



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF LEGAL AFFAIRS

Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment

Side event on “The World Ocean Assessment: Strengthening the Science- Policy Interface”

Opening Remarks

by

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Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Good afternoon.

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the United Nations Headquarters for this side-event on The World Ocean Assessment: Strengthening the Science-Policy Interface. I am very grateful for this opportunity to make brief introductory comments.

Let me state at the outset that, in recent years, the attention of Member States is increasingly focusing on oceans. The Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects (the Regular Process), established after the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, aims to regularly review the environmental, economic and social aspects of the world’s oceans, both current and foreseeable. A scientific understanding of the ocean is fundamental to carry out an effective management of the human activities that affect the marine environment and the biota that it contains.



As you know, the Regular Process is an intergovernmental process guided by international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and other applicable international instruments. It was established by and accountable to the General Assembly, and is recognized as the global mechanism for reviewing the state of the marine environment, including socioeconomic aspects, on a continual and systematic basis by providing regular assessments at the global and supraregional levels and an integrated view of environmental, economic and social aspects. It is overseen and guided by an Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole of the General Assembly composed of Member States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

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In the first cycle, the scope of the Regular Process focused on establishing a baseline, while in subsequent cycles, its scope is to extend to evaluating trends. The first cycle of the Regular Process culminated in the preparation and release of the First Global Integrated Marine Assessment and its Summary (A/70/112) prepared by a Group of Experts and peer-reviewed, including by Member States.

The Assessment is the first report on the state of the world's oceans and our knowledge about them. It represents a major milestone both for the Regular Process, and for the international community. My Office, through its Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea has made the Assessment available on the website of the Division. I am very pleased to announce that the hard copy publication of the Assessment was published in May 2017 in collaboration with Cambridge University Press and will be officially released immediately following this side-event. I therefore invite you all to join us in Room S-237 at 2.30 pm for this event.

The completion of the First Global Integrated Marine Assessment, also known as the first World Ocean Assessment, only marks the beginning of an on-going process. Much work remains to be done with respect to the uptake of the findings of the first World Ocean Assessment by decision-making streams and by other processes and assessments (at all levels). The General Assembly has noted with concern the findings of the Assessment that the world's ocean is facing major pressures



simultaneously with such great impacts that the limits of its carrying capacity are being, or, in some cases, have been reached, and that delays in implementing solutions to the problems that have already been identified as threatening to degrade the world's oceans will lead, unnecessarily, to incurring greater environmental, social and economic costs.

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Following the completion of the first World Ocean Assessment, the General Assembly in December 2015 launched the second (five-year) cycle of the Regular Process. In December 2016, the General Assembly endorsed the programme of work for the period 2017-2020 for this second cycle (referred to in paragraph 316 of resolution 71/257) which was adopted by Member States at the seventh meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole in August, 2016.

The programme of work envisages two key Outputs:

1. Output I: Second World Ocean Assessment(s) to be delivered in 2020, and,
2. Output II: Regular Process support for other ocean-related intergovernmental processes, including the preparation of three process-specific Technical Abstracts (25 pages each), to be delivered in 2017.

With regard to the second Output, the Group of Experts for the second cycle has already produced three Technical Abstracts,

tailored respectively to the requests and needs of the following: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, General Assembly resolution 69/292: Development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, and a third one with a focus on oceans and climate change, to cover both the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change process and the topic of focus for the eighteenth meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process which was held from 15 to 19 May here in New York ("The effects of climate change on oceans").



It is important to note that these Technical Abstracts are based upon the First Global Integrated Marine Assessment and, in particular, upon its Summary which the General Assembly approved in December 2015. The Technical Abstracts are intended to provide a synthesis of the information and findings in the Assessment for the benefit of policy-makers in a concise and accessible format, as part of our efforts to facilitate the science-policy interface.

I am pleased to note that, the Technical Abstracts will also be launched today in conjunction with the release of the hard copy publication of the Assessment.

At this point, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the members of the Group of Experts of the Regular Process for the first cycle, including its Joint Coordinators, who are fortunately with us today, for their work during the entire first cycle of the Regular Process and, in particular, the work carried out with respect to the Assessment. I am also very grateful to the Group of Experts for the second cycle for the preparation of the Technical Abstracts, as well as to the members of the Pool of Experts that contributed to the Assessment and the Technical Abstracts.

I would also like to recognize those organizations that contributed to the first cycle of the Regular Process, including the United Nations Environment Programme and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, for their technical and scientific, logistical and financial support during the first cycle of the Regular Process, and would like to encourage their support to the second cycle Regular Process. I would be remiss if I did not recognize the work of the Bureau as well as the work of the staff from my office in the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, in assisting in their finalization.

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The programme of work also outlines the activities in support of making the second cycle operational, including outreach and awareness-raising initiatives and capacity-building activities, such as regional workshops, briefings and side-events and the development and distribution of promotional print and audiovisual material.



In that regard, a number of activities will be undertaken this year, including the holding of a first round of regional workshops, which will serve to, inter alia, raise awareness, provide information, and receive feedback on the Assessment, generate interest from the scientific community, contribute to capacity-building and inform the scoping and preparation phases of the Assessment or Assessments of the second cycle. It is envisaged that a second round of regional workshops would be held in 2018 including so as to inform the preparation phases of the Assessment or Assessments, and to inform the collection of regional-level information and data for the preparation of the Assessment or Assessments.

As was the case during the first cycle of the Regular Process, support from States in particular for hosting of these workshops as in-kind contributions to the Regular Process, would be needed and very much appreciated since no financial allocation from the budget has been made for this purpose. I would therefore like to encourage States to consider hosting these workshops.

I am pleased to note that the General Assembly approved the allocation of resources for the programme of work for 2017 for the second cycle of the Regular Process and urged States, international financial institutions, donor agencies, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and natural and juridical persons to make financial contributions to the voluntary trust fund and to make other contributions to the Regular Process. I wish to underline that the Outputs and associated activities between 2018 and 2020 in support of the second cycle will need dedicated resources in order for them to be realized. To that end, a request for such budgetary support will be submitted to the General Assembly this year.

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The operationalization of the second cycle of the Regular Process represents a step forward in the global assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socioeconomic aspects. I wish to express my appreciation to all States and organizations that contributed to the first cycle and those that are also contributing to the second cycle. I would also like to assure you that the Secretariat remains committed to providing the Regular Process with its full assistance and support.



Together, I am confident that we can achieve a successful outcome for the second cycle and strengthen the science-policy interface so we can safeguard the future of the oceans, the source of life.

I thank you for your kind attention.