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INFORMATION DOCUMENT

PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GEF LME:LEARN PROJECT

Summary.

This document provides an overview of the activities implemented within the LME:LEARN project, which is executed by IOC of UNESCO, implemented by UNDP and financed by GEF. The IOC Assembly expressed its support at its 27th session (IOC-XXVII/Dec.5.4.4) for this project and the leading role of IOC as executing agency of LME:Learn. The period covered by the report is March 2016 – June 2017.

Background information

1. The goal of the project “Strengthening Global Governance of Large Marine Ecosystems and Their Coasts through Enhanced Sharing and Application of LME/ICM/MPA Knowledge and Information Tools” (LME:LEARN) is to improve global ecosystem-based governance of Large Marine Ecosystems and their coasts by generating knowledge, building capacity, harnessing public and private partners, and supporting south-to-south learning and north-to-north learning. The project will aim to meet this through identifying the priority issues affecting governance of the LMEs, along with their associated coastal zones, and marine protected areas, as well as their underlying root causes, and by integrating these in a global ecosystem-based governance framework founded on global coordination and cooperation. This 3-year project (March 2016-March 2019) will establish a dynamic global support network for the GEF LME, MPA, MSP, ICM and coastal and marine climate change adaptation projects practitioners with a view to increasing the capacity of countries to realize adaptive ecosystem-based management and governance. The project aims to achieve a multiplier effect using demonstrations of learning tools and toolboxes, to aid practitioners and other key stakeholders, in conducting and learning from GEF projects. Components of the LME:LEARN, as stated in the ProDoc, are:

- Component 1: Establish global and regional network of partners to enhance ecosystem-based management and to provide support for the GEF and non-GEF LME/ICM/MPA/MSP/climate change adaptation projects to address their needs and incorporate climate variability and change;
- Component 2: Synthesise and incorporate knowledge on LMEs into policy-making, capture best LME governance practices, and develop new methods and tools to enhance the management effectiveness of LMEs;
- Component 3: Strengthen capacity and partnership building through twinning and learning exchanges, workshops, and training among LMEs and similar initiatives; and
- Component 4: Communicate and disseminate GEF LME/ICM/MPA/MSP/climate change adaptation project achievements and lessons learned to practitioners and general public.
- Component 5: Project Management

2. A Project Coordination Unit (Component 5) was established, jointly with the IW:LEARN project, at the IOC-UNESCO to coordinate the networks and experience sharing and learning partners and to provide overall management of the LME:LEARN project. GEF has earmarked a grant of 2.5 M US\$ for the implementation of this project. In order to comply with GEF requirements, co-financing more than 13 M US\$ was secured.

3. The implementation of LME:LEARN started with the Steering Committee/Inception Workshop meeting that took place in March 2016. LME:LEARN PCU is joined by several partners (IUCN, Conservation International, ICES, UNEP/GRID), which have been well integrated in the implementation of the specific project activities. In addition to that, the LME:LEARN is strongly supported by the U.S., which is participating actively in project oversight and on the project's working groups through National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) of the U.S. Government's Department of Commerce. Several working groups of the project have been established (Governance; Ecosystem Based Management; Data and Information Management), each one of them actively involving larger number of stakeholders in the implementation of project's activities.

4. The objectives of the LME:LEARN directly contribute to High Level Objective 1: Healthy Ocean Ecosystems and Sustained Ecosystem Services, of the Draft IOC Medium-Term Strategy for 2014–2021 (IOC-XXVII/2 Annex 3), by building local and regional capacities, in terms of knowledge and tools, for implementing ecosystem based approaches in the marine environment. The project will respond to the priority areas contained in the ICAM strategy endorsed by the IOC Assembly at

its 26th session, particularly Strategic Objective1: Increase our collective capacity to respond to change and challenges in coastal and marine environments through further development of such science-based management tools as Integrated Coastal Area Management (ICAM), Marine Spatial Planning (MSP), Ecosystem-based Management (EBM), and Large Marine Ecosystems (LME). Finally, since the LME:LEARN project has a strong emphasis on capacity development, it will be harmonised with the IOC Capacity Development Strategy (IOC-XXVII/2 Annex 10). IOC Regional Sub-Commissions (IOCARIBE, WESTPAC, and IOCAFRICA) will also lead a number of project activities in their respective regions, and will facilitate the establishment of regional networks in their respective regions (Component 1) .

Expected outcomes of the project

5. The expected outcomes (results) of the Component 1 are:

- Outcome 1.1: Enhanced network of partners working to provide consistent management and ecosystem-based methods and technical support to GEF-LME/ICM/MPA/MSP projects.
- Outcome 1.2: Increased interaction between GEF- LME, MPA, MSP and ICM projects and other marine and coastal initiatives supported by GEF and partner organizations.
- Outcome 1.3: Increased collaboration and coordination between GEF-LME, ICM, MSP and MPA projects and partners, within the geographic boundaries of LMEs.
- Outcome 1.4: Progress towards fully integrated 'ridge to reef' ecosystem-based management of freshwater and marine transboundary water systems, based on good governance practices, through increased generation of knowledge and enhanced coordination between GEF-IW surface and LME and ICM projects.

