

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: 27 March 2023 – 4 September 2023.

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

The timetable of activities for the Group of Experts in 2023 comprises 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) the development of the Pool of Experts; and (iv) the development of the writing teams for each section, chapter and sub-chapter of 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.

1. 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.

Three regional workshops have been held to date:

1. Santos, Brazil, 15-17 May 2023. Regional focus: South Atlantic (between the African and American coasts) and the Wider Caribbean area

- Participants attending (66): Argentina, Australia, Brazil, China, Columbia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Ghana, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Ivory Coast, Morocco, Namibia, Nigeria, Poland, Republic of Türkiye, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, United States of America, Uruguay.
 - Summary of discussions: https://www.un.org/regularprocess/sites/www.un.org.regularprocess/files/1_summary_of_discussions_rp_workshop_2nd_round_brazil_mb_goe_bra_for_circulation.pdf
2. Kingston Jamaica, 12-14 June 2023. Regional focus: North and South Pacific regions and the Wider Caribbean area.
 - Participants attending (23): Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Columbia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Hong Kong SAR, India, New Zealand, Nigeria, Republic of Korea, Samoa, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Viet Nam.
 - Summary of discussions: <https://www.un.org/regularprocess/file/8427>
 3. Male, Seychelles, 2-4 August 2023. Regional focus: Indian Ocean (including the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal), the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, the ROPME/RECOFI area.
 - Participants and summary of discussions: (forthcoming)

A further two workshops in support of the third World Ocean Assessment are currently being planned:

1. Lisbon, Portugal 25-27 September 2023. Regional focus: North Atlantic, the Baltic Sea, the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea region.
2. Singapore, 9-11 November 2023. 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. Note an ocean governance capacity building workshop on ocean governance will be held either before or after this workshop.

2. Development of guidance for writing teams of chapters of the third World Ocean Assessment

Provision of clear guidance on the elements to be considered by each chapter 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 guidance for writing teams was originally anticipated to be finalised in May 2023 (outlined in the report to 18th meeting of the AHWGW). The unanticipated length of time to take to finalise the assignment of Group of Expert member leads and co-leads, meant that this has been delayed.

The Group of Experts are currently finalising the specifics of the types of guidance needing to be provided to writing teams (based on the specific sections of the outline of the third World Ocean Assessment) and once these have been finalised, work will begin on drafting the guidance document. This document will include overall guidance for all sections, chapters

and sub-chapters of the third World Ocean Assessment (including formatting specifics, guidance on length and expectation of quality) and specific guidance where required for sections or chapters and sub-chapters. This guidance will be finalised prior to the meeting of the Coordinating Authors (see item 2), so that it can be provided to Coordinating Authors prior to the workshop and discussed during the meeting.

All writing teams will need to provide lead and co-lead members with an outline of the section, chapter, sub-chapter as a first stage in the drafting process. This will provide lead and co-lead members the opportunity to ensure that sections, chapters and sub-chapters are following the guidance provided and are considering the content of the section, chapter or sub-chapter as set out in the annotated outline appropriately. To ensure that this is facilitated, the guidance provided to writing teams will set out an overall timetable to writing teams so that expectations around timing and delivery of drafts is clearly provided to writing teams (following the lessons learned from the second cycle).

3. Development of the Pool of Experts for the third cycle of the Regular Process

There have been a number of internal delays to the development of the Pool of Experts database that have resulted in it not being available to members of the Group of Experts until August 2023. In addition, finalisation of the first tranche of nominations to the Pool of Experts for the third cycle was delayed from an anticipated date of April (as set out in the report to the 18th meeting of the AHWGW) until July. The period of approval by member states of a first round of nominated experts into the Pool of Experts closed at the end of August, with ongoing nominations of experts to the Pool of Experts to continue to be supported as needed to ensure that adequate expertise is available for the development of writing teams.

At the time of writing this report, the Pool of Experts only comprises those experts from the first and second cycles of the Regular Process that have re-confirmed their nomination to the Pool of Experts.

4. Development of writing teams for the third World Ocean Assessment

The development of writing teams for each of the sections, chapters and sub-chapters of the third World Ocean assessment comprises two initial steps: (i) assignment of the Group of Expert members to lead and co-lead roles and (ii) identification of Coordinating authors. Once in place the lead and co-lead members will work with the Coordinating Author to identify experts from the Pool of Experts to establish individual writing teams.

Identification of Group of Expert member leads and co-leads for chapters of the third World Ocean Assessment

Members of the Group of Experts are expected to take on lead member roles and co-lead member roles for sections, chapters or sub-chapters of the third World Ocean Assessment. These roles ensure that there is adequate oversight of the drafting of chapters and sub-chapters, and that adequate guidance and support is provided to writing teams during the drafting, review and finalisation stages of the assessment. The number of chapters and sub-chapters currently proposed for the assessment means that members of the Group of Experts need to take on a lead member role and a co-lead member role for at least two chapters or sub-chapters each, and in many cases three chapters or sub-chapters each.

