% have a positive effect, 7% are ambiguous, and 63% fall into the category that contribute to overexploitation. Twelve countries account for 70% of the global subsidies that promote overcapacity; none are in Latin America and the Caribbean.

- Illegal fishing amounts to approximately 26 million tons annually, representing 15% of global fisheries production. Discards (non-target species, which are usually returned to the sea, often already dead) amount to 9.1 million tons annually. By contrast, sustainable fisheries management could avert annual losses of US\$ 86 billion.
- Globally, the group of fishing gears with the highest discards rates consists of six types of trawl nets, with an average bycatch of 37.6%. Shrimp trawls are notable with an average bycatch of 54%, meaning they capture more bycatch species than target species.
- In 2022, WTO adopted an agreement prohibiting three types of subsidies: (i) those that encourage illegal fishing; (ii) those targeting overexploited stocks; and (iii) those that finance fishing in unregulated areas. The agreement will enter into force when two thirds of the members ratify it; as of June 2025, 102 members had done so.

## > Key findings and indicators for Latin America and the Caribbean

- In 2021, the 31 coastal countries in the region provided US\$ 1.3 billion in fishing subsidies. Five countries account for 82% of all regional subsidies contributing to overcapacity and overfishing in the region: Peru (US\$ 280 million), Brazil (US\$ 256 million), Argentina (US\$ 243 million), Mexico (US\$ 191 million), and Chile (US\$ 133 million). Mexico stands out for having eliminated part of the subsidies reported in 2021.
- In Barbados, Grenada, Jamaica, Nicaragua and Trinidad and Tobago subsidies exceed 20% of the value of fisheries production.
- Only half of the countries in the region have acceded to the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies (see table 2).
- Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama and Peru have made voluntary progress in the implementation of the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI), through multi-stakeholder engagement and the regular publication of key information on regulations, resources and fishing activities.
- Three of the four fishing areas in the region report much higher discard estimates than the global average (10.8%): the Southwest Atlantic (29%), the Western Central Atlantic (23%) and the Eastern Central Pacific (17%). By contrast, the Southeast Pacific has the lowest discard rate in the world (4%).
- Optimal fisheries management would allow the region to increase annual catches by 4.1 million tons, with an estimated value of nearly US\$ 3 billion per year, and provide 123,579 new full-time jobs.

**Table 2**

Latin America and the Caribbean: countries that have ratified the World Trade Organization Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, June 2025

Country	Date of accession	Country	Date of accession
Antigua and Barbuda 	3 April 2025	Ecuador 	9 October 2024
Barbados 	14 February 2024	Guatemala 	10 March 2025
Belize 	16 June 2023	Haiti 	21 February 2024
Chile 	12 December 2023	Nicaragua 	2 June 2025
Colombia 	19 March 2025	Panama 	12 June 2025
Costa Rica 	15 November 2024	Peru 	19 July 2023
Cuba 	23 October 2023	Saint Lucia 	23 October 2023
Dominica 	14 February 2024	Uruguay 	14 February 2024

**Source:** Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, on the basis of World Trade Organization. *Members submitting acceptance of Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies*. [https://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/rulesneg\\_e/fish\\_e/fish\\_acceptances\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/rulesneg_e/fish_e/fish_acceptances_e.htm).

## > Recommended action

- ✓ **Ratify and accede to the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies**, to allow it to enter into force, and move ahead with negotiations on a second set of general rules on harmful fisheries subsidies and measures to prevent IUU fishing within the framework of the United Nations Ocean Conference. This will protect resources, restore and protect the sector's productivity and profitability and the well-being of fishing communities, and foster sustainable productive transformation.
- ✓ **Create road maps to reform and eliminate harmful subsidies**, develop national diagnostics to identify such subsidies, eliminate these incentives and redirect the resources towards sustainable practices, in line with Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the Nice Ocean Action Plan and the implementation of the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies. Regional cooperation can support common strategies, with equitable compensatory and just transition instruments.
- ✓ **Increase transparency, access to information and accountability regarding subsidies and their recipients**, access to fishery resources and the conditions under which they are granted, profits from fisheries, stock status, fishing vessel activities and product traceability, through voluntary initiatives such as FiTI. This requires stronger public information systems (data capture and reporting) and facilitating social oversight and international cooperation for responsible and equitable fishing.