6. On 6-8 December, 2016 a major annual meeting took place in the premises of UNESCO/IOC in Paris. The 18th Annual LME Consultative Meeting was attended by more than 130 participants from more than 50 countries, and a large number of national and international organisations. The meeting contributed to the development of the LME Partnership by engaging marine, coastal management, biodiversity and coastal and marine climate change adaptation project leaders. The meeting also provided an opportunity to discuss the contribution of GEF and other marine projects to the implementation of the Agenda 2030, particularly SDG 14 as well as other SDGs, in light of the forthcoming UN Conference on SDG 14 implementation to take place in June 2017.

7. During the 18th Annual LME meeting, a special parallel Regional Networks' session involving representatives from three LME regions, where the activities of the LME:LEARN will be focused (Latin America and the Caribbean; Asia; and Africa,) took place. Following the meeting, a note on the modalities of regional networks' activities in 2017 was prepared and it was discussed with IOC regional commissions' secretaries who will be managing by three regional networks with a technical and logistical support of the LME:LEARN PCU. The next Africa Regional Network Meeting is scheduled for for 3-4 August 2017 in Zanzibar, Tanzania. The Latin America and Caribbean Regional Network Meeting is tentatively scheduled for early October 2017 in Cartagena, Colombia.

8. The second Steering Committee Meeting (jointly with IW:LEARN) took place in Washington, DC, U.S.on 1-2 June 2017.

9. The expected outcomes (results) of the Component 2 are:

- Outcome 2.1: GEF LME/ICM/MPA/MSP projects equipped with new tools that incorporate ICM, MPAs and climate variability and change.
- Outcome 2.2: Innovative approaches captured and available for use by LME, MPA, MSP and ICM practitioners in LME governance.

- Outcome 2.3: LME/ICM/MPA/MSP projects accessing and using the tools to address the emerging priorities and new requirements for GEF.
- Outcome 2.4: Facilitate the exchange of experiences between LMEs on data and information management issues, and promote the development of common data management approaches for LME/ICM/MPA/MSP projects.

10. The agreements were signed with ICES, CI and IUCN, and all three partners have started implementation of the activities. The first step in that direction was the discussion on related outputs during the LME:LEARN Project Meeting, which took place on 5 – 6 December 2016 (preceding the Annual LME meeting, mentioned above). The meeting participants, gathered within three working groups of the project (Governance; Ecosystem Based Management; and Data and Information Management), focused their discussions on the contents of several toolkits that these partners will prepare.

11. Considerable progress has been achieved in drafting the Governance Toolkit. Special value of this endeavour is active participation of numerous stakeholders in developing it. The Governance Working Group met during the SDG14 Conference on 8-9 June 2017. It discussed the progress and agreed on the format of the toolkit, modalities of harmonisation with other toolkits (with a view to developing the same format for all toolkits), and inspected possible case studies to be included in the toolkit.

12. TORs for the remaining 6 toolkits were prepared and respective contracts have been signed. and the consultants selected. It is expected that all toolkits will be completed before the end of 2017, when the preparation of respective training modules will start. The training modules will serve as the basis for training activities within the three regions that the LME:LEARN is focusing its activities on.

13. The project data base is being developed by IOC/IODE. A survey was conducted with the objective of getting the response of the potential users on the data base structure. The results of the survey were presented during the LME Annual meeting. PCU has organized a meeting of the Data and Information Management Group in Oostende (20-21 April 2017) where major partners (IODE, GRID, IUCN) have discuss how to integrate several LME:LEARN products (data base, Google layers, web site) into one integrated and easily accessible portal. The marine domain of the IW:LEARN web site has been developed to serve as the platform for all the services to be offered through LME:LEARN. In addition, IUCN is preparing the outreach product addressed to the wider public. The initial structure of the product was presented at the meeting.

14. The expected outcomes (results) of the Component 3 are:

- Outcome 3.1: Increased collaboration and learning exchanges South-to-South between the GEF LME, MPA, MSP and ICM projects, and North-to-South and South-to-North partnerships with non-GEF marine and coastal initiatives (e.g. Seascapes) to build capacity and develop training and education materials.
- Outcome 3.2: GEF LME/ICM/MPA/MSP practitioners trained in new techniques and approaches for ecosystem-based 5-modular assessment, management and governance practices for ecosystem and mitigation of effects of climatic variability and change in LMEs.
- Outcome 3.3: Increased capacity of GEF LME, ICM, MSP and MPA project staff and practitioners, to address the new ecosystem-based governance priorities in GEF6 built through portfolio learning, partnerships, and training.

