

**Meeting of the General Assembly Ad Hoc Working Group of the
Whole on the Regular Process for Global Reporting and
Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including
Socioeconomic Aspects**

**Opening Remarks by Ms. Patricia O'Brien
Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs
The Legal Counsel**

**Conference Room 1, North Lawn Building
22 April 2013, 10:00am**

Co-Chairpersons,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Good morning. On behalf of the Secretary-General, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the United Nations Headquarters for the fourth meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole. We value enormously the Working Group's oversight oversees and guidance of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects.

At the outset, I wish to congratulate Ambassador Camillo Gonsalves of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Mr. João Madureira 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. At the same time, I wish to thank the former Co-Chairs, Ambassador Donatus St Aimee of Saint Lucia and Mr. Gonçalo da Motta of Portugal for their leadership in the past meetings of the Working Group as well as in the Bureau meetings.

Distinguished delegates,

In its resolution 67/78 of 11 December 2012, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole at its third meeting in April last year. The General Assembly also adopted the outline for the first global integrated marine assessment and the terms of reference and working methods for the Group of Experts of the Regular Process.

Earlier this year, the intersessional Bureau of the Regular Process approved the Guidelines for contributors and the Secretariat sent letters of appointment to the members of the Pool of Experts.

It is of utmost importance for delegates to ensure that the second phase of the first cycle of the Regular Process continues to move forward. In this meeting the format of issuance of the First Global Integrated Marine Assessment will be considered. The continuing and timely appointment of experts to the Pool of Experts remains an item of attention, in order to achieve the required number needed for the preparation of the assessment. Another item will be the approach as to how to contribute to the promotion and facilitation of capacity-

building. This will also be critical for the actual drafting of the first World Ocean Assessment to begin as soon as possible, so that the Assessment can be completed as scheduled.

I am very pleased to note the presence of the Joint Coordinators of the Group of Experts, Mr. Alan Simcock and Ms. Lorna Innis. I would like to thank them for being here this week and for their guidance in the process. I would also like to thank all members of the Group of Experts for their continued involvement in the Regular Process for the second phase of the first cycle. I understand that the Group of Experts will meet next week to look at the assignments for the members of the Pool of Experts.

Distinguished delegates,

As you know, the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole has recognized that Workshops are a key mechanism by which the first World Ocean Assessment will be accomplished and by which States will enhance their assessment capacity. The Workshops also facilitate dialogue among members of the Group of Experts and representatives and experts from States and relevant intergovernmental organizations in the regions. They have proven to be a great source of information with respect to the assessments already undertaken and the availability of capacity-building at the national and regional levels.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Australia, Belgium, Mozambique and the United States of America for the hosting of Workshops in support of the Regular Process. We shortly hope to conclude a host country agreement for a Workshop for the South Atlantic.

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 only close to 400 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 around the globe. Member States are thus urged to continue to reach out to their scientific societies and academic institutions, and to nominate individuals with the appropriate expertise.

As you know, the Secretary-General attaches great importance to ocean-related matters. In his video message on the website of the World Ocean Assessment, the Secretary-General mentioned the importance of the Assessment as a sound and scientific basis on which decisions can be taken to ensure a healthy, robust future for our oceans. He extended his gratitude to the

experts for their commitment to this work. He ensured that the United Nations stands ready to assist and that all relevant United Nations system bodies will provide the necessary support.

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 for the World Ocean Assessment without considerable and regular support of the activities contemplated in the time table for the first cycle of the Regular Process. Even relatively 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 most recent financial contributions received by the Trust Fund from Norway and the Republic of Korea. Invaluable scientific, technical and financial assistance to the Regular Process were also provided by the United Nations Environment Programme and the International Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO and other relevant intergovernmental organizations.

Distinguished delegates,

As you all know,

We cannot emphasize enough how oceans are essential to the long-term survival and prosperity of humankind. Ensuring their health and capacity to support life on earth is critical. Assessing the state of the marine environment and related socio-economic aspects is needed if we are to take decisions to preserve 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.