



WWF

BRIEFING

2018



Principles for a Sustainable **BLUE ECONOMY**

The PURPOSE of the PRINCIPLES

During the past few years, the term “Blue Economy” or “Blue Growth” has surged into common policy usage, all over the world. For some, Blue Economy means the use of the sea and its resources for sustainable economic development. For others, it simply refers to any economic activity in the maritime sector, whether sustainable or not.

Despite increasing high-level adoption of the Blue Economy as a concept and as a goal of policy-making and investment, there is still no widely accepted definition of the term.

To fill this gap in shared understanding about what characterizes a sustainable Blue Economy, and to help ensure that the economic development of the ocean contributes to true prosperity, today and long into the future, WWF has developed a set of “Principles for a Sustainable Blue Economy.” The Principles offer:

- **A clear definition** of a *sustainable* Blue Economy. This definition makes it clear that the Blue Economy must respect ecosystem integrity, and that the only secure pathway to long-term prosperity is through the development of a *circular* economy.
- **Guidance on governance.** The Principles describe how a sustainable Blue Economy must be steered and managed, by public as well as by private actors, at every scale.
- **A set of necessary actions.** This section of the Principles describes what needs to be done, by every stakeholder, if a sustainable Blue Economy is to be realized.



Photo: Jürgen Freund / WWF

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The Principles are also harmonized with relevant United Nations agreements, including the Sustainable Development Goals, other widely adopted principles for sustainable corporate and organizational governance, and with established understanding of related concepts such as Green Economy and circular economy.

WWF urges all Blue Economy actors to use these Principles to ...

- **Communicate** about the Blue Economy with stakeholders in decision-making processes, as well as in educational or awareness-raising settings.
- **Guide decision-making** about the Blue Economy in both the public and private sector.
- **Inform assessment processes** that track progress in developing a sustainable Blue Economy.
- **Support stakeholder dialogues** with a common definition and frame of reference on the Blue Economy.
- **Mobilize commitment by government and all relevant stakeholders** to the vision of a sustainable Blue Economy ... and act to turn that vision into reality.



Photo: WWF / James Morgan

Humanity increasingly understands that we are an integral part of the marine ecosystem, and that we must plan and implement our economic activities with care.

Principles for a SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY

The world's oceans, seas, and coastal areas are the largest ecosystems on the planet and a precious part of our natural heritage. They are also vital to the livelihoods and food security of billions of people around the world, and to the economic prosperity of most countries.

The ability of these marine environments to provide jobs and nutrition over the long term is, however, already under pressure from human economic activities; and it is being further threatened by development approaches that are fragmented, uncoordinated, and often in conflict with what science tells us is physically possible or ecologically sound.

Fortunately, many governments, organizations and communities in both developed and developing countries are

becoming aware of the need for a more coherent, integrated, fair, and science-based approach to managing the economic development of the oceans. Humanity increasingly understands that we are an integral part of the marine ecosystem, and that we must plan and implement our economic activities with care, balancing the desire to improve human living standards and wellbeing with the imperative to sustain ecosystem health¹. Active leadership is needed, in both the public and private sectors, to steer the Blue Economy in a sustainable direction. This includes delivering on commitments already made – globally, regionally, nationally and locally.

To ensure that the economic development of the ocean contributes to true prosperity and resilience, today

and long into the future, with special recognition of the needs of developing countries, WWF is proposing the following Principles for a Sustainable Blue Economy.

These Principles provide a definition of a Sustainable Blue Economy and a roadmap to help us get there. They are universal and can be applied to any part of the oceans, seas or coasts, as well as used by any actor involved in the economic development of the sea, including governments, private and financial sector actors, international agencies, and civil society groups.

WWF invites all Blue Economy actors to use these Principles for a Sustainable Blue Economy and to embed these definitions, descriptions, and actions into marine policy and activities, all around the world.

¹ Goal 14 of the Sustainable Development Goals reads: "Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development." Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, United Nations, 2015.

A SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY is a marine-based economy that ...

- **Provides social and economic benefits for current and future generations**, by contributing to food security, poverty eradication, livelihoods, income, employment, health, safety, equity, and political stability.
- **Restores, protects and maintains the diversity, productivity, resilience, core functions, and intrinsic value of marine ecosystems** – the natural capital upon which its prosperity depends.
- **Is based on clean technologies, renewable energy, and circular material flows** to secure economic and social stability over time, while keeping within the limits of one planet.

A SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY is governed by public and private processes that are ...

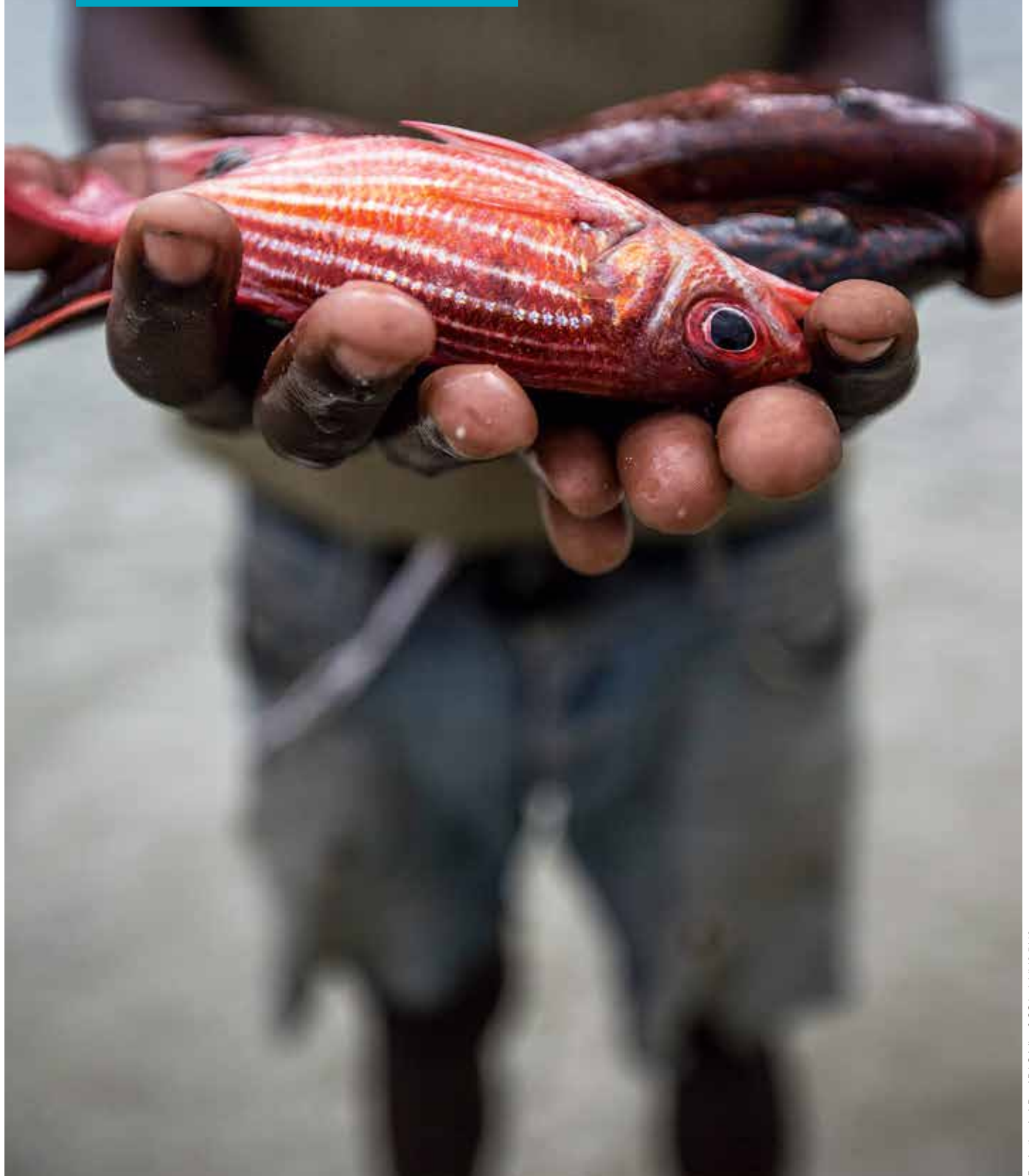
- **Inclusive**. A Sustainable Blue Economy is based on active and effective stakeholder engagement and participation.
 - **Well-informed, precautionary and adaptive**. Decisions are based on scientifically sound information to avoid harmful effects that undermine long-term sustainability. When adequate information and knowledge are missing, actors take a precautionary approach, actively seek to develop such knowledge, and refrain from undertaking activities that could potentially lead to harmful effects. As new knowledge of risks and sustainable opportunities is gained, actors adapt their decisions and activities.
 - **Accountable and transparent**. Actors take responsibility for the impacts of their activities, by taking appropriate action, as well as by being transparent about their impacts so that stakeholders are well-informed and can exert their influence.
 - **Holistic, cross-sectoral and long-term**. Decisions are based on an assessment and accounting of their economic, social and environmental values, benefits and costs to society, as well as their impacts on other activities and across borders, now and in the future.
- **Innovative and proactive**. All actors in a Sustainable Blue Economy are constantly looking for the most effective and efficient ways to meet the needs of present and future generations without undermining the capacity of nature to support human economic activities and wellbeing.

