



March 29, 2016

Bureau of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on the Regular Process
c/o Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs
email: doalos@un.org
cc: chung4@un.org

Re: lessons learned from the first cycle of the Regular Process with a view to the implementation of the second cycle

The letter is in response to the January 29, 2016 invitation from João Miguel Madureira of the Permanent Mission of Portugal to the United Nations to express views on “lessons learned” from the first cycle of the Regular Process with a view to the implementation of the second cycle.

PICES is an intergovernmental organization (Canada, People's Republic of China, Japan, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, and the United States of America) with the purposes of:

- Promote and coordinate marine research in the northern North Pacific and adjacent seas especially northward of 30 degrees North
- Advance scientific knowledge about the ocean environment, global weather and climate change, living resources and their ecosystems, and the impacts of human activities
- Promote the collection and rapid exchange of scientific information on these issues

Clearly, the match between the PICES objectives and the World Ocean Assessment is strong. PICES feels that it is uniquely positioned to support the World Ocean Assessment, particular in regards to the PICES Convention Area (North Pacific Ocean and marginal seas). In fact, PICES has completed two North Pacific Ecosystem Status Reports (NPESR) (http://www.pices.int/publications/special_publications/NPESR/2004/npesr_2004.aspx and

http://www.pices.int/publications/special_publications/NPESR/2010/NPESR_2010.aspx). The bulk of the information provided in Chapter 36C of the World Ocean Assessment was drawn directly from these publications by the contributors -Thomas Therriault, Chul Park and Jake Rice who have all played very active roles in PICES science. PICES is proceeding with a third version of the NPESR and we are focused on improving the data collection/assembly process to reduce the amount of work (and associated costs), with the hope that more effort can be devoted to the integration and synthesis component. We will also be adding socio-economic indicators to the report for the first time.

We present “lessons learned” from our own experience with production of the North Pacific Ecosystem Status Reports and from our involvement in the first cycle of the Regular Process. We feel that much of our experience in two cycles of NPESR production is relevant to the discussion around the regular process.

Lessons learned from the PICES NPESR process:

1. It is difficult to gather equivalent data for all areas of the ocean. In some cases, the data don't exist; in some cases, the data are unavailable and in other cases, the measurements are not comparable. This makes the integration and synthesis task more complicated and requiring advanced levels of scientific interpretation and judgement.

Secretariat
P.O. Box 6000,
Sidney, B.C.,
Canada, V8L 4B2
Phone: (250) 363-
6366
Fax: (250) 363-
6827
E-Mail:
secretariat@pices.int
Internet: www.pices.int

Chairman
Dr. Laura Richards

Vice-Chairman
Dr. Chul Park

Executive Secretary
Mr. Robin Brown

2. A thorough scientific treatment of the available data inevitably leads to a long report – longer than many people will read. This means that synthesis/summary components (supported by the detailed reports) are critical for the report.
3. Clear and attractive figures are a critical component and users should be encouraged to re-use these figures where appropriate in presentations and other documents. Repeated use of common figures is a great aid to the readers. We all understand the information better when we see it multiple times. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has led the way in this approach and demonstrated the effectiveness.
4. In addition to providing subsequent reports and updates, it is important to invest in approaches to the assembly of the data to make the process less arduous and more timely. PICES is currently engaged in this. We don't have all the answers, but this a critical requirement to make regular reporting sustainable.
5. Investments made in publication design and presentation increases the utility and uptake of the publication.

Lessons learned from our engagement with the first cycle of the Regular Process:

1. Regional organizations like PICES have a great deal to offer when it comes to basin-scale analysis and synthesis, but the structure of the Regular Process, where only nation states are really recognized, hampered our ability to contribute effectively.
2. In principle, the activities of PICES and similar organizations could be re-configured to better support a sustainable World Ocean Assessment process, but this is unlikely to happen with the current approach, with its focus on contributions by Member States. Regional organizations like PICES do not have “standing” in the eyes of the Regular Process and for whatever reasons, essentially no direction was provided from the UN to Member States through to national delegates to PICES. Perhaps Member States could be encouraged to make optimal use of regional (and other) intergovernmental organization and associations to improve the Regular Process.
3. These reports require a common focus. The current WOA has a great deal of information, but integration and synthesis is lacking. This will mean that experts will make use of some of the details, but the report is unlikely to have much impact on decision-makers.

Thank for your invitation to respond. In the next few months, PICES will add links to the World Ocean Assessment to our website and we have commissioned an article for our PICES Press newsletter to alert PICES scientists to the new World Ocean Assessment. We will also add the issue of PICES participation in subsequent rounds of the World Ocean Assessment to the agenda for our Governing Council.

Please let me know if you require clarification or further information.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R M Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Robin Brown
Executive Secretary
Tel: +1 (250) 363-6364
Email: Robin.Brown@pices.int