

REGULAR PROCESS FOR GLOBAL REPORTING AND ASSESSMENT OF THE STATE OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT, INCLUDING SOCIOECONOMIC ASPECTS

Report on the Preliminary Timetable and Implementation Plan

Note by the Joint Coordinators

1. This document reports on progress on the implementation of the Preliminary Timetable and Implementation Plan for the Second Cycle of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects (the “Regular Process”), which was presented to the tenth Meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on the Regular Process held on 28 February and 1 March 2018. The Working Group took note of the preliminary timetable and implementation plan and requested the Bureau to oversee its implementation.

Main tasks

2. For the period 1 January 2018, to 23 August, 2018, (the date of the Eleventh Meeting of the Working Group), the Timetable and Implementation Plan foresaw seven main activities:

- (a) The population of the Pool of Experts, on the basis of the “Mechanism for the establishment of the Pool of Experts for the second cycle of the Regular Process”, adopted by the Bureau;
- (b) The development and approval of the Outline for the Second World Ocean Assessment;
- (c) The designation of Lead Members and Co-Lead Members for the various chapters of the approved Outline from among the Group of Experts of the Regular Process;
- (d) The formation writing teams for the various chapters of the approved Outline;
- (e) Development of guidance on formatting and size of the various chapters of the approved Outline;
- (f) Commencement of holding the second round of Regional Workshops in support of the second cycle of the Regular Process;
- (g) Virtual meetings of the Group of Experts of the Regular Process to prepare a report for the Eleventh Meeting of the Working Group.

Website and communications

3. The fundamental tools for the work of the Group of Experts of the Regular Process were expected to be a new website, which would provide a secure and accessible base for documents and information for the Group, and a secure communications system for the exchange of ideas and documents within the Group.

4. Unfortunately, these tools are only now (July/August 2018) becoming available. The new website became operational around 25 July 2018, but still does not contain the full database on the members of the Pool of Experts, although this is expected to be achieved soon. Access for the Group of Experts to the UNITE system (which had provided a secure document store and means of communication) was withdrawn due to reasons beyond the secretariat’s control. Happily, this access is due to be restored soon.

5. The secretariat has been very pro-active in devising means of working around the lack of these facilities – a lack due to causes entirely outside their control. In particular, the secretariat has been able to provide to the Group of Experts, upon request, information from the Personal History Forms (PHFs) of members of the Pool of Experts, so as to help identify candidate experts for specific writing teams. Although very helpful, even this work-around suffers from the problem that electronic versions of PHFs are not available for all members of the Pool of Experts (due to non-submission by the experts themselves), especially those who were members of the Pool of Experts during the first cycle of the Regular Process, and who were invited to continue to support the Regular Process. Even when the database for the Pool of Experts is operational, it may take time to get all the members of the Pool to complete and up-date their entries. This may therefore continue to constrain progress. It has also been possible to devise other work-arounds. For example, some information has been stored on a

Dropbox site. Unfortunately, the IT systems of institutions and/or countries in which some of the Group of Experts work do not allow access to Dropbox, and so material has had to be communicated by e-mail, further constraining progress.

6. In relation to the UNITE system, at the start of the second cycle, the Group of Experts used the system to communicate and upload documents. Increasingly, during 2017, some members of the Group of Experts found the system difficult to use, while others had difficulties in accessing the system because of incompatibilities with their national or local IT systems. This led to a drop in usage and increased use of e-mail communication. As a result of this drop, the UNITE service was withdrawn in 2018. A new UNITE communication system will soon be activated, and the secretariat has helpfully offered to assist in overcoming the problems that had earlier caused difficulties.

Population of the Pool of Experts

7. Good progress has been made in populating the Pool of Experts. A number of experts who were members of the Pool of Experts in the first cycle have agreed to continue. Further nominations in accordance with the mechanisms have been made, bringing the total as at 27 June 2018 to 531. Broken down by the regional groupings in the United Nations General Assembly, the situation is as follows:

UN ASSEMBLY GROUP	NUMBER OF EXPERTS
African States	43
Asia/Pacific States	91
East European States	6
Latin American and Caribbean States	119
Western European and Other States	272
Total	531

8. However, there remain a number of fields of expertise where coverage is thin, particularly in relation to some parts of the globe.