GOAL 14.7

# Economic benefits to small island developing States from the sustainable use of marine resources

This target aims to increase the economic benefits to small island developing States (SIDS) from the sustainable use of marine resources, particularly through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism. These countries face significant structural challenges with regard to building sustainable economies on the basis of their marine ecosystems and resources. Caribbean SIDS have a valuable pool of coastal and marine environmental services that support tourism, fisheries and aquaculture, which are essential for community livelihoods, food security and the drive for sustainable development and transformation of production practices. Yet, they face considerable challenges, such as the deterioration of their marine ecosystems, ocean warming and acidification, and the increasing impacts of extreme weather events that generate large-scale disasters. This, coupled with their limited fiscal space, requires differentiated measures supported by regional cooperation. Sixteen of the 33 ECLAC member states in the region are SIDS of the Greater Caribbean.

## > What is happening?

- Globally, before the pandemic, 43% of the export revenues of SIDS came from tourism. During the pandemic, their tourist arrivals fell by 76% in 2020 and 72% in 2021, generating losses of US\$ 90 billion.
- In 2023, SIDS worldwide received 36 million tourists, a 42% increase on 2022.

## > Key findings and indicators for Latin America and the Caribbean

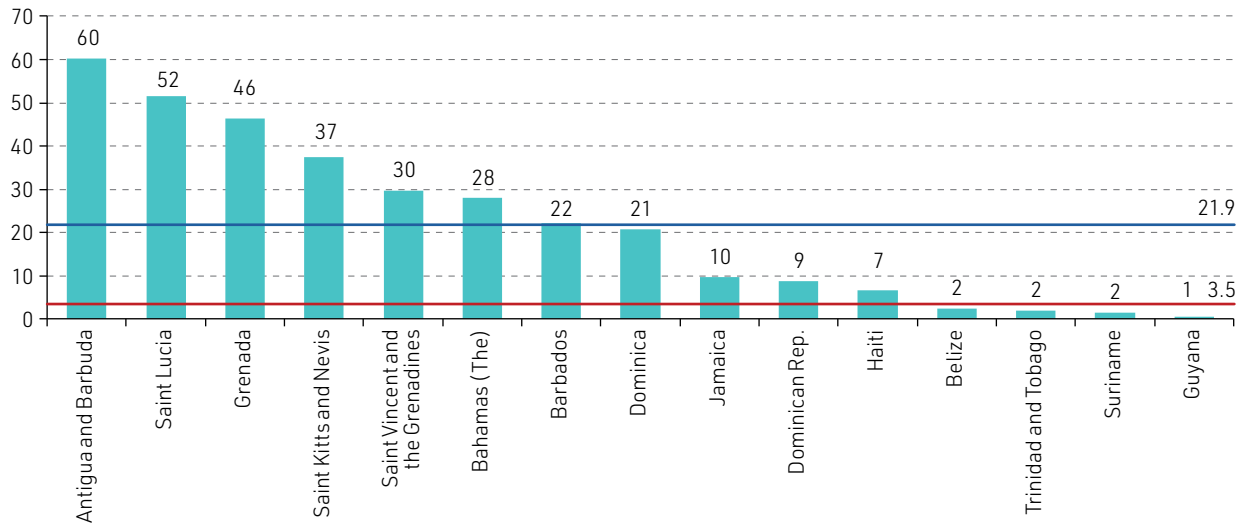
- Marine and coastal tourism is a key economic pillar for SIDS. Inbound tourism expenditure represents 21.9% of GDP for these countries, compared to 3.5% in the rest of the region (see figure 5A).
- The Dominican Republic leads tourism services exports in absolute value terms. In per capita terms, the four countries in the region with the highest tourism export values are The Bahamas, Barbados, Jamaica and Belize.
- Between 2014 and 2022, aquaculture declined by 45% in the region's SIDS.
- In 2022, sustainable fisheries represented 0.3 percentage points of GDP in SIDS, double the figure for the rest of the region. Of the animal protein consumed in these countries, 12.9% comes from the sea, and 82.4% of fish catches come from artisanal and subsistence fisheries (see figure 5B).
- In Barbados and Antigua and Barbuda, between 18% and 20% of the animal protein consumed is from seafood.

