



Regular process for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects

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 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.



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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 earlier 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 was 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 establish, 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.

Meetings of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole (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 its 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.



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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.

24. 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. 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 also recommended that workshops be organized at the earliest possible opportunity in order to inform the first cycle of the Regular Process. The Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole also agreed on the establishment of a Bureau to put in practice its decisions 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.

25. In resolution 66/231, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendations adopted by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole at its second meeting and adopted the criteria for the appointment of the experts and the guidelines for workshops to assist the Regular Process.

26. In the same resolution, the General Assembly also took note of the terms of reference and working methods for the Group of Experts, the report on communication requirements and data and information management for the Regular Process as well as the report on the preliminary inventory of capacity-building for assessments and types of experts for workshops. The Secretary-General was requested to bring such preliminary inventory to the attention of Member States, heads of specialized agencies, funds and



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programmes of the United Nations and other relevant intergovernmental organizations engaged in activities relating to capacity-building for assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socioeconomic aspects, as well as funding institutions, and invite their contribution to it.

27. In addition, at its sixty-sixth session, the General Assembly welcomed the establishment of the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole and decided on its composition and chairmanship. It also took note of the ongoing work of States aimed at the finalization of the possible outline for the first global integrated assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socioeconomic aspects, and recommended that workshops continue to be organized in order to inform the first cycle of the Regular Process. It also requested the Secretary-General to convene the third meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole in April 2012 to provide recommendations to the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session.

28. Following the adoption of the criteria for the appointment of experts by the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session, the secretariat of the Regular Process circulated letters to the chairs of the regional groups urging the appointment of experts by Member States to the Pool of Experts. The Group of Experts has estimated that a total of around 1500-2000 experts would be needed for the preparation of the first global integrated marine assessment by the end of 2014.

29. The third meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole was held at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 23 to 27 April 2012. At this meeting, the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole recommended that the General Assembly adopt the outline for the first global integrated marine assessment and the terms of reference and working methods for the Group of Experts. The Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole also recommended that the General Assembly take note of the revised draft timetable for the first global integrated marine assessment, the summaries of the workshops held in Chile (September 2011) and China (February 2012) as well as of the report on the preliminary inventory of capacity-building for assessments contained in annex V to document A/67/87. In addition, the Group of Experts was urged to finalize the guidance for contributors as soon as possible, to enable the pool of experts to start work on the preparation of the first global integrated marine assessment as soon as possible.

30. The report of the meeting and the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole to the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly are available as document A/67/87.

31. In May of 2012, the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole held its first meeting. It is comprised of the following Member States: Argentina, Bulgaria, Chile, China, Ecuador, Estonia, Ghana, Greece, Kenya, Republic of Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Ukraine, and the United States of America. Since May of 2012, four meetings of the Bureau have been convened (30 May 2012, 14 September 2012, 16 November 2012 and 26 March 2013). In December 2012, the Bureau approved the



guidance for contributors, which sets out the working arrangements and guidelines for the experts who will contribute to the first global integrated marine assessment.

32. In resolution 67/78 of 10 December 2012, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole at its third meeting. The General Assembly also adopted the outline for the first global integrated marine assessment of the Regular Process and the terms of reference and working methods for the Group of Experts of the Regular Process. Pursuant to paragraph 224 of the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the members of the Group of Experts who had served in the Group of Experts during the first phase of the first assessment cycle pursuant to paragraph 209 of General Assembly resolution 65/37 A, to continue serving in the Group of Experts for the second phase of the first assessment cycle.

33. In addition, at its sixty-seventh session, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to bring the preliminary inventory of capacity-building for assessment to the attention of Member States, heads of the specialized agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations and other relevant intergovernmental organizations, as well as funding institutions, to seek their contribution on existing opportunities and arrangements for capacity-building for assessments. It also requested the Secretary-General to convene the fourth meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole from 22 to 26 April 2013 and emphasized that the second phase of the first cycle of the Regular Process would start on 1 January 2013.

34. The secretariat of the Regular Process was requested by the General Assembly to send the first draft of the first global integrated marine assessment to Member States for comments from June to August 2014. The General Assembly also decided that the Group of Experts would revise the assessment in the light of the comments received and that, once revised, the draft would be presented to the Bureau, together with the comments received, and that with the approval of the Bureau, the assessment would be transmitted for consideration by the Working Group and for final approval by the General Assembly in 2015.

35. In 2012, additional workshops in support of the Regular Process were held in Belgium (June 2012), the United States of America (November 2012), and Mozambique (December 2012).

Second phase of the first assessment cycle (2013-2014)

36. In January 2013, nearly all members of the Group of Experts confirmed their availability to continue serving for the second phase of the first assessment cycle. Following the approval of the guidance for contributors by the Bureau in December 2012, the secretariat of the Regular Process also circulated letters to the members of the Pool of Experts setting out the terms and conditions of their appointment.



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37. The Website of the Regular Process was launched on 25 January 2013 (www.worldoceanassessment.org). It contains general information on the Regular Process (e.g., experts, workshops, capacity building etc.) as well as specific information on the development of the first global integrated marine assessment, or “World Ocean Assessment” (e.g., structure, process of drafting etc.). A closed section has been made created for the members of the Group of Experts and the Pool of Experts for the preparation of the World Ocean Assessment.

38. In February 2013, the sixth Workshop in support of the Regular Process was held in Australia.

39. Pursuant to resolution 67/78, the fourth meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole will be held from 22 to 26 April 2013.