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(of UNESCO)

INFORMATION DOCUMENT

**PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE ASSESSMENT OF ASSESSMENTS (AOA)**

Summary. This Progress Report has been prepared by UNEP and IOC as the lead agencies for the "Assessment of Assessments (AoA)" instituted by Part XI (Regular process for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects) of resolution 60/30 of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). This report is based on the report of the third meeting of the Group of Experts set up under that resolution, and the discussion of that report in the AoA Ad Hoc Steering Group meeting held from 19-20 June 2008 in New York. The report highlights the progress achieved by the Group of Expert since its inception in March 2007 and provides an opportunity for Member States to review the detailed outline of the final AoA report that will be submitted to the UN General Assembly in 2009. Finally, the report provides information on the financial situation of the AoA and calls on Member States of the UN to further contribute to the AoA in order to allow for the completion of the report in the best conditions.



United Nations Environment
Programme



Intergovernmental Oceanographic
Commission of the United Nations
Educational, Scientific and Cultural
Organization

“ASSESSMENT OF ASSESSMENTS” PROGRESS REPORT 20 JUNE 2008

Origin and Purpose

1. This Progress Report has been prepared by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (IOC). UNEP and IOC are the lead agencies for the “Assessment of Assessments” instituted by Part XI (Regular process for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects) of resolution 60/30 of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). This report is based on the report of the third meeting of the Group of Experts set up under that resolution, and the discussion of that report in the Ad Hoc Steering Group set up by that resolution.

2. The purposes of this Progress Report are:

- a. to provide the basis for the open-ended mid-term review of the work and progress on the “Assessment of Assessments”, which UNGA resolution 60/30 foresees in order to give all States Members of the United Nations an opportunity to comment on, and contribute to, the development of the ongoing work (paragraph 93(c));
- b. to inform the Ninth Meeting of the UN Informal Consultative Process on the Oceans and the Law of the Sea (UNICPOLOS) and the UNGA of the way in which the remaining stages of the “Assessment of Assessments” are intended to be carried out.

3. The progress report has been considered and endorsed by the Ad Hoc Steering Group. The Ad Hoc Steering Group, however, recognises that the report reflects work in progress, and that there may well be changes to both the structure and contents of the “Assessment of Assessments” as the further work of the Group of Experts continues.

Background

4. UNGA resolutions 57/141 and 58/240 decided to establish a regular process under the United Nations for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects, both current and foreseeable, building on existing regional assessments (“the regular process”).

5. Part XI of UNGA resolution 60/30 recorded the UNGA’s decision to launch an “Assessment of Assessments”, to be completed within two years, as a preparatory stage towards the establishment of the regular process. The resolution endorsed the conclusions of the second International Workshop on the regular process. Among other things, these conclusions were that:

- a. The “Assessment of Assessments” would provide, *inter alia*, a critical appraisal of existing assessments from a variety of sources; would identify what had worked well; and would help States identify areas where quality data was available and those regions where data or institutional capacity for undertaking marine assessments needed to be improved;
- b. The “Assessment of Assessments” should:

- (i) Assemble information about scientific assessments (including assessments covering social and economic issues) relevant to the regular process, which have already been carried out by United Nations agencies and global treaty organizations, regional organizations, national Governments and, where appropriate, by other organizations, which are relevant to undertaking a regular global marine assessment;
- (ii) Make a critical appraisal of those assessments, for example, by comparing methodologies, data sources and coverage, in order to identify, collate and synthesize best practices and to identify what thematic and other gaps and uncertainties exist in current scientific knowledge and assessment processes;
- (iii) Assess how well those assessments have been communicated to policy makers at the national, regional and global levels;
- (c) The “Assessment of Assessments”:

 - (i) is not intended to alter the competence of any other organization to undertake marine assessments within its field of competence.
 - (ii) should be essentially science-based. It should not require any original scientific research or any new marine observations but will involve the integration of existing scientific and technical data and information;
 - (iii) will not involve making any new assessments about the state of the oceans or about the state of any particular component. It is intended that it should bring together and review existing assessments
 - (iv) will need to acknowledge uncertainties: there may be gaps in scientific knowledge and in data and these should be identified.

- (d) The Assessment of Assessment should cover assessments of the state of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects, but should not encompass policy evaluations.

6. UNGA resolution 60/30 set up an ad hoc steering group to oversee the execution of the “assessment of assessments” (paragraphs 91 – 93), and provided for the establishment of a group of experts to undertake the actual work of assessing the various assessments. The composition of this group of experts is given in Annex A.

Laying the foundations

7. The Group of Experts began by adopting a programme of work, which was considered and endorsed by the Ad Hoc Steering Group at its meeting in June 2007.

