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Oceans and the law of the sea: oceans and the law of the sea

Report on the work of the 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

Letter dated 5 October 2020 from the Co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole addressed to the President of the General Assembly

We have the honour to transmit to you the attached report** on the work of the 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, which held its thirteenth meeting pursuant to paragraph 327 of General Assembly resolution [74/19](#). The meeting was held by correspondence from 9 September to 5 October 2020. Section III of the report sets out the agreed recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group to the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session on the progress in the implementation of the second cycle and on the draft programme of work and resource requirements for the third cycle of the Regular Process.

We kindly request that the present letter and the report be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under the agenda item entitled “Oceans and the law of the sea”.

(Signed) Juliette Babb-Riley

(Signed) Gert Auväärt

* [A/75/251](#).

** Circulated in the language of submission only.



Report of the 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

I. Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole

1. The thirteenth meeting of the 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, was convened pursuant to paragraph 327 of General Assembly resolution 74/19. Due to the constraints imposed on the conduct of in-person meetings at United Nations Headquarters, and in accordance with the outcomes of the consultations among the members of the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Working Group and concerned delegations on the modalities of the meeting, the thirteenth meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group was held by correspondence¹ from 9 September to 5 October 2020.

2. On 9 September 2020, the Co-Chairs of the Working Group, Juliette Babb-Riley (Barbados) and Gert Auväärt (Estonia), opened the meeting by a letter addressed to all participants in the thirteenth meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole.²

3. Information had been received from 45 Member States,³ eight intergovernmental organizations and other bodies⁴ and one non-governmental organization⁵ concerning their representatives attending the thirteenth meeting (by correspondence).

4. The following supporting documentation was available to the meeting participants: the provisional agenda; the annotations to the provisional agenda; a note by the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on its work since the twelfth meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole; a note by the Group of Experts of the Regular Process providing information on the progress in the finalization of the second world ocean assessment; a compilation of all written input received from Member States and other participants in the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on lessons learned from the second cycle, as well as written input by the Group of Experts and by the secretariat on the lessons learned from the second cycle; the draft programme of work for the third cycle prepared by the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole; and the preliminary resource requirements for the third cycle.⁶

¹ See www.un.org/regularprocess/sites/www.un.org.regularprocess/files/ahw gw13_notification.pdf.

² See www.un.org/regularprocess/sites/www.un.org.regularprocess/files/regular_process_13ahw gw_cochairletteropenmeeting.pdf.

³ Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Croatia, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Guinea, Honduras, Italy, Indonesia, Japan, Madagascar, Malaysia, Malta, Monaco, Morocco, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Qatar, Romania, Senegal, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Viet Nam and Zambia.

⁴ African Union, Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific, European Union, Indian Ocean Rim Association, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, International Hydrographic Organization, International Maritime Organization and United Nations Environment Programme.

⁵ International Ocean Institute.

⁶ All listed documents are available at www.un.org/regularprocess/events/thirteenth-meeting.

5. Under item 2 of the provisional agenda, the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole adopted the agenda (see sect. II below) on 14 September 2020 by silence procedure.⁷

6. Under agenda items 3 and 4, several delegations provided written comments on the progress in the implementation of the second cycle, commending the efforts of the Bureau, the Group of Experts and the secretariat, as well as on progress made despite the constraints imposed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Some delegations provided written comments on the documents for consideration under each agenda item. One delegation stressed that it would be necessary to circulate the third draft of the second world ocean assessment prior to the fourteenth meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole, to be held in November 2020. A revised note by the Group of Experts of the Regular Process providing information on the progress in the finalization of the second world ocean assessment was circulated and placed under silence procedure on 30 September 2020.⁸

7. Under agenda item 5, one delegation, in its written comments, welcomed the intentions and efforts outlined in relevant documents regarding the lessons learned from the second cycle to fill identified gaps and improve processes related to the composition of the Group of Experts, the Pool of Experts and the writing teams.

8. Under agenda item 6, several delegations, in their written comments, expressed support for the draft programme of work for the third cycle and provided comments on specific outputs and activities outlined therein. Several delegations noted the need to further strengthen and facilitate web-based working methods to ensure the success of the third cycle. In that regard, it was suggested that a hybrid approach be adopted for events to be held during the third cycle that would allow for both in-person and remote participation. Several delegations stressed the importance of further enhancing coordination and cooperation between the Regular Process and other relevant intergovernmental processes and assessments, including those at the global and regional levels, including with assessments performed under the Regional Seas Programme. Other written comments focused on the possible scope and content of the major output of the third cycle, ways to better implement the capacity-building activities, the importance of integrating traditional and indigenous knowledge into the assessment and the importance of developing a mechanism to facilitate the establishment of the Group of Experts so that the full complement of experts from all regional groups could be nominated during the early stages of the third cycle. The revised draft programme of work for the third cycle (see annex), with revisions made in light of the comments received, was circulated and placed under silence procedure on 30 September 2020.⁹

