

**Administrative Committee  
on Coordination**ACC/1996/8  
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ENGLISH ONLY

INTER-AGENCY COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT (IACSD)REPORT OF THE ACC SUBCOMMITTEE ON OCEANS AND COASTAL AREAS  
ON ITS FOURTH SESSION

(London, 28-30 May 1996)

## CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraphs</u>	<u>Page</u>
I. MATTERS BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE INTER-AGENCY COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT .....	1	2
II. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS .....	2 - 35	3
A. Opening of the session .....	2 - 3	3
B. Agenda, timetable and documentation .....	4	4
C. Inter-sessional activities .....	5 - 8	4
D. Follow-up to the fourth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development .....	9 - 22	5
E. Task manager's report on chapter 17 of Agenda 21 for the special session of the General Assembly in 1997 .....	23 - 26	8
F. Cooperative programme framework development .....	27 - 30	9
G. Nomination of a new Chairman .....	31	9
H. Other matters .....	32 - 33	10
I. Adoption of the report .....	34 - 35	10
<u>Annexes</u>		
I. List of participants .....		11
II. Agenda .....		12

I. MATTERS BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE INTER-AGENCY  
COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

1. The ACC Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas, 1/ having held its fourth session at the headquarters of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) from 28 to 30 May 1996, draws to the attention of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD) the following:

(a) Regarding institutional arrangements for the implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (A/51/116, annex II), the Subcommittee agreed that the Programme of Action and its future implementation plans would constitute the cooperative programme framework for programme areas A and B of Agenda 21, chapter 17. Inter-agency consultation on related policy aspects would take place during Subcommittee sessions as a specific agenda item, and technical aspects could be discussed in conjunction with meetings of the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Pollution (GESAMP). The Subcommittee also agreed that, if required, an ad hoc meeting with the specific task of reviewing inter-agency planning for the implementation of the Programme of Action could be held at IMO headquarters from 5 to 7 November 1996. Some reservations were expressed concerning any additional responsibilities that might fall upon the agencies that might not have been forecast in their respective work plans and budgets, as approved by their respective governing bodies. Recognizing that implementation of the Programme of Action was a long-term endeavour, within which adjustments to the current biennial programmes was not a necessary priority, the Subcommittee agreed that those members that intended to contribute to a collaborative effort in support of the Programme of Action would include within their future work plans a common approach, highlighting a system-wide endeavour, while respecting the mandates of each agency;

(b) Regarding international cooperation and coordination, the Subcommittee paid particular attention to the periodic overall review anticipated in paragraph 2 (a) of document E/CN.17/1996/L.20. Concerning the scope of the review, the Subcommittee felt strongly that it should focus on chapter 17 and should address a selected number of issues that, based upon an ongoing analysis of trends in implementation, needed to be brought to the attention of Governments at the General Assembly for appropriate action. So that the review could reflect the experience and concern of Governments as expressed in the governing and regional subsidiary bodies of the United Nations system, the Subcommittee encouraged its members to ensure the inclusion of an appropriate agenda item at forthcoming sessions of such bodies. Emphasis should be given to identifying gaps and proposing solutions to problems encountered in implementation, especially concerning the mobilization of necessary resources, for consideration by the Commission on Sustainable Development and transmittal to the General Assembly. The Subcommittee welcomed the intentions expressed in paragraph 2 (b) of the above-mentioned document with regard to improving its status and effectiveness. In anticipation of the proposed review by the Secretary-General, the Subcommittee offered a number of preliminary suggestions (see para. 17 below). Particular attention was drawn to the fact that the time devoted by the Subcommittee to reporting to the Commission on Sustainable

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Development had not enabled it to sufficiently focus its work on the provision of policy advice and on joint programming;

(c) Taking into account its future work plan, in particular its newly agreed upon functions concerning the inter-agency review of the Programme of Action, the Subcommittee agreed to hold its fifth session at the headquarters of the World Bank in Washington, D.C., during the week of 6-10 January 1997;

(d) Bearing in mind the principle of rotation for the Chairman, the Subcommittee unanimously nominated Ms. T. Melvasolo (United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)) to that function as of 1 January 1997, and Mr. Hayashi (United Nations) as Vice-Chairman. In the interim the present Chairman, Mr. S. M. Garcia (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)), would interact with the new officers to ensure appropriate transition.