8. In line with that programme of work, the first main stage of the work of the Group of Experts was:

- a. identifying relevant existing assessment processes in the various regions of the world’s oceans and seas;
- b. identifying relevant existing assessment processes in relation to global, trans-regional and supra-regional issues;
- c. analysing the way in which those assessment processes have been carried out, in relation to:
 - (i) the coverage of the different aspects of the marine environment and human activities affecting it, and
 - (ii) an agreed list of factors that strengthen the influence of assessments through enhancing scientific credibility, policy relevance, legitimacy and usefulness;
- d. drawing conclusions on:

- (i) the strengths and weaknesses of what existing assessment processes can contribute to a regular process for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects;
- (ii) principles and design factors that are relevant to the implementation and future conduct of a regular process for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects;
- e. agreeing on the framework for their report, which will be the main component of the report by the lead agencies to the UN General Assembly, in accordance with paragraph 94(d) of UNGA resolution 60/30.

9. The identification of the assessments to be considered has been based, in the first place, upon a database established by the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (with support from the United Kingdom). This database started from the 2003 document "Global Marine Assessments: A survey of global and regional marine environmental assessments and related scientific activities"¹. At present, it contains information on 362 activities, including assessments, scientific research studies of relevance and data holdings. WCMC has issued an open invitation through its website² to those who consider that there are other assessments of this kind to submit information on them for consideration. It is known, however, that the database is not yet complete. For example, because of lack of resources, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has not been able to submit details of all assessments that it has carried out.

10. At the regional level, the Group of Experts established a list of regions of the world's oceans and seas by the Group of Experts for the purposes of organising their work (set out in Annex B). This list is solely for the purpose of the "assessment of assessments". Each region was allocated to one of the experts to examine and evaluate the assessments in respect of that region. Each of the allocated experts has worked on the basis of:

- a. his or her personal knowledge of the assessments carried out in respect of that region;
- b. the WCMC database;
- c. consultation with relevant regional seas organisations and regional fisheries management bodies and with relevant global agencies.

The consultations have, in particular, allowed account to be taken of assessments not yet included in the WCMC database.

11. In addition, the members of the Group of Experts working on some regions with a high proportion of developing countries have been assisted by consultants drawn from some of those countries to identify and evaluate assessments that are relevant.

12. For each assessment identified, a standard template was completed to give basic information about the assessment. The factual parts of these templates are being incorporated into the WCMC database. For each AoA region, a standard template was then completed, bringing together information from the templates on individual assessments. Finally, the lead member of the Group of Experts for each region wrote a summary description and evaluation of the assessments for each AoA region. The material for each AoA region was then checked by other members of the Group of Experts.

13. At the supra-regional level, arrangements were made to identify and evaluate both integrated and thematic assessments which appeared relevant. Those so far planned to be covered are:

Global Integrated Assessments:

- a. the Global Integrated Water Assessment;

¹ Global Marine Assessments: A survey of global and regional marine environmental assessments and related scientific activities, UNEP, UNEP/WCMC, UNESCO/IOC, Nairobi and Cambridge, 2003, ISBN 9280723618.

² The URL of the website is <http://www.unga-regular-process.org>.

- b. the Millenium Ecosystem Assessment;
- c. the Global Environment Outlook;
- d. reports on the Large Marine Ecosystems produced under the auspices of the Global Environment Facility and NOAA;
- e. Global Open Oceans and Deep Seabed_
- f. reports of the IPCC

Global Thematic Assessments

- g. London Convention/dumping
- h. Shipping, including oil pollution from vessels
- i. Invasive alien species;
- j. Fisheries and Aquaculture;
- k. Climate change: warming, ocean circulation, sea level rise, acidification;
- l. Biodiversity: ecosystems (corals, mangroves, sea mounts), mammals, genetic resources;
- m. Land-based pollution (as defined under the Global Programme of Action on the Protection of the Marine Environment against Land-Based Activities (GPA);
- n. Land/Ocean interaction in the Coastal Zone which includes Tourism and Physical alteration and habitat loss
- o. Open-Ocean Pollution, including atmospheric inputs.

Developing the conclusions

14. On the foundations established by the examination and evaluation of the assessments that have been identified, the Group of Experts is now developing its report. The framework of this report has been discussed and agreed, and is set out at Annex C. It is organised in four main parts:

- Part 0 – Introduction
- Part I – Evaluation of assessments – Findings from the individual evaluations (with annexes of the regional summaries and the summaries of the global integrated and thematic assessments
- Part II – Evaluation of assessments – Best Practices
- Part III - The way forward – framework and options.