**Figure 5**

Latin America and the Caribbean: small island developing States: share of tourism in GDP and marine protein consumption

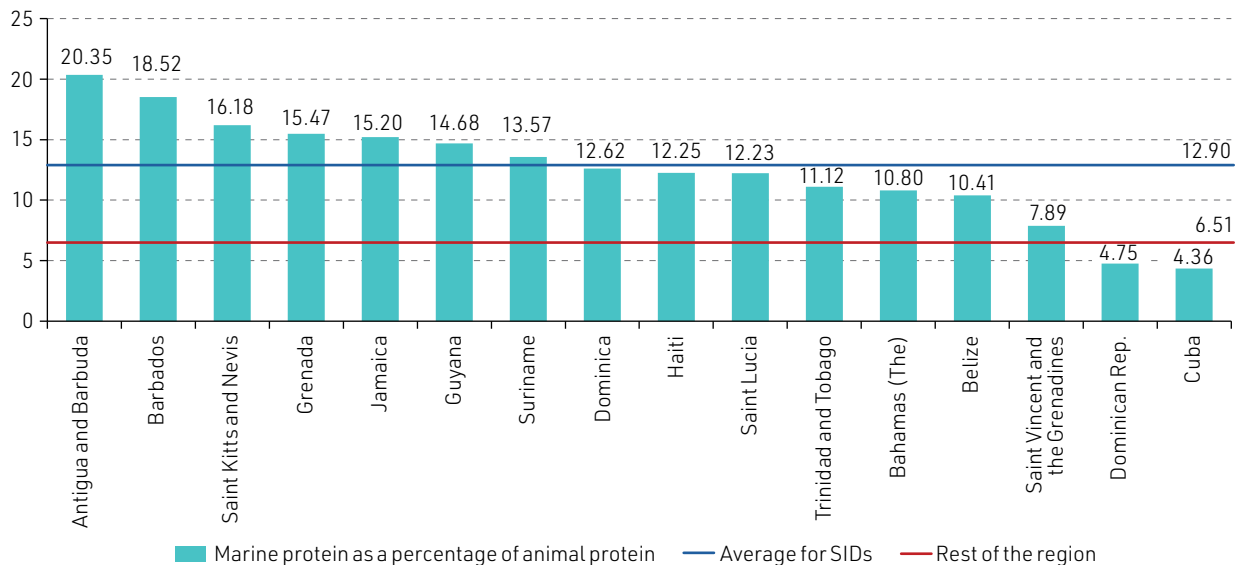
**A. Inbound tourism expenditure as a percentage of GDP (15 countries)**

(Percentages)



**B. Animal protein of marine origin and average for the rest of the countries of the region (16 countries)**

(Percentages)



**Source:** Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, on the basis of World Tourism Organization. (n.d.). *Tourism Statistics - Inbound Tourism*. <https://www.unwto.org/tourism-statistics/tourism-data-inbound-tourism>; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. (2024). *Regional data bank for statistical follow-up to the SDGs in Latin America and the Caribbean*. <https://agenda2030lac.org/estadisticas/banco-datos-regional-seguimiento-ods.html?lang=en>; and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2024). FAOSTAT. <https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/FBS>.

## > Recommended action

- ✓ **Transform tourism in SIDS toward resilient, sustainable models with significant local productive value chains**, prioritizing investments in sustainable infrastructure, energy efficiency and the diversification of activities that generate local employment, including ecosystem restoration and the creation of higher-skilled positions. For example, initiatives such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Centre of Excellence for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, established with the support of the Government of Aruba and the Kingdom of the Netherlands, aim to facilitate innovation, expand access to financing and make the tourism sector more sustainable.
- ✓ **Promote sustainable aquaculture as a way to improve food sovereignty and income in SIDS**, through regenerative models adapted to the island context with a long-term financial focus, accessible certifications, and partnerships connecting marine sustainability, production and health. This strategy can reduce vulnerabilities and create quality blue employment in coastal communities. The experience of Cuba and Belize, which have historically led this sector, may serve as an example in this regard.
- ✓ **Strengthen regional fisheries management through multilateral organizations** such as the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism, in order to move towards a functional RFMO system tailored to the needs and specificities of SIDS. This would allow for more efficient and equitable management of shared marine resources, strengthening the technical and scientific foundations and forging transparent agreements to leverage economies of scale. Emerging challenges in productive fishing, aquaculture and tourism must be addressed jointly and synergistically, including sargassum pollution and the accumulation of floating plastics, coral reef restoration and the arrival of invasive alien species, such as the lionfish.