Outline

9. The Outline for the Second World Ocean Assessment was approved at the tenth Meeting of the Working Group held on 28 February and 1 March 2018.

Designation of Lead and Co-Lead Members of the Group of Experts

10. Lead Members and Co-Lead Members have been designated for all the chapters. For Chapter 1 (Summary), the Joint Coordinators have been designated as Lead Members, and all the other members of the Group of Experts as Co-Lead Members. For all the other chapters, a single member has been designated as Lead Member, with responsibility for ensuring the production of the chapter, with one or more Co-Lead Members to assist. A table of the allocations is attached at Annex B of the note on the annotated Outline.

Formation of writing teams

11. The formation of writing teams has been hampered by the lack of suitable information-technology support. As explained above, there have been problems in accessing information about the expertise of members of the Pool of Experts, in order to sort through them to identify who would be appropriate for specific writing teams. This is a particular difficulty where there is a wide range of issues to be covered within a field of expertise. The work that the secretariat has done in providing access to information from PHFs (as described above) has been helpful and has assisted in identifying members for some writing teams. As and when the database on the Pool of Experts is made available, this task will be simplified – although the problems of the absence of electronic PHFs for some experts will remain until they have entered their details in the database.

12. Nevertheless, invitations have been issued in relation to 29 writing teams. None have yet been submitted for approval, since a large number of invitations are still pending, and in a number of cases the available contact information is incorrect, and action will be needed to find a usable means of contact. A table is attached at Annex A, showing the state of play for each chapter (or section of a

chapter where a separate writing team appears to be likely to be needed).

Guidance on formatting and size

13. A template has been developed (a copy is attached to the note on the annotated Outline) to give guidance on these issues. This will be a “living document” and will be amended from time to time.

Second round of Regional Workshops

14. The original plan was that there would be five Regional Workshops in the second round: those for the North Atlantic and adjacent seas, for the South Atlantic, for the North Pacific, for the South Pacific and for the Indian Ocean and adjacent seas. Regional issues relating to the Arctic and Southern Oceans are intended to be pursued through correspondence with the organisations of the Antarctic Treaty System and the Arctic Council.

15. The secretariat invited offers to host the workshops. In relation to the North Atlantic and adjacent seas, and the Indian Ocean, offers were received from two States to act as hosts – Malta and the Ukraine for the North Atlantic and adjacent seas; and Indonesia and Qatar for the Indian Ocean and adjacent seas. The Bureau considered these offers and agreed that both offers should be accepted, with the result that there will be two workshops for each of these two regions. Palau recently hosted the regional Workshop for the North Pacific in Koror from 8 to 9 August. One State has put forward an offer to host a workshop for the South Atlantic, but has yet to confirm it formally. The Permanent Commission for the South Pacific (CPPS), supported by the Government of Ecuador, has recently confirmed its intention to host the regional workshop for the ocean region of the South Pacific.

16. It was intended that the focus of each workshop should be a selection of chapters (or sections of chapters), and that efforts should be made to arrange the attendance of members of writing teams for those chapters (or sections of chapters). The challenges in allocating members of the Pool of Experts to writing teams made it difficult to fulfil this approach. Instead, the focuses of (at least the earlier) workshops have been placed on chapters for which members of the Group of Experts who would be attending the workshop are in the lead, and are therefore well placed to lead the discussion.

17. It had been planned that the workshop for the North Atlantic and adjacent seas to be held in Malta would have been in late July. The original intention for the second round of Regional Workshops was that they should focus on selected chapters, and that steps should be taken to ensure the attendance of members of the writing teams for those chapters. Because of the difficulties in creating writing teams, it proved impossible to select chapters construct a workable agenda on this basis in time to allow the original proposed date to be achieved, and the workshop had to be postponed. A different approach has therefore been adopted for the earlier workshops, under which the chapters were selected on the basis of the Lead Members of the Group of Experts from the region in question, who could be expected to attend to lead the discussions on those chapters. It is hoped that later workshops can be organised so as to maximise attendance from members of writing teams.

