



**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF LEGAL AFFAIRS**

**Tenth Meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on the Regular Process
for Global Reporting
and Assessment of the State of the
Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects**

**Address by Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares
Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs
and United Nations Legal Counsel**

Wednesday, 28 February 2018, 10:00

Madam Co-Chair,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

Good morning.

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the United Nations Headquarters for the tenth meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects. I would also like to convey to the Working Group the greetings of the Secretary-General.

Allow me to begin by thanking the Co-Chair, Ms. Juliette Babb-Riley of Barbados for her formidable leadership of the Bureau during the intersessional period. I also take this opportunity to thank the members of the Bureau for their efforts to put into practice the decisions and guidance of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole during the intersessional period.

I would like to begin by noting that there has been considerable progress in the implementation of the programme of work for the period 2017-2020 for the second cycle of the Regular Process. You may recall that the programme of work sets out two outputs of the second cycle. The first output is the Regular Process support for other ocean-related intergovernmental processes, including the preparation of three process-specific Technical Abstracts. The second output is the second world ocean assessment. The programme of work also outlines the activities necessary to make the second cycle operational, including outreach and awareness-raising, as well as capacity-building initiatives.



You may recall that the Group of Experts prepared three technical abstracts of the first World Ocean Assessment to provide a synthesis of its information and findings for the benefit of policy-makers, in a concise and accessible format. These abstracts dealt with 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. Last December the General Assembly noted with appreciation these technical abstracts which have been widely disseminated.

Another key development I would like to highlight is the successful completion, in 2017, of the first round of regional workshops in support of the Regular Process. The General Assembly, in its resolution 72/73 of 5 December 2017 on “Oceans and the law of the sea” welcomed the holding of the first round of regional workshops in support of the Regular Process in Lisbon in September 2017; in Auckland, New Zealand in October 2017; in Camboriú, Brazil and Bangkok in November 2017; and in Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania in December 2017.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the Governments of Portugal, New Zealand, Brazil, Thailand and the United Republic of Tanzania, as well as to the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and the United Nations Environment Programme for their contributions to these workshops, and continuing support for the Regular Process.

I would like to also express my sincere appreciation to the Joint Coordinators and members of the Group of Experts of the Regular Process, as well as to all the participants for their contribution to the discussions during these workshops, which considered the draft elements for an outline of the second world ocean assessment.

I would be remiss if I did not recognize the work of the Bureau as well as that of the secretariat, the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, in providing support to the organization of the workshops under severe time constraints.

Madam Co-Chair,
Distinguished delegates,

As you are aware, the General Assembly decided in its resolution 72/73 that the Group of Experts, in the elaboration of an outline of the second world ocean assessment, should proceed on the basis of a single comprehensive assessment. The draft outline of the second world ocean assessment, which you will consider at this meeting, was prepared by



the Group of Experts in consultation with the Bureau and the secretariat, and with the input of relevant intergovernmental organizations invited by the General Assembly to assist in the implementation of the second cycle. The draft outline was prepared taking into consideration also the feedback from the first round of regional workshops in support of the Regular Process, held in 2017.

The effective and efficient preparation of the second world ocean assessment will depend on the Group of Experts which has overall responsibility for its preparation, as well as on the Pool of Experts who are needed to form the writing teams to draft the chapters of the assessment. In that regard, I am pleased to note that the composition of the Group of Experts has since the last meeting, increased from seventeen to eighteen. In echoing the call from the General Assembly in resolution 72/73, I urge the regional groups that have not yet done so, to appoint experts to the Group of Experts, taking into account the need to ensure geographical distribution and adequate expertise in socioeconomic disciplines. There is also a need to reflect gender balance in accordance with the terms of reference and working methods of the Group of Experts.

As regards the Pool of Experts, the General Assembly in its resolution 72/73 took note of the mechanism for the establishment of the Pool of Experts and encouraged the appointment of experts in accordance with the mechanism. It is encouraging to note that one State has already nominated some experts while two intergovernmental organizations have identified experts.

I wish to recall that an important aspect of the identification and nomination of experts to the Pool of Experts is the designation of National Focal Points. I am pleased to note that thirty-five designations have been received to date. It goes without saying that to provide effective support to the implementation of the programme of work, the Regular Process will benefit from as many National Focal Points as possible. I therefore strongly encourage the States that have not yet done so to designate their National Focal Points.

Madam Co-Chair,
Distinguished delegates,

At this juncture, I would like to recall that in accordance with the programme of work, a second round of workshops is envisaged to be held this year with the objective to, *inter alia*, inform the collection of regional-level information and data for the preparation of the second world ocean assessment.

As was the case during the first round of regional workshops, support from States by hosting these workshops would be needed and very much appreciated since no financial allocation from the budget has been made for this purpose.



Therefore, invitations to consider hosting a regional workshop were circulated to States and to relevant intergovernmental organizations last December. I wish to thank all the States that have formally communicated their interest in hosting a workshop. I would also like to take the opportunity to note that there will also be the need for smaller meetings of the writing teams to focus on drafting relevant chapters of the second world ocean assessment. I therefore invite States and relevant intergovernmental organizations to consider hosting such meetings to support the Regular Process.

These regional workshops and meetings of writing teams also present an opportunity to build capacity as they will facilitate the development of the experts' skills in integrated assessment, covering environmental, social and economic aspects.

As you know, capacity-building is one of the core objectives of the Regular Process, and though the first round of regional workshops discussed capacity-building needs and opportunities, the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole considered that more input particularly from States, was needed to prepare the event and therefore decided to postpone the event to early 2019.

Madam Co-Chair,
Distinguished delegates,

As you know, cooperation is an integral part of the Regular Process, and is recognized by the General Assembly in its various calls for the engagement of intergovernmental organizations as well as non-governmental organizations in the second cycle. An important development has been the decision by the General Assembly to proclaim the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (the Decade), beginning in 2021.

The Decade presents an opportunity to highlight the importance of science for development and for creating synergies with the Regular Process. I am therefore excited at the prospect of what the second world ocean assessment can contribute to the preparation process for the Decade, and how the preparations for the Decade can support the ongoing work and delivery of outputs under the Regular Process.

Oceans and seas are an essential component of the global life-support system. The protection and sustainable development of the marine and coastal environment is essential to sustainable development; people, planet and prosperity. The findings of the first world ocean assessment were a wake-up call.



The greatest threat to the ocean is our failure to deal quickly with the many issues having an impact on the oceans and their ability to sustain human life and livelihoods. The importance of this meeting should therefore not be underestimated. The consideration and approval of the outline of the second world ocean assessment, as well as the consideration of other documents such as the timetable and implementation plan for the preparation of the second world ocean assessment and the second part of the Guidance for Contributors by this meeting, are essential to the preparation of the second world ocean assessment and thus the implementation of the second cycle of the Regular Process.

Therefore, as you begin your deliberations, I would like to wish you a fruitful dialogue, and assure you that the Secretariat remains committed to providing the Regular Process with its full assistance and support.

Thank you.