



General Assembly

Distr.: General
16 August 2019

Original: English

Seventy-fourth session

Item 76 (a) of the provisional agenda*

Oceans and the law of the sea: oceans and the law of the sea

Report on the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects

Letter dated 16 August 2019 from the Co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole addressed to the President of the General Assembly

We have the honour to transmit to you the attached report** on the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects, which met at United Nations Headquarters on 29 and 30 July 2019 pursuant to paragraph 334 of General Assembly resolution [73/124](#). Section III of the report sets out the agreed recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole to the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. Section IV contains guidance for the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Working Group, the Group of Experts and the secretariat of the Regular Process concerning the implementation of the second cycle of the Regular Process.

We kindly request that the present letter and the report be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under the agenda item entitled “Oceans and the law of the sea”.

(Signed) Juliette **Babb-Riley**

(Signed) Gert **Auväärt**

* [A/74/150](#).

** Circulated in the language of submission only.



Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects

I. Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole

1. The twelfth meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects was convened pursuant to paragraph 334 of General Assembly resolution 73/124. The meeting of the Working Group was held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 29 and 30 July 2019.

2. The Co-Chairs of the Working Group, Juliette Babb-Riley (Barbados) and Gert Auväärt (Estonia), opened the meeting. The Director of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, Office of Legal Affairs, delivered opening remarks on behalf of the Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and United Nations Legal Counsel.

3. Representatives of 51 Member States,¹ one non-member State,² two intergovernmental organizations and other bodies³ and two non-governmental organizations⁴ attended the meeting.

4. The following members of the Group of Experts of the Regular Process, established pursuant to paragraph 287 of General Assembly resolution 70/235, also attended the meeting: Anastasia Strati (Greece) and Alan Simcock (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland). Mr. Simcock participated in his capacity as Joint Coordinator of the Group of Experts.

5. The following supporting documentation was available to the meeting: a provisional agenda; an annotated provisional agenda; a format; a proposed organization of work; the conclusions from the multi-stakeholder dialogue and capacity-building partnership event held on 24 and 25 January 2019; a note on possible outcomes and building blocks of the third cycle of the Regular Process; a presentation by the Joint Coordinators on the revised preliminary timetable and implementation plan for the second cycle of the Regular Process; and a presentation by the Joint Coordinators on the second round of regional workshops, held in 2018.

6. Under agenda item 2, the Working Group adopted the agenda (see sect. II below) and, under agenda item 3, agreed on the organization of work as proposed by the Co-Chairs. In addition, several delegations made general statements under agenda item 3, expressing their appreciation for the work of the Co-Chairs, the Bureau, the Group of Experts, the members of the Pool of Experts and the secretariat during the intersessional period. Several delegations also highlighted the progress made in the implementation of the programme of work for the period 2017–2020, in particular the successful conclusion of the second round of regional workshops and the successful holding of the multi-stakeholder dialogue and capacity-building partnership event

¹ Argentina, Austria, Bangladesh, Barbados, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Estonia, Finland, Ghana, Greece, Guinea, Honduras, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Lithuania, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Micronesia (Federated States of), Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Panama, Philippines, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Singapore, Slovakia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Thailand, Turkey, United States of America and Viet Nam.

² Holy See.

³ European Union and United Nations Environment Programme.

⁴ International Ocean Institute and International Ship Managers' Association.

(see paras. 8 and 13–16 below). Noting the delays in the implementation of the revised timetable and implementation plan for the second world ocean assessment, several delegations emphasized the importance of expediting the work of the Group of Experts and avoiding further delays. They stressed the need to nominate experts from underrepresented regions and with the relevant expertise that is currently lacking in the Pool of Experts. Several delegations provided information on their ongoing assessments and capacity-building activities. Delegations expressed their support for the third cycle of the Regular Process and expressed their views relating thereto (see paras. 17–22).

7. Under agenda item 4, the Co-Chairs presented the report of the Bureau of the Working Group on developments since the previous meeting of the Working Group in the implementation of the programme of work for the period 2017–2020 for the second cycle of the Regular Process. The Working Group took note of the report of the Bureau.