Resources

15. The work of the “Assessment of Assessments” is being carried out under significant constraints on resources. The lead agencies developed, and the Ad Hoc Steering Group approved, the following budget:

US Dollars (\$)

Activities	2007	2008	2009
Expert Group Meetings (5 meetings @ 100,000 each) (expert travel, per diem and meeting support)	200,000	200,000	100,000
Preparation of necessary inputs to meetings of the group of experts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial support to individual experts - Support for additional expertise - Fellowships (students) - Commissioned studies 	100,000	100,000	50,000

Activities	2007	2008	2009
Ad Hoc Steering Group meetings (support for developing country participation)	75,000	75,000	75,000
Peer review		25,000	25,000
Two temporary positions located at UNEP and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO at G-4/G-5 and P-3/P-4 levels, to provide support for the overall Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socio-Economic Aspects (GRAME) process**		200,000	200,000
Publications & Lay out			100,000
Translation			200,000
Editing (science writer)			40,000
Communication, Data and Information management -virtual repository/library - virtual workspace - further development of database	50,000	20,000	20,000
Outreach - Brochures - Launch event/Seminars - Media packages	10,000	40,000	60,000
TOTAL	435,000	660,000	870,000
<i>Of which, In-kind contribution by lead agencies in preparation for the Ad Hoc Steering Group and the group of experts (staff time, travel, consultants and survey)</i>	<i>150,000</i>	<i>150,000</i>	<i>150,000</i>
TOTAL TO BE MOBILISED		1,965,000	
Total to be mobilised from States Members of the UN		1,515,000	

16. In fact, it has only so far been possible to mobilise the following sums from the States Members of the United Nations:

US Dollars (\$)

Country	Amount Committed	Received by
Belgium	16,500	IOC
Canada	26,600	IOC
Iceland	100,000	UNEP
Netherlands	25,245	UNEP
Norway	200,000	UNEP
Republic of Korea	20,000	IOC
Sweden	85,000	Through GESAMP
UK	50,000	UNEP
USA	30,000	IOC
Total	553,345	

17. In other words, less than half of the planned and approved expenditure can be covered. In consequence, the lead agencies have had to make cash contributions of \$150,000 (\$75,000 each) and to increase their contributions in kind (mainly staff time and hosting of meetings) to \$400,000 (\$200,000 each). These contributions from the lead agencies, together with the resources mobilized from the eight States, have covered the costs of the “Assessment of Assessments” from the start until June 2008. Little remains from the contributions already received except that represented by the \$50,000 from the United Kingdom, which is ear-marked for work on the WCMC database.

18. The work so far has therefore relied very heavily on the goodwill of the parent institutions of the Group of Experts, and of the experts themselves, to do work on a voluntary basis. While this is welcomed, and has enabled the progress so far made, it is not a feasible and sustainable basis for the regular process itself.

19. The revised budget for the remaining work (June 2008 to June 2009), as endorsed by the Ad Hoc Steering Group, is now as follows:

US Dollars (\$)

Activities	2008	2009
2 Expert Group Meetings (Nov 08/ Feb 09) (expert travel, per diem and meeting support)	50,000	50,000
2 Task Team Groups to work on specific sections	25,000	25,000
Preparation of necessary inputs to meetings of the group of experts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial support to individual experts - Support for additional expertise - Fellowships (students) - Commissioned studies 	80,000	80,000
Ad Hoc Steering Group meetings (support for developing country participation)		75,000
Peer review	25,000	25,000
Staff support to Lead Agencies (secondment/temporary position)	80,000	80,000
Publications & Lay out (Report & SDM)		130,000
Translation (Summary for Decision-Makers) into six languages		120,000
Editing (science writer)	30,000	40,000
Communication, Data and Information management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - further development of database - maintenance/development of Website 	20,000	20,000
Outreach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brochures - Launch event/Seminars - Media packages 	40,000	60,000
TOTAL	350,000	705,000

Activities	2008	2009
<i>Of which, Further in-kind contribution by lead agencies in preparation for the Ad Hoc Steering Group and the group of experts (staff time, travel, consultants)</i>	150,000	150,000
TOTAL TO BE MOBILISED	1,055,000	
Total to be mobilised from States Members of the UN	755,000	

20. The remaining resources available are therefore not sufficient to cover the essential costs of the remaining work. It is therefore essential for States to consider how the necessary resources can be mobilized to enable completion.

21. Without the necessary resources, the essential steps listed in the budget above will not be carried out. As a result, the “Assessment of Assessments” will be of a lower quality and will lose momentum, and the opportunity to present it to the UN General Assembly in accordance with the agreed timetable will be lost. Furthermore, there is a risk that the “Assessment of Assessments” will lack comprehensiveness, will not take account of all available information, and will therefore be compromised in its legitimacy and usefulness, especially to the other global processes where knowledge of the state of the global marine environment is relevant.

Further work

22. The Group of Experts is now engaged on preparing a complete draft of its report, based on the examinations, evaluations and analysis so far carried out. This will be considered at its meeting in early November 2008. This meeting will also develop a Summary for Decision-Makers.

23. Comments and contributions from States Members of the United Nations on this report and on the attached outline, as envisaged in UNGA resolution 60/30, will be most useful if they can be received in time to be considered alongside the complete draft in November 2008. **States Members of the United Nations are therefore invited to provide the lead agencies with any such material by 30 September 2008³.**

24. When the Group of Experts has completed its revision of the complete draft in November 2008, it is planned that the lead agencies, in agreement with the Group of Experts, will arrange for a peer review of the draft report by relevant experts from around the world. The Group of Experts will consider the comments from this peer review at its meeting in February 2009.