## II. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

### A. Opening of the session

2. On behalf of the Secretary-General of IMO, the Director of its Marine Environment Division, Mr. O. Khalimonov, welcomed participants and expressed the full support of IMO for the work of the Subcommittee as a useful instrument for inter-agency cooperation. He noted that, within a system-wide approach to the implementation of chapter 17 of Agenda 21, the impetus generated through the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) process had contributed to the established goals of IMO within its mandate. As was the case for other agencies, IMO was placing a major focus on the enforcement and implementation aspects of legal instruments that had been agreed upon as a framework for governmental action.

3. In his opening remarks, the Chairman stated that two years after its establishment, the Subcommittee could be seen to have reached a turning point in its work. He recalled that when members had met at the first session in 1994, a major emphasis had been placed, within the terms of reference of the Subcommittee, on action that would lead towards increased effectiveness in implementation of activities of common interest, based upon a long tradition of cooperation within the United Nations marine community, including the fields of both oceans and coastal areas. During the intervening period, the reporting functions of the Subcommittee had tended to take precedence over those directed to its primary mandate. While noting the positive reaction of Governments, through the Commission on Sustainable Development, to the policy considerations recommended through the reporting process, he emphasized the need to review the overall situation and seriously consider how the primary concerns of the members in increasing the effectiveness of joint action could be better met. He closed by expressing appreciation to IMO for the arrangements that had been made to host the session.

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B. Agenda, timetable and documentation

4. The Secretary presented the draft agenda, documentation and a proposed timetable for the session. The draft agenda was adopted, taking into account that the 1998 United Nations International Year of the Ocean, Expo '98 and the streamlining of national reporting in the field of sustainable development could be considered under agenda item 7 (Other matters). The list of participants is contained in annex I to the present report; the agenda, as adopted, is contained in annex II.

C. Inter-sessional activities

5. The Chairman presented his report on inter-sessional activities and drew attention to the preparation through the end of 1995 of input to the report of the Secretary-General on chapter 17; attendance at working group meetings of the Commission on Sustainable Development (New York, 26 February-1 March 1996 and 18 April-3 May 1996); and preparation for the meeting of task managers (New York, July 1996) and for the review of implementation of Agenda 21 at the special session of the General Assembly to be held in 1997. In providing to the members his analysis of the interface between the work of the Subcommittee and governmental decision through the Commission, he noted areas in which the current concerns of Governments coincided with the conclusions and advice that had emerged through inter-agency deliberation, as well as areas that reflected concerns arising from other processes and events.

6. The Subcommittee agreed that any matters of concern to its members that could not be considered sufficiently at the Commission on Sustainable Development should be further discussed and, if deemed necessary, re-emphasized. Examples of such matters included the importance that the Subcommittee attached to continued consideration of programme areas A (integrated coastal area management) and E (critical uncertainties), which the Commission had not yet been able to fully address.

7. The Subcommittee noted with satisfaction that the results of its work in assisting in the Commission reporting function had been well received. It also recognized that the new task manager reporting function for the 1997 overview (see sect. II D below) would need to be taken into account in the planning of the coming inter-sessional work, notably in regard to the Commission's working group preparatory meetings (24 February-7 March 1997); the fifth session of the Commission (7-25 April 1997); and the special session of the General Assembly (tentatively scheduled for 9 to 13 June 1997).

8. Considering that the process of intergovernmental decision was a gradual one that took place at the regional, subject-oriented and global levels, the Subcommittee advised that each member agency take due action to ensure that their own bodies were duly informed of the decisions reached by the Commission so as to reinforce a harmonized approach to national policy concerning oceans and coastal areas.

D. Follow-up to the fourth session of the Commission  
on Sustainable Development

9. The Chairman introduced the decisions made by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its fourth session that were relevant to chapter 17 of Agenda 21, as contained in documents E/CN.17/1996/L.19, 20, 22 and 23.

10. Having carefully studied those documents, the Subcommittee formulated a series of considerations, which are described below.