8. Under agenda item 5, the Joint Coordinator of the Group of Experts, Mr. Simcock, presented an overview of the second round of seven regional workshops of the second cycle of the Regular Process, held in 2018.⁵ The presentation covered the purpose of the workshops and the main issues discussed under each of the selected chapters of the second world ocean assessment deliberated at the workshops. Mr. Simcock emphasized the importance of the comprehensive summaries of discussions held at the workshops, which had been prepared by the secretariat, in particular as a reference for the teams writing the relevant chapters discussed during those workshops. The late scheduling of the workshops was identified as one of the main challenges that had constrained attendance by some of the experts, including the lead members for the chapters tabled for discussion. Stressing the importance of the continued integration of regional aspects into the second world ocean assessment, delegations welcomed the holding of the regional workshops. They also highlighted the importance of early preparations for possible future regional workshops in support of the Regular Process. The important role of the workshops in enhancing capacity-building as well as information-sharing at the regional level was also stressed. Some delegations requested information regarding the state of the marine environment in their respective regions. The Working Group took note of the information provided by the Joint Coordinator.

9. Under agenda item 6, the Joint Coordinator of the Group of Experts presented a report on progress in the implementation of the revised preliminary timetable and implementation plan for the second cycle of the Regular Process.⁶ While indicating that two thirds of the writing teams for the second world ocean assessment had been constituted and approved by the Bureau, the Joint Coordinator noted that four writing teams were lacking one or more members and that five teams were still being formed. The lack of response and less active participation of some members of the writing teams was also noted. The Joint Coordinator also drew attention to the five vacancies in the Group of Experts that remained to be filled by the respective regional groups, namely, two for the Group of Eastern European States and three for the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

10. The Joint Coordinator also noted that, while real success had been achieved in populating the Pool of Experts, with more than 700 experts nominated, there had been less success in ensuring geographical and gender distribution and adequate expertise in socioeconomic disciplines. With regard to progress in drafting, it was noted that

⁵ Available at www.un.org/regularprocess/sites/www.un.org.regularprocess/files/ahwgw_july_2019_-_regional_workshops.pdf.

⁶ Available at www.un.org/regularprocess/sites/www.un.org.regularprocess/files/ahwgw_july_2019_-_implementation_report.pdf.

drafts of 10 substantive chapters and subchapters had been submitted for review by the Group of Experts, and that drafts of a substantial number of other chapters and subchapters were well on their way to completion. It was also noted that the Group of Experts, during its meeting from 5 to 9 August 2019, would be able to carry out an overall assessment of pending tasks and adjust the preliminary timetable and implementation plan accordingly. It was also noted that the main outcomes of that meeting would include plans developed by the Group of Experts to ensure that all draft chapters were submitted for peer review in a timely manner. That meeting would also aim to finalize the list of proposed peer reviewers to be submitted to the Bureau for its approval. The Joint Coordinator commended the work carried out by the secretariat in establishing a workable website for the Regular Process, but noted that the system used by the Group of Experts for storing and sharing documents was not without problems and that the Group had not been able to identify a system for storing and sharing documents that would meet all of its requirements.

11. The Co-Chairs, while noting that 64 States had nominated national focal points for the Regular Process up to that point, urged the remaining States that had not yet done so to nominate national focal points and to bring the issue to the attention of their respective regional groups. In response to a comment regarding the disproportionately high representation of experts from the Group of Western European and other States in the Pool of Experts, one delegation suggested that new and innovative ways of communication also be used to reach out to experts from States that had not yet nominated experts, for example by contacting national universities and institutions, also noting that such an approach could help increase participation by experts, in particular from African States. One delegation proposed that States exchange views on how the role of national focal points could be better utilized, including for the exchange of information. In that regard, the Co-Chairs observed that national focal points were only one aspect of the multi-pronged approach to increasing participation in the Regular Process, which also included appeals to intergovernmental organizations to recommend experts. Moreover, it was noted that the Group of Experts had also approached several experts to become members of the writing teams under their purview.