25. The completed “Assessment of Assessments” and the Summary for Decision-Makers will then be submitted to the Ad Hoc Steering Group in May 2009. The lead agencies will then report to the UN General Assembly.

26. The “Assessment of Assessments”, with the Summary for Decision-Makers, will then be published during the summer of 2009, and the report of the lead agencies will be submitted to the UN General Assembly in October 2009. It is proposed (provided that the necessary resources, over and above those required for the revised budget, are made available) to publish the full “Assessment of Assessments” in the six UN languages.

³ Material may be sent to the Secretariat in the lead agencies at

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REGIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF ASSESSMENTS⁴

No	AoA Regions	Related Regional Sea Programme(s)	Related Regional Fisheries Body/Bodies	FAO Major Fisheries Area (and Sub-Area/Division where needed)	Related Large Marine Ecosystems (GIWA assessment for those marked *)	Coastal States of the AoA Region
01	Antarctic Ocean	CCAMLR	CCAMLR	Atlantic (Antarctic), Antarctic and Southern Indian Ocean, Pacific (Antarctic)	Antarctica	[The Contracting Parties of the Antarctic Treaty]
02	Arctic Ocean	PAME	CCBSP, NAMMCO, NEAFC,	Arctic Sea, Atlantic Northeast (Sub-Areas I, II, V and XIV)	Arctic Ocean, Beaufort Sea, Hudson Bay, West Greenland Shelf*, East Greenland Shelf*, Iceland Shelf, Faeroe Plateau*, Norwegian Shelf, Barents Sea*, Kara Sea*, Laptev Sea*, East Siberian Sea*, Chuckchi Sea*, West Bering Sea*, East Bering Sea	Canada, Denmark (Greenland and Færoes), Iceland, Norway, Russian Federation, Sweden, United States
03	Baltic Sea	HELCOM	[IBSFC now non-operational ⁵]	North-East Atlantic (Divisions IIIb, IIIc and III d - Sound, Belt Sea and Baltic Sea)	Baltic Sea*	Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russian Federation, Sweden

No	AoA Regions	Related Regional Sea Programme(s)	Related Regional Fisheries Body/Bodies	FAO Major Fisheries Area (and Sub-Area/Division where needed)	Related Large Marine Ecosystems (GIWA assessment for those marked *)	Coastal States of the AoA Region
04	Black Sea	Black Sea Commission	GFCM	Mediterranean and Black Sea (Black Sea)	Black Sea*	Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russian Federation, Turkey, Ukraine
05	East Asian Seas	PEMSEA, East Asian Seas Action Plan	APFIC, SEAFDEC,	Pacific West Central (part)	Gulf of Thailand, South China Sea*, Sulu-Celebes Sea*, Indonesian Sea*, Yellow Sea*, East China Sea	Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam,
06	Eastern African Seas	Nairobi Convention	SWIOFC	Western Indian Ocean (Sub-Areas 5, 6, 7 and 8)	Agulhas Current, Somali Coastal Current	Comoros, France (Réunion), Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, Tanzania, United Kingdom (British Indian Ocean Territory)
07	Mediterranean	Barcelona Convention	GFCM	Mediterranean and Black Sea (Mediterranean)	Mediterranean Sea	Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey (together with the Palestinian Authority)
08	North Central Pacific Ocean	(none)	IATTC	Pacific Eastern Central (part), Pacific Western Central (part)	Insular-Pacific Hawaiian (GIWA assessment of Eastern	United States (Guam, Hawaii, Northern Mariana Islands ⁶ , other Pacific Islands (Canton Island, Halfway Island etc, but excluding American Samoa)

⁵ Since the expansion of the European Union (EU) to include Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, fisheries management questions in the Baltic are handled bilaterally between the EU and the Russian Federation. The International Baltic Sea Fisheries Commission is being wound up.

⁶ The Northern Mariana Islands participate in the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and SPREP, but lie north of the equator.

No	AoA Regions	Related Regional Sea Programme(s)	Related Regional Fisheries Body/Bodies	FAO Major Fisheries Area (and Sub-Area/Division where needed)	Related Large Marine Ecosystems (GIWA assessment for those marked *)	Coastal States of the AoA Region
					Equatorial Pacific)	
09	North-East Atlantic Ocean	OSPAR	ICCAT, NASCO, NEAFC	Northeast Atlantic (Sub-Areas/ Divisions IIIa, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI and XII)	Iberian Coastal, Celtic-Biscay Shelf, North Sea	Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom
10	North-East Pacific Ocean	Antigua Convention	IATTC, IPHC, IPMC, NPAFC, OLDEPESCA, PSC	Pacific East Central (part), Pacific Northeast	Pacific-Central American Coastal, Gulf of California*, California Current, Gulf of Alaska	Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, United States
11	North-West Atlantic Ocean	(None)	NAFO	Northwest Atlantic	Northeast US Continental Shelf, Scotian Shelf, Newfoundland-Labrador Shelf,	Canada, Denmark (Greenland), United States
12	North-West Pacific Ocean	NOWPAP	APFIC, NPAFC	Pacific Northwest	Kuroshio Current*, Sea of Japan ⁷ , Oyashio Current*, Sea of Okhotsk*	China, Japan, Democratic Republic of Korea, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation
13	Red Sea & Gulf of Aden	PERSGA	(none)	Indian Ocean Western (Sub-Area 1)	Red Sea	Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen
14	ROPME/RECOFI Area	ROPME	RECOFI	Indian Ocean Western (Sub-Area 2)	Arabian Sea (part)	Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates
15	South Asian Seas	SAS	BOBP-IGO, CCSBT,	Indian Ocean Western (Sub-Areas	Arabian Sea, Gulf of Bengal	Bangladesh, India, Iran, the Maldives, Myanmar, Oman, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and

