

Lessons learned from the third cycle of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects

1. Introduction and purpose

This document on lessons learned builds on the previous preliminary version, which was considered by the 21st meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group held in September 2024.

It provides an overview of critical areas identified for enhancement through the ongoing feedback collection process, received from internal and external stakeholders. This process is part of the learning mechanism maintained by the secretariat of the Regular Process and conducted as part of each cycle. The insights summarised in this document describe challenges and obstacles encountered and formulates suggestions on how to address them. The aim is to identify where processes could be streamlined, planning could be improved and how those involved in the Regular Process can be better supported in delivering the outputs from each cycle's programme of work.

The document is intended to be considered by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on the Regular Process as part of the planning processes associated with identifying the foundational elements for the fourth cycle.

2. Overall operation

A. The Group of Experts (GOE)

GOE composition and size

The GOE in the third cycle primarily consisted of natural scientists resulting in low numbers of members with capability in social science disciplines, economics and policy, particularly at regional scales. This was identified in the lessons learned from the first and second cycles and continues to be highlighted from the third cycle as a shortcoming. Greater effort from the regional groups appointing these experts will be needed to promote disciplinary balance within the GOE. Identifying and addressing expertise gaps will ensure the next assessment(s) is supported by a well-rounded GOE, effectively guiding its development.

As of September 2025, 23 out of 25 seats of the GOE from the current third cycle have been filled. Pursuant to paragraph 326 of A/RES/79/144, regional groups that have appointed fewer than five experts are encouraged to appoint experts to the GOE, taking into account the need to ensure adequate expertise, gender balance and geographical distribution. Also, in the first and second cycles, some regions did not meet this quota. This resulted in (i) many foundational documents produced during the first year of the cycles being produced by a smaller group with less representation and (ii) some GOE members contributing to the activities quite late in the cycle and therefore not having the knowledge of earlier discussions, decision making and document drafting. Disproportionate distribution of GOE members to certain regions also meant that when teleconferences were scheduled, uneven participation occurred, resulting in disjointed discussion of activities amongst the GOE and a lack of inclusiveness in decision making. As suggested in the lessons learned from the second cycle and the current third cycle, as well as in the report from the Bureau to the 22nd meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group, it will be of paramount importance that a fall-back arrangement be developed and agreed by the Bureau so that additional members can be appointed if one or more regions do not appoint their full complement of five GOE members. This would ensure that tasks are spread more evenly across members, and meetings have adequate quorums for progressing activities.

Succession planning

It is vital that there is some continuity of members of the GOE between cycles to ensure that process history and lessons learned can be passed on.

At the beginning of the third cycle, the percentage of GOE members with any experience in the Regular Process was 36%. This then dropped to 22% during a critical part of the cycle when coordinating authors were being nominated and writing teams developed. The Regular Process should be aiming to have 40-50% of the Group of Experts consisting of experts with experience from previous cycles. Without this experience, carrying out and completing

activities will require far greater time. This is because the majority of GOE members need to establish an understanding of processes and familiarise themselves with tasks and their responsibilities. This was identified in the lessons learned from the first and second cycles and continues to be highlighted from the third cycle as an important consideration.

Communication and online collaboration

In addition to Microsoft SharePoint, the third cycle introduced Trello as an additional tool for GOE online collaboration. While these platforms served a vital purpose, some members encountered technological challenges that hindered the full utilisation of their capabilities. Looking forward, additional resources should be made available to ensure that all GOE members would have adequate tools, necessary training and technical support to access and use online platforms for communication and collaboration.

B. Timetable and implementation

The preliminary timetable and implementation plan of the third cycle, adopted at the 16th meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole, undergoes periodic revision to reflect ongoing progress, serving as a flexible guide for key milestones until the end of the cycle. Building on the lessons learned from previous cycles, the third cycle has developed the programme of work and resource requirements prior to the start of the fourth cycle. The same approach should be followed for the fifth cycle.

