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**Regular process for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment,
including socio-economic aspects (GMA)**

We have reviewed the draft document constituting the outcome of the discussions held by the Group of Experts on the GMA, 23-26 March 2004 in New York, and would like to offer the following comments as requested in paragraph 64 (b) of UNGA resolution 58/240.

We note that the draft document provides very little specific reference to the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP), and its possible role in, and contributions to the GMA.

Relevant key documentation on the GMA process prepared prior to the Experts Meeting did refer explicitly and specifically to GESAMP. Such key documentation includes inter alia:

- the reports of the Meetings in Reykjavik in 2001 and Bremen in 2002;
- the 2003 WCMC/UNEP/IOC survey of global and regional marine environmental assessments and related scientific activities;
- the Secretary General's Report (A/58/423) to the 58th Session of UNGA (8 October 2003) which described Proposals for Modalities for the GMA;
- the Consultants Report "The Development of a United Nations Global Marine Assessment Programme" (March 2004), prepared for the purpose of the GMA Experts Meeting.

In addition, we note that GESAMP itself explicitly stated interest and preparedness to participate and contribute to the GMA process, in its various phases of preparation and implementation. We refer to relevant text in the 2003 Report of the 33rd Session of GESAMP, and in particular, to its Annex V containing the response by GESAMP's Chair to your letter of 25 February 2003 on the proposed modalities for the GMA (attached hereto for easy reference).

<http://gesamp.imo.org/no74/GESAMP-74-fulltext.pdf>

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We would like to reiterate FAO's statements in support of a major role of GESAMP in the GMA, as communicated to you in March 2003 (also attached).

With the above in mind, and if possible, we would suggest that explicit and specific references be made (in future considerations and discussions) to the possible roles and contributions by GESAMP in various activities and panels described in the GMA Experts Meeting Report. These possible involvements of GESAMP could include inter alia:

- Continued assistance in the design and startup components for the GMA process;
- Participation in the Global Scientific Assessment Panel;
- Preparation of annual updates on the state of the marine environment;
- Developing scoping studies and complete documents on topical assessments;
- Scientific assistance, as required, to initiatives of design of regional assessments, including related capacity building efforts;
- Quality assurance including peer review processes.

With regards to the general contents of the draft document, we do note the specific reference to the important paragraph 36 of the WSSD-POI, but feel that such specific and visible reference should also be made to relevant UNGA resolutions. This could still be done by including these resolutions in annexes to the document.

It is noted that the report does not provide much guidance on the management and administration of information and knowledge generated by the various GMA efforts to be undertaken at regional and global levels. It is suggested that existing mechanisms such as, for example, the UN Atlas of the Oceans, be considered as the basis or reference for the development of a GMA information and knowledge management system.

We note that specific reference is made to fisheries and issues of interest to FAO, such as in paragraphs 16 (topical assessments), 22 (themes), 23 (causes) and 24 (drivers).

We would like to recommend that anthropogenic and natural environmental effects on fisheries resources and associated ecosystems be considered top priority among the specific issues which should be addressed by the first assessment.

As minor editorial change in the draft report, we suggest that the full name of GESAMP be spelled out in the list of Abbreviations on page (iii):

GESAMP IMO/FAO/UNESCO-IOC/WMO/WHO/IAEA/UN/UNEP Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection

Yours sincerely,

Ichiro Nomura
Assistant Director-General
(Fisheries Department)