⁷ This body of water has been referred to by the name “Sea of Japan” in relation to the academic studies of Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs), and is therefore included in the list of LMEs under that name. The body of water is also referred to as the Eastern Ocean. However, there is no international agreement on the correct name.

No	AoA Regions	Related Regional Sea Programme(s)	Related Regional Fisheries Body/Bodies	FAO Major Fisheries Area (and Sub-Area/Division where needed)	Related Large Marine Ecosystems (GIWA assessment for those marked *)	Coastal States of the AoA Region
			IOTC,	3, 4 and 5)	(GIWA assessment of Indian Ocean Islands)	Yemen
16	South-East Pacific Ocean	CPPS	CPPS, IATTC, OLDEPESCA	Pacific Southeast, Pacific Southwest, Indian Ocean Western (Sub-Area 6)	Humboldt Current*	Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru
17	Southern Indian Ocean	(none)	SIOFA	Indian Ocean Eastern (Sub-Areas 2, 3, 4 and 5), Indian Ocean Western (Sub-Area 7)	North Australian Shelf, North-West Australian Shelf, West-Central Australian Shelf, Southwest Australian Shelf	Australia, France (Kerguelen and other islands),
18	Southern Pacific Ocean	SPREP	FFA, WCPFC (SPRFMO under negotiation)		North-East Australian Shelf and Great Barrier Reef, East-Central Australian Shelf, Southeast Australian Shelf, New Zealand Shelf (GIWA assessment of Pacific Islands)	Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, France (French Polynesia and New Caledonia), Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, United Kingdom (Pitcairn Islands), United States (American Samoa), Vanuatu
19	South-West Atlantic Ocean	(none)	COFREMAR	Atlantic Southwest	Patagonian Shelf*, South Brazil Shelf, East Brazil Shelf, North Brazil Shelf (GIWA assessment of Brazil Current)	Argentina, Brazil, United Kingdom (Falkland Islands), Uruguay

No	AoA Regions	Related Regional Sea Programme(s)	Related Regional Fisheries Body/Bodies	FAO Major Fisheries Area (and Sub-Area/Division where needed)	Related Large Marine Ecosystems (GIWA assessment for those marked *)	Coastal States of the AoA Region
20	Western African Seas	Abidjan Convention	CECAF, COMHAFAT, COREP, ICCAT, SEAFO	Atlantic Eastern Central, Atlantic Southeast	Canary Current*, Guinea Current*, Benguela Current*	Angola, Benin, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania, Morocco, Namibia, Nigeria, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Togo
21	Wider Caribbean Sea	Cartagena Convention	OLDEPESCA, WECAFC	Atlantic Western Central	Caribbean Sea*	Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, France (French Guyana, Guadeloupe and Martinique), Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, the Netherlands (Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles), Nicaragua, Panama, St Kitts & Nevis, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Surinam, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom (Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Montserrat, Turks & Caicos Islands), United States, Venezuela

OUTLINE OF DRAFT REPORT OF THE “ASSESSMENT OF ASSESSMENTS” GROUP OF EXPERTS

NOTE: This outline represents the current state of play in late June 2008. The Group of Experts are still working to improve the analyses and summaries that they have prepared, and to formulate their conclusions. The outline will therefore change in the light of those improvements and the discussions over the formulation of conclusions. It has, nevertheless, reached a sufficient degree of firmness to invite contributions on questions such as issues that do not appear to be given sufficient emphasis, aspects that appear insufficiently clear and additional points that should be considered for inclusion.

PART 0 – INTRODUCTION

Section 1 – Background

0.1 This section will explain the reasons that have led to the agreements that a Regular Process⁸ is needed for the assessment of the world’s oceans, and the role of the “Assessment of Assessments” as a start-up phase.

0.2 It will go on to describe the way in which the work has been organised under the Ad Hoc Steering Group and the Group of Experts. This will include an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that all regions of the world have been involved in the “Assessment of Assessments”.

Section 2 – Context

0.3 This section will describe the importance of the oceans and seas to the life of the world and its economies, ecologies and societies. It will go on to describe the ever-increasing threats to which they are subject, and the risks that this will create.