18. The first workshop for the North Atlantic and adjacent seas is now set to be organised in Malta on 27-28 August. The second workshop for the North Atlantic and adjacent seas is planned to be held in Odessa, in the Ukraine on 17 – 18 October. The workshops for the Indian Ocean in Indonesia and Qatar are planned for November, but precise dates have not yet been confirmed.

Virtual meetings of the Group of Experts of the Regular Process

19. Virtual meetings of the Group of Experts of the Regular Process have been held as and when necessary. Because of the dispersal of the members of the Group around the world, it has been necessary to hold such meetings in two stages, basically one eastern longitudes and one for western longitudes, with one or both joint coordinators taking part in both and thus ensuring consistency and coherence.

20. The meeting scheduled in the timetable for 13 – 17 August was advanced to 30 July – 1 August, in order to permit a draft of this report to be presented to the Bureau on 14 August before being submitted to the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole.

State of Play on Formation of Writing Teams
2 August 2018

CHAPTER OR SECTION	TOPIC	WRITING TEAM INVITED	RESPONSE PENDING	ACCEPTED OR REFUSED	SUBMIT TO BUREAU	AGREED
1	Summary	Group of Experts of the Regular Process collectively				
2	Approach to Assessment	Lead and Co-Lead Members				
3	Scientific Understanding					
4	Drivers					
5	Ocean Physical and Chemical State					
6	Biota biodiversity	Overview by Lead and Co-Lead Members				
6A	Plankton	Yes		Yes		
6B	Invertebrate	Yes		Yes		
6C	Fish	Yes		Yes		
6D	Marine Mammals	Partly		Partly		
6E	Marine reptiles	Yes		Yes		
6F	Seabirds	Yes	Yes			
6G & 6H	Marine plants and macroalgae	Partly	Yes			
7	Habitat biodiversity	Overview by Lead and Co-Lead Members				
7A	Sand and mud substrates					
7B	Rocky substrates and reefs					
7C	Intertidal zone					
7D	Atoll and tidal lagoons					
7E	Tropical and sub-tropical coral reefs					
7F	Cold-water corals	Yes	Partly	Partly		

7G	Estuaries and delta	Yes				
7H	Kelp forests and algal beds	Partly	Yes			
7I	Seagrass meadows	Partly	Yes			
7J	Mangroves	Partly	Yes			
7K	Salt marshes	Partly	Yes			
7L	Submarine canyons					
7M	High-latitude ice	Yes	Yes			
7N	Seamounts and pinnacles	Partly	Yes			
7O	Abyssal plains					
7P	Open Ocean					
7Q	Ridges, plateaus and trenches					
7R	Hydrothermal vents and cold seeps	Yes	Yes			
7S	Sargasso Sea	Yes	Yes			
8	Human society	Overview by Lead and Co-Lead Members				
8A	Coastal communities					
8B	Human health					
8C	Maritime industries					
8D	Maritime culture					
9	Climate pressures	Overview by Lead and Co-Lead Members				
9A	Ocean physics	Yes	Yes			
9B	Ocean chemistry	Partly	Yes			
9C	Extreme climate events	Partly	Yes			
10	Nutrient inputs	Yes	Yes			
11	Other inputs	Overview by Lead and Co-Lead Members				
11A	POPs					
11B	Metals					
11C	Radioactive substances					
11D	Pharmaceuticals					
11E	Atmospheric inputs					
11F	Hydrocarbons					
11G	Offshore inputs					

11H	Contaminants concentrations					
12	Solid waste					
13	Erosion and sedimentation					
14	Infrastructure					
15	Capture fisheries	Yes		Yes		
16	Aquaculture					
17	Seaweed	Partly				
18	Desalinization and salt					
19	Seabed mining					
20	Offshore hydrocarbons					
21	Noise	Yes		Yes		
22	Renewable energy	Yes		Yes		
23	Marine transport					
24	Tourism and recreation					
25	Invasive species	Yes		Yes		
26	Marine genetic resources	Yes	Yes			
27	Marine hydrates					
28	Cumulative impacts					
29	Marine spatial planning	Partly				
30	Management approaches	Yes	Yes			
31	Overall benefits					