

## **Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects**

The Regular Process is a global mechanism established by States after the 2002 United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, South Africa (General Assembly resolution 57/141). It aims to regularly review the environmental, economic and social aspects of the state of the world's oceans, both current and foreseeable. It is 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. It is accountable to the United Nations General Assembly. Its purpose is to contribute to the strengthening of the regular scientific assessment of the state of the marine environment in order to enhance the scientific basis for policymaking.

The Assembly, through resolution 65/37 of 7 December 2010, decided that the Regular Process would be overseen by an Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole composed of Member States under the leadership of two Co-Chairs, one from a developed country and one from a developing country. Observers of the United Nations, relevant intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council are also invited to participate in the meetings of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole. Relevant scientific institutions and major groups identified in Agenda 21 may request an invitation to participate in its meetings. The meetings of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole are open to Member States and Observers of the United Nations. In accordance with past practice of the United Nations, relevant intergovernmental organizations and nongovernmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council will be invited to participate in the meetings of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole. Relevant scientific institutions, and major groups identified in Agenda 21 may request an invitation to participate in the meetings of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole. (General Assembly resolution [65/37 A](#), paragraph 204). The Working Group has two Co-Chairs representing developed and developing countries. They are appointed by the President of the General Assembly in consultation with regional groups.

A 15-member Bureau (composed of three Member States per regional group), established in 2012, puts into practice the decisions and guidance of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole during intersessional periods. The Bureau, under the leadership of the Co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole (currently Barbados and Estonia), usually meets monthly.

### **Evolution**

The General Assembly launched the "Assessment of Assessments" as the start-up phase of the Regular Process (General Assembly resolutions [58/240](#) (2003) and [60/30](#) (2005)). In December 2009, it endorsed the recommendations adopted by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole that proposed a framework for the Regular Process (General Assembly resolution [64/71](#)).

In December 2010, the General Assembly endorsed recommendations that proposed modalities for implementing the Regular Process, including the key features, institutional arrangements, capacity-building and financing (General Assembly resolution [65/37 A](#)). The Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea was designated to provide secretariat support to the Regular Process.

In December 2011, the Assembly adopted criteria for the appointment of experts and guidelines for regional workshops to assist the Regular Process (General Assembly [66/231](#)).

## **First Cycle**

The first cycle of the Regular Process ran from 2010 to 2014. Its main objective was to produce a First Global Integrated Marine Assessment (the first World Ocean Assessment). The General Assembly also established a Group of Experts to be an integral part of the Process. It is led by two Joint Coordinators and composed of a maximum of 25 experts (five from each regional group), taking into consideration geographic and gender balance and diversity of expertise. The general task of the Group of Experts is to carry out any assessments within the framework of the Regular Process at the request of the General Assembly under the supervision of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole. In order to assist the Group of Experts with this task, a wider **Pool of Experts** was established. Approximately 600 such experts were nominated to contribute to the preparation of the first World Ocean Assessment.

Workshops in support of the first cycle of the Regular Process were hosted by Chile, China, Belgium, United States of America, Mozambique, Australia, Côte d'Ivoire and India between 2011 and 2014. In December 2014, the draft chapters of the first Assessment under the Process were sent to Member States, peer reviewers and inter-governmental organisations for review.

The summary of the first World Ocean Assessment was issued as an official document of the General Assembly (A/70/112) on 22 July 2015. The 55-chapter Assessment marks the first time ever that scientific experts have assessed the current knowledge on the biological, chemical, economic, physical and social aspects of the oceans from an integrated, overall perspective. Its findings are alarming. The experts warn that the ocean is facing major pressures simultaneously with such great impacts that the limits of its carrying capacity are being, or in some cases have been, reached. They indicate that urgent action on a global scale is needed to protect the world's oceans from the many pressures they face.

Although it is not a policy document, the Assessment reinforces the science-policy interface and provides a scientific basis for informed decisions by governments, intergovernmental processes, policy-makers and others involved in ocean affairs. It provides a picture of the state of the oceans, including socioeconomic aspects, and also identifies where more information is needed and supports capacity-building efforts to generate, share and act upon that information. It established a baseline for measuring the state of the marine environment and thus represents a major milestone both for the Regular Process and for the international community.

The first World Ocean Assessment was welcomed with appreciation by the General Assembly, which also approved its summary and recognised, inter alia, the supporting role of the Assessment in the implementation of the recently adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly its ocean-related goals.