C. Activities in support of the assessment

With the objective of enhancing access to WOA III information and uptake by policymakers and the general public, the secretariat of the Regular Process, after launching a call for expressions of interest for collaboration in the digitalisation of WOA III on 22 April 2024, it is now actively working on this deliverable. The interactive WOA digital platform will need to be further developed under the fourth cycle to, *inter alia*, incorporate management tools for the rapidly expanding the Pool of Experts (POE) database to support various search functions, ensuring the identification of key experts for the development of the WOAs.

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

A. Gathering expertise

Constitution and composition of the Pool of Experts (POE)

Feedback received indicates that the new mechanisms of self-nominations and continuous membership throughout the various cycles introduced during the third cycle are successful innovations, effectively responding to the need for expanding the roster of experts in an agile manner.

The POE provides members of the writing teams and peer-reviewers for the preparation and peer review of the WOA. As of September 2025, the POE for the third cycle comprises more than 1200 experts, including 274 members of the POE from the first and second cycles that confirmed their interest in serving for the third cycle. Many experts nominating to the POE did so via self-nomination rather than nomination by States or recommendation by intergovernmental organisations and the increased number of experts in the POE for the third cycle reflects the implementation of the lessons learned from the second cycle in this regard. Despite the POE database from the third cycle including an increased number of experts from that of previous cycles, attaining the disciplinary, geographic and gender diversity needed to build adequate writing teams that could deliver the WOA III was a challenge. This was an issue identified in the first and second cycle and continues to be highlighted by the third cycle as an important consideration for engaging the expertise needed to deliver the WOA. Many experts needed to be added to the POE during the establishment of writing teams and initial drafting of sections, chapters

and sub-chapters of the WOA III. This caused substantial delays to the establishment of writing teams and full contribution to the drafting process.

Building on the implementation of lessons learned from the second cycle, it will be important to continue to put in place more robust processes to engage potential members of the POE. This includes efforts aimed at increasing awareness of the Regular Process, increasing the rigor and therefore credibility of its outputs and moving the call for nominations to the POE from a passive process to one that includes direct engagement with UN bodies, IGOs, NGOs and relevant agencies to directly identify the disciplinary expertise needed to deliver WOAs. Further improvements to the Regular Process website that facilitate the delivery of easy-to-understand information for potential members of the POE would also be useful to better understand the assessment process and what is involved. Further improving the description and categorisation of the needed expertise based on the experience from the third cycle could also assist with increasing engagement. This could include: (i) further improving the structure and readability of the list of expertise, (ii) breaking down large sea areas into smaller regions and (iii) creating an initial list of expertise needed for each chapter or sub-chapter of any outputs to be produced, taking into account its focus and the need for interdisciplinarity and geographical balance.

Provision of information on experts in the POE database

During the second cycle of the Regular Process, a searchable online database was developed with access via the website of the Regular Process in order to provide detailed information on the expertise of the members of the POE and facilitate the work of the GOE, including in identifying potential members of writing teams. While some minor improvements to this database were made during the third cycle, it still relied on the secretariat uploading information to the database manually. Further, some members of the POE from previous cycles, after agreeing to be re-nominated into the POE for the third cycle, did not update their personal information they had provided when they were originally nominated. As a result, some of the information in the database remained incomplete and not sufficiently accurate. These challenges resulted in extra burdens for the members of the GOE, the secretariat and the coordinating authors in establishing writing teams in due time.

Looking forward, greater resourcing is needed to improve the operational aspects of the database, with a view to incorporating this POE management function into the WOA digital platform. To ensure that information on members of the POE is sufficient and readily accessible, it would be important to develop clear guidelines on the information to be provided upon the nomination of an expert to the POE. Such guidelines should also apply to members of the POE from the previous cycles. Additional resources should be made available to support the maintenance and improvement of the POE database, including by strengthening the human and technical capacity of the secretariat. (See also point 7 below).

B. Development of the assessment

Regional workshops

i. Integration of workshop outputs into the WOA III outline and development

Two rounds of regional workshops were organised in support of the third cycle. The first round of 5 regional workshops was held in 2022 to inform the scoping of the assessment, raise awareness, provide information and receive feedback on WOA II, and generate interest from the scientific community in activities of the third cycle. A major output of the first round of regional workshops was content that directly contributed to the elaboration of the outline of WOA III. The second round of 5 regional workshops was held in 2023 to collect of regional level information and data focused on cross-cutting themes contained in the WOA III and key information for the development of the sustainability pathways component of WOA III.