9. Under agenda item 7, several delegations acknowledged, in their written comments, the need to attribute substantial resources to the development of a third world ocean assessment and expressed the view that, for the third cycle, resources should be allocated as a matter of priority to ensure sufficient capacity in the secretariat, a well-structured website for the Regular Process and sufficient resources for workshops, noting that the actual cost of workshops, if held online, might differ from the preliminary estimates. Furthermore, these delegations underlined that the investment of resources could only responsibly be accounted for with an increased relevance of the world ocean assessments through an effective interconnectedness

⁷ See General Assembly decision 74/544 on the procedure for taking decisions during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

⁸ See www.un.org/regularprocess/sites/www.un.org.regularprocess/files/goe_progress_report_rev_to_13_ahwgw.pdf.

⁹ See www.un.org/regularprocess/sites/www.un.org.regularprocess/files/programme_of_work_3rd_cycle_rev_to_13_ahwgw.pdf.

with other relevant intergovernmental processes and assessments. Another delegation provided written comments on the outcomes of the regional workshops and the presentation of estimated costs associated with regional workshops, as well as on the estimated costs of journal subscriptions for the third cycle. In its correspondence with this delegation, the secretariat recalled that, as indicated in the preliminary resource requirements for the third cycle, the resource estimates contained therein were of a preliminary nature. More detailed estimates would be prepared for that activity by the relevant departments and offices of the Secretariat, to be included in the document on programme and budget implications arising from the draft General Assembly resolution on oceans and the law of the sea, which would become available in November 2020. The revised preliminary resource requirements for the third cycle, with revisions made in light of the comments received, was circulated and placed under silence procedure on 30 September 2020.¹⁰

Adoption of recommendations to the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session

10. Under agenda item 8, on 5 October 2020, the Working Group adopted by silence procedure the recommendations for consideration by the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session (see sect. III below).

II. Agenda of the thirteenth meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole

11. On 14 September 2020, the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole adopted by silence procedure the agenda set out below.

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Adoption of the agenda.
3. Report of the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole.
4. Information from the Group of Experts on the progress in the finalization of the second world ocean assessment.
5. Lessons learned from the second cycle.
6. Draft programme of work for the third cycle.
7. Preliminary resource requirements for the third cycle.
8. Recommendations to the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session.

III. Recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole to the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session

12. The Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole recommends that the General Assembly:

- (a) Recall its decision to launch the third cycle of the Regular Process from 2021 to 2025, and endorse the recommendations adopted by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole at its thirteenth meeting on the programme of work and resource requirements for the third cycle of the Regular Process;

¹⁰ See www.un.org/regularprocess/sites/www.un.org.regularprocess/files/resource_requirements_3rd_cycle_rev_to_13_ahwgw.pdf.

(b) Recall also that the Regular Process shall be overseen and guided by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole, and decide that the Ad Hoc Working Group shall facilitate the delivery of the outputs of the third cycle as outlined in the programme of work for the third cycle of the Regular Process;

(c) Decide that the meetings of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole shall continue to be coordinated by two Co-Chairs, representing developing and developed countries, respectively, to be appointed by the President of the General Assembly, in consultation with regional groups, for the duration of the third cycle;

(d) Request the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole to continue to put into practice the decisions and guidance of the Ad Hoc Working Group during the intersessional period, including by providing oversight of the delivery of the programme of work for the third cycle of the Regular Process;

(e) Request the Secretary-General to invite the Chairs of the regional groups to constitute a group of experts, ensuring adequate expertise and geographical distribution, comprising a maximum of 25 experts, with no more than five experts per regional group, for the duration of the third cycle of the Regular Process, taking into account the desirability of some degree of continuity;

(f) Request the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole to review and update the mechanism to establish the Pool of Experts for the third cycle of the Regular Process, and to provide oversight of the establishment of the Pool of Experts, including by inviting individuals who served in the Pool of Experts during the second cycle of the Regular Process to indicate to the secretariat of the Regular Process whether they would be interested in serving in the Pool of Experts for the third cycle and beyond;

(g) Invite the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Environment Programme, the International Maritime Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Meteorological Organization and relevant United Nations system organizations, bodies, funds and programmes, as appropriate, to assist in the implementation of the third cycle of the Regular Process;

(h) Invite relevant intergovernmental organizations to contribute, as appropriate, to the activities of the third cycle;

(i) Invite States that have not yet done so to designate national focal points to facilitate the implementation of the programme of work for the third cycle of the Regular Process and beyond;

(j) Invite the secretariats of relevant United Nations specialized agencies, programmes, funds and bodies and the secretariats of related organizations and conventions to designate focal points to facilitate the implementation of the programme of work for the third cycle and beyond;

(k) Recognize the need for early preparation for regional workshops as outlined in the programme of work for the third cycle of the Regular Process, and invite States to consider hosting such workshops and inform the secretariat of their intent as early as possible;

(l) Request the Secretary-General to secure the necessary resources, from the regular budget of the Organization, for the programme of work for the third cycle of the Regular Process, as adopted by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole, in accordance with established procedures and within the respective purview of relevant bodies;

(m) Urge 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;

(n) Request the Secretary-General to convene, in 2021, up to two meetings of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole of no more than two days total duration for each meeting, one in the first half of 2021 and another in the second half of 2021.

