



GESAMP

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

GESAMP 46/7/3
5 September 2019
ENGLISH ONLY

46th session
Agenda item 7

SCOPING ACTIVITIES

Scoping Paper to update the information on sources of the main pollutants impacting the global marine environment – “The 80:20 Conundrum”

Results from the Discussion of the 80:20 Conundrum Paper

Submitted by the co-leads of the Correspondence Group

1 This scoping paper was requested because GESAMP expressed concerns about the original source and accuracy of the 80:20 figures for Land-based versus Marine sources of pollution. GESAMP further noted that even if this were reliable figures forty years ago, it would almost certainly need revision for the current era.

2 In reviewing the existing data, it has become clear that defining any global or regional overall percentages for sources of ‘generic’ marine pollution or contamination is somewhat misleading exercise in view of:

- a) The very diverse range of contaminants and wide range in emissions volumes involved e.g. millions metric tonnes of plastic V Kgs of POPs V metric tonnes of petroleum hydrocarbons, as well as;
- b) The different levels of impact and potential toxicity to the environment e.g. Methane versus CO₂ as a GHG or mercury, versus FADs or microplastics)

3 The GESAMP Correspondence Group therefore concludes that a more valuable exercise would be to strengthen information on a selected suite of key marine pollutants at the global and possibly the regional level. This would help to identify:

- .1 much more accurate ranges for the percentages of land vs. sea-based sources of the selected pollutants;
- .2 gaps and emerging concerns regarding marine contaminants and pollutants’ as well as;
- .3 estimating trends such as increases or decreases of such contaminants and pollutants, while helping to;
- .4 identify the sources and causes of these changes

4 Should this scoping exercise continue or even migrate into a Working Group, it should systematically reach out (draw membership from?) other recognized science groups and programmes and thereby play an integrating role.

5 Meanwhile, there was strong opinion within the GESAMP membership that, if this WG is constituted and completes its work successfully, GESAMP should publicly utilize this new

assessment to disclose the inaccuracy and irrelevance of the original rough estimate of 80:20 which is now fairly well entrenched in both the popular and scientific literature, in favour of the more refined, contaminant-based estimates this analysis will deliver.

6 Furthermore, an update on the information on sources of the main pollutants impacting the global marine environment could be presented by GESAMP as a contribution to the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

Action requested of GESAMP

7 GESAMP is invited to consider the information provided and take action as appropriate.