To create a SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY, public and private actors must ...

- **Set clear, measurable, and internally consistent goals and targets for a Sustainable Blue Economy**. Governments, economic sectors, individual businesses and other actors must all set relevant and measurable goals and targets for a Sustainable Blue Economy to provide their planning, management and activities with a clear direction. Goals and targets for different economic, social and ecological areas – as well as related policies and activities – must be made as integrated and coherent as possible, to avoid conflicts and contradictions.
- **Assess and communicate their performance on these goals and targets**. The goals and targets for a Sustainable Blue Economy must be regularly monitored and progress communicated to all stakeholders, including the general public, in a transparent and accessible way.
- **Create a level economic and legislative playing field that provides the Blue Economy with adequate incentives and rules**. Economic instruments such as taxes, subsidies and fees should be aimed at internalizing environmental and social benefits, costs and risks to society. International and national laws and agreements, including private agreements, should be framed, implemented, enforced, and continuously improved in ways that support a Sustainable Blue Economy.
- **Plan, manage and effectively govern the use of marine space and resources, applying inclusive methods and the ecosystem approach**. All relevant uses of marine space and resources must be accounted, planned, managed and governed through forward-looking, precautionary, adaptive and integrated processes that ensure the long term health and sustainable use of the sea, while also taking into account human activities on land. Such processes must be participatory, accountable, transparent, equitable and inclusive, in order to be responsive to present and future human uses and needs, including the needs of minorities and the most vulnerable groups in society. To make informed trade-offs, such processes should also use appropriate tools and methods to capture the range of benefits that ecosystem goods and services can bring to different stakeholders.
- **Develop and apply standards, guidelines and best practices that support a Sustainable Blue Economy**. All actors – including governments, businesses, non-profit enterprises, investors and consumers – must develop or apply the global sustainability standards, guidelines, best practices, or other behaviors that are relevant to them. For organizations, application of such standards should not only ensure that their activities are conducted in a responsible way, but also improve their own performance and competitiveness, today and in the future.
- **Recognize that the maritime and land-based economies are interlinked and that many of the threats facing marine environments originate on land**. To achieve a Sustainable Blue Economy in the seas and coastal regions, land-based impacts to marine ecosystems must be addressed and actors must also work to promote the development of a sustainable green economy on land.
- **Actively cooperate, sharing information, knowledge, best practices, lessons learned, perspectives, and ideas, to realize a sustainable and prosperous future for all**. All actors in a Sustainable Blue Economy have a responsibility to participate in the process of implementation, and to reach out across national, regional, sectorial, organizational, and other borders, to ensure collective stewardship of our common marine heritage.

A SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY

To ensure that the economic development of the ocean contributes to true prosperity and resilience, today and long into the future, WWF is proposing the following Principles for a Sustainable Blue Economy.



The Ocean in Numbers

100%
RECYCLED



2/3

Two-thirds of the base economic value of the ocean is produced by assets that rely on healthy ocean conditions.

US\$24TN

The overall value of key ocean assets is more than US\$24 trillion.



7TH

Based on the gross marine product, the ocean is the 7th largest economy in the world.

2050

At current rates of temperature rise, coral reefs will disappear by 2050.



Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

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