



GESAMP

Joint Group of Experts on the
Scientific Aspects of Marine
Environmental Protection

GESAMP 39/6
6 April 2012
ENGLISH ONLY

39th session

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE UN REGULAR PROCESS

**Note by Lorna Inniss and Alan Simcock
Joint Coordinators, Group of Experts of the Regular Process**

Introduction

1 This document is to provide an up-date to GESAMP on what is happening on the Regular Process. One or both coordinators hope to be able to attend the GESAMP meeting in New York on Thursday 19 April or Friday 20 April in order to answer questions.

Background

2 As explained to GEAMP in May 2011:

- .1 the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2002, recommended that there should be a "Regular Process under the United Nations for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects" (the "Regular Process");
- .2 the UN General Assembly accepted this recommendation, and organised a number of international workshops to consider the practicalities;
- .3 in 2006, the UN General Assembly set up a Group of Experts to carry out an initial stage – an Assessment of Assessments;
- .4 the Assessment of Assessments reported in 2009, with an analysis of over 500 assessments of the marine environment carried out around the world, conclusions on what is best practice for such assessments and recommendations on how to structure the regular process;
- .5 an Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole of the UN General Assembly considered the report and submitted recommendations to the UN General Assembly, which in December 2009 endorsed the overall framework of overall objective, scope, guidance on capacity-building, guiding principles and a description of the first cycle of assessment, the goal of which was agreed to be "integrated assessment of the oceans, including agreed priority cross-cutting thematic issues such as food security" by 2014. No agreement was reached on institutional matters, but a Group of Experts was set up to do some further preparatory work;
- .6 a further meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group in September 2010 considered the institutional arrangements further. In the event, the Group of Experts set up in 2009 was asked to continue as the Group of Experts of the Regular Process and to prepare a set of options for implementing the Regular Process. The Group of Experts does not have a chair, but its work is facilitated by two joint co-ordinators; and

- .7 in February 2011, the Ad Hoc Working Group considered the set of options submitted by the Group of Experts. The Ad Hoc Working Group's recommendations, endorsed by the UN General Assembly in April 2011, agreed certain organisational points, asked States to comment by 30 April 2011 on some aspects of the set of options submitted by the Group of Experts, asked the Group of Experts to prepare revised documents on the basis of those comments, and arranged for a further meeting on 27 and 28 June 2011.

Progress since May 2011

3 It is agreed that, under the UN General Assembly, the main decision-making forum for the Regular Process should be the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole, which will be open to all UN Member States and Observers, to competent intergovernmental organisations and to non-governmental organisations with consultative status with ECOSOC.

4 Agreement has been reached that there should be a Bureau of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole, consisting of two Co-Chairs and three members from each of the five General Assembly regional groups (Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean and Western Europe and Other). A quorum would be one Co-Chair and one member from each regional group. The exact functions of the Bureau remain to be agreed, but the expectation is that it will be able to take some decision on behalf of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole.

5 The Group of Experts of the Regular Process has been appointed until the end of 2012. Decisions are needed on what should then happen. General consensus has been reached on the terms of reference and methods of work of the Group of Experts, but final approval is still needed. The Group will, in effect, be responsible for managing the production of the First Global Integrated Marine Assessment, subject to approval of some major decisions by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole or its Bureau. One or more members of the Group of Experts will have overall responsibility for each chapter of the First Global Integrated Marine Assessment, and collectively they will be responsible for the Assessment as a whole.

6 Agreement has been reached on the creation of a Pool of Experts to work with the Group of Experts. The General Assembly has approved the criteria for the selection of experts, and States have been invited to nominate experts, in fields suggested by the Group of Experts, through the General Assembly regional groups, to serve as members of this pool of experts. The first nominations have been made. It is clear that members of the pool of collaborators (like members of the Group of Experts) will have to work largely on a *pro bono publico* basis (that is, without specific remuneration), and that their institutions will need to allow them time and support to do so, although support may be available for experts from developing countries if resources permit.

7 The Division of Ocean Affairs and Law of the Sea of the UN Secretariat has been designated as the Secretariat of the Regular Process, with other competent UN agencies and programmes invited to give technical and scientific support. IMO, UNEP and UNESCO/IOC have nominated focal points, and other agencies are expected to do so.

8 Funding is still highly uncertain. No real progress has been made since the last report to GESAMP, when we explained that some States have indicated their readiness to provide funding as and when a clear and effective set of arrangements have been agreed, and some UN agencies and programmes have indicated their readiness to support the Regular Process in various ways. IOC and UNEP have done so.

