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## **Regular process for the global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment (GMA)**

I am responding on behalf of the United Kingdom to your letter of 7 April to the UK's Permanent Representative to the United Nations.

We are grateful for the opportunity to comment on the draft document produced by the Group of Experts convened pursuant to paragraph 64 (b) of GA resolution 58/240.

As you will know from earlier correspondence, the UK strongly supports the establishment of a regular global assessment and reporting process, which received endorsement from the General Assembly (resolution 57/141) in the light of the specific commitment at paragraph 36 (b) of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. We see the proposed GMA as an important mechanism to enable policy makers and stakeholders generally to address the problems of the marine environment in a comprehensive and integrated manner.

We welcome the outcome of the Group of Experts meeting, which builds on the outcomes of the earlier Reykjavik and Bremen meetings, as well as the review by the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP), as providing a very good basis for taking forward the establishment of the GMA in accordance with resolution 57/141.

We also welcome the convening of the GMA international workshop in conjunction with the forthcoming meeting of the Oceans Consultative Process in New York, 7-11 June. We see this an opportunity for governments, UN agencies and other stakeholders to consider in some depth the outcome of the Group of Experts meeting with a view to coming to a shared understanding of what the GMA process entails and to establishing successfully the process by the end of 2004 as Resolution 58/240 envisages. Indeed, we see it as very important that all those mentioned in Resolution 57/141 play a full and active part in

establishing the regular process, and the workshop and subsequent follow up can help ensure this.

In view of this, and because we will also want to discuss the issues with colleagues in the European Union, , we would not propose to give you detailed comments on the draft report. But we do offer the following general observations.

First, we welcome the approach of the report, which in our view covers much of what we consider to be the five key modal areas which need to be addressed in establishing the GMA:-

- the definition and scope of the regular process;
- its relationship to ongoing assessment activities at the regional and international levels; the interaction with policy makers and stakeholders;
- institutional arrangements including contributions from relevant organizations and agencies and programmes of the United Nations system and arrangements for a secretariat; and
- capacity building and effective participation of expert from developing countries

Within these headings, which we think the report helpfully follows, we think there is much to commend in terms of more detailed areas, such as goals, scope, frequency, conceptual framework, themes, identification of regions, scenarios, co-ordination and scientific assessment.

We also welcome the concept of an initialization of the GMA through a two year start up process based on an assessment of assessments. Indeed, we would emphasise the importance of seeing the GMA as an evolutionary process, which can develop and strengthen over time as the various stakeholders become more engaged with its work, realize the benefits and re-orientate and develop programs accordingly.

We would also underline a point which the UK, along with its European Union colleagues, has stressed, ie the vital importance of the GMA building on current regional assessments. We welcome, therefore, the parts of the report which emphasise this existing regional dimension. It follows that we are cautious about possible indications that additional structures and mechanisms, such as 'GMA regions', might be utilized. We look forward to clarifying this and other issues at the workshop.

On co-ordination and budgetary considerations, we welcome the perception of the GMA as fostering and relying on inter-agency co-ordination and co-operation and the need for appropriate commitment and buy in. We do see the GMA as part of improving the way that agencies and donors can respond together more effectively to the identified needs of countries, and so improving oceans governance at various levels. In this context, we would see the involvement of the newly established inter-agency oceans group (presented on behalf of the Secretary-General along with other recent changes in inter-agency co-operation at the recent CSD meeting) as providing important underpinning for GMA work.

On resources generally, we note the indicative budgets attached to the draft report. We recognize, as the report says, the difficulty and complexity of coming to such figures. We will have to look closely at these in the context of how the GMA might be established and taken forward. This in our view tends to underline the importance of an evolutionary approach to the establishment and structuring of the GMA, which will also enable resource issues to be seen in a similar, evolutionary light.

Finally, on the specific question you ask about issues that the first assessment should address, it follows from the above that we think this is something that would emerge from

the assessment of the assessments. We would not want to encourage a shopping list. Secondly, Trevor Guymmer from our Inter-Agency Committee on Marine Science and Technology and I will attend the workshop at the Consultative Process. We will also be attending the Consultative Process, along with Martin Fidler from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Yours sincerely

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