

A Study of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in the Dredging Sector

In preparation for the CEDA Dredging Days Sustainability Panel session held in May 2024, the CEDA Strategy Commission requested a study to be carried out on the extent to which SDG's are being used as a voluntary reporting tool by CEDA members. The aim was to understand which SDG's were already being referenced and to what extent any other relevant SDG's could be considered in future reporting. The study's findings were presented and discussed in the Environmental Committee. It should be noted that reporting on SDG's is voluntary, CEDA members are responsible for their own reporting systems and are thus free to adopt alternative sustainability criteria and tools.

By adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, all 193 UN Member States committed to the pursuit and realisation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's). Our study seeks to shed light on the extent to which CEDA members have integrated the SDG's within their business strategies and communication, as well as identify opportunities within the sector for further alignment with the Goals. Some of the key findings of the underlying study are set out below.

- Of the 35 member organisations that publicly stated their commitment to the SDG's, most demonstrate a good understanding of the goals, the opportunities and risks they present, and how they can contribute to their advancement.
- In general, CEDA members report more thoroughly and extensively on SDG's concerned with more project-related environmental and economic issues - such as Climate Action, Life Below Water, and Decent Work and Economic Growth. SDG's related to social issues such as No Hunger, No Poverty, Gender Equality, and Reduced Inequalities were less prominent in reporting.
- Sustainability leaders within the researched companies said this disparity was rooted in a historical focus - particularly through government regulation - on matters such as biodiversity loss, greenhouse gas emissions, pollution and air quality. By comparison, the general understanding of social issues, effective ways to measure progress, and their intersection with environmental concerns, is still developing.
- There is a growing belief that, with this increase in understanding, social topics are becoming a greater priority for dredging organisations.
- A general shortfall was observed in the linking of organisations' own targets on sustainability matters back to their stated priority SDG's. Complexity in developing SMART KPI's and determining relevant SDG sub-targets was cited as a reason for this.
- It was observed that engagement with internal and external stakeholders in the process of defining priority SDG's can be improved, with less than half of the 35 sampled companies doing so. However, there is widespread consensus within the sample on the value of such engagement.
- New EU reporting regulations represent a challenge for voluntarily integrating the SDG's within organisations' sustainability reporting while also meeting the requirements from Brussels. Despite this disconnect, sustainability leaders believe the SDG's remain valuable for organisations as a "common language" to guide their sustainability efforts, demonstrate commitment, and drive progress.

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