Annex

Programme of work for the period 2021–2025 for the third cycle of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects

I. Introduction

A. Launch of the third cycle and its duration

1. In its resolution [74/19](#), the General Assembly decided to launch the third cycle of the Regular Process, to cover five years, from 2021 to 2025. In that same resolution, the Assembly requested the Bureau of the 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, with the assistance of the Group of Experts and the secretariat, to develop a draft programme of work for the third cycle. The programme of work was to be developed on the basis of the possible outcomes and building blocks of the third cycle prepared by the Bureau and endorsed by the Ad Hoc Working Group at its twelfth meeting and taking into account lessons learned from the second cycle. The Bureau was also requested to report to Member States in advance of the thirteenth meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group.

B. Scope

2. In its resolution [64/71](#), the General Assembly endorsed the recommendations adopted by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole at its first meeting, including that, in the first cycle, the scope of the Regular Process would focus on establishing a baseline and that, in subsequent cycles, the scope would extend to evaluating trends ([A/64/347](#), para. 19). In its resolution [71/257](#), the Assembly recalled that the scope of the first cycle of the Regular Process had focused on establishing a baseline, and decided that the scope of the second cycle would extend to evaluating trends and identifying gaps. Given these considerations and the lessons learned from the second cycle, the present draft programme of work assumes a similar scope for the third cycle.

C. Lessons learned from the second cycle

3. In its resolution [74/19](#), the General Assembly requested the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole to consider the lessons learned from the second cycle of the Regular Process, including with regard to the duration of the cycle and its outputs, in line with the modalities set forth in paragraph 282 of resolution [70/235](#) and on the basis of input received from Member States and other participants in the Ad Hoc Working Group and the Group of Experts, as well as from the secretariat, and also requested the Bureau to inform the Ad Hoc Working Group of the views received and to circulate that information in advance of the thirteenth meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group.

4. In a letter dated 14 May 2020, the Co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole invited Member States, observers and other participants in the Ad Hoc Working Group to provide written input on lessons learned from the second cycle of the Regular Process. A list of relevant documents and questions for consideration was developed by the secretariat for Member States, observers and other participants in the Ad Hoc Working Group to take into account in preparing their input.

5. Member States, intergovernmental organizations, the Group of Experts and the secretariat provided written input on lessons learned from the second cycle. A compilation of such input prepared by the secretariat and the full texts of all written input are available on the website of the Regular Process.¹

D. Draft programme of work

6. The draft programme of work for the third cycle of the Regular Process set out below was developed by the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole with the assistance of the Group of Experts and the secretariat, on the basis of the possible outcomes and building blocks of the third cycle and taking into account lessons learned from the second cycle. It forms the basis for the resource requirements for the third cycle. In view of the situation concerning the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its impact, the draft programme of work also takes into account the need for more extensive use of web-based working methods, including the holding of web-based meetings and the use of common online collaboration platforms. The draft programme of work was submitted to and considered by the Ad Hoc Working Group at its thirteenth meeting.

II. Outputs of the third cycle

7. The programme of work for the period 2021–2025 consists of three main outputs and related activities in support of making the third cycle operational, with the understanding that additional activities may be required.

Output I: assessments of the state of the marine environment, including socioeconomic aspects

8. Building on the First Global Integrated Marine Assessment (first World Ocean Assessment), which provided a baseline study of the state of the world's oceans, and the second world ocean assessment, the scope of which extended to evaluating trends and identifying gaps, the Group of Experts will oversee the preparation of assessments of the state of the marine environment, including socioeconomic aspects, with the final goal of strengthening decision-making at all levels. The assessments to be carried out during the third cycle may focus on specific topics in evaluating trends, if the Group of Experts and the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole so decide. The process will begin with a scoping exercise starting in 2021 and end with the assessments being finalized by late 2025. The scoping exercise and the preparation of the assessments will be supported through, inter alia, regional workshops that will help, among other things, to identify regional priorities and make progress in the writing of individual chapters to be included in the assessments. In view of the COVID-19 pandemic and its potential impact on the third cycle, regional workshops that would, inter alia, support the scoping exercise could be supplanted by regional webinars or other web-based activities if needed.

Output II: Regular Process support for and interaction with other ocean-related intergovernmental processes

9. On the basis of the second world ocean assessment, key activities will be identified to support and enhance interaction with other ongoing ocean-related intergovernmental processes, as appropriate. Outputs will be specifically tailored to the requests and needs of the processes, including the following:

¹ See www.un.org/regularprocess/content/second-cycle-regular-process/lessons-learned.