# Scientific knowledge, research and marine technology transfer



GOAL 14.a

This target seeks to increase scientific knowledge, investment in research and capacity-building as enablers for achieving the other SDG 14 targets and enhancing their response to complex challenges and their scope for action to leverage the opportunities offered by marine areas. Despite its importance, global investment in ocean-related research and applied development is limited and insufficient to achieve these aims. At the regional level, there is little information available at all. In most countries that do maintain indicators, investment is much lower than the global average. However, the region's research and scientific output in ocean sciences is comparable to the global average, and even higher in several countries.

## > What is happening?

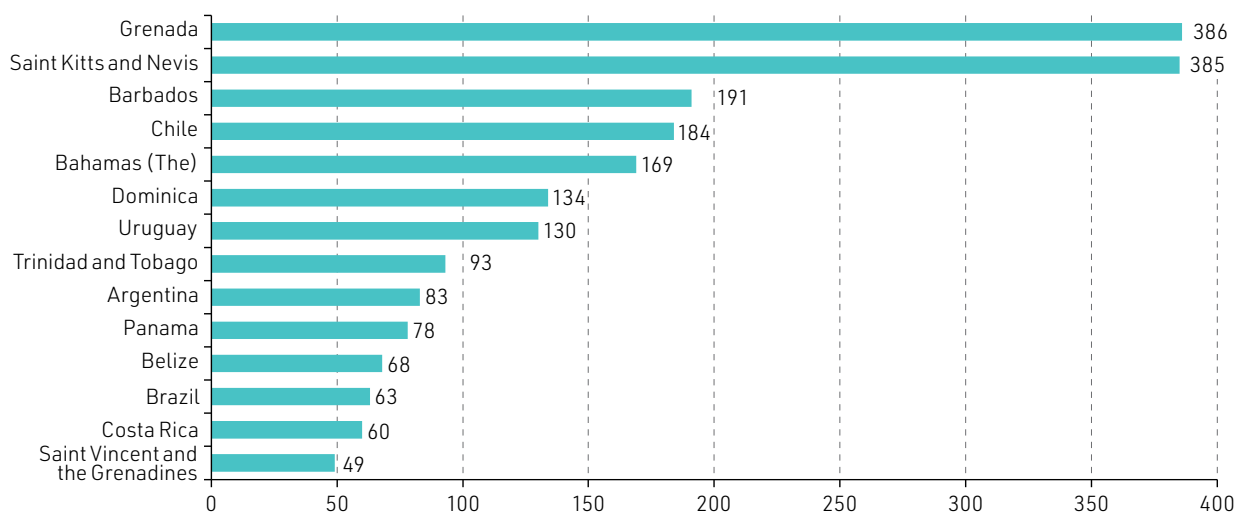
- Knowledge about the ocean is essential to understanding and enhancing its role in solutions to multiple dimensions of sustainable development, especially climate stabilization, food security, coastal population development, pollution and degradation of marine and coastal ecosystems and their effect on the production dynamics of marine economy sectors.
- The global investment trend in ocean sciences (measured by the share of the annual national research budget allocated to marine technology), by country, is fluctuating and declining overall. In 2021, it amounted to just 1.14% of total research and development expenditure, which is far too little.
- In 2017, 50% of the world's ocean science publications came from countries in Europe and North America, while Latin America and the Caribbean accounted for only 6.6%.

## > Key findings and indicators for Latin America and the Caribbean

- Only eight countries (the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras and Peru) reported on the indicator on investment in ocean sciences between 2013 and 2021. Of these countries, only Colombia reported values for the entire period.
- Excluding Ecuador and Peru, the most recent records on national investment in ocean science and technology as a share of total research and development (R&D) expenditure (2013–2021) is an order of magnitude lower than the global average (~0.1% vs. 1.1%).
- Ecuador and Peru are notable exceptions (3% in 2021 and 5.8% in 2016, respectively), with figures much higher than the global and regional average.

- Ocean science publications in the region exceeded the global average (47.6 papers per million people) in 14 countries and doubled it or more in 7 countries. Some SIDS, such as The Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada and Saint Kitts and Nevis, produce ocean science research 3 to 8 times higher than the regional average (46.9) and the global average (see figure 6).