9 Agreement has been reached that regional workshops are needed to involve experts in the different regions and create a dialogue between the Group of Experts and regional experts. Guidelines for these workshops have been agreed. Two workshops have so far been held:

- (a) at Santiago, Chile, for the South-Eastern Pacific; and
- (b) at Sanya, China, for Eastern and South-Eastern Pacific Seas.

10 Further workshops are being organised for the North Atlantic and the Baltic, Black and Mediterranean Seas (in Belgium in June, 2012), for the Wider Caribbean (probably in Miami, USA, in July, 2012) and for the South-Western Pacific (in Australia, probably also in July, 2012). Yet further workshops are probable, including one for the Eastern Indian Ocean. The regional organisations for the Arctic and Antarctic will also be consulted by correspondence.

Methods of Work

11 As has been explained, final decisions remain to be made on the terms of reference and methods of work of the Group of Experts of the Regular Process. General consensus seems to have been reached on much of this, however and the broad outline remains (as reported to GESAMP last year):

- .1 agreement of the outline of the First Integrated Assessment;
- .2 agreement of a Guide for Authors (a draft of which was part of the February set of options);
- .3 preparation of working papers on each of the issues identified under each chapter of the outline, in many cases with a series of regional working papers, with a later synthesis working paper based on them. These working papers would be produced by a Lead Drafter (or a team of Lead Drafters), commented on by a panel of consultants designated by the Group of Experts, and revised by the Lead Drafter(s);
- .4 preparation of draft chapters on the basis of the working papers by Lead Drafter(s), with again comment by a panel of consultants and revision by the Lead Drafter(s);
- .5 production of the first draft of the First Integrated Assessment by the Group of Experts, based upon the draft chapters;
- .6 peer review of the first draft by both:
 - .1 national authorities and intergovernmental organisations; and
 - .2 independent peer-reviewers for each chapter designated from among experts who have not previously been involved;
- .7 revision by Chapter Editors (who would be either members of the Group of Experts or Lead Drafters) in the light of peer-review comments; and
- .8 adoption of the final version by the Group of Experts.

Outline of the First Integrated Assessment

12 Part of the set of options produced by the Group of Experts for the February 2011 meeting was a possible outline for the First Integrated Assessment. The Ad Hoc Working Group agreed in February 2011 that States should comment on this by 30 April 2011 and that the Group of Experts should produce a revised version by the end of May 2011. This revised version was considered briefly by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole in June 2011, and a

further opportunity was given to States to comment. A further revision has been produced (available on the DOALOS website (<http://www.un.org/Depts/los/index.htm>)), and this will be considered by the Ad Hoc Working Group on 23 – 27 April 2012.

13 There are five main general issues for discussion:

- .1 ***the scope of the First Global Integrated Marine Assessment:*** some States believe that the Outline should be restricted to a smaller range of issues, in order to facilitate its production. Other States consider that all relevant issues should be considered, even if in at a very high-level, in order to give an indication of priorities;
- .2 ***the structure of the First Global Integrated Marine Assessment:*** some States appear still to query the value of looking separately at ecosystem services, human activities that impact on the marine environment and species and habitats, and want a single integrated assessment. Other States seem not to want the Group of Experts to attempt an overall assessment;
- .3 ***the treatment of responses to the state of the marine environment:*** it is clear that States do not want any discussion of policies towards the marine environment. Equally, some States want to see the use of the analytic approach of Drivers – Pressures – State – Impact – Response (DPSIR), which implies looking at the way in which responses have had consequences for the marine environment. It is not clear how these different wishes can be reconciled;
- .4 ***capacity-building:*** there is a division of opinion on how far the First Global Integrated Marine Assessment should go in assessing capacity-building needs. Some States would want such assessment restricted to needs for capacity-building for assessment (including integrated assessment). Others would like to see also assessment of capacity-building needs for management; and
- .5 ***treatment of economic and social aspects:*** there is concern whether the assessment of economic and social aspects is being given sufficient emphasis.

14 There are also a number of specific issues on the drafting of the Outline. These seem, however, to be largely points of detail.

Conclusion

15 The development of the Regular Process thus continues to be slow. Last year, there was hope that major structural issues would soon be resolved. Some significant issues, however, still remain to be settled. Nevertheless, progress has been made in spite of this – the regional workshops have started, as has recruitment to the Pool of Experts.

16 The timetable will almost certainly have to be revised to allow a later completion of the First Global Integrated Marine Assessment, but the overall target of delivering it by the end of 2014 still seems achievable, provided that agreements on the remaining major issues can be reached at the meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on 23 – 27 April 2012.

Action requested of GESAMP

17 GESAMP is invited to consider this report, to comment on it and to take any action as appropriate.