

PRELIMINARY REPORT TO THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP OF THE WHOLE FROM THE GROUP OF EXPERTS FOR THE THIRD CYCLE OF THE REGULAR PROCESS

Reporting period: 5 September 2023 – 1 March 2024.

Activities for the Group of Experts during the reporting period comprised four major elements: (i) a second round of regional workshops; (ii) development of guidelines for writing teams of the sections, chapters and sub-chapters of the assessment; (iii) identification of coordinating authors and development of writing teams for the sections, chapters and sub-chapters of the assessment; and (iv) coordination of and contribution to a number of meetings in support of the third cycle of the Regular Process and the third World Ocean Assessment.

The Group of Experts continues to utilise monthly meetings to evaluate progress on these activities and identify issues and potential solutions to any issues. This allows the Group of Experts to identify (i) if the timing of activities should be re-evaluated and whether activities need to be rescheduled and (ii) what consequences any rescheduling of activities might have on the overall timetable of the assessment.

Output I: Assessment(s) of the state of the marine environment including socioeconomic aspects

Regional workshops in support of the third World Ocean Assessment

The purpose of this second round of regional workshops is to provide outputs of relevance to two elements of the annotated outline for the third World Ocean Assessment:

- Considerations for the development of sustainability pathways relevant to the section of the assessment on sustainable and inclusive ocean economies (section 5A).
- Cross-cutting themes that can provide input across multiple chapters and sections of the assessment, specifically those focused on equity, gender and Indigenous, Traditional owner and Local community Knowledge (ITLK).

By structuring the workshops around the same elements, the workshops provide an opportunity for conducting a form of expert elicitation on specific elements of each element (not dissimilar to the scoping workshops). This thereby allows for the generation of specific content that can be incorporated into the chapters of the assessment (either directly into the chapters on equity, gender and ITLK or via the development of the sustainability pathway components of the chapters in the section on sustainable and inclusive ocean economies).

Concept note for workshops: <https://www.un.org/regularprocess/file/8421>.

Understanding that continuous improvement through the noting of lessons learned is an integral part of each cycle of the Regular Process, a compiled lessons learned document is being maintained by the members of the Group of Experts involved in each workshop. Suggested improvements have been implemented in subsequent workshops and feedback on suggested changes to identify if the suggested changes created an improvement and in what way are also provided in the document.

In addition to the three regional workshops reported to the 19th meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole, two further regional workshops were held :

1. Lisbon, Portugal 25-27 September 2023. Regional focus: North Atlantic, the Baltic Sea, the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea region.

Participants attending (31): Australia, Brazil, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Ecuador, France, Germany, Greece, Guinea-Bissau, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Philippines, Portugal, Russia, Senegal, Spain, Togo, Türkiye, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and United States of America

Summary of discussions:

https://www.un.org/regularprocess/sites/www.un.org.regularprocess/files/summary_of_discussions_2023_rp_workshop_2nd_round_portugal_jh_goe_gov_for_circulation.pdf

2. New York, USA 27-29 November 2023. Regional focus: Regional focus: tentatively the Indian Ocean including the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal), the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden and the ROPME/RECOFI area.

This workshop was originally planned to be held in Singapore but was rescheduled due to failure to reach an agreed point on the host country agreement.

Participants attending (35): Argentina, Austria, Bangladesh, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Ecuador, France, Germany, Greece, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Poland, Republic of Korea, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Timor-Leste, United Kingdom, and United States of America.

Summary of discussions:

https://www.un.org/regularprocess/sites/www.un.org.regularprocess/files/draft_summary_of_discussions_nyc_rev2.pdf

In total, 222 participants from 68 countries attended the second round of workshops.

Development of guidance for writing teams of the sections, chapters and sub-chapters of the third World Ocean Assessment

Provision of clear guidance on the elements to be considered by each section, chapter and sub-chapters of the assessment has been identified as highly important and is a key lesson learned from the second cycle. During the second cycle varying amounts of guidance was provided to writing teams leading to substantial variation in the elements considered by chapters. As a result, some chapters did not consider social and economic elements, there was varying coverage of trends and varying coverage on regional content.

Development of draft document providing guidance for writing teams occurred throughout the fourth quarter of 2023. This drafting process was supplemented by a workshop sponsored by the German government in support of the third cycle. The “Ocean Futures and Scenarios” workshop, held in Berlin 14-15 December 2023, focused on developing a synthesised scenario that provided a view of a sustainable future for the ocean from the present out to 2050. The “Navigating the Future Seas” scenario provides a future narrative that the writing teams of the chapters and sub-chapters of section 5A of the assessment can use with the outputs of the regional workshops to develop the sustainable pathway components of their chapters and sub-chapters. This component, as described in the annotated outline aims to identify information and tools that can be utilised by ocean sectors to progress the sustainable development goals and assist in setting a pathway to achieving a sustainable ocean future.