12. The Working Group took note of the information provided and requested the Group of Experts to prepare a further revised timetable and implementation plan for consideration and finalization by the Bureau and also requested the Bureau to keep it under review and oversee its implementation.

13. Under agenda item 7, the Working Group considered the outcome of the multi-stakeholder dialogue and capacity-building partnership event. It was recalled that the recommendations from the event included the development of a coherent capacity-building programme for conducting marine assessments, in particular integrated assessments.

14. Delegations noted the valuable opportunity provided by the event, which allowed experts from different regions to discuss the importance of integrated assessments for decision-making, needs and capacity gaps related to conducting integrated assessments, and opportunities, best practices and lessons learned to improve the science-policy interface. One delegation commended the efforts of the Co-Chairs and the secretariat in ensuring gender and geographical balance among the participants and the panellists. Several delegations noted the need to raise public awareness of the assessments, in particular by advancing ocean literacy and utilizing effective communication strategies for that purpose. In that regard, one delegation commended the publication in June 2019 of a white paper on the first World Ocean Assessment co-authored by 10 members of the Group of Experts. Information on several activities carried out with the aim of building ocean literacy was also presented by an observer delegation.

15. The importance of both capacity-building and the cross-sectoral integration of science into ocean policies for the efficient implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was also stressed. Highlighting the importance of capacity-building and technology transfer as essential components of the Regular Process, especially for developing countries, some delegations encouraged the holding of similar events in the future. One delegation urged States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to continue to provide information for the capacity-building inventory.

16. The Working Group approved the conclusions from the multi-stakeholder dialogue and capacity-building partnership event (see annex I) and requested the Bureau to consider the way forward with respect to those conclusions.

17. Under agenda item 8, the Working Group considered the proposed outcomes and building blocks of the third cycle of the Regular Process as contained in a document prepared by the Bureau, with the support of the secretariat, and presented by the Co-Chairs (see annex II).

18. Delegations and the Joint Coordinator of the Group of Experts expressed support for the early planning of the third cycle of the Regular Process. Delegations stressed the need to review the lessons learned from the second cycle as a point of departure in the preparations for the third cycle. Regarding the scope of the third cycle, one delegation called for careful and well-informed consideration, including by examining good practices from other assessments and related processes. Another delegation suggested identifying any gaps in thematic and spatial assessments before moving to a global integrated assessment. A third delegation proposed that trends be identified in order to determine the objectives and scope of the third cycle. A view was expressed that issues currently receiving a substantial amount of attention, such as microplastics, could be addressed in stand-alone chapters, while simultaneously maintaining balance among the chapters. With regard to the proposed format of the third cycle, the importance of maintaining the involvement of scientists and Member States, as well as capacity-building components, was stressed. One delegation observed the need to further integrate science policy and communications perspectives into the third cycle, while another delegation stressed the importance of achieving outcomes of the third cycle that are “policy-relevant” and not “policy-prescriptive”. Several delegations noted that the outcome of the third cycle should also contribute to assessing how effective efforts have been in achieving the relevant Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 14.

19. Delegations underlined the importance of ensuring coordination and synergies between the third cycle of the Regular Process and the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030), including by involving the Executive Planning Group for the Decade in the planning process for the third cycle. It was noted that several members of the Group of Experts were currently taking part in the planning of the Decade. Several delegations, recalling that the Decade provides an opportunity to strengthen the role of science as a basis for policymaking, suggested that the Regular Process could have a specific role in that regard. A view was expressed that the outcome of the third cycle should be used as a timely opportunity for an interim review of progress in the implementation of the objectives of the Decade.

20. The important role of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in guiding the activities to be carried out under the Regular Process was emphasized. In relation to the interaction of the third cycle of the Regular Process and other relevant processes, several delegations recognized the Regular Process as the only global process that provides for integrated marine assessments and noted the importance of the support that it provides for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the

United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea and the intergovernmental conference on an internal legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction by providing scientific information on the state of the marine environment. It was also noted that a regular exchange of information and close coordination between the Regular Process and those processes would be essential to creating synergies. Another delegation suggested that representatives from various long-established and successful assessment processes, such as that of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, be encouraged to participate in future meetings of the Regular Process.