Participants in the regional workshops during the third cycle were selected based on nominations of experts received from Member States, UN bodies, relevant regional organizations and via self-nomination. Geographic, gender, and

disciplinary balance was ensured in the selection of participants, to the extent possible, in consultation with the host country. In the first round, the number of participants in each workshop ranged from 22 to 117, with an average of 55 participants per workshop. The percentage of female participants in each workshop ranged from 18 to 55 per cent, with the average being 38 per cent. In the second round, the number of participants in each workshop ranged from 23 to 67, with an average of 44 participants per workshop. The percentage of female participants ranged from 31 to 64 per cent, with the average being 43 per cent.

Surveys sent to workshop participants in the third cycle identified very similar feedback to that collected after the workshops during the second cycle. Most participants found the segments on the Regular Process, structure of WOA III and the consideration of the chapters to be the most useful. They also identified that the interactive components of the workshops were most interesting. When asked what component of the workshops could be improved or developed further, regional issues, capacity-building and expanding the participation base, particularly in including policymakers, were among the most frequent answers. Comments provided on the organisation of the workshops included the need for earlier planning, granting of visas and more time for experts to prepare, as well as the possibility to participate remotely and to continue discussions after the workshop. The late scheduling of regional workshops was identified as one of the main challenges that had constrained attendance by some of the experts during the third cycle. For suggested improvements see the host country agreement segment below.

The third cycle formally incorporated a dedicated chapter on Indigenous and traditional knowledge (ITLK) in WOA III for the first time. While this is a positive step forward, no budgetary allocation had been made for the third cycle to allow for the gathering of input through in-person meetings, which is a customary way of engaging with ITLK communities. This is because the decision of adding this new topic and area of work was only included in the development process of the annotated outline of WOA III, which was approved by the General Assembly after it approved the programme of work and the budget for the third cycle. A lesson learned is that the need for financial support for ITLK stakeholder engagement should be anticipated in future cycles. Therefore, it is proposed to establish a dedicated budget to support ITLK stakeholder engagement. This budget would facilitate the development of detailed methodologies to incorporate input from ITLK stakeholders and provide the necessary financial resources to support these engagements.

ii. Host countries and host country agreements

One of the main reasons for the late scheduling of the workshops was the difficulty in securing offers to host the workshops. Despite considerable time and effort being spent to ensure that each region would have at least one workshop, during the second round of workshops, a workshop in the Pacific region had to be cancelled due to difficulties in concluding the host country agreement. Further, considerable time was placed into trying to establish host country agreements, which led to concomitant delays in planning and scheduling and ultimately meant that in both rounds, potential hosts stepped down from the process. In the second round, in some cases, these delays hampered the ability of members of the GOE from attending, due to conflicting commitments and an inability to travel at short notice.

Looking forward, additional measures should be taken to ensure early planning and scheduling of regional workshops, including by adopting a more structured approach in facilitating early conclusion of host country agreements. To avoid scheduling conflicts as much as possible, it might be beneficial to establish a tentative timeline for the workshops and provide this to Member States. It might also be useful to further expand on the parameters for an offer to host a regional workshop in the calls sent to Member States, with information on certain essential legal provisions, such as on privileges and immunities, access to medical services and visas. These measures might facilitate the early conclusion of host country agreements. When there are no co-hosts for regional workshops, actively engaging intergovernmental organisations as possible co-hosts should be done during future cycles. These improvements were put forward as a lesson learned from the second cycle and remain a lesson learned from the third cycle.