- (a) The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- (b) The intergovernmental conference on 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;
- (c) The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;
- (d) The Convention on Biological Diversity;
- (e) The United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea;
- (f) The United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030);
- (g) The United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030).

10. Relevant ocean-related intergovernmental processes will be consulted regarding the preparation of these outputs, which may include a series of brief documents for the benefit of policymakers, based on the second world ocean assessment, if so decided, or other products or services identified through consultations with Member States and relevant ocean-related intergovernmental processes. Particular focus will be given to ensuring dynamic and mutually reinforcing cooperation between the activities of the Regular Process and the activities carried out in the framework of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development during the first half of the Decade.

11. The third cycle of the Regular Process will also consider discussions held in other United Nations processes and relevant assessments prepared under other intergovernmental processes, including the following:

- (a) The General Assembly;
- (b) The intergovernmental conference on 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;
- (c) The high-level political forum on sustainable development;
- (d) The United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development;
- (e) The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change;
- (f) The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services;
- (g) The Global Biodiversity Outlook;
- (h) Marine assessments conducted under regional seas conventions;
- (i) The United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme;
- (j) The Global Environment Outlook.

Output III: capacity-building

12. Capacity-building is one of the core objectives of the Regular Process. During the third cycle, a coherent programme on capacity-building will be carried out. The

aim of the programme will be to develop the capacities of States in strengthening the ocean science-policy interface at the national, regional and global levels. In particular, it might relate to the joint production of knowledge through multi-stakeholder partnerships, the translation of data into policy-relevant information and knowledge, the use of knowledge brokerage, the engagement of the scientific community and ocean users in policymaking processes, the links between the science-policy interface at all levels and society, the role of citizen science and the integration of traditional, indigenous and local knowledge and science. Attention will also be paid to institutional arrangements and legal frameworks that help ensure the integration of science and policy for ocean governance.

13. Through regional workshops, an international symposium and other activities that might be developed, the capacity-building programme will provide opportunities for building knowledge and skills associated with strengthening the ocean science-policy interface, including its role in ocean governance. This may include identifying gaps and needs in the science-policy interface and formulating measures to address the identified gaps and needs that are tailored to particular contexts, situations and regions, depending on those participating in the activities.

14. One of the aims of the capacity-building programme is to create a community of practice on the ocean science-policy interface at the national, regional and global levels to foster partnerships, cultivate ocean literacy, discuss and develop best practices and share lessons learned, with a view to enabling continuous and collective learning beyond the third cycle. Another aim is to promote the adoption of an integrated approach to supporting efforts for implementing Sustainable Development Goal 14, as well as other ocean-related Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is also in line with and supports the Decade.

15. The capacity-building programme will be overseen by the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs, in its capacity as the secretariat of the Regular Process, and implemented in cooperation with the UNESCO International Oceanographic Commission, other United Nations entities, members of UN-Oceans and other partners, as appropriate, including regional organizations or entities with competence in ocean science and in marine and coastal management, and other stakeholders.

III. Activities in support of making the third cycle operational

Activities relating to the achievement of output I: assessments

16. Building on the practice from previous cycles, the Pool of Experts for the third cycle will consist of experts from all regional groups with expertise across multiple ocean disciplines. Efforts will be made to ensure adequate coverage of expertise and diversity in expertise, geographic representation and gender considerations. The mechanism to establish the Pool of Experts for the second cycle, including the process of nominating and appointing experts, will be reviewed at the beginning of the third cycle with a view to strengthening the mechanism for the third cycle.

17. Preparations for the assessments will begin with a scoping exercise starting in 2021 to determine the focus of the assessments, taking into account the trends evaluated and gaps identified in the second world ocean assessment, regional priorities identified through regional workshops to support the third cycle and input from other ocean-related intergovernmental processes. In parallel with the scoping exercise, the Group of Experts will develop the preliminary annotated outlines for the assessments, which will include a list of the specific expertise needed for each topic to be addressed in the assessments, to facilitate the identification of potential

members of writing teams and the nomination of additional experts to the Pool of Experts to fill the gaps in the needed expertise. The proposed scope of the assessments and annotated outlines will be finalized with input from the regional workshops and potential members of writing teams and submitted for approval by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole early in 2023. The list of writing teams will be finalized for approval by the Bureau during the first half of 2023. In addition to the outlines, the Group of Experts will develop guidelines for developing chapters and subchapters that will also set out any limitations on their content (e.g., in terms of scope, word limit and format). Special focus will be given to the development of an efficient and secure remote working environment to facilitate collaboration and the participation of experts in writing teams.

18. It is envisaged that the drafting of the assessments will begin in the first half of 2023 and will be supported through regional workshops, in-person and web-based meetings of the writing teams and a common online collaboration platform. Zero drafts of the assessments are expected to be completed and ready for review by mid-2024. To fully realize the potential of the regional workshops to be held during the third cycle in, inter alia, raising the awareness of stakeholders about the Regular Process, collecting data and information, supporting the scoping exercise and the drafting of the assessments and building capacity, steps will be taken to ensure the timely identification of hosts and participants.

