



Background information on the Regular Process

1. At the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August to 4 September 2002, States agreed, in paragraph 36 (b) of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI), to “establish by 2004 a regular process under the United Nations for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects, both current and foreseeable, building on existing regional assessments” (the “Regular Process”).

Preparatory phase (2002-2005)

2. In paragraph 45 of resolution 57/141 of 12 December 2002, the General Assembly endorsed paragraph 36 (b) of the JPOI. It requested the Secretary-General, in close collaboration with Member States, relevant organizations and agencies and programmes of the United Nations system, to prepare proposals on modalities for a regular process for the global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, drawing, inter alia, upon the work of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and taking into account the recently completed review by the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP), and to submit these proposals to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session for its consideration and decision, including on the convening of a possible intergovernmental meeting.

3. In 2003, the Secretariat prepared a report on proposals for modalities for the Regular Process focusing on steps to be taken for the establishment of this Process (the report on proposals is available as document A/58/423). In paragraph 64 (a) of resolution 58/240 of 23 December 2003, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to convene a group of experts of no more than 24 participants, comprising representatives of States, including all regional groups, and representatives from intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations, including both scientists and policy makers, to produce a draft document with details on the scope, general framework and outline of the regular process, peer review, secretariat, capacity-building and funding. The Group of Experts was convened in New York from 23 to 26 March 2004. It recommended, inter alia, that an “Assessment of Assessments” be undertaken as part of the start-up phase of the Regular Process. The outcome of its discussions was submitted to an International Workshop held in New York from 7 to 11 June 2004. A second International Workshop, held in New York from 13 to 15 June 2005, considered a number of conclusions about the nature, aims and output of the “Assessment of Assessments”, and recommended an organizational structure.



Start-up phase: the “Assessment of Assessments” (2005-2009)

4. Pursuant to resolution 60/30 of 29 November 2005, the General Assembly launched the start-up phase to the Regular Process, called the “Assessment of Assessments”. The Assembly also established organizational arrangements, which included an Ad Hoc Steering Group to oversee the execution of the “Assessment of Assessments”; two United Nations agencies to co-lead the process, UNEP and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC/UNESCO); and a Group of Experts to undertake the actual work of assessing the various assessments.

5. Letters from the heads of IOC/UNESCO and UNEP transmitting a report on the results of the “Assessment of Assessments” to the Secretary-General were issued as document A/64/88.

Operationalization of the Regular Process (2009 to 2010)

6. In paragraph 157 of resolution 63/111 of 5 December 2008, the General Assembly established an ad hoc working group of the whole to recommend a course of action at its sixty-fourth session based on the outcomes of the fourth meeting of the Ad Hoc Steering Group which reviewed the completed “Assessment of Assessments” report, and requested the Secretary-General to convene its informal meeting for one week not later than September 2009. The meeting took place from 31 August to 4 September 2009. The report of the meeting is available as document A/64/347.

7. In paragraph 177 of resolution 64/71 of 4 December 2009, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendations adopted by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole that propose a framework for the Regular Process, describe its first cycle and a way forward and stress the need for further progress to be made on the modalities for the implementation of the Regular Process prior to the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly. It also requested the Secretary-General to convene an informal meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole from 30 August to 3 September 2010 to further consider and make recommendations to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session on the modalities for the implementation of the Regular Process, including the key features, institutional arrangements and financing, and to specify the objective and scope of its first cycle, key questions to be answered and primary target audiences, in order to ensure that assessments are relevant for decision-makers, as well as on the terms of reference for the voluntary trust fund and the scholarship fund established pursuant to paragraph 183 of the same resolution. The report of the meeting is available as document A/65/358.

8. In paragraph 179 of the same resolution, the General Assembly invited States, as a means to facilitate decisions on the first cycle of the Regular Process, to submit their views to the Secretary-General on the fundamental building blocks of the Regular Process, and requested the Secretary-General to present these views to the General



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Assembly at its sixty-fifth session in the context of his annual report on oceans and the law of the sea. The report is available as document A/65/69/Add.1.

9. In paragraph 180 of the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to invite the Chairs of the regional groups to constitute a group of experts, ensuring adequate expertise and geographical distribution, comprised of a maximum of 25 experts and no more than 5 experts per regional group, for a period up to and including the informal meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole in 2010. The General Assembly also requested the group of experts to respond and make suggestions on the issues listed in paragraph 60 of the report on the results of the “Assessment of Assessments”, available in the annex to document A/64/88.

10. In paragraph 200 of resolution 65/37 A of 7 December 2010 the General Assembly endorsed the recommendations adopted by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole at its meeting early that year that proposed modalities for the implementation of the Regular Process, including the key features, institutional arrangements, capacity-building and financing.

