



GESAMP

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

GESAMP 43/2
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ENGLISH ONLY

43rd session
Agenda item 2

REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF GESAMP

Introduction

1 The main focus of GESAMP, since the 42nd 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

2 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. Currently these include:

- .1 bio-magnification of contaminants and potential effects on ecosystem and human health;
- .2 the potential impact of disinfection by-products (DBP) in the marine environment;
- .3 the impacts of mine tailings in the marine environment;
- .4 the impacts of residues of chronic oil spills; and
- .5 sargassum accumulations in the western and eastern mid-Atlantic.

3 These will be reported upon during the current session.

GESAMP Office

4 The Chairman would like to acknowledge the continuing efficient and enthusiastic support of the GESAMP Office, in particular the contribution of Chrysanthe Kolia as the GESAMP Administrative Coordinator, to provide support for the GESAMP Office. This has provided an opportunity to improve communication and maintenance of the website. The Office continues to receive ad hoc requests for GESAMP advice or support, and it is encouraging to see that GESAMP is seen as a source of reliable information and advice.

5 As stated at the 42nd session, GESAMP risks losing the momentum of setting up the Pool of Experts (PoE). Until recently there has been a lack of resources to maintain the website and the PoE application process. GESAMP needs to decide on whether the present model of

maintaining a PoE is appropriate. The Office is open to suggestions as to how the PoE application process and communication with registered experts might be improved.

GESAMP and the wider international community

6 The 17th Annual Large Marine Ecosystem (LME) Consultative meeting took place at IOC-UNESCO in Paris (29 September to 2 October 2015). The Chairman took part and contributed to a Panel Discussion on emerging issues in ocean health. It proved a good opportunity to strengthen links with a number of LME and other regional organisations.

7 The GESAMP Chairman received invitations to represent GESAMP at several meetings with a regional focus, including: PICES (North Pacific Marine Science Association); HELCOM (The Baltic Marine Environmental Protection Commission); ROPME (Regional Organisation for Protection of the Marine Environment, the Kuwait Convention); and, the Ny-Ålesund symposium on sustainable development in the Arctic.

8 GESAMP has observer status on the PICES Marine Environmental Quality Committee (MEQ), which covers 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. The 2015 PICES Annual Science Conference (ASC) took place in Qingdao, eastern China (15 to 23 October). There is growing interest in the work of GESAMP in the PICES community (Canada, China, the Japan, Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, the United States) and the GESAMP Chairman was invited to give a presentation to the PICES Science Board as well as MEQ. There were several sessions of direct relevance to GESAMP and these have been reported separately. A number of China-based scientists were identified as potential contributors to GESAMP and its working groups. The 2016 PICES ASC will take place after the 43rd GESAMP session. GESAMP has agreed to co-sponsor a special session on hydrocarbon contamination but circumstances are likely to rule out GESAMP participation this year.

9 The Chairman attended a Stakeholder Conference on marine litter, organised and supported by HELCOM (Helsinki, March 2016). This provided an opportunity to describe the findings of GESAMP WG 40 on microplastics.

10 The Chairman took advantage of his attendance at the 2nd United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-2, Nairobi, May 2016) to take part in a number of workshops relevant to current GESAMP activities, including marine litter and sargassum outbreaks. It also presented an opportunity to make or renew contacts with several key international and regional partner organisations, NGOs and national environment ministries. These included a representative of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions (BRS). Closer ties with the BRS, and equivalent organisations, are most welcome.

11 Following UNEA-2, the Chairman was invited to attend the 17th meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea. The topic was 'Marine debris, plastics and micro-plastics'. The Chairman gave a presentation on microplastics, via teleconference, partly based on the outcome of WG 40.

12 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.

13 There is to be a UN Conference in 2017 to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG14) in as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. GESAMP has been asked to be part of the Advisory Group to the Co-hosts of the conference, Fiji and Sweden. So far there has been one meeting attended by teleconference.

Conclusion

14 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

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