

**Lessons learned from the second cycle of the
Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the
Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects**

Compilation of input from Member States and other participants in the
Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole

A. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 74/19, 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.

2. 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 of the Whole 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 of the Whole to take into account in preparing their input.

3. As of 2 July 2020, written input on lessons learned from the second cycle was received from the following Member States and other participants in the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole: China, Japan, Morocco, New Zealand, Portugal, Republic of Korea, the United States of America, the European Union, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) secretariat, and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). This document contains the above-mentioned written input arranged by key topics. The full texts of all written input will be made available on the website of the Regular Process.

B. Compilation of written input

4. Regarding duration, outputs and the programme of work:

- We believe the five year cycle of the World Ocean Assessment is suitable and we hope the preparations for the next cycle will begin much earlier with more detailed scheduling. (*Republic of Korea*)

- The three technical reports from the first cycle were very useful. We expect to have similar reports (or small brochures) from WOA II, with 10-15 pages containing key summaries for the public and policy makers. (*Republic of Korea*)
- Though the WOA is not policy descriptive, if it contains region scientific issues identified in WOA II, it may contribute to making policy improvement in the 3rd cycle of the Regular Process. (*Republic of Korea*)
- The side events associated with WOA II such as regional workshops, multi-stakeholder dialogues and capacity-building partnership events were very important. ROK hopes to see more of these kinds of activities in the next cycle. (*Republic of Korea*)
- We hope that the works conducted in the next cycle will make progress according to scheduled timetables. (*Republic of Korea*)
- The scope of the first cycle was to establish a baseline concerning the state of the marine environment, while the scope of the second cycle was extended to evaluating trends and identifying gaps. New Zealand remains convinced that these are useful roles for the World Ocean Assessment. (*New Zealand*)
- The three Technical Abstracts consumed too much intellectual energy and other resources from the Secretariat, GoE and Bureau and, most significantly, delayed the start of preparing WOA-II, causing irreversible disruption to the schedule. (*United States of America*)
- It is our belief that this duration and allocation of time was optimal for the achievement of the objectives of the second cycle, as it allowed for the organisation of several rounds of workshops and the organisation multi-stakeholder dialogue and capacity-building partnership event while also allowing for the flexibilities in the implementation of the workplan within the given timelines. (*UNFCCC*)
- The progression from establishing the baseline concerning the state of the marine environment, to the extension of the scope of the second cycle to evaluating trends and identifying gaps was natural and crucial for progress on the topic. (*UNFCCC*)
- We believe that the technical abstracts were useful, and covered relevant cross-cutting issues. Based on the technical abstract on the impacts of climate change and related changes in the atmosphere on the oceans, the secretariat would be willing to cooperate on identifying further synergies with action under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, including in regard to strengthening action on adaptation and mitigation, as well as on responding to risks due to slow onset and extreme events. (*UNFCCC*)

- We observe that the regional workshops based on their outcomes; and the participation in the multi-stakeholder dialogue and capacity-building partnership event have been successful in raising awareness regarding the Regular Process, and bringing several stakeholders affecting and affected by the marine environment to a common platform. In addition, the capacity-building inventory is useful initiative, and is created in a user-friendly manner. Concentrated communications regarding the inventory would be beneficial to enhance the visibility of the inventory to members of the public as well as increasing submissions. Alternative, researchers could be engaged to track the success and impacts of the activities contained within the inventory towards achieving the objectives of the Regular Process, and linking to local and regional efforts to create a methodical assessment of the activities. It is also important to consider the need to weave together indigenous values and climate knowledge when holding multi-stakeholder dialogues. (*UNFCCC*)
 - We thank the secretariat of the Regular Process, for their support to participants in the Regular Process, as well as consistent and timely communications, uploading of documents and maintaining the effective web pages, along with servicing the meetings of the Regular Process. (*UNFCCC*)
 - The structured manner in which the timetable and plan of implementation was drafted and circulated was useful to visualize and track progress of the activities within the second cycle. It is a suggestion for consideration that when drafting the timetable and implementation plan for the third cycle, for the potential inclusion of a column for relevant contact persons for activities, both at the secretariat and external contact persons for ease of streamlined communications. (*UNFCCC*)
 - The annotated outline is useful and presents the intent content within chapters in a precise and concise manner while also allowing sufficient room for flexibility. A suggestion towards enhancing the outline would be include preliminary references to existing datasets, findings and publications which the writing teams will be drawing from. (*UNFCCC*)
 - In regard to chapter 9 on climate change, slow onset events such as sea level rise do not seem to be included. The secretariat would welcome an opportunity to coordinate with IPBES and IPCC to optimise coordination and synergies of writing teams for relevant sections. (*UNFCCC*)
5. Regarding the review processes for the second world ocean assessment (WOA II):
- The first draft of the Second World Ocean Assessment runs to nearly 850 pages and covers multiple fields of work related to the marine environment, such as fisheries, marine transportation, marine industries, climate change, etc. Necessary time is needed to coordinate different departments to review the

draft and integrate all the comments. Thus, it is suggested to extend the time of review by Member States, so as to ensure its effectiveness. (*China*)