0.4 It will then describe the various governance processes that have been created for the oceans and seas, and the significance for those processes of a sound, comprehensive understanding of the oceans, their ecosystems and their role in economies and societies.

Section 3 - Fundamentals

⁸ The “Regular Process” is the short-hand term used in UN General Assembly Resolution 60/30 to refer to the regular process for reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects. It is used in this document in the same sense.

0.5 This section will first explain the important distinction between issues relating to what an assessment assesses (“the product”) and issues relating to how the assessment is developed (“the process”).

0.6 This section will then explain

- a. the definition of “assessment” that is used in the report;
- b. what it takes for an assessment to be influential (its relevance/salience, its legitimacy, and its scientific credibility). These characteristics are crucial to identifying best practices, and thus ensuring that the assessment is “fit for purpose”;
- c. what can make an assessment an “integrated assessment”.

0.7 This section will also identify the *design factors* that have been identified as relevant for the purposes of assessing the existing assessments, and (in consequence) for the design of the Regular Process:

Product

- a. objectives of the assessment. These are an essential first step to guide the assessment process and are also necessary when the process is evaluated, so that a check can be made whether the objectives are being achieved.
- b. scope (geographic, temporal and thematic coverage), conceptual framework, and outline, including key questions of interest to all stakeholders. These key questions are often captured as formal “terms of reference” for an assessment;
- c. target audience(s), including relevant policy-making levels, intergovernmental bodies, and the degree of specificity required;
- d. analytical methods and tools to be used in the assessment;
- e. arrangements to maintain data and information for use in future assessments;

Process

- f. a mechanism to guide the individual assessment, including its composition and clearly-articulated responsibilities (e.g., a Steering Committee, Science Panel);
- g. identification of potential collaborating institutions and partners;
- h. an implementation plan (schedule and deadlines for organization of work, drafting, review, and production of reports) linked clearly with the budget;
- i. linkages with other contemporary assessment processes (e.g., climate change, ozone, river basins);
- j. timing and nature of government involvement, including in the review process;
- k. timing and modalities for participation by non-official stakeholders;

- l. provision and procedures for peer review and quality assurance;
- m. treatment of dissenting views and uncertainty;
- n. communications and outreach strategies, arrangements for public availability of data, reports, and other assessment products;
- o. provision for post-assessment review and evaluation regarding individual assessments and the assessment process itself.

Section 3 – Structure of the report

0.8 This section will set out the way in which the rest of the report is structured:

- a. Part I is descriptive – it will provide an overview of the existing assessment landscape for the marine environment. A wide range of assessments has been reviewed. Their scope varies in its geographic and thematic coverage. It will examine what is being done in the regions and at supra-regional levels and how this can be used in the Regular Process. It will review the approach used to evaluate existing assessments and presents results and insights regarding strengths, gaps and concerns within each region and at larger scales;
- b. Part II is normative – it will identify best practices for assessments and describes examples from existing arrangements to illustrate *how* assessment processes have been organized. Its purpose is to provide guidance and models that could be adapted for the Regular Process. Like Part I, it will be based on the evaluation of numerous regional and global assessments, but it is supplemented by review of relevant literature analyzing what makes assessments influential. It will then examine four main elements to be considered in designing an assessment process: (1) principles governing the process, (2) design features for initiating and carrying out an assessment, (3) means for capacity-building and networking to improve assessments over time, and (4) institutional mechanisms for organizing an assessment.
- c. Part III will then present options for the way forward for the Regular Process. It will show how the Regular Process could build upon and relate to the current assessment landscape and will describe the niche that the Regular Process would fill. Drawing on Part II, it will propose principles for a Regular Process and provides guidance on the necessary design factors. It will then consider options for the aims, functions and scope of the Regular Process and for its institutional arrangements, including consideration of a phased approach.

PART I – THE ASSESSMENT LANDSCAPE: A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE REVIEW OF REGIONAL ASSESSMENTS AND SUPRA-REGIONAL THEMATIC ASSESSMENTS

Section 1 – Introduction

1.1 This section will recapitulate the mandate to start from what is currently being done, and explain how the available building blocks have been reviewed in order to:

- a. Identify major features of existing assessments: these features will include both substantive questions (the coverage; the data collected; the methods of evaluating the data etc) and procedural questions (how the assessments have been organised);
- b. Evaluate existing capacity in regions and at global level, as demonstrated by what has been done by way of assessments;
- c. Reach conclusions on what is available, and what are the gaps.

Section 2 – Approach and Method of Evaluation

1.2 This section will describe how the existing assessments have been evaluated. The start has been the *individual assessment templates*, that have been completed for each assessment at the regional level that has been identified as a result of the earlier review by the UNEP World Centre for Conservation Monitoring, of subsequent discussions with regional organisations, and of direct contacts with those in the field.

1.3 There will then be a description of how these individual templates have been brought together in regional templates and the resulting *regional summaries*.

