



GESAMP

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

GESAMP 47/2
27 August 2020
ENGLISH ONLY

47th session
Agenda item 2

REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF GESAMP

1 The Chair presented the work of GESAMP to the 21st Global Large Marine Ecosystems Consultative Meeting in Cartagena, Colombia, held from 18 to 20 September 2019, highlighting the activities and decisions of the 46th session of GESAMP in New York, which was also GESAMP's 50th Anniversary. He explained how useful GESAMP could be in advising the LMEs as well as the Regional Seas Programmes and the Regional Fisheries Management Bodies. He further noted GESAMP's role, in looking at all the scientific aspects related to marine environmental protection, as well as reviewing its scientific work and provide advice on adaptive management requirements and policy guidelines arising from its various findings and recommendations.

2 The Chair was involved in several planning meetings of Working Group 38, which proposed a workshop to showcase the Weight of Evidence process using emerging issues and current scientific data. This would focus, in the first instance, on the new information emerging from GESAMP WG 38 suggesting that it is most likely, given the evidence, that the major impacts of the kinds of changes arising from atmospheric inputs into the oceans, are more likely to occur in the open ocean and high seas areas. The workshop would focus on assessing the implications of this new scientific information, whether the data is strong enough to identify trends that deserve a management response, and what such a response might be. The workshop is titled "What is the potential role of atmospheric deposition in driving ocean productivity in the Madagascar Channel and Southwest Indian Ocean? - A case for an Adaptive-Dynamic Management approach within Large Marine Ecosystems". and was planned for in the third quarter of 2020. Due to the current travel restrictions as a result of COVID-19 this has now been postponed.

3 The Chair initiated two intersessional meetings at the request of the Members as follows:

- .1 **25 February 2020:** This included a series of updates from the various Working Groups, Task Teams and Correspondence Groups. The Members also discussed the current areas of expertise within GESAMP and the possibility to revise the Pool of Experts and the procedure for maintaining such a Pool. The Members also noted that they would wish to see a revision of the peer review process as the current review forms were considered to be too detailed and too onerous, adding considerable time to what is already often a demanding task of reviewing documents of up to 200 pages. The Members expressed the view that, rather than the review form, it should be replaced by guidelines for reviews which should take the form of Track Changes. It was noted that this would need to be raised with the GESAMP Office and Members asked that it should be included on the agenda of the 47th session.
- .2 **29 July 2020:** The main focus of this members' intersessional meeting was discussion about the Rules of Procedure which the ExCom members had reviewed and discussed in their intersessional in June 2020. ExCom had agreed to consider any comments arising from the membership regarding the RoP. One specific issue that arose was the use and meaning of the title 'Emeritus Member'. Some of the history was presented by those who are or have been Emeritus members. It was agreed that this title should be defined in the RoP under definitions and the

GESAMP Office would provide some wording for the Members to consider and approve. There was a useful discussion by the members regarding their experiences with virtual meetings and it was agreed that this could be a valuable contribution under AOB for the 47th session. . The status of the Correspondence Groups was also raised and the Members expressed the view that it would be appropriate for each Correspondence Group lead to provide findings and recommendations for the next steps to the 47th session.

4 A series of discussions and interactions arose both within the two intersessional meetings and in the period between, relating to the existing expertise among the membership and significant gaps in that expertise that they would wish to see filled. This detailed 'back-and-forth' was valuable and helped the Members to define areas they considered inadequately represented within the membership. These include Fisheries, Social Sciences, Climate Change Mitigation/Adaptation and general aspects of Marine Law (UNCLOS, Conventions, Treaties).

5 Following the second Intersessional there was a consensus among the Members on the value of the intersessional meetings both for updates on the status of activities and for raising new issues and concerns, and would like to see them continue as a worthwhile means of staying in touch between annual meetings.

6 The Chair also contributed to two ExCom intersessional meetings in February and in June 2020. During these, the status of the various Working Groups and Correspondence Groups was discussed. The main actions arising from both meetings related to further GESAMP involvement in the Sargassum issue and the need to finalise the drafting of the ROP.

7 The Chair also initiated several 'catch-up' sessions with the GESAMP Office throughout 2019 and 2020 in order to advance any decisions or concerns raised by either the Members or ExCom and to agree on the next steps.

8 The Chair was invited by the World Maritime University (WMU) to participate in the Third Workshop on Empowering Women for the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development taking place remotely on 28-30 September 2020. Following discussions with the GESAMP Office it was agreed that in this case Dr. Wendy Watson-Wright would be a more appropriate and more experienced representative for GESAMP.

9 GESAMP said farewell to two of its Members in 2020, Thomas Hoefer (Germany), and Ahmed Abu Hilal (Jordan). Thomas, who has been a Member since 2014, decided to retire from GESAMP. Thomas had been involved in a number of GESAMP issues and was particularly active in WG 1: The Evaluation of the Hazards of Harmful Substances Carried by Ships, including as its Chair. Ahmed, a Member since 2016, also sent his regrets as he had to resign from the from GESAMP due to health reasons. Prior to his resignation he completed the final draft of the Report of the Correspondence Group on the Impact of Armed Conflicts on the Marine Environment and Sustainable Development. GESAMP will need to discuss on how to make use of the advance report. We wish them both good luck going forward.

Action requested of GESAMP

10 GESAMP is invited to note the information provided, and comment as it deems appropriate.
