



GESAMP

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

GESAMP 43/5
29 October 2016
ENGLISH ONLY

43rd session
Agenda item 5

CONTRIBUTIONS TO OTHER UN PROCESSES

Briefing paper on UN-Oceans

Submitted by the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea,
Office of Legal Affairs

Overview of UN-Oceans

1 UN-Oceans (United Nations Oceans and Coastal Areas Network) was established by the Chief Executives' Board for Coordination in 2003 in the follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002) to respond to the call addressed to the Secretary-General to establish an effective, transparent and regular inter-agency coordination mechanism on ocean and coastal issues within the United Nations system. UN-Oceans held its first meeting in Paris in January 2005.

2 In 2013, in its resolution 68/70 on oceans and the law of the sea, the General Assembly approved new terms of reference for UN-Oceans as an "inter-agency mechanism that seeks to enhance the coordination, coherence and effectiveness of competent organizations of the United Nations system and the International Seabed Authority, within existing resources, in conformity with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the respective competences of each of its participating organizations and the mandates and priorities approved by their respective governing bodies". There are currently twenty four members of UN-Oceans. All sponsoring organizations constituting the Executive Committee of GESAMP are members of UN-Oceans (for full membership, see www.unoceans.org).

3 The United Nations Legal Counsel/Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea is the focal point of UN-Oceans and in that capacity also performs secretariat functions for UN-Oceans. While the General Assembly has been calling for financial earmarked contributions to the trust fund established by the Secretary-General for the Office of Legal Affairs to support the promotion of international law, to support among others, travel associated with the performance of the functions of the focal point, to date no contributions have been made.

4 Under the revised terms of reference, the mandate of the UN-Oceans is to, among others:

- (a) Strengthen and promote coordination and coherence of United Nations system activities related to ocean and coastal areas;
- (b) Regularly share ongoing and planned activities of participating organizations within the framework of relevant United Nations and other mandates with a view to identifying possible areas for collaboration and synergy;
- (d) Facilitate inter-agency information exchange, including sharing of experiences, best practices, tools and methodologies and lessons learned in ocean-related matters.

5 In support of its mandate and work, the UN-Oceans may set up time bound ad hoc assignments to facilitate coordination on specific issues, open to all organizations of UN-Oceans. It has

done so, for example, for the coordination of activities relating to the convening of the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, which took place in Samoa in 2014. In November 2016, UN-Oceans will be organizing a side event, entitled “Science based solutions for achieving adaptation and mitigation goals”, at the twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 22) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

6 A noteworthy achievement of UN-Oceans includes the launch in June 2016 of an inventory of mandates and activities of its members. This inventory, which is available on the UN-Oceans’ website is expected to assist States and other stakeholders in clarifying what are the various mandates and priorities set out by Member States on ocean related issues and which United Nations organizations or entities are entrusted with supporting their implementation. The inventory is expected further to assist UN-Oceans members in identifying possible areas for collaboration and synergy and allow for a more effective and better coordinated response to the mandates and priorities approved by the respective governing bodies of UN-Oceans members. From consulting the inventory, States would also be in a position to determine the technical assistance and other support available from UN-Oceans’ members for the implementation of relevant instruments.

7 In order to ensure transparency and accountability, in line with the terms of reference, the focal point of UN-Oceans has presented to meetings of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (ICP) a progress report on UN-Oceans’ activities, and its biennial work programmes. Its recent biennial work programme covers the period from 2016 to 2017 (see the attached).

Possible relevant work of UN-Oceans to GESAMP

8 UN-Oceans works through face-to-face meetings, as well as teleconferences. The reports of the UN-Oceans meetings, as well as other relevant documents, are all available on the website of UN-Oceans (www.unoceans.org).

9 In the most recent face-to-face meeting held on 25 August 2016, UN-Oceans members considered, among other issues; (1) UN-Oceans inventory: identification of synergies and areas of collaboration; (2) UN-Oceans side event at COP 22 of UNFCCC; (3) development of metadata for the indicator for target 14.c of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and (4) UN-Oceans Side Event at the High-Level United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14. Members also exchanged information, including updates on: the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects; the second session of the Preparatory Committee established by General Assembly resolution 69/292: Development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (for additional details, see input to the Report of the Administrative Secretary of GESAMP); the UN Atlas of the Oceans; and the World Oceans Day Portal.

Sustainable Development Goal 14

10 The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes a stand-alone SDG 14 with a number of targets and means of implementation which may be relevant for the work of GESAMP. SDG target 14.a calls on stakeholders to increase scientific knowledge, develop research capacity and transfer marine technology [...], in order to improve ocean health and to enhance the contribution of marine biodiversity to the development of developing countries, in particular small island developing States and least developed countries. Another relevant target is 14.c, which reads as follows:

“Enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources, as recalled in paragraph 158 of ‘The future we want’.”

11 UN-Oceans has worked in a collaborative manner to identify an encompassing indicator to assess the implementation of this target. The agreed upon indicator reflects the fact that implementation of target 14.c cannot be advanced without cooperation and coordination among all relevant sectoral organizations and bodies of the UN system and the International Seabed Authority. The indicator reads as follows:

“Number of countries making progress in ratifying, accepting and implementing through legal, policy and institutional frameworks, ocean-related instruments that implement international law, as reflected in the United Nation Convention on the Law of the Sea, for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and their resources”.