19. The review of the assessments is essential for reinforcing the science-policy interface embodied in the Regular Process and will also help ensure the accuracy, legitimacy and policy-relevance of the assessments. The review process for the third cycle will adopt the same multi-stage approach used in the past and will consist of a peer review of the assessments, a review by competent intergovernmental organizations and a review by States. Guidelines on the identification of peer reviewers and on the modalities for each stage of the review process will be developed and submitted for approval by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole during the second half of 2022.

20. The assessments will be finalized and submitted for consideration by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole and then the General Assembly by late 2025. The finalized assessments will, after having been edited and translated, be made available in the six official languages of the United Nations. Copyright issues will also be addressed. The assessments will be published and disseminated, mainly in electronic format, with a limited number of printed copies.

21. The following activities will be undertaken during the third cycle:

- (a) The enhancement of working methods and the communications and collaborative document management systems necessary;
- (b) The strengthening of the mechanism to establish the Pool of Experts for the third cycle, including the process of nominating and appointing experts;
- (c) The establishment of the Pool of Experts, including through confirmation of the interest of individuals who served during the second cycle and the nomination and appointment of additional experts;
- (d) The evaluation, enhancement and maintenance of the database of members of the Pool of Experts;
- (e) The evaluation, enhancement and maintenance of the database of recent and ongoing global and regional assessments;
- (f) The scoping exercise for the assessments;
- (g) The development of annotated outlines;

- (h) The constitution of writing teams and development of guidelines;
- (i) The planning and organization of regional workshops to support the scoping exercise, the preparation of the preliminary annotated outlines, the collection of information and the preparation of assessments;
- (j) The holding of in-person and web-based meetings of the writing teams;
- (k) Obtaining subscriptions to scientific publications and databases, as identified by the Group of Experts;
- (l) The preparation of draft assessments, including an editing and review process, for the purpose of, among other things, securing the copyright and ensuring conformity with United Nations standards, including in respect of determining the need for and/or responding to requests for disclaimers;
- (m) The establishment of the modalities of the review process of the assessments, which will be a multi-stage review process consisting of a peer review, a review by competent intergovernmental organizations and a review by States;
- (n) The conduct of the review process;
- (o) A review of comments received by the Group of Experts and a final review by States and their approval;
- (p) The finalization of assessments for digital and print publication, including editing, translation and dissemination.

Activities related to the achievement of output II: Regular Process support for and interaction with other ocean-related intergovernmental processes

22. A series of brief documents will be prepared by the Group of Experts outlining specific policy-relevant information from the second world ocean assessment as they may relate to and support other ocean-related intergovernmental processes. Relevant ocean-related intergovernmental processes will be consulted to ensure that the brief documents respond to the requests and meet the needs of these processes. Briefings and side events will be held in the margins of the meetings of these processes to present the brief documents so as to support and interact with these processes.

23. The Regular Process will continue to support ongoing ocean-related intergovernmental processes and other activities yet to be developed, including outreach and awareness-raising activities. Joint activities will be identified and implemented together with the UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission with a view to ensuring synergies between the third cycle of the Regular Process and the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. Coordination and cooperation with the secretariats of other ocean-related intergovernmental processes will be strengthened and maintained on a regular basis, including through UN-Oceans.

24. The following activities will be undertaken during the third cycle:

- (a) The enhancement of working methods and the communications and collaborative document management systems necessary;
- (b) The preparation of the outlines of the brief documents;
- (c) The review and approval of the outlines;
- (d) The preparation of the brief documents, including an editing and review process, for the purpose of, among other things, securing the copyright and ensuring conformity with United Nations standards, including in respect of determining the need for and/or responding to requests for disclaimers;

- (e) The consideration and finalization of the brief documents;
- (f) The translation, digital and print publication and dissemination of the brief documents;
- (g) The preparation and holding of briefings or presentations to be held in the margins of events of other ocean-related intergovernmental processes;
- (h) The preparation of outreach and awareness-raising material on the Regular Process to be shared with stakeholders of other ocean-related intergovernmental processes;
- (i) The participation by members of the Group of Experts, the Bureau or the secretariat of the Regular Process, in their capacity as members of the Group, the Bureau or the secretariat, in meetings and proceedings of other ocean-related intergovernmental processes;
- (j) The establishment of mechanisms to strengthen and maintain on a regular basis coordination and cooperation with the secretariats of other ocean-related intergovernmental processes, including through UN-Oceans;
- (k) The identification and implementation of other activities to support and interact with other ocean-related intergovernmental processes.

Activities related to the achievement of output III: capacity-building

25. In order to increase understanding of and to provide skills training on the science-policy interface, five three-day regional workshops will be held in 2022 and 2023 in the following areas: the North Pacific; the South Pacific; the Indian Ocean (including the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal), the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the area covered by the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Regional Commission for Fisheries;² the North Atlantic, the Baltic Sea, the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea; and the South Atlantic (between the African and American coasts) and the wider Caribbean Sea.³ Some of these regional workshops might be held back-to-back with the regional workshops in support of the implementation of the third cycle of the Regular Process, if it is so agreed with the host Governments. Participants in the workshops will include representatives of the scientific community, the policy community (policymakers, managers, etc.) and stakeholders representing ocean users, at the national and regional levels.