Institutional arrangements for the implementation of the Programme of Action

11. The Subcommittee agreed:

(a) To the principles contained in the Programme of Action, recognizing that the action called for depended upon the participation of all countries and organizations;

(b) That the compendium of ongoing agency projects as contributions to the Programme of Action should be updated, and should reflect both synergy and gaps vis-à-vis agency endeavours;

(c) That it would be advisable for each agency to include an item on the Programme of Action at the next session of its governing body, based upon pro forma background information that would be provided by UNEP in the near future;

(d) That recent agreements of GESAMP as an inter-agency expert group concerning its response to Programme of Action needs would support global evaluation of the health of the ocean and, more specifically, regional pilot exercises, providing that the responsibilities conferred to GESAMP were backed by adequate funding;

(e) That progress in implementation, identification of gaps, needs and solutions, should be considered by the Subcommittee at each of its sessions, within the arrangements anticipated for cooperative programme frameworks and with a full day being set aside for discussion.

12. Some reservations were expressed, however, concerning any additional responsibilities that might fall upon the agencies that might not have been forecast in their respective work plans and budgets, as approved by their respective governing bodies. Recognizing that the implementation of the Programme of Action was a long-term endeavour within which adjustments to the current biennial programmes were not a necessary priority, the Subcommittee agreed that those members that intended to contribute to a collaborative effort in support of the Programme of Action would include within their future work plans a common approach, highlighting a system-wide endeavour, while respecting the mandates of each agency.

13. As an example of agency concerns in that respect, vis-à-vis on the one hand the decisions reached by Governments within the CSD process, and on the other those of the governing bodies of the agencies, FAO stated that it recognized

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that the issues of nutrients and sediment mobilization in relation to agricultural activities fell under its area of expertise. In line with commitments made at the recent inter-agency meeting on the Programme of Action (Geneva, 15 and 16 May 1996), FAO would indeed make available to the Programme of Action secretariat existing information, documents and databases relevant to the Programme of Action clearing house. In addition, FAO would in due course inform UNEP of the address of relevant pages on its Internet site, to which the UNEP Programme of Action home page could refer. However, FAO regretted that it was currently unable to play a more active part in the implementation of the Programme of Action due to restrictions in manpower and funds. Without extrabudgetary financial support, it could not assume a lead role in the clearing house mechanism, as envisaged by the Programme of Action. A more active participation would require a clear mandate from the FAO Conference.

14. As to the request in paragraph 9 of document E/CN.17/1996/L.19 that States take action in the governing bodies of relevant United Nations organizations so that they could take the lead in the development of the clearing house mechanism, IMO stated that it had not been properly consulted on its designation to coordinate oils (hydrocarbons) and litter, which did not imply that IMO was unwilling to assume that role; its involvement, however, would, be limited to the obligations arising from the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL 73/78), the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and other Matter (London Convention) and other IMO instruments, as appropriate.

#### International cooperation and coordination

15. The Subcommittee took note of paragraph 2 (a) of document E/CN.17/1996/L.20 and expressed its willingness to undertake the coordination of a periodic review of the marine environment and related issues, as described in chapter 17 of Agenda 21. Recognizing that a decision on that matter would be taken in 1997 by the General Assembly at its special session, the Subcommittee offered the guidance set out below to ACC, through IACSD, concerning how such a review could be most effectively carried out, and requested that those views be taken into account when the future work programme of the Commission was considered.

16. As to the scope of the review, the Subcommittee felt strongly that it should focus on chapter 17 and should address a selected number of issues that, based upon an ongoing analysis of trends in implementation, needed to be brought to the attention of Governments at the General Assembly for appropriate action. So that the review could reflect the experience and concern of Governments as expressed in the governing and regional subsidiary bodies of the United Nations system, the Subcommittee encouraged its members to ensure the inclusion of an appropriate agenda item at forthcoming sessions of such bodies. Emphasis should be given to identifying gaps and proposing solutions to problems encountered in implementation, especially concerning the mobilization of necessary resources, for consideration by the Commission and transmittal to the General Assembly. The Subcommittee noted that the annual report to the General Assembly on the Law of the Sea would provide an opportunity for advising Governments on emerging trends, and recommended that the proposed periodic review of all aspects of the marine environment and related issues be considered by the General Assembly every three to five years under the agenda item "Oceans and the Law of the Sea".