Selection of Group of Expert members to lead and co-lead roles was finalised at the August meeting of the Group of Experts.

Identification of potential Coordinating Authors for chapters of the third World Ocean Assessment from the Pool of Experts

Identification of Coordinating Authors was originally anticipated to be finalised mid 2023 (outlined in the report to 18th meeting of the AHWGW). Because of delays to the development of the Pool of Experts database and approvals of nominations of experts into the Pool of Experts, this is now anticipated to be finalised end of September. It is noted that some experts that re-confirmed into the Pool of Experts from the first and second cycle of the Regular Process could be identified as potential Coordinating Authors. However, to ensure that experts across all of the expanded list of expertise required for the third World Ocean Assessment, and the full geographic range of expertise can be considered, there has been a need to wait until the first tranche of nominations against the expanded list of expertise is finalised. This somewhat reduces the time that the Group of Experts has to analyse the Pool of Experts for potential experts that could be invited to take on the role of Coordinating Author, particularly given planning around a meeting of Coordinating Authors potentially in November. The Group of Experts expects that there will be a two-to-three-week period within which potential Coordinating Authors can be identified, invited to take on the role and their acceptance confirmed to ensure that writing teams have enough lead time to organise their attendance at the meeting for Coordinating Authors. Official approval of the Coordinating Authors will need to be considered by the Bureau as soon as possible following confirmation of acceptance.

At the time of writing this report an assessment of the Pool of Experts is being undertaken to establish how many of the writing team members from the second World Ocean Assessment have re-confirmed their nomination to the Pool of Experts (see item 2). This is being undertaken to potentially identify those Pool of Expert members that could provide updates to the chapters and sub-chapters of the second World Ocean Assessment as detailed in section 4 of the outline for the third World Ocean Assessment. This is intended to expediate the identification of Coordinating Authors for this section of the third World Ocean Assessment.

5. *Meeting of the Coordinating Authors*

As was identified in the report to the 18th meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole, the Group of Experts had proposed to the secretariat a meeting of the Coordinating authors. The purpose of this meeting is to facilitate understanding across all coordinating authors on:

- The focus and structure of all of the sections, chapters and sub-chapters of the assessment
- The information being considered in each of the sections, chapters and sub-chapters
- Cross-linkages between sections, chapters and sub-chapters
- Visual content opportunities for each section, chapter and sub-chapter, including infographics, spatial maps, charts, data and information repositories and other resources (based on the support being provided by the Secretariat in digitising the assessment)

This meeting would be somewhat similar to the meetings of authors facilitated under the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and the Global Environment Outlook (GEO). It will ensure that all coordinating authors have a clear understanding of the overall focus of the assessment and have been provided with the opportunity to interact with and understand the focus of all other chapters and sub-chapters within the assessment. It also provides an opportunity to build a community around the assessment for supporting raising awareness and facilitating outreach for the assessment.

At present planning for this meeting is underway as part of planning for the final regional workshop, pending confirmation, to be held in Singapore. This will consist of a two-day meeting. As soon as Coordinating Authors have been finalised for the sections, chapters and sub-chapters of the third World Ocean Assessment, invitations will be distributed and further details on the content of the workshop provided.

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

1. Attendance at the 32nd session of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission General Assembly

Three members of the Group of Experts attended the 32nd session of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) General Assembly held in Paris, France 21-30 June 2023 in their capacity as member state delegations. Two Group of Experts members provided input into events either associated with the Assembly or scheduled to occur during the period of the Assembly. These included a panel session held as part of the Ocean Science Day focused on “Building the infrastructure and enabling environment for the ocean decade” and a side event held prior to the commencement of the Ocean Science Day on 22 June 2023, focused on “Co-designing the IPOS”. A full recording of the Ocean Science Day is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P1Z_BFWasOI.

In addition, a statement was provided by DOALOS in support of the Regular Process during consideration of a specific agenda item on the IOC-UNESCO's State of the Ocean Report. This is noted in the Provisional Summary Report (A-32):

193.DOALOS informed the Assembly of the process of preparing the Third World Ocean assessment (WOA), which will provide an integrated global view on the ocean and sustainable development. Reference was made to the ongoing dialogue with UNESCO-IOC to align the WOA and the StOR and to ensure that they share common goals and are complementary.

It is also noted that The Adopted Decisions and Resolutions (A-32) from the Assembly identifies:

IOC Decision A-32/4.6

IOC Contributions to UN Governance Processes

The Assembly,

Having examined document IOC/A-32/4.6.Doc,

Welcomes the adoption of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework by Convention on Biological Diversity, as well as recent developments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement, the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socio-economic Aspects, and the implementation of 2030 Agenda and its SDG 14;

Requests the Executive Secretary to continue engaging the Commission in these UN processes by providing scientific and technical support as well as supporting the development of IOC Member States capacity to contribute to achievement of the goals of these ocean governance frameworks.