26. The specific objectives and desired outcomes of the regional workshops will reflect regional needs and be developed in consultation with the relevant organizations. The agendas will generally include presentations by partners on: theory and practice related to the ocean science-policy interface; the relationship between ocean governance and the ocean science-policy interface; the application of an integrated approach to the science-policy interface; the links between the science-policy interface and society, including ocean users; the role of citizen science and traditional, indigenous and local knowledge; methodologies for evaluating the effectiveness of the science-policy interface and identifying gaps and needs; and best practices and lessons learned in strengthening the ocean science-policy interface. In

² The States members of the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment are Bahrain, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The members of the Regional Commission for Fisheries are Bahrain, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

³ Separate workshops will not be held for the Arctic Ocean or the Southern Ocean. Instead, the relevant international bodies and forums for those areas (in particular, the Antarctic Treaty System and the Arctic Council) will be invited to contribute their views on the issues addressed in the workshops.

addition, interactive discussions will be held on challenges, opportunities, best practices and lessons learned for strengthening the ocean science-policy interface and on the application of an integrated approach. Particular attention will be paid to empowering the ocean data value chain from marine scientific research to integrated ocean governance, drawing upon relevant initiatives under the framework of the Decade. A summary of the discussions held at each regional workshop will be prepared. These summaries, along with electronic versions of the presentations and other resource materials, will be made available on the Regular Process website and through other measures identified in the outreach and engagement strategy.

27. A two-day international symposium on strengthening the ocean science-policy interface will be held in 2023. This will be a focused, interactive and knowledge-sharing event drawing upon the outcomes of the regional workshops and identifying future needs and directions for further building capacity on the science-policy interface. Participants will include representatives of scientific and policy communities at all levels, including States and intergovernmental organizations with competence in the ocean science-policy interface, as well as relevant non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders. The event will provide an opportunity to share lessons learned on the strengthening of the science-policy interface for ocean governance at the global level, on the empowerment of the ocean data value chain, the links between the science-policy interface and society, including ocean users, the role of citizen science and traditional, indigenous and local knowledge, as well as to identify common approaches, priorities and potential avenues for collaboration. In this regard, the symposium will provide a unique opportunity for sharing information between scientific platforms operating at all levels, thereby fostering a common understanding of approaches and priorities, reducing the duplication of efforts and reinforcing collaboration. A summary, including highlights of the discussions, will be produced at the end of the symposium. The proceedings of the symposium and the papers submitted by panellists on their presentations will be made available to the public through the website of the Regular Process.

28. As part of the capacity-building programme, activities will also be carried out to raise awareness about the importance of the science-policy interface for integrated ocean governance and of the capacity imperatives of the science-policy interface. Using platforms such as the website of the Regular Process, presentations by the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea and relevant partners and public communication tools, efforts will be made to facilitate the continuous exchange of information and knowledge among the multiple stakeholders of the community of practice. Particular attention will be paid to sharing information on capacity-building needs and opportunities for strengthening the ocean science-policy interface, including best practices and lessons learned. These initiatives will reflect the information collected through the regional workshops and other activities undertaken under the Regular Process, as well as those provided by States and stakeholders. The general public will be kept informed of progress made and of the outputs of the capacity-building programme, and of how these can be used to reinforce the science-policy interface.

29. The following activities will be undertaken during the third cycle:

- (a) The planning and organization of regional workshops on capacity-building and the preparation of summaries of discussions;
- (b) The dissemination of information collected through the regional workshops, including the summaries of discussions, presentations and other resource materials;
- (c) The planning and organization of the international symposium and the preparation of a summary, including highlights of the discussions;

(d) The dissemination of information collected through the international symposium;

(e) The establishment of working methods and an online collaboration platform to facilitate continuous exchange of information and knowledge among the multiple stakeholders of the community of practice and of the Regular Process, as well as to promote ocean literacy;

(f) The planning and implementation of public engagement activities on capacity-building;

(g) The implementation of other ongoing capacity-building activities to support the Regular Process, including the compilation and maintenance of a capacity-building inventory, fundraising for the Regular Process special scholarship fund and the implementation of the special scholarship;

(h) The continuous evaluation of the implementation of the capacity-building programme and other capacity-building activities.

Activities related to the overall implementation of the third cycle

30. The Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole will oversee the implementation of the third cycle of the Regular Process and provide the necessary guidance. The Ad Hoc Working Group will have up to eight meetings during the third cycle.

31. The Bureau of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole, in putting into practice the decisions and guidance of the Ad Hoc Working Group during the intersessional period, will hold regular meetings throughout the year in order to oversee progress.