Communication with, within and between writing teams

During the third cycle, all writing teams were provided with access to Microsoft SharePoint, allowing for direct upload of documents associated with the development of each section, chapter and sub-chapter of the assessment and joint development of documents by writing teams. This facilitated the sharing of documents between writing teams, the GOE and the secretariat and streamlined the review process associated with the development of initial plans and the zero draft for each chapter. A dedicated meeting of the coordinating authors held in Portugal in February 2024 provided the opportunity for coordinating authors to meet, spend dedicated time familiarising themselves with the assessment and their tasks in drafting sections, chapters and sub-chapters and discussing the details of their tasks with lead and co-lead members. Writing team members however identified that in order to better understand overlaps and connections between sections, chapter and sub-chapters, particularly during the drafting stage, greater support for writing team interaction is needed. Efforts to bring coordinating authors together virtually were limited given the dispersed nature of coordinating authors and their teams, the competing commitments of writing teams and the limited interactivity that online meetings present to many attendees.

Looking forward, greater resources are needed to regularly connect coordinating authors and their writing teams with the GOE and with each other. This should be facilitated by a mixture of in-person and online meetings, held at regular intervals during the drafting period of future assessments.

Managing POE contributions to the assessment

During the final parts of second cycle, it was noted that a number of members of writing teams failed to provide any contribution to the chapter they had been assigned. At the time it was agreed that only those members of the writing teams who contributed to the chapter would be listed at the front page of each chapter or sub-chapter and that the writing teams approved by the Bureau (within which non-contributing writing team members were listed) would be placed at the back of the assessment in an appendix. During the third cycle, a more formalised and proactive approach was developed as part of the [Guidance for Writing Teams](#) document. This included providing writing team members with two opportunities for responding to the secretariat to confirm their engagement in the writing team before their removal from the writing team was formalised. Notwithstanding this new process, there were still a number of cases where non-contributing experts were formally removed from the writing teams. This resulted in gaps within some of the writing teams which needed to be filled, hence delaying the development of certain chapters.

To strengthen this process, it would be useful to provide future experts that are nominated to the POE with clear guidance on the expectations of writing teams' members both before and during the nomination process. This might include formalising their commitment to contribute to each assessment. There are multiple frameworks that other global and multilateral assessments take in formalising both the commitment to specific assessments and soliciting and acknowledging contributions. These encompass identifying individual writing team members' role and contribution to the writing team, and including this detail as part of the review to be done by the Bureau.

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

Policy relevant briefs

Four policy-relevant briefs based on the content of WOA II were prepared by the GOE to provide support to other ongoing ocean-related processes. These briefs focused on: (i) climate change and the ocean, (ii) marine biodiversity, (iii) Sustainable Development Goal 14: Life Below Water and (iv) the relevant United Nations ocean-related Decades. While the policy relevant briefs received positive acknowledgment, it was noted by some participants in the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole, as well as the Group of Experts, that their preparation and finalisation took a significantly longer than originally expected and thus delayed the preparation of WOA III. In response, it was proposed that short thematic summaries of WOA III be produced during the third cycle and that in future cycles it would be beneficial to manage all outputs of a cycle, including activities to support these outputs, in an integrated

manner. Preparation of shorter types of documents, as opposed to technical abstracts or policy relevant briefs of 20 to 40 pages, to outline process specific and policy-relevant information produced within the same cycle would be preferred. This will allow each assessment to provide decision-makers with timely and up-to-date information for use.

Interactions with other ocean-related intergovernmental processes

Interactions and collaborations with other UN bodies, intergovernmental agencies and regional bodies were substantially expanded during the third cycle. These included:

- Engaging scientific and intergovernmental organisations in the launch event for the WOA II.
- Receiving reviews and inputs from UN bodies on the policy relevant briefs on WOA II and WOA III.
- Engaging a number of UN bodies, intergovernmental and scientific organisations in side events focused on the WOA at the UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon (2022), and the UN Ocean Decade conference in Barcelona, Spain (2024).
- Establishing observer status at the IPCC and IPBES.
- UNEP co-hosting a regional workshop in Mahe, Seychelles (2-4 August 2023); ISA co-hosting two workshops in Kingston, Jamaica (12-16 June 2023 and 12-14 September 2022).
- Holding dedicated meetings with IOC-UNESCO and IPCC representatives to better understand engagement and collaboration opportunities.
- Directly partnering with the OECD to provide economic indicator data to the writing teams of the WOA.
- GOE members taking part in panel sessions convened by UN bodies and intergovernmental and regional organisations at dedicated events, and as part of side events held in the margins of large intergovernmental conferences (e.g. UNFCCC COP).

