



# GESAMP

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

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42nd session  
Agenda item 2

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## REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF GESAMP

### Introduction

1 GESAMP expresses its thanks to IOC of UNESCO, the host of the 42nd session of GESAMP for their hospitality and in particular Dr. Luis Valdes for the organisation of the session.

### Work programme

2 The main focus of GESAMP since the 41st session has been on the planned activities of the Working Groups. Continuing support from the UN Sponsoring Agencies, supplemented with funding from other sources, is essential to allow this core work to continue and deliver high quality outputs that are appreciated by the target audience and a much wider user-group. The support from the UN Sponsoring Agencies is greatly appreciated and GESAMP urges that this level of support should be maintained and, if at all possible, increased. The independence, credibility and cost-effectiveness of the GESAMP model are well recognised.

### Correspondence groups

3 In recent years inter-sessional correspondence groups have addressed several important issues to help evaluate whether these are areas GESAMP may wish to develop further. These include:

- .1 the effects of hypoxia, including possible endocrine effects;
- .2 bio-magnification of contaminants and potential effects on ecosystem and human health;
- .3 the potential impact of disinfection by-products (DBP) in the marine environment; and
- .4 the impacts of mine tailings in the marine environment. A GESAMP International Workshop on *'the impacts of mine tailings in the marine environment'* took place in Lima, Peru, in June 2015 (see section 7).

### GESAMP Office

4 GESAMP welcomes Ms. Chrysanthe Kolia as the new GESAMP Administrative Coordinator, to provide support for the GESAMP Office. This should provide an opportunity to address some of the issues - for example, around improved communication and maintenance of the website - raised during the 41st session. Ad hoc requests for GESAMP advice or support have been steadily increasing in recent years and this trend has continued since the 41st session. Requests range widely in topic area, and it is encouraging to see that GESAMP is seen as a source of reliable information and advice. However, each enquiry takes time to respond to and this puts an additional load on the GESAMP Office and the GESAMP Chairman.

5 GESAMP risks losing the momentum of setting up the Pool of Experts (PoE) because of a lack of resources to maintain the website and the PoE application process. Several queries have been received from PoE members about their continuing involvement, and there have been several offers from well-qualified scientists to take part. But it is difficult to respond adequately in the present circumstances.

### **GESAMP and the wider international community**

6 GESAMP has been involved in the GEF-sponsored Transboundary Waters Assessment Programme (TWAP). The Task Team set up to produce a revised assessment of 'Pollution of the Open Oceans' has completed its report. The report focuses on the five-year period since the publication of GESAMP R&S 79 in 2009, which covered similar subject matter. It will be published by IOC according to a timetable aligned to the overall TWAP. Additional material was contributed to the web-based version of the report and the data portal.

7 The Chairman represented GESAMP at the Annual Science Conference of the North Pacific Marine Science Association (PICES) for the sixth successive year. The 2014 Conference took place in Yeosu, Republic of Korea. The Chairman co-chaired a one-day special session on marine litter, co-sponsored by ICES, PICES and GESAMP, with invited speakers from European and PICES nations. GESAMP has Observer status on the Marine Environmental Quality Committee (MEQ), covering a wide range of marine environment protection issues. MEQ have set up a Study Group on emerging issues, which complements GESAMP's Emerging Issues programme.

8 The Chairman represented GESAMP at the second meeting of the Ocean Acidification International Reference User Group (OA-iRUG) held at the Oceanographic Museum in Monaco <http://www.iaea.org/ocean-acidification/page.php?page=2198>. The RUG is chaired by Mr. Dan Laffoley of the IUCN, and is supported by Prince Albert of Monaco. The IAEA Marine Environmental Laboratory hosts the Ocean Acidification International Coordination Centre. The main activity has been the preparation a report '*Acting on ocean acidification – improving prospects by planning ahead*'. This was presented at the international scientific conference '*Our common future under climate change*' in Paris in July 2015, in advance of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference in Paris in November/December 2015.

9 The Chairman is a member of the Steering Committee of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML), advising UNEP DEWA on its implementation and the potential contribution of GESAMP.

### **Conclusion**

10 GESAMP continues to be recognised as a source of reliable and impartial science assessment and advice. This accolade can only be maintained if there is sufficient support and financial backing to provide a vibrant programme, providing a cost-effective service for the Agencies and responding to requests from external bodies to contribute GESAMP experience and expertise. There appear to be two components to ensuring GESAMP can thrive: i) for the Agencies to commit to supporting GESAMP both in terms of sponsoring Members to attend the annual Session and offering financial support for working group and other ad hoc activities; and ii) to pursue partnerships between UN Agencies and external funding bodies such as industry, Foundations, intergovernmental bodies, national governments and NGOs.

### **Action requested of GESAMP**

11 GESAMP is requested to note the information provided and comment as appropriate.