*Abstract No. 01*

# GREENING THE BLUE ECONOMY: SOUTH ASIA'S PERSPECTIVES FOR GOOD OCEAN GOVERNANCE

M. Imali Udeshika Manikarachchi[1*], Lawrence P. Hildebrand[2] and K.H.H Niroshana[3]

[1] Ocean University of Sri Lanka, NARA Road, Colombo 15, Sri Lanka.
[2] World Maritime University, Sweden.
[3]University of Ruhuna, Matara, Sri Lanka.

hashanniro@yahoo.com

The purpose of this work is to review the commitments of the coastal South Asian countries towards a sustainable Blue Economy in terms of national, regional and international initiatives. The Rio declaration and the Agenda 21 have embraced the importance of national and international level implementations of institutional frameworks, regulations and standards as roads to sustainable development. The Blue Economy concept, which is about building a sustainable ocean based economy, is quite new to South Asia, even though a number of maritime industries are currently practiced. South Asia being home to 1.7 billion people and one of the poorest regions in the world, its shared marine resources face challenges due to resource overexploitation, over population, habitat degradation and climate change. To join the regime of International Ocean Governance for a greener Blue economy, South Asia seeks solutions in terms of management plans, regulations and collaborative approaches. In this study, the national, regional and international perspectives of major coastal countries of the South Asian region, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Maldives are considered. In most South Asian countries at national levels, the constitution supports the provisions for safeguarding the natural environment as a whole. Initiatives in the context of Integrated Coastal Zone Management and Marine and Coastal Protected Areas have also been put in place. However, recent studies have revealed that concerns such as poor financial allocations, governance issues, duplication of responsibilities, un-harmonized policies, lack of coordination and evaluation capacities have hampered the performance of national initiatives. The secretariat of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the South Asia Cooperative Environment Program (SACEP) are the main organizations dealing with environmental issues at regional level. Other than that, The South Asian Seas Action Plan (SASAP) of the UNEP Regional Seas Program is operated under the SACEP and several other programs such as The South Asia Coral Reef Task Force (SACRTF), The Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem (BOBLME) Program and the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) dedicate their efforts for conservation and management of marine ecosystems and living resources.

**Continued on next page**

**Continued**

South Asian countries are parties to some major international environmental treaties. All the coastal States are signatories to the UNCLOS 1982, Part I, II and V of MARPOL, FAO CCRF, CBD, UNFCCC conventions while none or few countries have ratified important conventions such as HNS, OPRC, and Dumping. Since most coastal South Asian countries have mixed legal systems with common law system, the ratifications are not enforceable until the applicable domestic laws are enacted. When implementing their agreed international commitments, South Asian countries perform at both regional and local levels. All of them have declared national institutional structures to address environmental issues in a comprehensive way and some countries have well established specific legislations for mitigating marine environmental issues such as marine pollution. The study concludes that the framework for South Asian regional good Ocean Governance can be strengthened by establishing domestic integrated marine policies, strong political willingness, adequate quantitative research to formulate marine sector-wise national databases and uniform ratification of international agreements.