



**Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State
of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects**

Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole of the General Assembly

The Twenty-first Meeting

Provisional Agenda Item 4

Report of the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole

Note by the Bureau, as of 8 August 2024

1. The General Assembly, in paragraph 320 of resolution 78/69, requested the Bureau 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 (the “Regular Process”), to continue to provide oversight of the delivery of the programme of work for the third cycle of the Regular Process.
2. Since the twentieth meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group held on 15 March 2024, the Bureau has conducted one meeting on 29 July 2024 to consider, among others, the possible outcomes and building blocks of the fourth cycle of the Regular Process, the progress in the implementation of the programme of work for the third cycle of the Regular Process (2021-2025), and other items covered in section XII of General Assembly resolution 78/69 relating to the Regular Process.

Implementation of the programme of work for the third cycle

Activities related to the overall implementation of the third cycle

3. The Bureau was informed that, notwithstanding the recent nomination of Dr. Juying Wang of China, there are still pending nominations for the Group of Experts. Currently, the Group of Experts has 23 members out of the 25 positions available. The Bureau members from the Eastern European group, with two pending nominations, will continue to follow up on this matter trying to achieve the full constitution of the Group of Experts as soon as possible.

Activities related to the achievement of output I: Assessment(s) of the state of the marine environment, including socioeconomic aspects

4. With the goal of facilitating the development and drafting of the third World Ocean Assessment (WOA III), two meetings took place in Lisbon with the support of the Government of Portugal, namely: 1) an in-person meeting of Coordinating Authors of WOA III on 19-20 February 2024; and 2) an in-person meeting of the Group of Experts on 21-22 February 2024. These meetings were instrumental in finalising the timeline for

the development and completion of WOA III, in accordance with the programme of work for the third cycle, and also led to the finalisation of the [Guidance for writing teams of WOA III](#). These sessions laid a solid foundation to advance WOA III drafting and enabled the Group of Experts to provide on-site advice and guidance on pertinent issues, facilitating tangible progress in the development of WOA III.

5. In accordance with the approved [annotated outline of WOA III](#), an in-person meeting of Indigenous, Traditional Owner, and Local Community Knowledge (ITLK) experts will take place in Paris from 26 to 28 August 2024. This meeting aims to facilitate direct interaction with ITLK experts to solicit feedback on the current draft of the ITLK chapter of WOA III, significantly supporting the chapter's development. The gathering will ensure the presence of multi-disciplinary experts to advance chapter components and will allow relevant ITLK experts to provide direct guidance to the chapter, facilitating its development and finalisation. Furthermore, an in-person meeting of the Group of Experts is scheduled to be held at the United Nations University Headquarters in Tokyo from 13 to 19 November 2024. This meeting aims to review the zero draft of WOA III, with a view to circulate the first draft of WOA III with Member States for their first review in early 2025.

6. In light of the lessons learned from the second cycle, which highlighted the necessity for the early constitution of the Group of Experts and the early preparation of the programme of work for a new cycle, two documents have been developed: a) the possible outcomes and building blocks of the 4th cycle of the Regular Process; and b) the preliminary lessons learned from the 3rd cycle of the Regular Process. The possible outcomes and building blocks document outlines four key elements for delivering the outputs and outcomes envisaged for the fourth cycle: (1) the fourth World Ocean Assessment(s) of the state of the marine environment; (2) outreach and engagement activities, including through the WOA digital platform; (3) support for and interaction with other ocean-related intergovernmental processes; and (4) capacity-building for strengthening the ocean science-policy interface. The preliminary lessons learned document will be further developed towards the end of the third cycle, through a comprehensive survey which will be distributed to various stakeholders, including the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole, Bureau, and national and intergovernmental focal points.

Activities related to the achievement of output II: Regular Process support for and interaction with other ocean-related intergovernmental processes

7. The Regular Process enhanced its support for ocean-related intergovernmental processes by convening a [satellite event](#) on 10 April entitled, “*Advancing the United Nations World Ocean Assessment: supporting future ocean sustainability and informing decision making and ocean policy*,” during the 2024 Ocean Decade Conference which was held in Barcelona, Spain, from 10 to 12 April 2024. The event highlighted the crucial role of the Regular Process and its WOAs to strengthen the ocean science-policy interface, emphasising the importance of forging strong partnerships with other ocean-related intergovernmental processes to enhance the relevance of and complementarity

with the WOAs. The event also served as a platform to discuss how these collaborations could facilitate the significant uptake of ocean science in policymaking, with the Regular Process and its WOAs promoting the exchange of innovative approaches and shared expertise.

8. The Regular Process was represented by the Joint Coordinators of the Group of Experts at the Sixty-first session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC-61) held in Sofia, Bulgaria, from 27 July to 2 August 2024. Their intervention underscored the importance of strengthening the complementarity between the WOAs and IPCC's assessments, in accordance with UN General Assembly Ocean and the Law of the Sea resolution 78/69, paragraph 316, inviting open discussions with the IPCC aimed at exploring mechanisms to align the activities of both processes. Building on this, the Regular Process will consider how certain outputs from the two processes might complement each other and be delivered in ways that maximise messaging on the crucial role of the ocean within the context of climate change mitigation and adaptation, as envisioned in the possible outcomes and building blocks document referred to above.

Activities related to the achievement of output III: Capacity-building

9. Progress has been made towards the development of the WOA III digital platform, an essential tool designed to enable policymakers and decision-makers to quickly access relevant information, thereby strengthening the ocean science-policy interface. On 22 April 2024, the secretariat of the Regular Process issued a call for expressions of interest (EoI) to Governments, non-governmental organisations, and individuals with relevant expertise, with the objective of compiling a roster of potential contributors to support various aspects of the digitalisation of WOA III content. The contributions sought include advice, platform design (both back-end and front-end), data hosting, programming, author support, content creation, and other types of technical support. This collaborative effort will enhance the utility and reach of WOA III, contributing to the development of the capacities of States in strengthening the ocean science-policy interface at the national, regional, and global levels for safeguarding the sustainability of our oceans.
