



GESAMP

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

GESAMP 44/2
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44th session
Agenda item 2

REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF GESAMP

1 This has been another busy and productive period for GESAMP. The main focus, since the 43rd session, has been on the planned activities of the Working Groups. The support from the UN Sponsoring Organizations 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, and the continuing delivery of high quality outputs are appreciated by the target audience and a much wider user-group. This can only be maintained with continuing support from the UN Sponsoring Organizations, financially and in-kind. It was encouraging to see the efforts being made to maintain or increase this support by agencies, but also to note the success in securing funding from a diverse range of sources for particular working group activities.

2 In recent years intersessional correspondence groups have addressed several important issues, to help evaluate whether these are areas GESAMP may wish to develop further. Currently these include:

- CG 1 - The environmental impact of disinfection by- products
- CG 2 - The impacts of chronic hydrocarbon contamination
- CG 3 -The causes and impacts of massive outbreaks of *Sargassum* seaweed in the Caribbean, Brazil and West Africa
- CG 4 - The impact of pharmaceutical and other novel chemicals in wastewater
- CG 5 - The extent and impacts of onshore and offshore sand mining

3 These are discussed further under agenda Item 7.

4 The Chairman wishes to acknowledge the continuing efficient and enthusiastic support of the GESAMP Office, The Chair wishes to record his personal appreciation of the contribution Edward Kleverlaan made to GESAMP as Technical Secretary for IMO and to wish him a happy retirement. Congratulations are due to Fredrik Haag who has succeeded Edward and we look forward to Fredrik's successor being in place shortly so the Office is back to full strength. The Office continues to receive ad hoc requests for GESAMP to contribute to UN, intergovernmental and regional initiatives, as well less formal requests for advice or support. It is encouraging to see that GESAMP is seen as a source of reliable information and advice.

5 The status of the Pool of Experts and efforts to maintain and improve communication with those experts who have shown an interest in GESAMP have been discussed at recent GESAMP sessions but without resolution. The Office would welcome suggestions on how communication might be improved.

GESAMP and the wider community

6 The United Nations SDG14 Ocean Conference was the most important event to have occurred in relation to GESAMP's mission, since the 43rd Session. It took place from 5 to 9 June 2017 in New York. The Chairman was invited as a panel member at the first Partnership Dialogue plenary sessions covering marine pollution. There was considerable interest, with the main focus on marine plastic litter, although the Chairman did attempt to place this in a broader environmental

protection context. There were several other invitations to present at or attend side events concerned with marine litter, regional governance and the role of science in policy development. The importance of linking SDG14 with other SDG goals was emphasised on several occasions. The conference presented an excellent opportunity to raise GESAMP's profile to a varied global audience, including discussion with the Environment Ministers of Norway, Sweden and Indonesia, and the Chairman is grateful to IMO for supporting his attendance.

7 The Chairman was invited to attend the consultation on the implementation of the EAF Nansen science programme, hosted by FAO in February 2017. This programme provides the opportunity of making observations of ocean physics, chemistry and biology, and extend environmental monitoring of contaminants, to areas of the ocean that are less well frequented by commercial and research vessels, as well as improve local capabilities. This applies in particular to the west coast of Africa, the east coast of South America and the southern Indian Ocean, in the next 2- 3 years. This may also provide opportunities to identify regional experts in relation to GESAMP's existing or future work programme.

8 The Chairman attended a workshop on microplastics in seafood at the invitation of FAO, in December 2016, in support of the UN Environment-funded initiative to produce a report on this important topic. This was a good opportunity to make sure that the work of WG40 was well integrated.

9 The Chairman attended one workshop of the G7 (Rome, with Regional Seas organisations) and two workshops of the G20 (Hamburg, Bremen) in relation to the preparation and implementation of their respective Action Plans on marine litter. Contacts made at these meetings have led to agreements from NOWPAP, the Environment Ministry of Japan and the State Ocean Administration of China to each sponsor one member for the third phase of WG40.

Action requested by GESAMP

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 Sponsoring Organizations to commit to supporting GESAMP both in terms of sponsoring Members to attend the annual Session and offering financial support for working groups and other ad hoc activities; and ii) to pursue partnerships between Sponsoring Organizations and external funding bodies such as industry, foundations, intergovernmental bodies, national governments and NGOs.