Engaging with ocean-related intergovernmental processes requires considerable effort, a large portion of which is placed on the GOE. This creates demands on members of the GOE over and above those of their core work in planning and delivering the WOA and associated products. For many members, balancing these responsibilities and workloads, in addition to their other responsibilities, meant that engagement in these activities was not possible. This then placed a disproportionate workload on a small number of GOE members and meant meeting all opportunities possible was challenging. Moreover, the fact of also not having the full complement of 25 members of the GOE nominated placed additional burden on the group.

Looking forward, it would be useful to develop a clear strategy for engagement that can be shared with GOE members at the start of each cycle. This should consider the foundational activities that the secretariat will need to engage in to establish and maintain working relationships with other intergovernmental processes. Such strategy should contain a clear set of objectives over the short, medium and long-term, noting that directly engaging in collaborative activities can take some time to plan and carry out (e.g. the joint workshop between IPCC and IPBES took three years from planning to delivery of the report). Such a strategy would facilitate coordination of activities, improve planning around events and could be shared with other intergovernmental processes to facilitate collaborative development and planning.

Enhancing regional intergovernmental and scientific organisation inputs into the Regular Process

In organising the two rounds of regional workshops, the Regular Process secretariat ensured that invitations were extended to regional intergovernmental and scientific organisations, welcoming their representatives to attend these workshops to share insights, discuss relevant findings, and provide updates on regional ocean governance and scientific research. These organisations were also invited to recommend experts for the Pool of Experts. As a result, some regional intergovernmental and scientific organisations provided data, information, and resources for the preparation of WOA III.

Despite these efforts, there remains significant potential to further strengthen these interactions. Moving forward, the Regular Process will need to deepen these collaborations by fostering continuous dialogue, increasing joint initiatives, and ensuring that regional inputs are effectively integrated into the assessments. Possible coordination mechanisms among the secretariats of ocean-related processes might be adopted, including through UN-Oceans. Additional resources should be made available to support the holding of events aimed at promoting inter-agency dialogues on the state of the marine environment, including socioeconomic aspects.

Support for attendance at relevant ocean processes meetings

A lesson learned from the Regular Process being unable to attend the IPCC-60 meeting due to a budgetary freeze of the organisation highlights the need for extrabudgetary funding that can be utilised even in the event of an organisation-wide budget freeze. Allocating a sufficient budget would ensure the Regular Process is represented at relevant ocean-related processes, such as the IPCC, IPBES, UNFCCC, and CBD COPs, enhancing the visibility of the Regular Process and promoting key messages of the WOAs.

5. Output III: Capacity-building

Capacity-building activities

Capacity building activities in the third cycle comprised 5 workshops, 2 in conjunction with the first round of regional workshops held in 2022 and 3 in conjunction with the second round of regional workshops in support of the WOA held in 2023. These workshops primarily focused on providing short-course material on UNCLOS and international ocean governance and on theories and best practices for strengthening the science-policy interface. Participants in regional workshops during the third cycle were selected based on nominations of experts received from Member States, UN bodies, relevant regional organizations and via self-nomination. Geographic, gender, and disciplinary balance was ensured in the selection of participants, to the extent possible, in consultation with the host country. In the first round, the number of participants in each workshop ranged from 26 to 117, with an average of 72 participants per workshop. The percentage of female participants in each workshop ranged from 35 to 54 per cent, with the average being 44 per cent. In the second round, the number of participants in each workshop ranged from 23 to 66, with an average of 45 participants per workshop. The percentage of female participants ranged from 43 to 64 per cent, with the average being 54 per cent.

In addition, a [joint DOALOS/IOC-UNESCO International Symposium on strengthening the science-policy interface](#) discussed the capacity building needs identified during the first round of regional workshops in support of the WOA. Of the 47 moderators and panellists selected for the event, 4 moderators or panellists were nationals of States in the African Group, 7 of the Asia-Pacific Group, 2 of the Eastern European Group, 13 of the Latin American and Caribbean States Group and 21 of the Western European and Others Group; 21 were women and 26 men. The report from this symposium was posted on the Regular Process website in early 2024. The Symposium underscored the importance of comprehensive capacity-building, tailored capacity development, enhanced marine observations, ocean literacy, cooperative global initiatives, effective communication strategies, and regular multi-stakeholder dialogues to strengthen the ocean science-policy interface.

