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INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION
(of UNESCO)

INFORMATION DOCUMENT

**IOC'S PARTICIPATION IN THE UN REGULAR PROCESS FOR GLOBAL REPORTING
AND ASSESSMENT OF THE STATE OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT,
INCLUDING SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS**

This document provides an overview of the possible areas where the IOC would be in position to meet the objectives of the UN Regular Process and specifically support some of the foreseen activities. These IOC areas or services are based on the set of options identified by the Group of Experts of the Regular Process. These options include (i) the proposal to organize a set of regional workshops; (ii) the means of nominating a pool of experts that would be required to support the development of the first integrated assessment; and (iii) a possible outline for the first global integrated assessment report. These options will be reviewed and discussed at the next meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole to be held on 27-28 June 2011, in New York.

Introduction

The outcome of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole held in September 2010, and convened to recommend a course of action for the Regular Process to the UN General Assembly, was to propose to:

- (i) Set the deadline for the first integrated ocean assessment under the first cycle of the Regular Process as 2014;
- (ii) Establish an Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole composed of all UN Member States that will be the body overseeing the implementation of the Regular Process;
- (iii) Invite, through the UN Secretary General, IOC, UNEP, IMO and FAO to provide scientific and technical support to the Regular Process;
- (iv) Establish a group of experts (appointed by UN Member States) as an integral part of the Regular Process, to prepare the assessment report, and, as a first step, develop a set of options necessary to achieve the deadline of 2014;
- (v) Appoint UN-DOALOS as the Secretariat of the Regular Process, establish a UN Trust Fund to support the Regular Process cycle and invite Member States and other organizations to contribute to the Trust-Fund and to make other contributions.

These recommendations were transmitted to the General Assembly and translated in the annual ocean omnibus resolution (UN Resolution 65/37 adopted on 7 December 2010). Following these decisions, an Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole, composed of all UN Member States was established as well as a Group of Experts mandated with the task of preparing a set of options for implementing the 'Regular Process'. The 'Regular Process' Ad Hoc Working Group met for the first time from 14 to 18 February 2011 in New York to review the set of options prepared by the Group of Experts.

Central to the options proposed by the experts are:

- (i) the proposal to organize a set of regional workshops in the first year of the regular process in order to facilitate dialogue between the Group of Experts of the Regular Process and representatives and experts from States and relevant intergovernmental organizations;
- (ii) the means of nominating a pool of experts that would be required to support the development of the first integrated assessment;
- (iii) a possible outline for the first global integrated assessment report.

The February Ad Hoc working group decided that these issues should be reviewed and opened for comments by UN Member States. As a result, UNGA Resolution 65/37 B sets a tight deadline, by inviting Member States to comment, by 30 April 2011 on the possible outline for the first global integrated assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects, the draft criteria for the appointment of experts and the draft guidelines for workshops. The Group of Experts prepared revised versions of those draft documents so as to reflect the comments of States, for further discussion and adoption at the next meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole to be held from 27 to 28 June 2011 in New York. These draft documents are available on DOALOS website at:

http://www.un.org/Depts/los/global_reporting/global_reporting.htm

In addition, UNGA Resolution 65/37 B adopted in April 2011 called for "the Group of Experts, in consultation with the secretariat of the Regular Process and the assistance of the members of UN-Oceans, to explore means of leveraging existing systems to manage the information that comprises the foundation of the global marine assessment and to report its findings by 30 May 2011 for the consideration of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole at its next meeting".

Based on the documents prepared by the Group of Experts and the needs expressed in UNGA Resolution 65/37 B, the following areas where IOC could support the objectives and operations of the Regular Process have been identified:

A) Information and data management needs of the Regular Process

The IOC, building on its expertise in information and data management, would be in a position to provide the following services to the Regular Process:

