



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

**General Assembly Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole
23 to 27 April 2012
Conference Room 1, North Lawn Building**

**Ms. Patricia O'Brien
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The Legal Counsel
Office of Legal Affairs**

Opening remarks

Co-Chairpersons,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Good morning. On behalf of the Secretary-General, it is my pleasure to welcome you to United Nations Headquarters for the third meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole to oversee and guide the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socio-economic Aspects.

At the outset, I wish to congratulate Ambassador St. Aimee of Saint Lucia and Mr. Gonçalo Motta of Portugal on their appointments as Co-Chairs. I am confident that their experience and leadership will contribute to the success of this very important meeting.

Distinguished delegates,

As you know, in its resolution 66/231 of 24 December 2011, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole at its second meeting in June last year. The General Assembly also adopted the Criteria for the Appointment of Experts and the Guidelines for Workshops to assist the Regular Process.

It is of the utmost importance for delegates to build on this progress and ensure that the first cycle of the Regular Process continues to move forward. In particular, key progress is needed in the consideration of the Outline for the First Global Integrated

Marine Assessment, the appointment of experts to the Pool of Experts, the consideration of the Terms of Reference and Working Methods for the Group of Experts and the development of the Website of the Regular Process. It will also be critical for the actual drafting of the First Global Integrated Marine Assessment to begin as soon as possible so that the Assessment can be completed by 2014.

In this endeavour, I am very pleased to note that a number of the members of the Group of Experts are present at this meeting to assist you. I would like to thank them for their participation this week and for the guidance provided by the Coordinators of the Group of Experts, Mr. Alan Simcock and Ms. Lorna Innis.

I also wish to acknowledge the appointment of some Member States to the Bureau of the Regular Process, which will put in practice the decisions and guidance of the Ad Hoc Working

Group of the Whole during intercessional periods. At the same time, I strongly encourage consultations to continue so that the six remaining appointments can be made as soon as possible so that the Bureau can be fully composed and able to perform its functions.

Distinguished delegates,

As you know, the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole has recognized that Workshops will be a key mechanism by which the First Global Integrated Marine Assessment will be accomplished and States will enhance their assessment capacity. The Workshops will also facilitate dialogue between the Group of Experts and representatives and experts from States and relevant intergovernmental organizations.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Chile and the People's Republic of China for hosting Workshops in Santiago and Sanya, respectively, in support of the first phase of the first cycle

of the Regular Process. In conjunction with these Workshops, I am pleased that we were able to successfully conclude host country agreements, which are fundamental in granting privileges and immunities to all participants in the Workshops. We are now in the process of finalizing host country agreements for the upcoming Workshops to be held in Belgium and Australia. We also hope to conclude host country agreements with Mozambique and the United States of America who have expressed interest in hosting Workshops in support of the Regular Process later this year.

Distinguished delegates,

The Group of Experts has estimated that between 1500 to 2000 experts will be needed to properly conduct the First Global Integrated Marine Assessment. To date, the secretariat of the Regular Process has received the appointments of fewer than 200 individual experts. The legitimacy, relevance and credibility of the Regular Process will ultimately depend on the involvement of scientists and experts from relevant disciplines from throughout

the world. Member States are thus urged to become engaged in this ongoing process and to reach out to their scientific societies and academic institutions, and to nominate individuals with the appropriate expertise.

As we all know, your discussions this week are not isolated from other events and processes. It is my sincere hope that this meeting will build on the momentum already developing in other fora to better protect and restore the health and productivity of the oceans for the benefit of present and future generations, in particular in the lead up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development ("Rio+20"). The challenge will be to agree on options and arrangements that are realistic, yet ambitious and forward-looking.

To this end, the Secretary-General is paying particular attention to oceans this year. Among other planned activities, he will be joining us in commemorating the 30th anniversary of the

opening for signature of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Over the past thirty years, the Convention or “constitution for the oceans” has provided the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. Various events will be held to mark the occasion, culminating in a high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly on 10 December 2012. I would like to invite all States and relevant bodies and organizations to take part in these activities and to celebrate this important occasion.

Finally, I would urge States which are in a position to do so to make contributions to the Regular Process Trust Fund. It will be difficult to achieve the deadline of 2014 without considerable and regular support of the activities contemplated in the first cycle of the Regular Process. Even small contributions, if made by a large number of States, will help toward effective support of the activities of the Regular Process.

In this regard, I wish to acknowledge with appreciation the invaluable scientific, technical and financial assistance and support to the Regular Process that has been provided by the United Nations Environment Programme and the International Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO.

Distinguished delegates,

The oceans are essential to the long-term survival and prosperity of humankind. Preserving their health and capacity to support life on earth is critical. A strong, regular and reliable mechanism to assess the state of the marine environment and related socio-economic aspects is needed if we are properly to manage the human activities which, individually and cumulatively, have adverse impacts on the health and productivity of our oceans.

As you embark on your important discussions, I would like to wish you a very successful meeting. As always, the Secretariat is committed to providing the meeting with its full assistance and support.

Thank you.