32. National focal points designated by States will continue to play an important role in facilitating the implementation of the programme of work for the third cycle. States that had designated national focal points during the second cycle will be contacted at the beginning of the third cycle to ascertain whether such designations will be extended to the third cycle and beyond. States that wish to designate new national focal points or that have not yet designated a national focal point will be invited to do so as soon as possible. The terms of reference for national focal points will be reviewed and revised, as appropriate, at the beginning of the third cycle. The secretariats of relevant United Nations specialized agencies, programmes, funds and bodies and the secretariats of related organizations and conventions will also be invited to designate focal points to facilitate the implementation of the programme of work for the third cycle. Terms of reference for such focal points will be developed at the beginning of the third cycle. Starting from the third cycle, the focal points, including national focal points and the focal points of relevant United Nations specialized agencies, programmes, funds and bodies and of the secretariats of related organizations and conventions, shall serve on a continuous basis rather than for a specific cycle.

33. The Group of Experts for the third cycle will be established to carry out the assessments. It will be composed of a maximum of 25 experts, with no more than five experts from each regional group, taking into due account the need for adequate expertise, geographical distribution and gender balance, as well as the desirability of some degree of continuity. Should a regional group nominate fewer than five experts, other regional groups may be invited by the Bureau to nominate additional experts in consultation with that regional group. Once established, the Group of Experts will develop its terms of reference and working methods. It is projected that seven in-person meetings of the Group of Experts will be held during the third cycle, in addition to frequent web-based meetings.

34. A timetable and implementation plan for the third cycle will be developed in 2021. The plan will include important milestones for all outputs planned during the third cycle.
35. The following priority activities will be undertaken throughout the third cycle:
- (a) The establishment of working methods for the third cycle;
 - (b) The establishment of the communications protocols and collaborative systems necessary;
 - (c) The holding of the meetings of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole, including one meeting each year and additional meetings as necessary;
 - (d) The holding of regular meetings of the Bureau;
 - (e) The establishment of focal points and the development of their terms of reference and working methods;
 - (f) The holding of web-based meetings of the focal points, as necessary;
 - (g) The establishment of the Group of Experts and the development of its terms of reference and working methods;
 - (h) The evaluation, enhancement and maintenance of the database of members of the Group of Experts;
 - (i) The holding of in-person and web-based meetings of the Group of Experts;
 - (j) Regular communication with the Bureau, the focal points and the Group of Experts;
 - (k) The development of a timetable and implementation plan for the third cycle;
 - (l) The management of the Regular Process voluntary trust fund.

Activities related to outreach and engagement

36. The need to improve communication and to enhance outreach and awareness-raising, in particular in order to reach and engage policymakers, organizations, academic institutions, including schools, and the general public, was among the lessons learned from the first and second cycles of the Regular Process. During the third cycle, an outreach and engagement strategy will be developed and implemented. The primary aims of such a strategy will be to improve communication with stakeholders in the context of the Regular Process and to reach and engage policymakers, organizations, academic institutions, including schools, and the general public in the Regular Process. Some activities related to the achievement of outputs II and III, such as the preparation of brief documents outlining policy-relevant information from the second world ocean assessment, the facilitation of a continuous exchange of information and knowledge among the multiple stakeholders of the community of practice and of the Regular Process and the promotion of ocean literacy, could be part of such a strategy.

37. As part of the strategy, outreach and awareness-raising efforts will continue to be pursued through a number of activities, including the holding of briefings and side events, the development and distribution of promotional materials, regular communication with focal points and participation in other ocean-related intergovernmental processes to promote the activities and outputs of the Regular Process and to promote synergies and opportunities for cooperation and coordination to support the implementation of the third cycle. The strategy will also outline actions

for improving the website of the Regular Process and various online databases and using new, innovative and effective means of communication.

38. In implementing the third cycle, efforts will also be made to further integrate multilingualism. The major products from the achievement of outputs I and II of the third cycle will be made available in the six official languages of the United Nations. The website of the Regular Process will be made available in the working languages of the secretariat (English and French).

39. The following priority activities will be undertaken during the third cycle:

- (a) The development of the outreach and engagement strategy with the aim of improving communication with stakeholders in the context of the Regular Process and to reach out to and engage with policymakers, organizations, academic institutions, including schools, and the general public in the Regular Process;
- (b) The review and approval of the outreach and engagement strategy;
- (c) The implementation of the outreach and engagement strategy;
- (d) The maintenance of the website of the Regular Process;
- (e) The development of a French version of the website of the Regular Process;
- (f) The evaluation of the implementation of the outreach and engagement strategy.

Activities related to evaluation and planning

40. A dedicated lessons learned exercise will be carried out to review the third cycle of the Regular Process and its outcomes with a view to informing, inter alia, the structure, funding and programme of work of the fourth cycle. Bearing in mind that the preference of the General Assembly was for there to be no gap between the second and third cycles, and that the preparations for the third cycle therefore had to take place during the second cycle, it is assumed that the preparations for the fourth cycle will take place during the third cycle, if Member States so decide. Participants in the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole, the focal points, the Group of Experts, the Pool of Experts and the secretariat will be invited to provide input for this exercise.