11. In paragraph 202 of the same resolution, the General Assembly decided that the Regular Process, as established under the United Nations, was accountable to the General Assembly and should be an intergovernmental process guided by international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and other applicable international instruments, and take into account relevant General Assembly resolutions.

12. In paragraphs 203 and 204 of the same resolution, the General Assembly decided that the Regular Process would be overseen and guided by an Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole of the General Assembly composed of Member States, and requested the Secretary-General to convene the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole from 14 to 18 February 2011. It further decided that the meetings of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole would be open to Member States and Observers of the United Nations. In accordance with past practice of the United Nations, relevant intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council would be invited to participate in the meetings of the Working Group, and relevant scientific institutions and major groups identified in Agenda 21 could request an invitation to participate in the meetings of the Working Group. The meetings of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole would be coordinated by two co-chairs representing developing and developed countries, appointed by the President of the General Assembly in consultation with regional groups.

13. The General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to designate the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, Office of Legal Affairs, United Nations, to provide secretariat support to the Regular Process, including its established institutions. The Secretary-General was also requested to invite the IOC/UNESCO, UNEP, the International Maritime Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the



United Nations, and other competent United Nations specialized agencies, as appropriate, to provide technical and scientific support to the Regular Process.

14. Pursuant to paragraphs 205 and 212 of the same resolution, the General Assembly emphasized the deadline of 2014 for the completion of the first integrated assessment and requested the Group of Experts to work, with the assistance of the secretariat of the Regular Process, to develop a set of options necessary to achieve such a deadline to be presented by the Group of Experts for consideration and adoption, as appropriate, by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole at its meeting in 2011.

15. In paragraph 208 of the same resolution, the General Assembly recommended that the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole established, with agreement on terms of reference and other relevant elements, a management and review mechanism composed of States from among its members, on the basis of equitable geographic representation.

16. In paragraph 209 of the same resolution, the General Assembly also established a group of experts to be an integral part of the Regular Process and requested the members of the Group of Experts, who had been appointed by Member States pursuant to paragraph 180 of General Assembly resolution 64/71, to continue serving on the Group of Experts for the duration of the first phase of the first assessment cycle.

17. In addition, the General Assembly urged Member States, international financial institutions, donor agencies, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and natural and juridical persons to make financial contributions to the voluntary trust funds established pursuant to paragraph 183 of its resolution 64/71 and to make other contributions to the Regular Process.

First meeting of the Regular Process (2011 onwards)

18. At the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole, held at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 14 to 18 February 2011, delegations discussed options to achieve the deadline of 2014 for the completion of the first cycle of the Regular Process. The Working Group also considered the status of the trust fund established for the purpose of supporting the operations of the first five-year cycle of the Regular Process.

19. On the basis of those discussions, the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole adopted recommendations to be transmitted to the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly and agreed on a way forward to enable Member States to continue discussing, as necessary, issues relating to options to achieve the deadline of 2014 for the completion of the first cycle of the Regular Process. The report of the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole and the recommendations to the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly are available as document A/65/759.



20. The recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole were endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 65/37 B of 4 April 2011.

21. Pursuant to paragraph 2 of that resolution, the Secretary-General was requested to explore, in consultation with the Group of Experts, the establishment of appropriate means to address the communication requirements of the Regular Process and to report on the findings as soon as practicable. In addition, the secretariat of the Regular Process, with the assistance of the Group of Experts, was requested to inventory, on a preliminary basis, capacity-building for assessments and types of experts for workshops and to report on these issues at the following meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole.

22. In paragraph 5 of the same resolution, the General Assembly invited States to provide comments, by 30 April 2011, on three draft documents: the possible outline for the first global integrated assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects; the draft criteria for the appointment of experts; and the draft guidelines for workshops. The General Assembly also requested the Group of Experts to prepare, by 30 May 2011, revised versions of these documents in the light of the comments of States.

23. Pursuant to paragraph 7 of the same resolution, the Secretary-General was requested to convene the second meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole to address outstanding issues identified in the report of the first meeting, with a view to enabling the first cycle of the first global integrated assessment to proceed, and to provide recommendations to the General Assembly for consideration at its sixty-sixth session. The second meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole was held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 27 and 28 June 2011.

24. On the basis of its discussions, the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole adopted recommendations to be transmitted to the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly and recommended that its next meeting be convened in the first half of 2012. It recommended that workshops be organized at the earliest possible opportunity in order to inform the first cycle of the Regular Process. Pursuant to paragraph 208 of resolution 65/37 A, the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole also agreed to establish a bureau to put in practice its decisions and guidance during the intersessional period. The report of the second meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole and the recommendations to the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly are available as document A/66/189.