1.4 There will then be a description of the way in which summaries have been produced for each of the *supra-regional issues* that has been identified.

1.5 There will then be a description of the way in which this material has been used to produce analyses of products and processes.

Section 3 – Review of regional and supra-regional assessments

1.6 This section will then summarise the material that has resulted from these approaches and methods.

1.7 There will be separate examinations of regional assessments and assessments of supra-regional issues.

1.8 It will be the core of Part I, and will be supported by annexes giving more detail for each region and supra-regional issue.

Section 4 - Analysis

1.9 Each element in this section will look both at regions and the supra-regional issues and ensure that the differences at both levels are brought out. The elements will be:

Product

- a. The coverage of the assessment and its dominant themes (looked at under the six headings of water quality, living marine resources, habitat characterisation, lower trophic levels, threatened and declining species, and social and economic conditions);
- b. How far have the assessments been integrated, and what types of integration have taken place? What techniques have been used for integration?
- c. Analysis of policy options;
- d. Data sets: Coverage and representativeness, their inter-operability and availability;

Process

- e. Processes used in the assessments;

- f. Assessment capabilities;
- g. Linkages to decision making.

PART II – EVALUATION OF ASSESSMENTS – BEST PRACTICES

Section 1 – Introduction

2.1 This section will explain how the approaches described in section 4 of Part 0 have been applied to the elements that come out of the analysis in Part I.

Section 2 – Principles for Establishment and Operation of an Assessment Process

2.2 This will describe the principles identified as important:

- a. Iteration and adaptation
- b. Oceans as part of the Earth System
- c. Use of Sound Science and Scientific Excellence
- d. Improvement in Scientific and Assessment Capacity
- e. Anticipatory/Early Issue Identification
- f. Linkage to policy-makers and other users
- g. Inclusiveness/Participation
- h. Transparency/Accountability/Accessibility

Section 3 – Best Practices identified in the Assessment of Assessments

2.3 This section will set out examples of best practices identified in relation to the most significant of the design factors. These headings will include:

- a. Issues of Scope and Conceptual Framework;
- b. Science/Policy relationships, including:
 - i. Reaching each identified target audience;
 - ii. Articulation of structures and responsibilities to reflect boundaries between science and policy – the roles of governments and expert assessors;
- c. Stakeholder participation;
- d. Nomination and selection of experts;

- e. Transparency, and accessibility of data and information;
- f. Quality assurance and peer review;
- g. Treatment of dissent among experts;
- h. Effective Communication;
- i. Treatment of uncertainty;
- j. Post-assessment Review and Evaluation

Section 4: Institutional Aspects

- 2.4 This section will describe what has proved to be good practice in relation to:
- a. Capacity-building and networking to improve assessments over time;
 - b. Institutional options for organising an assessment.

PART III: THE WAY FORWARD – FRAMEWORK AND OPTIONS FOR THE REGULAR PROCESS

Section 1 - Introduction

3.1 This part of the Assessment of Assessments will discuss a possible way forward for implementing the Regular Process. In light of the conclusions in Parts I and II, a preliminary section will show how the Regular Process could build upon and relate to the current assessment processes for the marine environment, and what principles and design factors it would help to incorporate into it. The next section will then discuss options for the formulation of the aims, scope and institutional arrangements of the Regular Process, including a phased approach.

Section 2 - Framework

Subsection 2A: Context

3,2 Adaptive management of human activities affecting the marine environment involves a progression from analysis of problems and establishment of priorities; formulation of options; adoption of policies and their implementation; and review of progress. This segment will describe the niche that the Regular Process will fill in such a progression at the global level:

- a. Showing the importance of the oceans to human life and as a component of the planet;
- b. Providing a new level of support to the wide range of decision-making authorities involved at global, regional and national levels in managing human activities and in responding to the unprecedented rate of change in the marine environment;

- c. Clarifying the context and improving the information base for sectoral global policies, and for regional and national policies on human activities affecting the marine environment;
- d. Providing a common context and information base when it is appropriate to integrate policy development and decision-making across sectors;
- e. Providing a scientific basis for setting priorities within ocean policies at global, regional and national levels;
- f. Giving a focus for efforts to build capacity, to improve access to data and information and to enhance the quality of assessments of the marine environment at all levels.

3.3 This segment will then explore the relationship that the Regular Process should have with assessments of the marine environment and human activities conducted at national, regional and other global sectoral levels:

- a. Relationship with existing reporting obligations under international agreements and commitments;
- b. Linkages with, and between current national, regional and sectoral assessment processes;
- c. Identification of gaps in current assessment processes that need to be addressed;
- d. Evaluation of cumulative effects of and synergies (positive and negative) among impacts in different regions and from different sectors.

3.4 This segment will also translate the conclusions of Part I (Findings of Survey of Regional and Supra-Regional Assessment Processes) into conclusions about the desirable future relationship between the Regular Process and other assessment processes, including how to build upon them.