**Figure 6**  
Latin America and the Caribbean (14 countries): publications on ocean sciences, 2010–2014  
(Number of papers per million inhabitants)



**Source:** Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. (2024). CEPALSTAT. <https://agenda2030lac.org/estadisticas/banco-datos-regional-seguimiento-ods.html?lang=en> and Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2017). *Global Ocean Science Report: The Current Status of Ocean Science around the World*. UNESCO Publishing.



## Recommended action



**Substantially increase investment in ocean research**, especially for developing technical and operational capabilities, in emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence for fisheries monitoring, clean energy for maritime transport, and molecular tools for studying biodiversity and product traceability. Investment should include training programmes aimed at developing productive chains, a blue economy, and the mainstreaming of environmental planning, land and sea-use planning, and public investment management. These efforts may be accelerated through public-private partnerships with universities, technology centres and local communities.



**Promote a regional scientific and research agenda on marine ecosystems**, prioritizing topics such as pollution, acidification, ocean warming, biomass, deep-sea mining, ecosystem restoration, regenerative aquaculture and inclusive marine tourism. This agenda must be supported by monitoring networks coordinated with international, regional and subregional cooperation, and efforts to strengthen scientific diplomacy in order to identify baselines for long-term monitoring of different indicators, innovative solutions, and the tracking of progress in the blue economy. An example of this is the expedition of the Tara Oceans vessel around the Southern Cone to improve knowledge about marine biodiversity and climate change.



**Strengthen technical, operational, political and prospective (TOPP)** capacities to manage marine knowledge, coordinate stakeholders, facilitate cooperation and anticipate scenarios. This approach will help to link productive development with environmental sustainability and design more effective and inclusive public policies for coastal and marine territories.

# Artisanal fishers and their access to marine resources and markets



GOAL 14.b

This target is focused on providing access for artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets through better and more inclusive governance, increased revenues and the promotion of legal frameworks that are aligned with sustainability while leaving no one behind. In comparison to large-scale industrial fisheries, small-scale fishing activities give more people jobs, are an essential component of food security, keep prices at affordable levels, are more efficient in terms of tons of fish caught per volume (in litres) of hydrocarbon fuel consumed and receive fewer subsidies. Artisanal fishing is also an integral part of local and traditional knowledge in many communities. In addition, it is highly profitable in social terms and provides a livelihood to the members of local communities and to the women who work in some of the activities making up its value chain.

## > What is happening?

- Various studies estimate that small-scale fishing accounts for between 25% and 38% of the total catch worldwide.
- Small-scale fishing generates a smaller volume of discards and uses very little biomass for the production of fishmeal and fish oils, as its output is primarily used for human consumption.

## > Key findings and indicators for Latin America and the Caribbean

- In Latin America and the Caribbean, 34.2% of the marine catch, by volume, is accounted for by artisanal and subsistence fishing. In the Caribbean, artisanal fishing represents 51.9% and subsistence fishing 30.5% of the total. In Mexico and Central America, the corresponding figures are 43.2% and 1.6%, respectively, and in South America, they are 34.4% and 0.3%, also respectively.
- In 2022, nearly 1.5 million people worked in artisanal fishing activities in South America, with women making up 40% of that number. Almost 57,000 people were formally employed in artisanal aquaculture, of whom 17% were women.
- In all, 75% of the artisanal catch in the region comes from Mexico, Chile and Peru.
- In 2019, artisanal and subsistence fishing represented over 80% of the catch in the following countries in the region: Haiti (99%), Jamaica (99%), Dominican Republic (95%), Antigua and Barbuda (95%), the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (87%) and Cuba (81%).
- In their latest reports, 24 countries indicated that, in 2018–2024, they had achieved one or the other of the two highest implementation categories for inclusive and sustainable legal frameworks that facilitate artisanal fishers' resource access. Eight countries have made progress while seven have experienced a retrogression (see table 3).