2. *Meetings between the Secretariat, Group of Experts coordination team and the co-chair of Working Group II of the sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*

Two meetings have been held between the Secretariat, the Group of Experts coordination team and the co-chair of Working Group II of the sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

The meetings were identified as useful for all in better understanding structures and operational aspects of both processes and in association, what might be the steps involved in strengthening the exchange of information between the two processes. The meetings reaffirmed the necessity of acknowledging WOA as a key resource in the IPCC assessment process and keeping WOA and IPCC independent from each other to ensure the uniqueness and visibility of each entity.

Potential mechanisms that could better link the two processes included exploring government contacts who could bridge the gap between the Regular Process and IPCC. These contacts would serve as focal points, helping to raise the WOA's profile at IPCC plenaries, and vice versa. Approaches for collaboration, such as presentations at COP side events, could also be explored. Even though these events are not part of the IPCC's official assessment process, they can play a key role in fostering a cooperative atmosphere and promoting the WOA's work.

DOALOS is one of the 37 UN bodies registered at IPCC as observers and therefore may attend sessions of the IPCC and may invite experts to review draft IPCC reports. Utilising this observer status, DOALOS and the Group of Experts will prepare observer statements to be submitted to the IPCC 60th Plenary session (currently expected to occur early 2024) and the UNFCCC COP-28 (Dubai, 30 Nov-12 Dec 2023). These statements will focus on the contributions the Regular Process can make to IPCC deliverables under the seventh Assessment Report cycle.

3. *Input into a presentation being provided by DOALOS, in support of the third cycle of the Regular process, to the 50th meeting of GESAMP*

In honour of celebrating the 50th anniversary session of the Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP), DOALOS will provide a presentation that highlights possible avenues to enhance synergies between the Regular Process and GESAMP. The aim of this presentation is to strengthen the sharing of knowledge on best practices for conducting integrated assessments and design of analytical frameworks that incorporate socioeconomic aspects between GESAMP and the Regular Process.

Members of the Group of Experts coordination team have been assisting the Secretariat in the development of this presentation.

4. *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 secretariat and the Group of Experts have identified that coordinating a side event at the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development conference, to be held in Barcelona, Spain 10-12 April 2024, could provide an important opportunity for supporting the strengthening of collaborations with other ocean-related assessments and processes and in particular the IOC-UNESCO and other UN bodies taking part in the conference. The secretariat has registered interest in organising a satellite event on behalf of the Regular

Process, with the next steps involving the drafting of a concept note for submission by 30 October 2023. Coordination of the drafting of this concept note will be facilitated by the secretariat and will begin in September with the Group of Experts providing substantive input on the design of the side event. 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.

Output III: Capacity building

1. Assistance to DOALOS in delivering workshops on ocean governance and the science policy interface

Capacity building workshops were held in tandem with the regional workshops in support of the third World Ocean Assessment held in Brazil, Jamaica and Seychelles, on 10 to 12 May 2023, 15-16 June 2023 and 30 July – 1 August, respectively. Attending members of the Group of Experts, where requested, delivered presentations, moderated sessions and facilitated group exercises, as well as provided input into the organization of these workshops.

Other activities in support of the outputs of the third cycle of the Regular Process for 2023

1. Ocean Futures Scenarios and Sustainability Pathways workshop

Complimentary to the five regional workshops to be held in 2023, the German Government is currently planning a workshop that will specifically focus on developing ocean scenarios and sustainability pathways. Establishment of the planning group for this workshop, who will develop the content and structure of the workshop, as well as identify what outputs will be produced by the workshop was recently finalised, with two members of the Group of Experts contributing to the planning group. Two preliminary outcomes of the workshop are being envisaged: (i) a scientific publication on ocean scenarios; and (ii) guidance for the writing teams of the third World Ocean Assessment on sustainability pathways. In addition to providing outputs of relevance to the sustainability pathway components of the assessment, the workshops will also provide an opportunity for identifying expertise for writing teams that can be added to the Pool of Experts.

2. Second writing team meeting

A generous offer has been made by the Government of Portugal to support a second workshop of writing teams in 2024. Initial discussions on this workshop are that it would be very useful for bringing the Coordinating Authors together for a second meeting in the second half of 2024. This could support discussions on progress of the writing teams, identify any issues or challenges faced by the writing teams and facilitate exchange of information between writing teams. It could also provide an opportunity to provide direct updates to the Coordinating Authors on the development of the digital platform that will deliver the third World Ocean Assessment and any requirements of the writing teams in supporting the transfer of their chapters and sub-chapters to the platform.

3. *Status of the Group of Experts membership*

Since the 18th meeting of the AHWGW:

- Carmen Mifsud (Western European and Others Group) has been approved as Group of Expert member, replacing Alan Deidun who stepped down.
- Renison Ruwa (African Group) has informed the secretariat of his retirement and associated stepping down from the Group of Experts.
- Essam Yassin Mohammed (African Group) has informed the secretariat that he is stepping down from the Group of Experts, following his recent appointment as Director General of WorldFish.

This leaves the Group of Experts at 20 members with two vacancies in the African Group and three vacancies in the Eastern European Group.