## **Second cycle**

The General Assembly launched the second cycle of the Regular Process in 2015 (resolution 70/235), decided in 2016 that the second cycle will cover five years from 2016 to 2020, and endorsed the programme of work for the period 2017 - 2020 for the second cycle of the Regular Process adopted by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole at its seventh meeting (held from 3 to 9 August 2016). In 2017, the General Assembly recalled that, in the first cycle, the scope of the Regular Process focused on establishing a baseline, and decides that the scope of the second cycle will extend to evaluating trends and identifying gaps.

In implementing this cycle, a Group of Experts for the second cycle composed of not more than 25 experts nominated by the Regional Groups has been constituted (see <http://www.un.org/depts/los/rp>). A pool of experts for the second cycle is also being constituted in

accordance with the “Mechanism for the establishment of the Pool of Experts for the second cycle of the Regular Process” adopted by the eighth meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole (held from 17 to 18 April 2017). National Focal Points are also being designated by States with guidance from the “Terms of Reference for National Focal Points” adopted by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole at its eighth meeting. National Focal Points, facilitate the implementation of the programme of work for the period 2017-2020 for the second cycle of the Regular Process, in particular with respect to the nomination process for additional experts to the Pool of Experts, the swift communication between the scientific community, the Group of Experts, the Pool of Experts, the Bureau and the secretariat of the Regular Process, and awareness-raising.

The programme of work envisages the following Outputs of the second cycle:

- Output I - the preparation of the second world ocean assessment to be delivered in 2020, which will play a decisive supporting role for other United Nations processes and should support policy development and decision-making at the national, regional and global levels. As with the first World Ocean Assessment, the effective and efficient preparation of the second world ocean assessment will be facilitated by a Pool of Experts. An Outline of the second world ocean assessment and a Preliminary timetable and implementation plan for the preparation of the second world ocean assessment have been prepared by the Group of Experts. The drafting of the second world ocean assessment is scheduled to start in August 2018.
- Output II - Regular Process support for other ocean-related intergovernmental processes including the following: (a) The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; (b) General Assembly resolution 69/292 on 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; (c) The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; (d) The United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea.

With regard to Output II, three Technical Abstracts of the First Global Integrated Assessment were produced in June 2017 on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction; the ocean and the Sustainable Development Goals under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and the impacts of climate change and related changes in the atmosphere on the oceans, prepared in accordance with the programme of work for the period 2017–2020 for the second cycle of the Regular Process.

#### Activities in support of the second cycle

The programme of work for the second cycle also outlines the activities in support of making the second cycle operational, including outreach and awareness-raising initiatives and capacity-building activities, such as regional workshops, briefings and side-events and the development and distribution of promotional print and audiovisual material.

In accordance with the programme of work, two rounds of regional workshops will be held in support of the second cycle, under the auspices of the United Nations. A first round of five regional workshops was held in 2017 in Lisbon in September 2017, in Auckland, New Zealand, in October 2017, in Camboriú, Brazil, in November 2017, in Bangkok in November 2017 and in Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania, in December 2017. This first round of workshops helped raise awareness about and receive feedback on the first World Ocean Assessment, informed the scoping and preparation phases of the second world ocean assessment and generated interest from the scientific community. The summaries of discussions for these workshops are available at [...].

The second round of regional workshops in support of the second cycle of the Regular Process, which is intended to support the development of the second world ocean assessment by enabling the collection of regional-level data and enabling relevant members of writing teams to meet, is scheduled to begin in the second half of 2018. Guidelines for the second round of workshops were adopted in April 2018.

A multi-stakeholder dialogue (case studies of good practices)/ a capacity-building partnership event will be held from 24 to 25 January 2019 in New York, in order to provide an opportunity to build awareness and collaboration with respect to capacity-building in support of the Regular Process, including with respect to building capacity to participate in, and make use of, assessments.

The Regular Process aims through its main outputs, such as the first World Ocean Assessment and the future second world ocean assessment to reinforce the science-policy interface by providing a scientific basis for informed decisions on ocean issues by governments and other policy makers.

The General Assembly in its resolution 71/257 of 23 December 2016 recalled the importance of making Governments, intergovernmental organizations, the scientific community and the general public aware of the Assessment and the Regular Process. The General Assembly further recognized the supporting scientific value of the Assessment, among other things, for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, General Assembly resolution 69/292: 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, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change process.