

New Zealand comments on paper A/AC.271/WP.1 'A regular process for the global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects'.

New Zealand is supportive of the establishment of a global marine assessment and we agree that such an assessment is urgently needed.

We agree with the Goals and Scope as outlined in the paper. We agree that the GMA should build on existing work and institutions where possible.

New Zealand agrees that the GMA should cover the oceans from coastal waters to ocean basins.

New Zealand believes that fisheries information and issues should be included in the GMA. We believe that the meaning and substance of the GMA would be greatly diminished in the absence of fisheries information and issues.

New Zealand would prefer the GMA to have a centralised rather than regional approach. We note that the current proposal is heavily weighted towards a regional approach. We believe this is less than desirable, as a regional approach could result in inconsistencies and gaps in information with regard to straddling, highly migratory or cosmopolitan species. If a centralised approach is adopted, then consideration should be given to building the global assessment from a set of areas with ecologically defined boundaries, perhaps ocean-basin based.

Given the emphasis on a regional approach we suggest that there will need to be in-depth discussion around the creation/definition of appropriate regions. In particular, coverage of high seas areas and areas of overlapping jurisdiction are of concern. Large Marine Ecosystems (LME's), which have been put forward as a possible candidate for regional boundaries appear to be limited in coverage and largely restricted to continental shelves, leaving the issue of the high seas unresolved.

We are also concerned that the regional approach would be expensive and administratively difficult. New Zealand's area of regional interest, the south-west Pacific, is a vast area of ocean that is sparsely populated by small Pacific Island countries and territories, many with limited resources and expertise. In considering appropriate regional governance for our area of interest a geo-political boundary may be more appropriate than a purely ecological boundary, for instance the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC/CPS)/South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP) area.

Related to the decision on regional boundaries will be the issue of governance and responsibility. This does not appear to have been well addressed in the paper. Again we reiterate that the approach needs to build on existing work and institutions.

The Assessment of Assessments could be expanded to look at lessons learnt from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) process.

It is unclear why Topical Assessments might be considered part of the set-up phase of the GMA. The purpose of the Topical Assessments is not contained in the paper which adds to

the confusion. We suggest that the regular GMA process would facilitate and enable Topical Assessments and not be preceded by them. We suggest that Topical Assessments would largely vary between regions where threats and challenges to ocean management differ.

Underlying work to facilitate interpretation and understanding of suggested Topical Assessments could include:

- Development of ecosystem and trophic models with predictive capacity, integrated with socio-economic models (regional, ocean basin, global).
- Classification and characterisation of marine habitats (oceanography (geophysical, chemophysical, hydrographical), biological composition, ecological function, and spatial and temporal distribution) mapped with spatial and temporal overlays of nature, extent and intensity of human induced stressors (e.g. see para 23 of paper).

We agree that given the regional approach the GMA requires a common conceptual framework to foster comparability among the regional assessments. We are not sure that the themed approach is optimal, as it would not readily support an ecosystem-based assessment of key threats/management priorities. Perhaps consideration could be given to the development of an agreed set of minimum data and information requirements, along with agreed standards.

The above approach would also facilitate the development of the GMA as an on-line system, either in the form of a centralised database or as a portal to a cluster of regional or even local databases. In order to avoid extra costs it will be important not to require material to be presented in forms that necessitate transformation from existing database formats, however advances in the development of a marine XML (MML) will facilitate exchange of marine data in different formats.

We generally agree with the proposed regular GMA process, with some reservations about the theme approach and the regional component as described above.

New Zealand central government initiatives that could contribute local information to the GMA include, but are not limited to, the Environmental Performance Indicators Programme, the Marine Environment Classification, the National Aquatic Biodiversity Information System, and the Oceans project to inform national priorities for management and research.