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17. The Subcommittee welcomed the intentions expressed in paragraph 2 (b) of the above-mentioned document concerning improving its status and effectiveness. In anticipation of the proposed review by the Secretary-General, the Subcommittee offered the following preliminary suggestions:

(a) To reinforce its role and expedite action on its recommendations, the Subcommittee should report directly to ACC through its Organizational Committee, and its Chairman should be invited to attend sessions of IACSD;

(b) Representation of agencies should be at a level commensurate with the need to take decisions that might have policy and budgetary implications and to decide upon joint action on matters falling within their terms of reference;

(c) Appropriate resources should be placed at the disposal of the Subcommittee so that it could more effectively undertake the reporting and coordination responsibilities assigned to it, bearing in mind that the work associated with the functions of the Subcommittee was not normally anticipated in the programmes and budgets of its members;

(d) Depending upon identification at each session of the major subjects to be considered at the following session, the Subcommittee should endeavour to make arrangements for ad hoc consultations with other task managers, as well as with international and non-governmental organizations that had expressed interest in its work;

(e) To contribute to increased awareness of the importance of oceans and coastal areas to sustainable development, members of the Subcommittee should provide information to be included as a special section within the IOC home page on the Internet. That would be coupled with "pointer" indications on other agency home pages, as well as with a similar exercise being envisaged in support of the Programme of Action clearing house;

(f) Because time devoted by the Subcommittee to reporting to the Commission had not enabled it to sufficiently focus its work on the provision of policy advice on joint programming, future sessions and inter-sessional work should emphasize the latter;

(g) All members were reminded of the need to ensure that they could communicate among themselves and with the secretariat by electronic mail.

18. Regarding paragraph 2 (c) of the above-mentioned document, the Subcommittee welcomed the proposed review of GESAMP and emphasized the need to take into account the human and financial resources associated with the tasks being assigned to GESAMP.

#### Implementation of international fishery instruments

19. The Subcommittee took note of the relevant decision, and noted that the forecast report of FAO would provide input to the periodic review anticipated under document E/CN.17/1996/L.20.

Protection of the oceans, all kinds of seas, including enclosed and semi-enclosed areas, and coastal areas and the protection, rational use and development of their living resources

20. The Subcommittee also identified those issues raised in document E/CN.17/1996/L.23 that should be responded to in preparing the draft task manager report on chapter 17 for the review of the General Assembly at its special session, in 1997.

21. As to offshore oil and gas activities, the Subcommittee noted that the Commission, after noting that with regard to offshore oil and gas activities IMO conclusions on harmonized environmental regulations had been and were being developed in specific regional programmes, had concluded that there was no compelling need at that time to further develop globally applicable environmental regulations.

22. The Subcommittee also noted that the conclusion mentioned above was reached by the Marine Environment Protection Committee of IMO in 1994, and that since that time offshore exploration and production had accelerated in the developing and Commonwealth of Independent States countries. On the other hand, expectations for regional and national activities to regulate discharges from offshore installations had not been fulfilled. Out of 13 existing action plans of the United Nations Regional Seas Programme, only one had a protocol containing appropriate provisions. It was suggested, therefore, that IMO and UNEP further consider that problem and carry out an assessment of the development of current national, regional and global regulations to control discharges from offshore activities.

E. Task manager's report on chapter 17 of Agenda 21 for the special session of the General Assembly in 1997

23. Following an introduction by the Chairman concerning the decisions of IACSD concerning the preparation of task manager reports on the various chapters of Agenda 21 for the 1997 General Assembly review, the Subcommittee devoted considerable time to identification of the major issues that should be addressed. Noting that the forecast structure and length of those reports implied a concise and selective approach, the Subcommittee agreed upon a limited number of key objectives, positive and negative trends, and possible solutions as the basis for further development of the draft report.

24. The Subcommittee instructed the Secretary, in consultation with the Chairman, to transmit to the Subcommittee secretariat within the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat an initial draft text by 15 June so that it could be circulated to other task managers in advance of the meeting of task managers to be held in New York from 8 to 10 July 1996.

25. The Subcommittee received with satisfaction information provided by its secretariat that the Chairman would be invited to attend the forthcoming session of IACSD, which would directly follow the task managers' meeting. Noting that

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the draft reports would probably be adjusted as a result of the task managers' consultation and IACSD deliberations, the Subcommittee instructed the Secretary to circulate as soon as possible thereafter any requirements for revision so that all members could provide their views.

26. Recalling that consideration on small islands were included within chapter 17 but were being dealt with by the Subcommittee secretariat within the wider context of the Global Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the Subcommittee emphasized its interest in being kept informed of all related matters so that its report could take them into account.

#### F. Cooperative Programme Framework Development

27. Two matters were raised for discussion: (a) progress in developing cooperative programme frameworks for programme areas A and B of chapter 17 of Agenda 21 and (b) a suggestion by the United Nations and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for a consultative procedure on projects being proposed for extrabudgetary funding.