21. On other matters relating to the third cycle of the Regular Process, the importance of an editorial process that would ensure consistency in the information to be provided in the outputs of the third cycle was highlighted. Some delegations recalled the success achieved by regional workshops held in 2017 and 2018 and expressed their support for convening regional workshops also during the third cycle. It was suggested that the planning for those workshops, which should be aligned with capacity-building and outreach activities, commence at the earliest possible stage in order to ensure the broadest possible geographical representation. Some delegations highlighted the importance of establishing the resource requirements for the third cycle as soon as possible.

22. The Working Group approved the possible outcomes and building blocks of the third cycle of the Regular Process, and requested the Bureau, with the assistance of the secretariat and in consultation with the Group of Experts, to develop a programme of work for the third cycle in advance of the thirteenth meeting of the Working Group. The Working Group also requested the Secretary-General to prepare the resource requirements for the third cycle on the basis of the draft programme of work for the third cycle to be developed by the Bureau in the intersessional period. The Working Group further requested the secretariat to invite Member States and other participants in the Working Group and the Group of Experts to submit written contributions on lessons learned and to compile the information received, for approval by the Bureau, in advance of the thirteenth meeting of the Working Group.

23. Under agenda item 9, the Working Group considered the draft recommendations and guidance for the Bureau, the Group of Experts and the secretariat. Under agenda item 10, the Director of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea reported on the status of the voluntary trust fund for the purpose of supporting the operations of the Regular Process and noted that, since the eleventh meeting of the Working Group, contributions to the trust fund had been received from Estonia, Ireland, New Zealand and the Republic of Korea. It was also noted that no contributions had been received to the special scholarship fund to support training programmes for developing countries. Delegations were encouraged to continue to contribute to both funds and to make other contributions to the Regular Process pursuant to the appeal made by the General Assembly in paragraph 332 of its resolution [73/124](#).

Adoption of recommendations to the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session

24. The Working Group adopted by consensus the draft recommendations for consideration by the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session (see sect. III). The Working Group also adopted guidance for the Bureau, the Group of Experts and the secretariat (see sect. IV).

II. Agenda of the twelfth meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole

25. The Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole adopted the agenda set out below.
 1. Opening of the meeting.
 2. Adoption of the agenda.
 3. Organization of work.
 4. Report of the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole.
 5. Second round of regional workshops held in 2018.
 6. Information from the Group of Experts regarding implementation of the revised preliminary timetable and implementation plan for the second cycle of the Regular Process.
 7. Outcome of the multi-stakeholder dialogue and capacity-building partnership event.
 8. Third cycle of the Regular Process.
 9. Adoption of recommendations to the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session.
 10. Other matters.
 11. Closure of the meeting.

III. Recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole to the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session

26. The Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole recommends that the General Assembly:
 - (a) Reiterate the need to strengthen the regular scientific assessment of the state of the marine environment in order to enhance the scientific basis for policymaking;
 - (b) Reaffirm the principles guiding the Regular Process and its objective and scope, recall the crucial importance of the Regular Process for ongoing ocean-related intergovernmental processes and its possible inputs, including for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, among other relevant processes, and note the importance of continuing support and cooperation between the activities of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and those of the Regular Process;
 - (c) Recall the importance of ensuring that assessments, such as those included in the *Global Sustainable Development Report* and those prepared under the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and the Regular Process, support one another and avoid unnecessary duplication, and also recall the importance of compatibility and synergies between such assessments and assessments at the regional level;

(d) Reaffirm the importance of the first World Ocean Assessment as the outcome of the first cycle of the Regular Process, recall the technical abstracts of the Assessment, and reiterate its concern as reflected in the findings of the Assessment, as recorded in paragraph 289 of its resolution [71/257](#) and subsequent resolutions;