Feedback gathered from the workshops identified that there were challenges for those whom English is a second language, to follow the content of the workshop. This limited the experience of attendees and the ability of the workshop to build true capacity. Looking forward, it will be important to further refine a coherent capacity-building programme for conducting ocean assessments, in particular integrated assessments. Organising two symposia in the fourth cycle, instead of one, could enhance opportunities to engage with a broader range of stakeholders and share progress on the ocean science-policy interface. As a first step, it is suggested for an external expert to conduct a strategic review of the secretariat's capacity-building programme and develop a clear strategy for capacity-building activities over the short-, medium-, and long-term that will deliver into defined outcomes of benefit to the Regular Process and the WOA. This strategy could be informed by the capacity-building activities undertaken by other

ocean-related intergovernmental processes, many of which have formal programmes aimed at supporting the processes over the long-term.

Enhancing digital solutions and capacity-building tools

The use of web-based documents at regional workshops instead of off-line versions has proven useful in consolidating workshop outputs, streamlining processes in compiling data. Further exploration and enhancement of these digital solutions are necessary in various formats. Notably, securing dedicated funding to purchase capacity-building-focused software accounts would be highly beneficial. This funding would support the creation of user-friendly newsletters and the design of ocean science posters, which are vital tools for effectively communicating the key findings of the WOAs and facilitating capacity-building activities of each cycle of the Regular Process.

6. Activities related to outreach and engagement

Communication and dissemination

During the third cycle, the lack of a full-time staff member leading communication efforts under a coherent strategy resulted in limited engagement with stakeholders, as these tasks were handled by a part-time consultant. The lesson learned is that to bolster outreach efforts and broaden the scope of stakeholders, it is necessary to have a full-time staff member dedicated to all areas of the Regular Process communication efforts, particularly focusing on the dissemination of WOA key findings and the development of effective ocean science graphics tailored for global, regional, and national audiences.

Additionally, feedback from stakeholders during regional workshops and the symposium highlighted the need to enhance the WOAs' relevance from a regional perspective. Having a dedicated full-time staff member would ensure the effective dissemination of Regular Process activities for various oceanic regions, thereby reaching decision-makers at the regional and national levels in a more targeted manner and addressing the identified communication gaps.

Technology enhancements on website, email, and video tools

Feedback from regional workshop participants indicated the need for improvements to the user interface of the Regular Process website. A key lesson learned is that further enhancements are paramount to ensure the website is more user-friendly and easier to navigate, thereby enabling stakeholders to efficiently accessing relevant information.

The third cycle outreach efforts highlighted the importance of establishing a dedicated communication channel to streamline outreach and engagement. The current approach of using the DOALOS email account, which covers a broader scope of work and requires additional layers of internal coordination, hindered agile and effective outreach and engagement. Securing a separate budget to create a dedicated Regular Process email account (e.g. RP-WOA@un.org) could enhance outreach efforts. A dedicated email account would enable the Regular Process secretariat to fully own this communication channel to increase awareness of its vital role and engage more effectively with stakeholders at all levels.

Furthermore, to enhance understanding of ocean science provided by the WOAs and improve ocean literacy among policymakers and the general public, it is proposed that a dedicated budget be secured to develop an introductory video about the Regular Process. Collaborating on a video with IOC-UNESCO's Ocean Literacy programme could further support this endeavour, providing a comprehensive and impactful approach to ocean education and awareness.

7. Work of the Regular Process secretariat

WOA digital platform and support to the management of the POE database

During the third cycle, the outreach potential of WOA II was hindered by the absence of any interactive web-based feature for presenting its findings. Moreover, the management of the POE operated under an inefficient system where application collation and the registration of approved candidates were conducted on separate platforms and managed manually. This manual handling not only increased the risk of human error but also demanded countless hours of staff time that could have been easily automated. The lesson learned indicates the necessity for an end-to-end digital platform to streamline both the digital presentation of the WOAs and the management of the POE.