15. The recruitment process to hire the IW:LEARN/LME:LEARN Deputy Project Manager/Training and Twinning Specialist has been concluded. It took somewhat longer time than expected to complete because of the unusually large number of applicants (178). The selected applicant assumed her duties by end of May 2017.

16. The preparation of the guide on planning and implementing capacity development (carried by Conservation International) is progressing and the first draft is expected to be delivered soon. This guidebook will also provide instructions for facilitating twinning and learning exchanges.

17. Twinning exchange is being encouraged in several regions. Opportunities were sought for and the first regional twinning meeting took place in Bogor (Indonesia) in April 2017. All 13 regional LMEs were present and strong interest was expressed to continue with this initiative. The forthcoming Regional Networks' meeting will also be an opportunity to solicit the twinning proposals. It is expected that the twinning proposals will be finalised in early 2018 and that the first activities will start soon after.

18. The work has started on the development of the training strategy. In addition to examining the reach of the training modules that will be developed on the basis of the governance and EBM toolkits, the strategy will review all other LME relevant training opportunities and recommend those that will be most useful for the LME community to utilise.

19. The consultant has been hired to assist PCU in preparation of the global conference on ecosystem management and ocean governance (to be held in Cape Town, South Africa on 27 November – 1 December 2017). It is the LME:LEARN activity focused on identifying ways and means of how science could impact ocean governance. For this purpose, a meeting was organized in Paris to discuss the preparations for the conference with the participation of several LME:LEARN partners. The Steering Committee discussed the matter further in Washington. The conference will be organised jointly with the UN Environment' Regional Seas Programme and FAO. It will be organised in association with the Volvo Ocean Race, which will give global visibility to the LME community. It is expected that 150-200 participants will attend the conference. The basic structure and agenda of the conference has been already prepared and it has already been discussed with all interested partners.

20. During the Sustainable Ocean Summit, organized by World Ocean Council in Rotterdam (30 November – 2 December 2016), LME:LEARN had organized a session “ Engaging the Ocean Business Community in Regional Ocean Governance”. The session brought together the maritime business community and the coastal and ocean management and governance community who shared their thoughts, concerns and visions for a more fully interactive and collaborative management approach to regional ocean governance with full stakeholder involvement. Also, representatives of four LME projects were present. During the session, the participants identified modalities for a ‘way forward’ for these two communities to adopt a closer partnership and mechanism for dialogue and negotiation. This issue was largely taken over to the Annual LME Meeting in December 2016 (organised a week after in Paris), where participants discussed, among other, the issues of the blue economy as well as innovative financing, which are highly relevant for private sector engagement in LME governance.

21. The expected outcomes (results) of the Component 4 are:

- Outcome 4.1: Communication of results to stakeholders, increased awareness of LME issues and engagement in networks through global and regional LME /COPs
- Outcome 4.2: Strategy developed for showcasing LME and ICM assessment and governance best practices among project partners, stakeholders, resource managers, broader scientific community, government representatives, private companies, universities, schools and the public.
- Outcome 4.3: Global policy discussions informed and impacted by knowledge and experience of GEF- ecosystem based LME/ICM/MPA/MSP governance project.

22. Work is progressing on development of the marine portal. Several activities are taking place in parallel, namely (1) migration of the contents of the previous IW:LEARN web site to the new one, which includes the marine and LME related content, (2) compilation of information on new LME, MPA, ICM, MSP and climate change adaptation projects, and (3) updating the current information

on projects and partners. This activity is carried out by UN Environment/GRID but the PCU is very actively involved in its implementation. A consultant has been hired to assist the PCU. A weekly skype meeting with GRID are being held.

23. The new IW:LEARN web site has been designed, which also includes the marine domain (marine.iwlearn.net). The marine domain has been regularly been updated with the new resources and information that is of interest for the LME community.

24. LME:LEARN has participated at the UN Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14. The Project Manager attended the preparatory meeting, held in mid-February 2017 in New York and the Conference Secretariat accepted the proposal for the LME:LEARN side event during the conference. LME:LEARN PCU, together with IOC/UNESCO and UNDP, organised the event on 6 June 2017. The event was attended by more than 70 participants. The panel, comprised of representatives of LMEs as well as of IOC/UNESCO and GEF Secretariat, gave answers to the questions posed by the moderator. During the lively debate, the participants gave several proposals, namely to enhance the cooperation with other regional bodies, such as UN Environment's Regional Seas Programme; to utilise marine management tools such as MSP; to improve ocean observation.

25. On the occasion of the conference, PCU published a brochure "The Large Marine Ecosystems Approach: An Engine for Achieving the SDG14". The brochure has been printed in 1000 copies and widely distributed.

26. The LME:LEARN is interacting closely with the IW:LEARN in sharing the experiences and best practices. Very attractive newsletter has been published with the assistance of GRID. This practice will be continued.