



GESAMP

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

GESAMP 46/2
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ENGLISH ONLY

46th session
Agenda item 2

REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF GESAMP

1 This has been another productive period for GESAMP whose main focus, since the 45th session, has been on the planned activities of its working groups WG 34, WG 40 and WG 41 had reports published in the Reports & Studies Series and WG 1 and WG 42 have reports ready for publication. A new working group on sea-based sources of marine litter was formed during the inter-sessional period, co-led by FAO and IMO which will be holding its second meeting at the end of October.

2 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 has been 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.

3 In recent years inter-sessional correspondence groups (CGs) have addressed several important issues, to help evaluate whether these are areas GESAMP may wish to develop further. A new CG was agreed at the 44th Session to update the estimate of the relative importance of land- and sea-based sources of pollution (the 80:20 conundrum) and a substantive draft text is available for discussion under agenda item 7.

4 The Chair wishes to acknowledge the continuing efficient and enthusiastic support of the GESAMP Office, including the contribution of Ms. Chrysanthe Kolia as the GESAMP Administrative Coordinator, to provide support for the GESAMP Office. The Office continues to receive *ad hoc* requests for GESAMP to contribute to UN, intergovernmental and regional initiatives, as well as less formal requests for advice or support from the media and the education sector. It is encouraging to see that GESAMP is seen as a source of reliable information and advice.

GESAMP and the wider community

5 The GESAMP Chair attended a meeting of the UN Ad hoc Open-Ended Expert Group on marine plastic and microplastics, held in Geneva in December 2018 (supported by UN Environment).

6 The Chair attended the 4th UN Environment Assembly in Nairobi, in March 2019 (supported by UN Environment and IMO), making a number of contributions related to marine litter and plastics.

7 The Chair co-chaired the Clean Oceans Panel at the UN Decade of Ocean Science 1st Preparatory meeting, held in Copenhagen in May 2019, and co-led a workshop on the same subject. The outputs from this event will be used to further develop plans for the Decade.

8 The Chair attended the 20th UN Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, held in New York in June 2019. The topic of the 20th meeting was Ocean

Science and the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. He gave a presentation on 'the use of science for advising the UN system' as part of a panel session, drawing on the example of how GESAMP has been doing this successfully for 50 years.

9 Invitations to attend a number of other international events during the year had to be declined due to a number of factors, including resource constraints.

Action 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 in-kind 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 group 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.

Final thoughts

11 This year marks the 50th anniversary of GESAMP and we will be celebrating that success this week. However, 2019 also marks the year we lost Joanna Toole, a wonderful colleague and friend from FAO. Joanna lost her life in March, one of the victims of the Ethiopian Airlines plane disaster, en route to Nairobi for UNEA 4. She was passionate about the environment, firstly working in an NGO and then becoming a contractor for FAO. She was the co-lead for the establishment of the new GESAMP working group 43, focussing on the impact of fishing gear on wildlife and fish resources. We are all determined to make a success of this working group as a token to Joanna, and to help carry on her mission.

12 It has been a privilege to serve as a Chair of GESAMP for the past six years. I wish my successor every success.