**Table 3**

Latin America and the Caribbean (29 countries): degree of implementation of the legal/regulatory/policy/institutional framework recognizing and protecting access rights for small-scale fisheries, 2018, 2020, 2022 and 2024

País	2018	2020	2022	2024
Antigua and Barbuda	5	5	5	5
Argentina	3	3	3	3
Bahamas (The)	2	2	2	2
Belize	5	5	5	5
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	3	3	3	3
Brazil	4	4	4	4
Chile	2	2	2	2
Colombia	3	3	3	3
Costa Rica	3	3	3	3
Cuba	2	2	2	2
Dominica	3	3	3	3
Ecuador	4	4	4	4
El Salvador	2	2	2	2
Grenada	3	3	3	3
Guatemala	3	3	3	3
Guyana	3	3	3	3
Honduras	2	2	2	2
Jamaica	3	3	3	3
Mexico	2	2	2	2
Nicaragua	2	2	2	2
Panama	3	3	3	3
Peru	2	2	2	2
Dominican Republic	3	3	3	3
Saint Kitts and Nevis	3	3	3	3
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	2	2	2	2
Suriname	3	3	3	3
Trinidad and Tobago	3	3	3	3
Uruguay	2	2	2	2
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	3	3	3	3

**Source:** Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, on the basis of Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2024). FAOSTAT. <https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/SDGB>.

**Note:** Categories 1 through 5 (lighter shades denote a lower degree of application, while darker ones denote a higher degree of application).

## > Recommended action

- ✓ **Ensure exclusive access for artisanal fishing communities to fishing zones or specific resources** by instituting regulations that clearly promote multi-stakeholder management schemes for strengthening governance. These regulations should be paired with socially constructed mechanisms and instruments that will provide assured access to fisheries for artisanal and subsistence fishers, support greater resource recovery and raise living standards in coastal territories in line with the principles of territorial equity and sustainability. Multi-stakeholder co-management success stories are to be found in, for example, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica and Mexico.
- ✓ **Further the development of artisanal fishery production linkages by promoting the formation of sustainable** clusters of fishers, processing industries, research centres and public agencies to generate added value, a more equitable distribution of profits and the creation of decent, resilient jobs with the support of environmental certifications, financing and sound regulatory frameworks.
- ✓ **Increase the level and transparency of economic incentives for artisanal fisheries** by improving beneficiary records and promoting measures that facilitate access to sustainable markets, differentiated certifications, such as the Fishery Improvement Project (FIPs) and Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), and fair trade conditions for artisanal fishers.



GOAL 14.c

# Promote sustainable ocean governance based on international law

This target focuses on the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and governs the use of the maritime space and the rights of States. Its implementation is of key importance in strengthening marine cooperation at the national, regional and global levels. As envisaged in the framework Convention, various international treaties and agreements have been developed that are crucial for the regulation of access and the ecological integrity of the ecosystem and marine resources of the oceans and seas. The Latin American and Caribbean region has shown great interest in ocean-related multilateral treaties, although there is room for further progress in this regard.

## > What is happening?

- The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea was adopted in 1982 and has been ratified or acceded to by 167 countries and the European Union; 19 countries have not signed it and another 13 have signed but not ratified it. All the countries of the region are party to it except the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Colombia, El Salvador and Peru.
- The Convention has given rise to a number of treaties on specific issues. The Regional Seas Programme coordinates efforts across 18 conventions, 4 of which are relevant for the region. The Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (the Cartagena Convention) has three protocols: the Protocol Concerning Cooperation in Combating Oil Spills in the Wider Caribbean Region; the Protocol Concerning Land-based Sources of Pollution; and the Protocol on Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife. There is also the Convention for Cooperation in the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Marine and Coastal Areas of the Northeast Pacific (known as the Antigua Convention). The Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and Coastal Area of the South-East Pacific (Lima Convention) covers the marine environment and coastal areas between Colombia and Chile. Finally, the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources provided for the establishment of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources. The Commission's 27 members include Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Ecuador (see table 4).
- One or more Latin American and/or Caribbean countries are members of 12 (25%) of the regional fisheries management organizations (RFMO) in the world that are recognized by Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).
- The International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, adopted in 1973 is composed of a protocol and six annexes that address different pollutants; 85% of the countries of the region have signed at least five of those six annexes.
- The 2023 Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction governs the area-based protection of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, the equitable sharing of marine genetic resources, capacity-building and marine technology transfer. It has been signed by 111 States and ratified by 50 of them (as of June 2025); 10 more ratifications are needed in order for it to enter into force.
- The United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement focuses on the long-term conservation and management of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks and thus constitutes another tool for combating IUU fishing.