(e) Recall the decision that, in the first cycle, the scope of the Regular Process focused on establishing a baseline, and that the scope of the second cycle would extend to evaluating trends and identifying gaps, also recall the approval by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole of the outline for the second world ocean assessment, note the consideration by the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Working Group during the intersessional period of an annotated outline for the second world ocean assessment, and also note the revised preliminary timetable and implementation plan for the second world ocean assessment prepared by the Group of Experts in consultation with the secretariat of the Regular Process;

(f) Welcome the holding of the second round of regional workshops in support of the second cycle of the Regular Process in Koror, Palau, on 8 and 9 August 2018, in Valletta on 27 and 28 August 2018, in Odessa, Ukraine, on 17 and 18 October 2018, in Bali, Indonesia, on 8 and 9 November 2018, in Doha on 28 and 29 November 2018, in Accra on 3 and 4 December 2018 and in Guayaquil, Ecuador, on 17 and 18 December 2018, and take note of the summaries of those workshops;

(g) Recognize the need for early preparation for possible future regional workshops in support of the Regular Process, and invite States to consider hosting such workshops and inform the secretariat of their intent as early as possible;

(h) Recall the importance of raising awareness of the first World Ocean Assessment and the Regular Process, and recognize with appreciation the activities undertaken to raise awareness of the Assessment, including during the regional workshops held in 2017 and 2018 in support of the second cycle of the Regular Process;

(i) Welcome the holding of the multi-stakeholder dialogue and capacity-building partnership event on 24 and 25 January 2019, note the summary of discussions, and welcome the approval by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole at its twelfth meeting of the conclusions from the partnership event;

(j) Reiterate its invitation to States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to provide relevant information to the secretariat for inclusion in the capacity-building inventory of needs and opportunities relevant for the Regular Process, and express its appreciation for the information contributed thus far and for the work undertaken by the secretariat;

(k) Also reiterate its request to intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to provide information on recent and ongoing assessments and other processes at the regional and global levels relevant to the Regular Process in order for the secretariat to update the inventory, and express its appreciation for the information contributed thus far and for the work of the secretariat in compiling the information received;

(l) Welcome the holding of the twelfth meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on 29 and 30 July 2019, in accordance with paragraph 334 of resolution [73/124](#), and endorse the recommendations adopted by the Ad Hoc Working Group at its twelfth meeting;

(m) Decide to launch the third cycle of the Regular Process, to cover five years, from 2021 to 2025, and request the Bureau, with the assistance of the Group of Experts and the secretariat, to develop a draft programme of work for the third cycle, on the basis of the possible outcomes and building blocks of the third cycle prepared

by the Bureau and endorsed by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole at its twelfth meeting and taking into account lessons learned from the second cycle, and to report to Member States in advance of the thirteenth meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group;

(n) Request the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole to consider the lessons learned from the second cycle of the Regular Process, including with regard to the duration of the cycle and its outputs, in line with the modalities set forth in paragraph 282 of resolution 70/235 and on the basis of input received from Member States and other participants in the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole and the Group of Experts, as well as from the secretariat, and also request the Bureau to inform the Ad Hoc Working Group of the views received and to circulate that information in advance of the thirteenth meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group;

(o) Request the Secretary-General to prepare the resource requirements for the third cycle of the Regular Process on the basis of the draft programme of work for the third cycle to be developed in the intersessional period by the Bureau and to report to Member States in advance of the thirteenth meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole;

(p) Recognize with appreciation the important role of the Co-Chairs and the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole in providing guidance during the intersessional period before the twelfth meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group, request the Bureau to continue to implement the decisions and guidance of the Ad Hoc Working Group during the intersessional period before the thirteenth meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group, and recognize the support provided by the secretariat in that regard;

(q) Also recognize with appreciation the continued work of the members of the Group of Experts and that of the Pool of Experts of the Regular Process in the implementation of the second cycle of the Regular Process;

