

[*Translated from Chinese*]

**Views of China on lessons learned during the
first cycle of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment
of the State of the Marine Environment**

The overall operating mechanism of the first cycle of the World Ocean Assessment (WOA I) reflects the relative soundness of the programme. The Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole meets with the Bureau to supervise and manage overall programme implementation. In its capacity as secretariat, the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS) manages the day-to-day affairs of the programme. The Group of Experts, the strength at the programme's core, is in charge of determining assessment methods, organizing the assessment agenda, and drafting assessment reports; it also organizes peer reviews. Setting up the Pool of Experts has facilitated the gathering of scholars and researchers with outstanding professional expertise from around the globe; they work in teams with the Group of Experts to write chapters of reports and also complete the drafting of assessment reports. The regional workshops enhance the role of the regional organizations, collect valuable data from within regions, and identify regional capacity-building needs. Despite the soundness of this overall framework, however, some issues remain with regard to the basic programme implementation procedures, which have yet to be resolved and ameliorated.

1. *Balancing the proportion of old and new members in constituting the new Group of Experts.* In the process of implementing the first cycle of the World Ocean Assessment, the twenty members of the Group of Experts, from different regions around the globe and with differing professional backgrounds, worked together to complete the Assessment under the leadership and guidance of the coordinators. The membership of the Group was set at a reasonable number, allowing it the flexibility to organize Group meetings of modest size, resulting in relatively high work efficiency. For the new Group of Experts to be constituted in the next Assessment cycle, we suggest that a balanced proportion of new members to old ones should be considered; new members should be brought into the Group, but at the same time, to ensure programme continuity, it would be advisable to maintain a specific proportion of existing members, so that the second-cycle Group of Experts can familiarize itself with the "Regular Process" programme and start the relevant work with as little delay as possible. Furthermore, while the regional balance of the members of the Group of Experts for the first-cycle Assessment was relatively successful, we suggest that with regard to the professional background of Group members, the broadest possible range of the disciplines needed to carry out the Assessment should be represented, and that multi-disciplinary balance be given full consideration. Naturally, in accordance with the initial requirements set out by the Group of Experts, and in order to ensure that the Group remains open to new ideas and methods, the principle that no member of the Group of Experts may serve more than two successive terms must be scrupulously observed, so as to avoid stagnation and the stifling of innovation.

2. *Replenishing membership in the Pool of Experts in a reasonable manner, and improving its working mechanism.* The Pool of Experts was a major factor in the successful completion of the World Ocean Assessment. Its establishment facilitated the gathering of researchers with widely varying regional and professional backgrounds to complete the Assessment, making the conclusions of the Assessment more convincing and representative, and also more reflective of regional characteristics. However, in the first-cycle Assessment, there was a broad lack of enthusiasm for assessment work among members of the Pool of

Experts, and a correspondingly small number of them showed any willingness to join the chapter-drafting groups to take on the writing tasks involved. How to get more experts to participate actively in assessment work, and how to strengthen exchange and communication among members of the writing teams, are two important issues that must be resolved for the second-cycle Assessment. Moreover, there is a persistent problem in the uneven distribution of the areas of expertise of Pool members, with clearly insufficient numbers of experts in certain areas. In light of these issues, we suggest that with the establishment of the new Group of Experts in line with the goals of the second-cycle Assessment, requirements for fields of expertise should be set up as early as possible for Pool members, so as to provide guidance for member States in nominating experts and enable the timely replenishment of new Pool members. We also request that member States take a variety of measures to encourage participation in relevant assessment work on the part of the Pool members they propose, and suggest improving the working mechanism of the Pool by setting up smoother communication and exchange between the Pool of Experts and the Group of Experts as well as the Secretariat, and holding periodic exchange activities, thereby allowing Pool members to keep abreast of the development and requirements of the programme and participate more effectively in its implementation.

3. *Taking full advantage of regional workshop results and the role of regional organizations.* The first-cycle Assessment convened a series of regional workshops, which not only publicized the WOA programme very effectively, but also made an important achievement by collecting a large amount of valuable regional-level information and data. The aim of a regional workshop is to organize and analyze the assessments undertaken in that region and the data and information produced, and organically combine them with the overall WOA programme. During the first-cycle Assessment, however, some of the regional workshops were held before the Pool of Experts had even begun its work, with some chapter-report writers unable to attend the regional workshops as a result. Additionally, because the organization and publicizing of regional-workshop results were delayed in the later stages, those results could not fulfil the role expected of them during the first-cycle Assessment. For that reason, we suggest that in the second-cycle Assessment, chapter-drafting teams be enabled to make fuller use of the results of the regional workshops, collect relevant regional data, and more fully mobilize and bring into play the roles of regional organizations.

4. *Increasing funding input to improve the work mechanisms of the report chapter-writing teams.* For the first-cycle Assessment, the report mechanisms had originally been envisioned as being modelled on the report-writing experience of other global assessment programmes, such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), with plans for the Group of Experts to hold numerous work meetings on compiling key chapters, allowing the members of the drafting teams to engage in face-to-face discussions of chapter content, thus raising the quality of the chapters they wrote; owing to time and funding issues, however, this could not be achieved. We therefore advise that plans be made early in the second-cycle Assessment to set aside a certain amount of time and money to convene meetings on drafting key or important chapters, so as to further enhance the scientific value of the Assessment.

5. *Strengthening WOA capacity-building.* WOA capacity-building includes not only providing developing countries with technology transfers, skills training and guidance in fully utilizing the results of the WOA, but also strengthening its own assessment capacity-building and solving the problems caused by insufficiency of the information and data needed for the Assessment. The Group of Experts should, as soon as possible and on the basis of the work of the first-cycle Assessment, set the scope and goals of the second-cycle Assessment, study the latest developments in the comprehensive evaluation of the marine environment,

and analyze insufficiencies in the information and data needed for the Assessment and take countermeasures to resolve them, so as to better complete the work of the second-cycle Assessment.