To facilitate improvement, it is imperative that the fourth cycle establishes a fully digitalised platform. Developing such a comprehensive web-based framework will significantly enhance the effectiveness of secretariat support by automating processes and reducing the reliance on manual labour. This improvement will allow resources within the secretariat to be redirected towards supporting more substantive areas of the Regular Process, thus ensuring greater overall efficiency and effectiveness.

Staff

While the planned activities around Output I: third World Ocean Assessment were conducted successfully by the secretariat, significant improvements with regard to the Regular Process outreach and communication activities will be of essence in order to better engage all relevant stakeholders, including other ocean-related intergovernmental processes and regional organisations. Currently, the Regular Process has not yet achieved the level of impact that would be commensurate with the content of the WOAs and the efforts and resources deployed. To address this gap, it is of paramount importance that the Regular Process secretariat be strengthened with an additional Professional staff position (P-3). This addition will ensure adequate support for promoting the outputs of the Regular Process, playing an instrumental role in elevating public awareness and ensuring that the WOAs' findings reach a wider audience. The new proposed staff member will oversee outreach and engagement activities, develop the Regular Process regional network with intergovernmental and scientific organisations, and maintain the WOA digital platform to enhance the dissemination of knowledge and information to support decision-makers at all levels. Details on the foreseen responsibilities include the following:

- Outreach and engagement: the new Professional staff will oversee the outreach and engagement activities to ensure the dissemination of knowledge and information from the WOAs to decision-makers at the global, regional, national, and local levels, including through DOALOS' social media accounts. The new professional staff will also oversee the Regular Process support for and interaction with other ocean-related intergovernmental processes. This role is crucial for bridging the gap between scientific assessments and policy implementation on the ground, as well as alignment between the Regular Process' Assessments and relevant global scientific assessments including the IPCC's Assessment Report and IPBES' Global Assessment Report. The staff member will be responsible for creating targeted communication strategies to effectively convey the findings of the WOAs to diverse audiences. This includes organising webinars, information sessions, and virtual conferences to engage with stakeholders and policymakers, ensuring they have the necessary information to make informed decisions regarding sustainable use of the oceans. Furthermore, the outreach efforts will focus on increasing the visibility and impact of the WOAs, promoting its use as a valuable resource in sustainable ocean management.
- Development of the Regular Process regional network: the new Professional staff will also be responsible for developing the Regular Process regional network with relevant intergovernmental and scientific organisations. This entails establishing and maintaining partnerships with key stakeholders, including regional bodies, research institutions, and non-governmental organisations. By fostering these connections, the Regular Process can ensure that the WOA is informed by a diverse range of perspectives and expertise, enhancing its relevance and accuracy. The staff will coordinate collaborative efforts, facilitating the exchange of data, best practices, and innovations in ocean science and policy. This network will serve as a platform for ongoing dialogue and cooperation, strengthening the global community's ability to address complex marine environmental challenges.

- Maintenance of the WOA digital platform: in addition to outreach and network development, the Professional staff will be tasked with maintaining and updating the WOA digital platform. This involves ensuring that the platform remains up-to-date, user-friendly, and accessible to a wide audience. The staff will oversee the regular updating of content, including new findings, reports, and interactive tools that enhance the usability of the WOA. The staff will also work on improving the platform's functionality, incorporating feedback from users to better meet their needs. By providing a robust digital resource, the Regular Process can facilitate greater access to ocean-related data and information, supporting informed decision-making and fostering a deeper understanding of marine environmental issues among stakeholders worldwide.

Maximising the Special Scholarship Trust Fund mechanism

The Regular Process Special Scholarship Trust Fund was established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 64/71 to support training programmes for developing countries. No contributions have yet been made to this fund. The Regular Process can utilise the Fund to support early-career researchers and ITLK stakeholders in their participation in Regular Process activities. Looking forward, it is suggested that the Regular Process amplify its impact by underscoring the importance of mobilising contributions to this Fund. This could include raising awareness on the Fund and strengthening collaboration with intergovernmental, regional, and national organisations to mobilise resources for the Fund.