(r) Urge regional groups that have not yet done so to appoint experts to the Group of Experts, taking into account the need to ensure equitable geographical distribution and adequate expertise in socioeconomic disciplines;

(s) Welcome the appointment of additional experts to the Pool of Experts for the second cycle of the Regular Process by States and through recommendations from relevant intergovernmental organizations, in accordance with the revised mechanism for the establishment of the Pool of Experts for the second cycle of the Regular Process;

(t) Also welcome the designation by States of national focal points pursuant to paragraph 319 of resolution 73/124, and urge States that have not yet done so to designate their national focal points as soon as possible;

(u) Recall its invitation to the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme, the International Maritime Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Meteorological Organization and relevant United Nations system organizations, bodies, funds and programmes, as appropriate, to assist in the implementation of the second cycle of the Regular Process with regard to the following activities: awareness-raising, the identification of experts for the Pool of Experts, technical and scientific support for the Bureau and the Group of Experts, hosting meetings of the writing teams and capacity-building, and also recall its invitation to relevant intergovernmental organizations to contribute, as appropriate, to the activities of the second cycle;

(v) Request the Secretary-General to convene the thirteenth meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on [...] 2020, with a view to providing

recommendations to the General Assembly on progress in the implementation of the second cycle, in particular in the finalization of the second world ocean assessment, and on the draft programme of work and resource requirements for the third cycle of the Regular Process, and encourage the widest possible attendance of participants in the Ad Hoc Working Group;

(w) Urge States, international financial institutions, donor agencies, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and natural and juridical persons to make financial contributions to the voluntary trust fund and to make other contributions to the Regular Process;

(x) Recall the potential of the Regular Process special scholarship fund, established pursuant to resolution 64/71, to support training programmes for developing countries, including through cooperation projects among various stakeholders, in order to strengthen the human and institutional capacity of those countries to carry out integrated assessments, and encourage States, international financial institutions, donor agencies, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and natural and juridical persons to make financial contributions to that fund.

IV. Guidance for the Bureau, the Group of Experts and the secretariat of the Regular Process concerning the implementation of the second cycle of the Regular Process

27. The Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole decides:

(a) To request the Group of Experts of the Regular Process to prepare a further revised timetable and implementation plan for the second world ocean assessment for consideration and finalization by the Bureau and to request the Bureau to keep it under review and oversee its implementation;

(b) To request the secretariat to transmit, in August 2019, a further request to States to nominate, and to intergovernmental organizations to recommend, experts from underrepresented regions and with the relevant expertise currently lacking in the Pool of Experts of the Regular Process;

(c) To urge the Group of Experts to finalize the designation and assignment of experts to the writing teams for the chapters of the second world ocean assessment as soon as possible, for approval by the Bureau;

(d) To urge the Group of Experts to finalize the selection of peer reviewers from the members of the Pool of Experts, for approval by the Bureau, taking into account the need to ensure that the peer reviewers were not previously involved in the preparation of chapters that they are asked to review;

(e) To request its Bureau, with the assistance of the Group of Experts and the secretariat, to consider the way forward with respect to the conclusions from the multi-stakeholder dialogue and capacity-building partnership event held on 24 and 25 January 2019;

(f) To request its Bureau, with the assistance of the Group of Experts and the secretariat, to develop a draft programme of work for the third cycle of the Regular Process, on the basis of the possible outcomes and building blocks of the third cycle endorsed by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole at its twelfth meeting and taking into account lessons learned from the second cycle, and to circulate it to Member States in advance of the thirteenth meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group;

(g) To request the secretariat to invite written contributions on lessons learned from Member States and other participants in the Ad Hoc Working Group of the

Whole, as well as from the Group of Experts, members of the writing teams and the secretariat, and to compile the information received for approval by the Bureau and to circulate that information in advance of the thirteenth meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group, recognizing that the review of the lessons learned from the second cycle is an ongoing process;

(h) To request the secretariat, with the assistance of the Group of Experts, to develop awareness-raising material with key messages highlighting the principal findings of the second world ocean assessment and means of dissemination, for approval by the Bureau.