## > Key findings and indicators for Latin America and the Caribbean

- Barbados, Chile and Uruguay are the only countries in the region to have ratified all five of the key instruments dealing with IUU fishing activities: the Convention on the Law of the Sea, the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement, the Port State Measures Agreement, the Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas and the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies (2022).
- Belize, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru and Uruguay are each member of between six and seven regional fisheries management organizations.
- Ten of the 32 countries in the world that have backed a moratorium or precautionary pause on deep-sea mining are countries of the region: Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama and Peru.
- As of June 2025, 11 countries of the region had ratified the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction and 16 had ratified the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies. If all the countries of the region were to ratify or accede to these instruments, both of them would enter into force.
- Fifteen marine and/or coastal areas in Latin America and the Caribbean are United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) natural world heritage sites: 7 of these are in the Pacific region, 5 in the Caribbean and 3 in the Atlantic region.

**Table 4**  
Latin America and the Caribbean: conventions and protocols in the Regional Seas Programme, June 2025

Country	Antigua Convention	Lima Convention	Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources	Cartagena Convention		
				Oil spills	Specially protected areas and wildlife	Land-based sources of pollution
Antigua and Barbuda						
Argentina						
Bahamas (The)						
Barbados						
Belize						
Brazil						
Chile						
Colombia						
Costa Rica						
Cuba						
Dominica						
Ecuador						
El Salvador						
Grenada						
Guatemala						
Guyana						
Haiti						
Honduras						
Jamaica						
Mexico						

Country	Antigua Convention	Lima Convention	Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources	Cartagena Convention		
				Oil spills	Specially protected areas and wildlife	Land-based sources of pollution
Nicaragua						
Panama						
Peru						
Dominican Republic						
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines						
Santa Lucia						
Saint Kitts and Nevis						
Suriname						
Trinidad and Tobago						
Uruguay						
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)						

**Source:** Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, on the basis of Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission. (n.d.). *Antigua Convention*. <https://www.iattc.org/en-us/About/Antigua-Convention>; Organization of American States. (n.d.). *Lima Convention*. <https://www.oas.org/ext/en/main/oas/our-structure/agencies-and-entities/citel/about/details/artmid/4087/articleid/3842/categoryid/483?categoryname=%25e2%2580%258bcconvenios-interamericanos>; Commission for the conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources. (n.d.). *Acceding States*. <https://www.ccamlr.org/en/organisation/acceding-states>; and United Nations Environment Programme. (2025). *Cartagena Convention: Status of Ratification*. <https://www.unep.org/cep/who-we-are/cartagena-convention>.

## > Recommended action

- ✓ **Consolidate a multilateral legal governance framework for oceans to support sustainable blue development.** The region has a wide-ranging multilateral institutional framework, but countries differ in terms of the extent of the commitment involved, which diminishes its effectiveness in dealing with cross-border challenges such as overfishing, marine pollution, the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and structural inequality. Increased ratification or accession to international treaties would strengthen the region's leadership position in ocean diplomacy and enhance its ability to play an influential role on an equal footing in negotiations and decision-making about the global ocean commons. This would also make it possible to more actively promote the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. Examples include the moratorium on deep-sea mining, the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction and the international treaty on plastic pollution.
- ✓ **Harmonize national and subnational policy and regulatory frameworks with international treaties.** Integrate production, environmental and social policies that will facilitate a system-wide transformation of marine production practices in order to build inclusive, coherent and resilient blue economies in line with their geographic and institutional context. This will entail addressing existing gaps in the implementation of these agreements and mobilizing international cooperation and climate and marine financing.
- ✓ **Strengthen the multi-stakeholder management of marine resources by advancing towards an RFMO system** and improve coordination among countries through bilateral and multilateral agreements. Jointly manage shared fishery resources and promote public-private partnerships by providing programmes for building technical and legal capacities and encouraging genuine participation.

*Blue horizon 2025* offers an up-to-date summary of the progress made and challenges faced by the region in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 14 on the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. It provides a compilation of key indicators that shed light on the strategic importance of the ocean in terms of well-being, the economy and sustainable development, together with a selection of key findings regarding each of the SDG 14 targets, in order to contribute to the Latin American and Caribbean countries' understanding of existing trends, gaps and opportunities.

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) offers this document as a tool for decision-making and transformative policymaking to promote the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, regional cooperation and efforts to build capacity and strengthen the oceanic sciences with a view to the consolidation of a sustainable, inclusive and resilient blue economy.

A more detailed analysis and the full bibliography are available in Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (2025). *Panorama del océano, los mares y los recursos marinos y su contribución al desarrollo sostenible de América Latina y el Caribe* (LC/TS.2025/30).