The full draft of the guidance for writing teams document was presented at the first coordinating authors workshop, held in Lisbon, Portugal 19-20 February 2024 for feedback by the coordinating authors. Following discussion of this feedback during a meeting of the Group of Experts, also held in Lisbon Portugal 21-22 February, the document has been revised and is currently being reviewed for

the final time by the Group of Experts. Once finalised, it will be submitted to the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole for approval.

The draft of the guidance for writing teams, as provided to the coordinating authors can be accessed at:

https://www.un.org/regularprocess/sites/www.un.org.regularprocess/files/2_draft_guidance_for_writing_teams_for_goe_review_to_cas_for_circulation.pdf

Identification of coordinating authors and development of writing teams for the third World Ocean Assessment

The report from the Group of Experts to the 19th meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole identified a number of delays to the development of the Pool of Experts database. Since finalisation of the first tranche of nominations to the Pool of Experts for the third cycle, a second call for nominations was made with nominations to the Pool of Experts ongoing. Finding adequate expertise for writing teams from the Pool of Experts continues to be a challenge. As a result, calls issued by the secretariat for the Regular Process have been augmented with targeted nominations for expertise associated with the identification of coordinating authors and writing teams members.

At the time of writing this report, coordinating authors for all sections, chapters and sub-chapters of the third World Ocean Assessment (total: 64) have accepted the role, with many well underway in building their writing teams. Coordinating authors are from all five UN regions, although the majority (80%) are from the Western Europe and Others Group, with 31% female and 69% male, noting that there are clear biases in the Pool of Experts to males from countries in the Western Europe and Others Group with expertise in the natural sciences.

All writing teams will be reviewed initially by the Group of Experts to ensure gender balance and adequate geographic and disciplinary diversity, and once adequately developed writing teams will be submitted to the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole for approval.

Lead and co-lead member roles for sections, chapters or sub-chapters of the third World Ocean Assessment have been updated as new members of Group of Expert have joined. The maximum number of chapters and sub-chapters currently assigned to Group of Expert members is currently eight, noting that further re-assignment will occur with the onboarding of the new member from the African States Group.

Meeting of the Coordinating Authors

The report from the Group of Experts to the 19th meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole provided an overview of initial planning of the coordinating authors meeting. With the re-scheduling of the final regional workshop from Singapore to New York and the opportunity provided through the “Ocean Futures and Scenarios” workshop, sponsored by the German government, it was agreed that the coordinating authors meeting be delayed into early 2024. This not only ensured that guidance provided to the coordinating authors could include further detail (particularly in terms of the sustainability pathways components of section 5A), it also provided for the opportunity for a larger number of coordinating authors to attend the meeting.

As noted in the report to the 19th meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole the Government of Portugal had generously offered to support a second workshop of writing teams in 2024 with initial discussions identifying that this could be useful for bringing the Coordinating Authors together. This opportunity was further progressed with the first meeting of the coordinating authors held 19-20

February in Lisbon, Portugal. The meeting included 69 participants comprised of 19 GoE members and 50 coordinating authors that attended either in person or virtually.

The agenda for the meeting is available at:

https://www.un.org/regularprocess/sites/www.un.org.regularprocess/files/2_coordinating_authors_meeting_agenda_goe_for_circulation.pdf.

Somewhat guided by meetings of authors regularly facilitated under other global assessment processes such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and the Global Environment Outlook (GEO), the aim of the meeting was to ensure that all coordinating authors have a clear understanding of:

- the overall focus and structure of the assessment
- their roles and responsibilities
- the timelines for the drafting and review process
- the specific requirements of their section, chapter or sub-chapter
- the linkages between their section, chapter or sub-chapter and other parts of the assessment

The meeting also provided an opportunity to build a community around the assessment for supporting raising awareness and facilitating outreach for the assessment. During the meeting, the zero draft submission date was discussed and set at 01 November 2024.