Annex I

The way forward: conclusions from the multi-stakeholder dialogue and capacity-building partnership event

1. There is a need to raise public awareness, in particular through “ocean literacy”. Enhanced ocean literacy across all parts of society is necessary to underpin the provision of funds and resources for capacity-building. In addition, improved ocean literacy among policymakers and other significant decision makers is particularly needed as a basis for developing measures to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 14. Increasing this form of literacy at the national level is a foundational element to enable capacity- and capability-building in national marine science sectors. There is a need to step up ocean literacy particularly for children to ensure better understanding and management in coastal communities.
2. Significant activities are already under way in many parts of the world to promote ocean literacy. Examples highlighted at the multi-stakeholder dialogue and capacity-building partnership event are the programmes of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the work of InterManager with schools in relation to shipping and the initiatives of the European Union, in particular on marine debris. Such activities should be welcomed and extended, and new activities should be identified and encouraged.
3. It will be important to develop a coherent capacity-building programme for conducting marine assessments, in particular integrated assessments.
4. An initial step in preparing such a programme needs to include encouraging national and local authorities to analyse the capacity-building needs that they have prioritized in their particular contexts. Capacity development should be tailored to address identified needs, and some States need to be assisted with the formulation of those needs. Any transboundary diagnostic analyses carried out on large marine ecosystems can provide a valuable source of information.
5. Guidance on how to carry out such capacity-building analyses could be developed on the basis of existing experience, including by mapping funding issues and effective use of resources. All forms of cooperation, including North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation, including financial support will be necessary to enable all countries to carry out those analyses.
6. It is also necessary to review how the needs identified globally, regionally and in such national analyses can be met through processes already identified or to be identified in the inventory of capacity-building activities produced as part of the Regular Process, and how remaining gaps can best be filled. Global processes in which needs have been identified include the Regular Process, its First Global Integrated Marine Assessment (first World Ocean Assessment) and the *Global Ocean Science Report*. Needs have also been identified in processes at the regional level.
7. The rapid growth of in situ and satellite observations of the marine environment has greatly enhanced capacity-building in marine science. In this context, the importance of the electronic dissemination of data cannot be overemphasized. Open and transparent data availability strongly supports the Regular Process and advances capacity-building in marine sciences. When States share data and information, everyone benefits. Securing a better connection between existing databases is key. In addition, capacity development for using the existing databases and for facilitating access to those databases is important.

8. There is a need to promote synergies and opportunities for cooperation and coordination with respect to capacity-building initiatives. Enabling regional capacity- and capability-building partnerships, including through the United Nations Environment Programme regional seas conventions framework, is an important way forward to foster coordination and cooperation in marine science across geographical regions encompassing States at varying levels of development.
9. There is a need to develop communication strategies for different target audiences in the context of the Regular Process. Products and summaries that can be understood or interpreted by policymakers and decision makers are particularly helpful, such as the technical abstracts of the First Global Integrated Marine Assessment and the reports on ocean literacy published by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission.
10. The human and institutional capacity to carry out integrated assessments needs to be strengthened through existing and additional training opportunities, including through cooperation projects among various stakeholders. The experiences of other organizations and the potential of the Regular Process special scholarship fund and the capacity-building inventory to facilitate such projects should be fully utilized.
11. Regular multi-stakeholder dialogues at the global and regional levels should be promoted, including on the margins of meetings of various organizations carrying out integrated assessments. They should focus on best practices and lessons learned, including through case studies. The regional workshops of the Regular Process are an example of successful multi-stakeholder engagement, in particular in the field of capacity-building.