28. Following a proposal from UNEP and bearing in mind the need to streamline inter-agency consultations, the Subcommittee agreed that the Programme of Action and its future implementation plans would be considered as the cooperative programme framework for programme areas A and B of chapter 17. Inter-agency consultation on related policy aspects would take place within the sessions of the Subcommittee as a specific agenda item. It was noted that technical aspects could be discussed in conjunction with GESAMP meetings.

29. The Subcommittee reiterated the views expressed at its second and third sessions concerning the purposes and concepts embodied in the cooperative programme framework approach.

30. In discussing the various ways in which project document preparation and submission could benefit from inter-agency views, the Subcommittee was of the view that an informal consultation process should be encouraged. The Subcommittee agreed that the originating agency should inform all members (by electronic mail, with a copy to go to the Secretary) of the subject and scope for a given project so as to ascertain their interest in receiving the full proposal for comment, indication of interest in eventual participation and identification of any eventual overlap. The United Nations and UNDP volunteered to follow the procedure as a trial exercise in regard to the Train Sea-Coast project and to report back to the Subcommittee at its next session.

#### G. Nomination of a new Chairman

31. Bearing in mind the principle of rotation for the Chairman, the Subcommittee unanimously nominated Ms. T. Melvasolo (UNEP) to that function as of 1 January 1997, and Mr. M. Hayashi (United Nations) as Vice-Chairman. In the interim, the present Chairman, Mr. S. M. Garcia (FAO), would interact with the new officers to ensure appropriate transition.

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#### H. Other matters

32. The ACC Subcommittee was briefed on progress made in the preparations for the United Nations International Year of the Oceans and EXPO '98. The Joint United Nations Information Committee, as central coordination body for the inputs from the United Nations system, had designated the United Nations and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as co-lead agencies for EXPO '98. A number of activities had been planned by countries as a means of public awareness-raising. A logo was being developed by UNESCO for the Year of the Oceans, for possible use by United Nations agencies. United Nations stamps would also be issued for the event.

33. The Subcommittee took note of a request from the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development to identify possible duplication in requests for information from Governments, and recalled that it had not directly requested any information from Governments on oceans. Furthermore, on the basis of information provided by the Department, it felt unable to identify any areas of duplication or overlap. It was mentioned that a possible criterion for the validity of requests for information from Governments could be the degree to which information and data received would be utilized to prepare information products useful to Governments themselves.

#### I. Adoption of the report

34. Taking into account its future work plan, in particular newly agreed upon functions concerning inter-agency review of the Programme of Action, the Subcommittee agreed to hold its fifth session at the headquarters of the World Bank in Washington, D.C., during the week of 6-10 January 1997. If required, an ad hoc meeting could be held at IMO headquarters from 5 to 7 November 1996, with the specific task of reviewing inter-agency planning for implementation of the Programme of Action.

35. The Subcommittee adopted the report on its fourth session.

#### Notes

1/ The secretariat for the Subcommittee is provided by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) through its Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC). Correspondence should be addressed to: Secretary, ACC Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas, c/o UNESCO/IOC, 1, rue Miollis, 75732 Paris Cedex 15, France. Fax: (33.1) 40 65 99 76; Internet: N. Philippon-Tulloch@unesco.org; telex: 20 44 61; telephone: (33.1) 45 68 39 86.

Annex I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Chairman: S. M. Garcia

(Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations)

Secretary: N. Philippon-Tulloch

(Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)

United Nations, its entities and programmes

United Nations	M. Hayashi A. Rogers
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	C. Moreno
United Nations Environment Programme	T. Melvasolo

Specialized agencies and related organizations

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	H. Naeve
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	G. Kullenberg
Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission	G. Kullenberg
World Bank	M. Hatiolos
International Telecommunication Union	J. L. Pereira-Fihlo
World Meteorological Organization	P. Dexter
International Maritime Organization	A. Khalimonov D. T. Edwards D. Du
International Atomic Energy Agency	M. S. Baxter

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Annex II

AGENDA

1. Opening of the session.
2. Agenda, timetable and documentation.
3. Inter-sessional activities.
4. Follow-up to the fourth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.
5. Task Manager's report on chapter 17 of Agenda 21 for special session of the General Assembly in 1997.
6. Cooperative programme framework development.
7. Nomination of a new Chairman.
8. Other matters.
9. Adoption of the report.

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