Meeting of the Group of Experts

Directly following the coordinating authors meeting, a meeting of the Group of Experts was held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Lisbon to discuss:

- feedback provided by the coordinating authors on the guidance for writing teams document
- finalising the process for submission and review of section, chapter and sub-chapter plans, including setting a submission date
- review of writing teams
- developing a process for tracking progress by writing teams throughout the drafting and review process
- updating the timetables for 2024 and 2025
- planning for a side event to be held as part of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development conference, 10-12 April Barcelona, Spain
- updating the GoE working methods
- preliminary considerations for developing a lessons learned document for the third cycle including addressing continuing biases in the Pool of Experts and improvements to the regional workshops

During this meeting it was agreed that section, chapter and sub-chapter plans were to be submitted by writing teams by 21 March 2024 and the review process should include at least five members of the Group of Experts to ensure an adequate range of perspectives could be provided whilst distributing the task load across the Group of Experts membership (given that the plans for 64 sections, chapters and sub-chapters will need to be reviewed).

Output II: Regular Process support for and interaction with other ocean-related intergovernmental processes

Contribution to the joint IOC-UNESCO/DOALOS international symposium on strengthening the science-policy interface

Four members of the Group of Experts contributed to the planning and participated in the “International symposium of the United Nations Regular Process on strengthening the ocean science-policy interface” held in Paris, France 12-13 December 2023. Members of the Group of Experts co-chaired a number of symposium sessions, including each of the five regional deep dives and a session focused on the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. The symposium was opened by the co-chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole and was attended by 202 participants from 63 countries.

The symposium programme is available at:

https://www.un.org/regularprocess/sites/www.un.org/regularprocess/files/programme_cb_symposium_20231211.pdf

Statement to IPCC60

The secretariat and the Group of Experts prepared an intervention on behalf of the Regular Process to the 60th session of the IPCC, 16-19 January 2024, Istanbul, Türkiye. It was initially intended that this be provided in person by DOALOS, however budgetary restrictions prevented this.

Input into the planning of a side-event at the second conference of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development to be held in Barcelona, Spain, 10-12 April 2024

The report from the Group of Experts to the 19th meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole identified that the secretariat had registered interest in organising a satellite event on behalf of the Regular Process. A proposal for a side-event focused on the third World Ocean Assessment was submitted in October 2023 and subsequently approved in December 2023. Details of this side event can be found at: <https://oceandecade-conference.com/on-site-satellite-events.php>.

The aim of the side event is to highlight the role of the World Ocean Assessments in providing a regular review of the state of marine environment and in doing so providing science-based information for decision-making. It will also provide an opportunity to present the new framing of the assessment to be produced in the third cycle in providing a more integrated approach to providing information on the ocean and including forward-looking pathways for action for sustainability. The side event will consist of an introductory component outlining the Regular Process and the third World Ocean Assessment. This will be followed by a panel session involving representatives of other UN bodies and global assessments focused on discussing:

- how those bodies/processes might support the World Ocean Assessment
- how the World Ocean Assessment might support those bodies/processes

Other activities in support of the outputs of the third cycle of the Regular Process

Ocean Futures Scenarios and Sustainability Pathways workshop

As noted in the report from the Group of Experts to the 19th meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole, three members of the Group of Experts were contributing to the planning of the “Ocean

Futures and Scenarios” workshop, held in Berlin 14-15 December 2023, and sponsored by the German Government in support of the third cycle of the Regular Process. The workshop, attended by 20 experts focused on developing a set of future scenarios for the ocean from which a synthesised scenario could be produced for use by the writing teams of section 5A of the third World Ocean Assessment. Following the workshop specific guidance on the use of the synthesised scenario within the context of developing the sustainability pathways component of the chapters in section 5A of the assessment was drafted and included in the guidance for writing teams document. This document was provided to the coordinating authors for feedback with minor edits requested by coordinating authors and Group of Experts members. A revised version of this guidance is currently being reviewed by the Group of Experts as part of a final review of the guidance for writing teams document. The website for the workshop is: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/086d5c81146d428ca183d0da55c1d7c5> and a workshop report is currently being finalised by the workshop leads following review by the workshop participants.

Status of the Group of Experts membership

Since the 19th meeting of the AHWWG:

- Eric Okuku (African Group) has been approved as a Group of Expert member, replacing Renison Ruwa who stepped down from the Group of Experts.
- Joshua Tuhumwire (African Group) has been approved as a Group of Expert member.
- Jinfeng Fan (Asia-Pacific Group) has stepped down from the Group of Experts.
- Tymon Zielinski (Eastern Europe Group) has been approved as a Group of Expert member.

This results in a total of 22 members of the Group of Experts, with one vacancy in the Asia-Pacific Group and two vacancies in the Eastern European Group.

Replacement of the Joint Coordinator of the Group of Experts

Roberto de Pinho stepped down from the role of Joint Coordinator in early February 2024. Following an expression of interest and approval by silence procedure process, Donovan Campbell has taken up the role.