Annex II

Possible outcomes and building blocks of the third cycle of the Regular Process

Possible outcomes of the third cycle

- One or more assessments will need to be produced. In determining the scope and focus of the assessment(s), the Group of Experts, the Bureau and the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole could consider the following questions in particular:
 - Should there be another global integrated assessment, or should the next assessment(s) have a more limited focus, such as thematic assessment(s)?
 - Can the outcomes of the third cycle be made more relevant to policymakers by creating more direct links to global, regional or subregional objectives, in particular the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals?
 - How will overlaps with, for example, the assessments by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and the Global Environment Outlook be avoided, and how can synergies among these processes be further strengthened?
 - How can approaches and lessons learned from the above-mentioned processes help to inform the organization of the third cycle?
- Technical abstracts of the second world ocean assessment: should these be produced as was done for the first World Ocean Assessment, or should another, briefer type of document for the benefit of policymakers be produced, such as a brief (5- to 10-page) document outlining specific policy-relevant information from the second world ocean assessment?
- A coherent programme to support capacity-building:
 - The development of such a programme was recommended at the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole, held from 31 August to 4 September 2009, and it was also listed as a possible way forward in the outcome document of the multi-stakeholder dialogue and capacity-building partnership event held on 24 and 25 January 2019.
 - The focus of the programme should primarily be on integrated assessments.
 - The programme could, for example, take the form of a clearing house mechanism, providing information and matching needs and available programmes related to integrated assessments.

Building blocks of the third cycle

1. Lessons learned from the second cycle of the Regular Process

A dedicated process or exercise to review the second cycle of the Regular Process and its outcomes would help inform, inter alia, the structure, funding and programme of work of the third cycle. Such a process would benefit from the input of participants in the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, national focal points, the Group of Experts, the Pool of Experts and the secretariat.

2. Outreach and engagement strategy

- The outcome document of the multi-stakeholder dialogue and capacity-building partnership event lists the need to develop communication strategies for different target audiences.
- The need to improve communication, as well as to make greater for outreach and awareness-raising, was also among the lessons learned from the first cycle of the Regular Process.
- These aims could all be addressed in an outreach and engagement strategy.
- The primary aims of such a strategy would be to improve communication with stakeholders in the context of the Regular Process and to reach and engage policymakers, organizations, academia, schools and the general public in the Regular Process.
- The briefs for policymakers mentioned above could be a part of such a strategy.
- The regional workshops discussed below could also be a part of such a strategy.

3. Regional workshops

- Regional workshops are expected to contribute to reinforcing the capacity of States to participate in the Regular Process, undertake and/or participate in assessments, and to more generally reinforce the science-policy interface. They are also expected to foster wider geographical representation and a broader range of expertise in the appointment of experts to the Pool of Experts of the Regular Process and to facilitate the collection of regional-level data and information for the future integrated assessment(s).
- Building on the successes and lessons learned from the first and second cycles, how should the regional workshops for the third cycle be structured?

4. Interaction between the Regular Process and the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development

- The third cycle of the Regular Process would coincide with the first five years of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030).
- The deliverables of the third cycle of the Regular Process should be aligned with and feed into the Decade.
- The trends to be evaluated and the gaps to be identified in the second world ocean assessment could inform planning for major activities of the Decade. The Decade could then assist in concentrating efforts to further the knowledge in those areas of ocean science in which gaps currently exist, thereby contributing to the next integrated assessment. The Decade could also provide an opportunity to support the Regular Process in strengthening the science-policy interface. Therefore, the Decade and the Regular Process would mutually benefit from cooperation and synergies with each other.
- The implementation plan for the Decade will be considered by the General Assembly in 2020, at the same time as the consideration of the second world ocean assessment and of the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole for the third cycle. As a result, there is a need to ensure coordination and synergies between the two processes. To do so, it would be important to involve the Executive Planning Group for the Decade in the planning process for the third cycle.

- The twentieth meeting of the Informal Consultative Process (10–14 June 2019), the focus of which was ocean science and the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, presented another opportunity to highlight the importance of decision-making based on the best available science and the important role of the Regular Process in that regard.

5. Regular Process and other United Nations bodies and processes

During the third cycle, the Regular Process would also need to consider discussions held in other United Nations processes, including the following:

- Intergovernmental conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction
- General Assembly
- United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea
- High-level political forum on sustainable development
- High-level 2020 United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, to be held in Portugal, and its outcomes.