IV. Secretariat activities relating to the Regular Process

41. As the secretariat of the Regular Process, the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs supports the activities undertaken within the Regular Process and the implementation of its outputs. During the third cycle, the secretariat will be required to perform the following functions, among others:

- (a) The discharge of secretariat functions for the overall implementation of the third cycle, including:
 - (i) Providing assistance, including administrative services, to delegations, the Co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole, the Bureau, the members of the group of experts, the members of the Pool of Experts and the focal points, and technical support for all virtual meetings, the use of the online collaborative platforms and the use of relevant databases;
 - (ii) Supporting the planning and organization of the third cycle, including the development of a timetable and implementation plan for the third cycle and the development of terms of reference and working methods for the group of experts and the focal points;

- (iii) Planning, organizing and servicing the meetings, whether in-person or web-based, of the Ad Hoc Working of the Whole, the Bureau and the group of experts, including departmental coordination, the preparation of agendas, documents and background materials, note-taking and drafting of summaries and meeting reports;
- (iv) Coordinating the work of the various bodies of the Regular Process and supporting regular communication and the sharing of information, including through the preparation of correspondence and information materials, the maintenance of relevant contact lists, databases and the website of the Regular Process;
- (v) Holding inter-agency cooperation and coordination meetings, whether in-person or web-based;
- (vi) The administration of the Regular Process voluntary trust fund, including fundraising, donor engagement, the management of contributions, the disbursement of funds and travel management and reporting;
- (vii) Conducting activities related to outreach and engagement, including the development and implementation of the outreach and engagement strategy and support for the evaluation of its implementation;
- (viii) Supporting the conduct of the lessons learned exercise to review the third cycle and its outcomes;
- (b) The provision of secretariat support for activities related to output I, including:
 - (i) Providing assistance to the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole, the Bureau and the Group of Experts related to the establishment and constitution of the Pool of Experts, including the development of the mechanism, the list of expertise, communications and guidance to States, intergovernmental organizations and potential members, and the evaluation, enhancement and maintenance of the database of the Pool of Experts;
 - (ii) Providing support to the Group of Experts related to the scoping exercise for output I, including by providing support for the use of the online collaboration platform and by planning and providing assistance in organizing and holding regional webinars;
 - (iii) Providing support to the Group of Experts for the constitution of the writing teams and the coordination of their work, including the development of the annotated outlines and the drafting process;
 - (iv) Providing support for the regional workshops, including their scheduling, planning and organization, preparing relevant documents and negotiating necessary agreements with the organizers and hosts, providing travel support and substantive servicing, preparing reports and conducting any necessary follow-up;
 - (v) Providing support for the review of the assessments, including the development of modalities for the review processes and their implementation, as well as providing substantive reviews of the assessments;
 - (vi) Providing support for the finalization and dissemination of the assessments, including editing, formatting, translation and publication support;
- (c) The provision of secretariat support for activities related to output II, including:

- (i) Providing support to the Group of Experts for the drafting of the brief documents prepared as part of output II, including by substantively reviewing the documents, supporting the editing and review process and managing the formatting, translation, publication and dissemination of the documents;
 - (ii) Planning, organizing and substantively servicing briefings, presentations and side events to be held in the margins of or during the meetings of other ocean-related intergovernmental processes;
 - (iii) Preparing information materials on the Regular Process to be shared with stakeholders of other ocean-related intergovernmental processes;
 - (iv) Facilitating the participation in ocean-related intergovernmental processes by members of the Group of Experts or the Co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on behalf of the Regular Process, including the preparation of presentations, background notes and speeches, upon request;
 - (v) Planning, organizing and holding meetings with the secretariats of other ocean-related intergovernmental processes in order to strengthen coordination and cooperation, including through UN-Oceans, and coordinating activities resulting from such meetings;
- (d) The provision of secretariat support for activities related to output III, including:
- (i) Developing and implementing the capacity-building programme, in collaboration with Member States, intergovernmental organizations and other stakeholders, including with regard to planning, coordination, further development of activities and evaluation of the programme;
 - (ii) Planning, organizing and substantively servicing the capacity-building workshops, including by preparing relevant documents and negotiating agreements, providing travel support, preparing reports, conducting the necessary follow-up and disseminating the information collected;
 - (iii) Planning, organizing and substantively servicing the international symposium, including by providing travel support, preparing reports and disseminating the information collected;
 - (iv) Providing support for the establishment of the community of practice, including with regard to its working methods, collaboration platforms and the development of systems for the continuous exchange of knowledge and information;
 - (v) Implementing other ongoing capacity-building activities to support the Regular Process, including activities to promote public engagement, the compilation and maintenance of the capacity-building inventory, fundraising for the Regular Process special scholarship fund and the development and implementation of the special scholarship programme.