3.5 This segment will finally set out the consequences that flow from the relationships between the Regular Process and other assessment processes:

- a. Need for local and national capacity-building to enable States to contribute effectively to their regional assessment processes and to progress towards more integrated approaches.
- b. Need for local and national capacity building to enable States to participate fully in global sectoral assessment processes and in the Regular Process.
- c. Means of improving the cohesion among existing assessment processes in data collection and management, assessment techniques and science/policy relations.
- d. Need for arrangements to facilitate exchange of data, analysis and assessments between regional and global sectoral processes and the Regular Process and among regional and global sectoral processes (the “Regular Process Network”).
- e. Ways of filling the gaps that have been identified.

This segment will set out the requirements that have been identified in Part I for these five aspects and options for meeting them.

Subsection 2B. Principles of the Regular Process

On the basis of the conclusions in Part II, this segment will restate the principles on which the Regular Process should be based:

- a. Iterative and adaptive nature of the Regular Process, including periodic review and evaluation of the Regular Process.
- b. The need to view the oceans and the rest of the Earth as a single system.
- c. Use of sound science and development of scientific excellence based on objective and impartial analysis.
- d. Early identification of new issues and of changes in existing issues.
- e. Continual improvement in scientific and assessment capacity.
- f. Effective links between the Regular Process and policy-makers and other users.
- g. Inclusiveness for all stakeholders, and means to arrange appropriate participatory roles for them.
- h. Transparency, accountability and availability.

Subsection 2C: Guidance for the Regular Process

This segment will set out how the principles described in section B and the best practices set out in Part II, Sections 3 and 4 can effectively and efficiently be applied to the Regular Process. The issues to be covered will be:

- a. The needs for participation by, and communication with and among:
 - i. Governments, including the process for approval of the outputs of the Regular Process.
 - ii. International organizations.
 - iii. Non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders.
- b. Methods for effective communication;
 - c. Methods to promote cohesion within regions and global sectors for:
 - i. Data collection, storage and availability;
 - ii. Tools for the analysis of data;
 - iii. Strategies for dealing with information gaps;
- d. Access to available information:
 - i. Public access to data and information.
 - ii. Availability of metadata on information used.

- iii. Access to officially-collected statistics from fields other than marine science.
- iv. Access to traditional knowledge.
- v. Access to research not yet published in peer-reviewed journals and books (“grey” literature);
- e. Procedural issues:
 - i. Nomination and selection of experts;
 - ii. Quality assurance;
 - iii. Peer review;
 - iv. Dealing with dissent on scientific questions;
 - v. Dealing with uncertainty;
- f. Post-assessment review and evaluation.

Section 3 – Options

Subsection 3A: Aims/Objectives and Tasks for the Regular Process

This segment will address options for the formulation of the aims and objectives of the Regular Process. It will also identify specific functions to be carried out in the Regular Process:

- a. Promotion of networking among existing marine assessment processes.
- b. Promotion of cohesion on handling data and analysis.
- c. Conducting the assessments of the Regular Process.
- d. Communication of results to all audiences.
- e. Capacity building.

Subsection 3B: Scope

In light of Part I and Section 3 of Part II, this segment will set out options for the definition of the scope of the Regular Process. It will seek to explain how socio-economic factors are to be integrated alongside environmental and ecological aspects, how effectiveness of policies will be assessed, how vulnerable groups will be identified and the threats to them assessed, and the approaches to evaluating the costs of actions and of inaction.

The segment will recommend the use of an analytical framework of Drivers, Pressures, States, Impacts and Responses in these tasks, and proposals will be made on how this framework can be made operational.

Subsection 3C: A Phased Approach

This segment will consider different options for tasks to be performed and the scope of the assessments to be undertaken in a possible phased approach to establishing the Regular Process.

Susection 3D: Institutional Arrangements

This segment will consider options for the establishment of, and reporting by, the Regular Process and for keeping the Regular Process and its influence under review.

a. ***Options for Management and Expert Assessment:***

These options will address the composition and functions of

- i. an oversight body to govern and guide the Regular Process and
- ii. an expert panel to conduct/produce authoritative scientific assessments, including socio-economic aspects.

The options will consider the involvement of governments in the review and steering of the overall Regular Process, how UN Specialized Agencies and other international organizations can be involved, and how to ensure access to needed expertise. They will also cover critical design factors of the Regular Process such as peer review of outputs and how to organize periodic reviews of the Regular Process itself.

b. ***Options for Support Arrangements:***

These options will address how to provide support for the institutional arrangements, including:

- i. Administrative support;
- ii. Scientific and technical support for experts conducting assessments under the Regular Process;
- iii. How to promote a network of existing marine assessment processes;
- iv. How to promote cohesion between assessment processes in data gathering and management and assessment techniques;
- v. How to underpin capacity building, by identifying needs and locating potential sources of help and resources;
- vi. How to review developments in marine science and policy that may inform existing regional or global marine assessment;

c. ***Options for financing, including estimates of the costs of various options.***