

REGULAR PROCESS FOR THE GLOBAL REPORTING AND ASSESSMENT OF THE STATE OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT, INCLUDING SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES

THE ASSESSMENT OF THE POTENTIAL GAPS AND OVERLAPS IN THE POOL OF EXPERTS AND HOW TO MANAGE THEM

- AS OF 17 FEBRUARY 2023 -

The 18th meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole has been convened in accordance with the programme of work for the period 2021 to 2025 for the third cycle of the Regular Process. This programme of work was adopted by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on the Regular Process during its thirteenth meeting in October 2020, and endorsed by the General Assembly through its resolution 75/239 of 31 December 2020 on “Oceans and the law of the sea”.

The 18th meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole to be held from 27 to 28 March 2023 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York will consider the following documents:

The proposed scope of the next World Ocean Assessment(s);

The comprehensive annotated outline of the World Ocean Assessment(s) containing a summary of content and format;

The list of expertise needed for the writing teams;

The assessment of potential gaps and overlaps in expertise and the way to manage them.

This document outlines the current gaps and overlaps in the Pool of Experts and options for managing those gaps and overlaps.

Overview of the current status of the Pool of Experts

There are currently 265 individuals in the Pool of Experts database. These experts are from previous cycles and have identified, after being contacted by the secretariat of the Regular Process, that they would like to contribute to the third cycle. They have, for the vast majority, identified specific expertise, although the broad nature of many of the categories of expertise identified in previous cycles results in specific expertise difficult to identify.

Of the 265 individuals in the Pool of Experts database, 12 have identified no expertise, with the remaining 253 identifying between one and 29 areas of disciplinary expertise. Individuals identified expertise in 38 categories of natural sciences, 26 categories associated with human activities in the ocean and the associated economics, 15 categories of management, mitigation and responses to human activities, nine categories associated with social aspects of the ocean and three categories associated with engineering and technology. The largest number of individuals identified expertise in benthic ecology (49 experts), marine and coastal ecosystem management (43 experts), marine protected areas (42 experts) and coastal-zone planning and management (including land-use planning, marine spatial planning and effects of extreme climate events and tsunamis) (39 experts). The largest number of individuals identified expertise from the North Atlantic Ocean, the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea, the Mediterranean and the North Sea (64 experts), and the Global Ocean as a whole (59 experts), with the lowest number of individuals identifying expertise from the Indian Ocean, the

Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal, the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden and the Persian Gulf (19 experts) and the Arctic Ocean (17 experts).

Of the 265 individuals in the Pool of Experts database, 120 have identified a particular role that they would like to be considered for. Of these, 23 would like to be considered for all categories identified in previous cycles (member of the writing team, peer-reviewer, commentator). A further two have identified that they would like to be considered for all categories however for specific expertise areas. Fourteen individuals have identified that they would like to be considered for a member of the writing team or for peer reviewer, three for a member of the writing team or commentator and six for peer reviewer or commentator. Seven individuals have identified that they would like to be considered for a peer-reviewer only and one for a commentator role only.

Gaps and overlaps in expertise in the Pool of Experts

The Group of Experts during their meeting of 13-17 February, undertook a review of the annotated outline of the World Ocean Assessment, to refine the list of expertise produced during the second cycle. This took into account the expertise needed to fulfil each of the chapters proposed. In considering this expertise and some of the shortcomings of the list from the second cycle to adequately meet these needs an expanded list of expertise has been developed. This comprises 216 categories of expertise, with the increase associated with:

- (I) Better defining the specific expertise needed to update the second World Ocean Assessment (section 4 of the annotated outline);
- (II) Identifying new expertise needed, particularly across social, economic and governance categories for sections 3 and 5 of the annotated outline;
- (III) Identifying new expertise needed in developing supporting elements of the assessment including spatial maps, infographics, factsheets etc., beyond that produced as part of the outreach and engagement strategy for the third cycle.

Newly identified categories, particularly across social, economic and governance categories, constitute the primary potential gaps in expertise.

As the experts currently in the Pool of Experts database are from previous cycles, their listed expertise was provided on the basis of previous lists of expertise as a reference. To bring the current Pool of Experts expertise in line with the revised list of expertise needed for the third World Ocean Assessment, the secretariat would need to contact each individual and ask them to provide an update to the database in order to accurately assess gaps and overlaps for the third cycle.

Managing gaps and overlaps in the Pool of Experts

There are multiple mechanisms through which the Group of Experts and secretariat of the third cycle will manage gaps and potential overlaps in the Pool of Experts. These include:

- (i) Working with UN bodies such as the IOC-UNESCO, UNEP, IMO, ISA, FAO, WMO and other bodies contributing to UN-Oceans to identify expertise within their organisations, programmes, working groups etc. Discussions with IOC-UNESCO have already been initiated in this regard;
- (ii) Specific intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) will be engaged with to identify expertise. To this point, the Group of Experts has already identified a list of specific organizations that will

be contacted formally through the official call for experts and also specifically where expertise is needed;

- (iii) Working with the AHWGW members and national focal points to identify expertise from member States via extensive distribution of the official call for experts to national research agencies, universities, and other relevant national bodies;
- (iv) Drawing on the networks of GoE members to identify expertise.

The secretariat of the Regular Process has undertaken some improvements to the Pool of Experts database based on the lessons learned from the second cycle. The experts' information in the database is being re-organized and reviewed for accuracy to ensure the required information is available to support the establishment of the writing teams. Further improvements will continue to be implemented moving forward. The secretariat will introduce a new process to streamline the database registration process, which will be announced during the official call-for-nominations to the Pool of Experts to be launched in April 2023. Additional functionalities would be added to the online database to enhance its user-friendliness. Individuals will be queried on the specific expertise they possess that can contribute to the assessment. This will be limited to two categories/areas of expertise. This should provide information that is more focused and relevant for development of the assessment. It will also avoid situations that have occurred in previous cycles where individuals were contacted within the context of a particular expertise they had identified but then declined stating that they did not have adequate expertise in that area.

These improvements to the Pool of Experts database will make the database more streamlined, thereby allowing the Group of Experts to assess the expertise in the database and identify gaps and overlaps quickly, routinely and easily. This will support regular assessment of the database and allow for directed efforts in identifying experts to be nominated to the Pool of Experts to fill gaps.