1. The development, hosting and maintenance of a **public website** according to the criteria defined by the GoE. This website could be based on the model of the AoA web site that IOC created (www.unga-regular-process.org) or could use a different architecture. Shared and decentralized administration rights could be built in so that content could be uploaded from various locations.
2. Development, hosting and maintenance of a **web-based Virtual Office** for: (i) GoE and contributing experts and (ii) government/international organizations, based on the criteria provided by the GoE.
3. Jointly with UNEP, further development of the Regular Process **Database of existing marine assessments ('GRAMED')** could be carried out (<http://development.unep-wcmc.org/mura/rpchm/index.cfm/information-portal/past-and-existing-assessments/>)
4. A **web-based information management system for handling the peer-review** process of the Regular Process report. This should be customized based on criteria to be agreed by the AHWG and building on best practices in literature peer-review. This activity could be conducted in collaboration with UNEP.
5. A database for **identifying marine experts and institutions** through OceanExpert (www.oceanexpert.net) which contains information on more than 9,000 individual marine experts and 5,000 institutions and organizations. Searches can be carried out by field of expertise and geographical area. This system would be useful to identify possible expertise for the Regular Process at regional and sub-regional levels. A subset of 'OceanExpert' could be developed to display the profile of appointed RP experts.
6. **Data publishing system** for the RP: IOC, through its International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange (IODE) could set up a system that will make it possible for the RP authors to package and store the data sets they used (or at least parts thereof) for their paper. These "data packages" would then be given a unique and persistent identifier so they can always be referred to. In this case, the authors' chapters can package and deposit the data they used in this system and refer to the package(s) in their chapter. Information about this project, can be found at:

http://www.iode.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=110&Itemid=129
7. Access to a number of **thematic database** relevant to the themes of the RP report, such as:
 - (i) **IODE Ocean Portal:** This system provides seamless access to collections and inventories of marine data from the National Ocean Data Centres in the IODE network and allows for the discovery, evaluation (through visualization and metadata review) and access to data via web services.
 - (ii) **OBIS:** The Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS) is part of IODE and is an evolving strategic alliance of people and organizations sharing a vision to make

marine biogeographic data, from all over the world, freely available over the World Wide Web. The OBIS database now contains over 22 million records.

B) Support for the Organization of Regional Workshops for the Regular Process.

Regional workshops are recognized as a key mechanism by which the First Global Integrated Marine Assessment will be accomplished and States can enhance their assessment capacity. Workshops will facilitate dialogue between the Group of Experts of the Regular Process and representatives and experts from States and competent intergovernmental organizations.

The Group of Experts is proposing that Regional Workshops be organized for the following general areas of sea/ocean:

- a. The North Pacific
- b. The South Pacific
- c. The eastern and south-eastern Asian Seas (including the Indonesian seas),
- d. The northern Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden and the 'ROPME/RECOFI' area,
- e. The southern and western Indian Ocean,
- f. The North Atlantic, the Baltic Sea, the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea,
- g. The South Atlantic (between the African and American coasts) and the wider Caribbean.

Whilst these do not match perfectly with the geographical scope of IOC's own Regional Subsidiary Bodies (RSBs), IOC's regional sub-commissions and regional committees should actively engage and support the objectives of such workshops. As it stands, it is proposed that these workshops be organized under the auspices of the United Nations (i.e. United Nations Secretariat), which means that IOC would not be in a position to host such workshops. IOC RSBs could however assist in mobilizing regional experts through IOC networks, and identify possible regional/thematic experts and authors for the drafting of specific chapters.

C) Capacity Building for the Regular Process

Through the organization of Regional Workshops, the Regular Process is aiming at identifying the "capacity-building needs of States to allow them to contribute more fully to, and benefit more fully from, the Regular Process, and identify steps that those States could usefully take to build the capacities of competent intergovernmental organizations (if any) through which the States collaborate [...]; and start building capacity for integrated assessment".

IOC RSBs could also support the organization of regional capacity building initiatives in support of the Regular Process. Using the experience of the IOC/KORDI Regional Workshop on capacity building for the Regular Process, organized in October 2010, a specific training module could be developed on Integrated Marine Assessment and conducted through IOC regional programmes. Such a training course would be integrated into IODE's OceanTeacher in order to provide wider and remote access to the course resources.

D) Provision of assessment products/ results/data to the Group of Expert

There are a number of assessment products that the IOC leads that could be made available to the Group of Experts and integrated into the UN Regular Process Global Assessment Report. This includes:

- Environmental and socio-economic indicators for Large Marine Ecosystems, and Open Ocean (through the GEF TWAP project, co-implemented by IOC)

- Scientific statements on specific issues (e.g. Acidification, sea level rise, ocean fertilization, HABs)
- Ocean Observation products

E) Modalities for cooperation

Building on the decisions reached at the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole and after some internal consultations with the Regular Process Secretariat (DOALOS), IOC would prepare a detailed description of its contribution. Whilst some of these activities would be provided through in-kind assistance and the provision of seed funds, IOC would also need to be in a position to raise extra-budgetary resources. IOC and DOALOS would enter into agreement on the basis of an exchange of letters or a Memorandum of Understanding.

Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC)
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
1, rue Miollis
75 732 Paris Cedex 15, France
Tel.: +33 1 45 68 10 10
Fax: +33 1 45 68 58 12
<http://ioc-unesco.or>