12 UN-Oceans and its members are also actively engaged in the preparations for the United Nations Conference to support the implementation of SDG 14 which will take place in New York, from 5 to 9 June 2017. In particular, UN-Oceans has discussed how to best contribute to the preparation of documents for the Conference including a background note and concept papers on the themes of the partnership dialogues, which will be agreed upon by Member States at a preparatory meeting to be convened in February 2017. The Conference will be organized around plenary sessions and seven (7) partnership dialogues. Each of the dialogues will be chaired by two co-chairs with a moderator and up to four panellists (for details, see General Assembly resolution 70/303).

Action requested of GESAMP

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

ANNEX

UN-Oceans work programme 2016-2017

I. UN-Oceans mandate

1. UN-Oceans is an inter-agency mechanism that seeks to enhance the coordination, coherence and effectiveness of competent organizations of the United Nations system and the International Seabed Authority, within existing resources, in conformity with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the respective competences of each of its participating organizations and the mandates and priorities approved by their respective governing bodies.
2. Pursuant to its terms of reference,¹ UN-Oceans is mandated to:
 - (a) Strengthen and promote coordination and coherence of United Nations system activities related to ocean and coastal areas;
 - (b) Regularly share ongoing and planned activities of participating organizations within the framework of relevant United Nations and other mandates with a view to identifying possible areas for collaboration and synergy;
 - (c) Facilitate, as appropriate, inputs by its participating organizations to the annual reports of the Secretary-General on oceans and the law of the sea and on sustainable fisheries to be submitted to the Secretariat;
 - (d) Facilitate inter-agency information exchange, including sharing of experiences, best practices, tools and methodologies and lessons learned in ocean-related matters.

II. Activities in 2016-2017

A. Sharing of information on ongoing and planned activities of participating organizations within the framework of relevant United Nations and other mandates with a view to identifying possible areas for collaboration and synergy

1. Updating of the inventory of mandates and activities approved by the respective governing bodies of UN-Oceans participating organizations with a view to identifying on-going and planned activities in respect of those mandates and activities, and continued development of the online platform to enhance its user friendliness *[ongoing]*
2. Maintenance of the calendar of intergovernmental meetings, conferences and expert workshops related to oceans and coastal issues, and sharing of information on planned activities, for example in relation to the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and Sustainably Use the Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources for Sustainable Development, New York, 5 -9 June 2017 *[ongoing]*
3. Sharing of information on activities in preparation for, and during, the second cycle of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects *[ongoing]*

¹ General Assembly resolution 68/70, Annex.

4. Development of a World Oceans Day portal for sharing of information on planned events to mark World Oceans Day 2017

B. Strengthening and promotion of coordination and coherence of United Nations system activities related to ocean and coastal areas

1. Supported by the inventory of mandates, priorities and on-going and planned activities, continued identification, by UN-Oceans members, of possible areas for collaboration and synergy [*December 2016*]
2. Organization of joint activities, where appropriate and feasible, to mark World Oceans Day 2016 and World Oceans Day 2017, including at the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, Conserve and Sustainably Use the Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources for Sustainable Development, New York, 5 -9 June 2017 [*8 June*]
3. Organization of UN-Oceans side events at relevant ocean-related meetings, including HLPF meetings and other high-level events in relation to Sustainable Development Goal 14 and other relevant SDGs
4. Contributing to the follow-up and review process of the HLPF as regards Sustainable Development Goal 14 targets and indicators
5. Supporting the preparation of metadata for the indicator for target 14.c and related data collection²
6. Providing other inputs, as mandated, to assist in the implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including Sustainable Development Goal 14 and other relevant Goals and the SAMOA Pathway

C. Facilitation of inputs by UN-Oceans participating organizations to the annual reports of the Secretary-General on oceans and the law of the sea and on sustainable fisheries

1. Contributing to the preparation of the annual report of the Secretary-General on the topics of focus of the meetings of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea
2. Contributing to the second part of the annual report of the Secretary-General on developments in ocean affairs and the law of the sea during the period 31 August 2015 to 31 August 2016 and 31 August 2016 to 31 August 2017

² The indicator for target 14.c is found in the Final list of proposed Sustainable Development Goal indicators, as Annex IV of the Report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, E/CN.3/2016/2/Rev.1, available at <<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/47th-session/documents/2016-2-SDGs-Rev1-E.pdf>>. Other relevant information concerning Sustainable Development Goal indicators is also found on the website of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators <<http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/>>.

3. Consideration of ways to contribute to the review of the terms of reference of UN-Oceans by the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, including through, as appropriate, the preparation of a document on lessons learned

D. Facilitation of inter-agency information exchange, including sharing of experiences, best practices, tools and methodologies and lessons learned in ocean-related matters

1. Exchange of information and case studies on experiences, best practices, tools and methodologies and lessons learned utilizing different mechanisms, such as the “LME:LEARN” Platform
 2. Continually supporting and providing guidance for the development and update of the UN Atlas of the Oceans
-