- It is required to consider including the Section name in the draft table of contents because important keywords (e.g., marine plastics) appear more than once in the ‘Section’ name level, not in ‘Parts’ and ‘Chapters’. (*Japan*)
- Regarding the question about the dedicated webpages for the process of review, we find them practically useful with necessary information. (*Japan*)
- A robust peer review process is vital to a credible and useful Assessment. New Zealand contributors involved in the expert review process reported improvements in the way it was organised and structured, compared to the first cycle of the Assessment. However, some still considered that it fell short of standards for scientific journals and other international science synthesis reports. (*New Zealand*)
- The two-stage review process was useful as one review is technical and the other is political and both are needed to later on fill in the identified gaps and needs (*Portugal*)
- We hope to have more time to review the draft documents in the next cycle. (*Republic of Korea*)
- The time given for Member States’ review of the first draft of WOA II was insufficient. We expect to have more time to the next cycle. (*Republic of Korea*)
- The UNGA through the omnibus ocean resolution repeatedly invites relevant UN bodies such as IOC, UNEP, IMO, FAO, WMO to provide technical and scientific support to the Regular Process and specifically to contribute, as appropriate, to the activities of the second cycle. (*IOC*)
- In this respect, intergovernmental organisations have provided data, information and resources to the drafting of WOA-II. The inputs of intergovernmental organisations are crucial to the substance and rigour of the WOA-II, and ensure alignment with complementary global processes and assessments. Many of these agencies are continuously generating data and new knowledge on the state of the ocean. In the recognition of the importance of this process, many organisations – including the IOC – invested significant time and effort in developing and providing inputs. As an example, IOC’s Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS) prepared and submitted biodiversity data to the authors of the WOA-II Chapter (<https://github.com/iobis?q=WOA>). (*IOC*)
- We note that, contrary to the process, for the first round of the Regular Process, intergovernmental organisations were not invited to review the draft

WOA-II. However, we believe that there would have been strong benefits of review by these organisations. This is important both from a fact-checking point of view, to ensure robustness of the information, appropriate referencing, but also in terms of providing comments and inputs on the conclusions and recommendations developed by the Group of Experts that are relevant to the mandates of these organisations. We strongly feel that in the future this step should be integrated as a systematic part of the process. (*IOC*)

- The UNFCCC secretariat commends the two-stage review process as it was methodical and comprehensive, and extends its cooperation if it is invited to conduct any review and submit comments, especially with subject-matter expertise on climate change and the environment, should intergovernmental organisations be invited to participate. (*UNFCCC*)
- The webpages are accessible, and materials posted have been easy to locate, making them essential for the efficient functioning of the activities within the Regular Process. (*UNFCCC*)
- The UNFCCC secretariat is in agreement with the frequency and length of the meetings conducted. However, in light of travel restrictions imposed during the Covid-19 pandemic, it is foreseeable that if these meetings are to be conducted using electronic means of communication in the third cycle, the length and duration of the meetings may have to be altered, condensed or spread over more days. (*UNFCCC*)
- The review process could be improved. (*UNCTAD*)
- The current review process appears to be complex and opaque and should be reviewed. It would be preferable for relevant UN system organizations, bodies, funds and programmes, to have an opportunity to provide substantive inputs and/or review the drafts at an early stage. At present IGOs have not been asked to review either the first or the second draft of WOA II building on relevant substantive areas of expertise and work. This is not conducive to creating synergy of effort. In addition the opportunity for additional quality control by drawing on substantive areas of interested IGOs has been missed. (*UNCTAD*)

6. Regarding the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole and its Bureau:

- The Working Group should discuss how well the second cycle actually achieved the goal of evaluating trends and identifying gaps, including for example whether the approach to data management and analysis was sufficiently consistent and systematic between chapters and Assessments. The question of how to organise the Assessment going forward, so that it's readily usable for comparative purposes, is worth attention. (*New Zealand*)

- New Zealand continues to attach importance to the Regular Process (and the World Ocean Assessment) as a global mechanism to review the environmental, economic and social aspects of the oceans. However as other synthesis reports dealing with ocean issues emerge, for example IPBES and IPCC products, New Zealand also considers that the Working Group should carefully examine the World Ocean Assessment's niche. This is especially important in the context of growing demands on government and expert science resources to contribute to more and more synthesis reports. (*New Zealand*)
- The Working Group should have a discussion about how the World Ocean Assessment has contributed to the strengthening of the regular scientific assessment of the state of the marine environment and, importantly, its role in enhancing the scientific basis for policymaking (e.g. how has the assessment influenced policymaking?). (*New Zealand*)
- Holding the meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole twice a year needs to be considered. The first should be held in the first half of the year for the preparation of world ocean assessment and for the improvement of awareness. This meeting should be participated by key experts involved in the drafting process. The second meeting should be held just before the General Assembly (GA) for decision making and preparation of the report to GA. (*Republic of Korea*)
- The poor coordination between the Group of Experts (GoE) and the Bureau in the first cycle did not substantially improve in the second cycle. The GoE insistence on closing the nomination process for members of the Pool of Experts remains a mystery and yielded unnecessary disharmony. Communications between the GoE and Bureau could have been substantially improved. For example, the GoE transmittal of information to the Bureau on reorganization of WOA-II Chapters, which had been approved by the AHWG, was too late for the Bureau to recommend actionable solutions, although the Bureau had informed the GoE on several occasions of the Bureau's concerns on specific chapters. This example was representative of the Bureau's near-absence of knowledge of the workings of the GoE and indicated missed opportunities for improved communications from the GoE. The GoE did not provide progress reports to the Bureau, although a Summary of Discussions of each meeting of the Bureau was made available to the GoE. (*United States of America*)
- Coordination between the Secretariat and Bureau was vastly improved in the second cycle compared to the first cycle. My personal thanks are extended to the Secretariat. Four examples are:

(1) A draft list of WOA-II chapters' authors was a continuously updated document.

(2) The timely distribution of Summary of Discussion and Action Items after the meeting of the Bureau, including an updated colorized chart of status of Actions.

(3) Meetings of the Bureau were organized in an orderly manner to avoid emergency meetings with 1- to 2-day notice.

(4) A flexible protocol for the silence procedure was highly effective. (*United States of America*)

- Overheard at meetings of the AHWGW in the first and second cycles was the sentiment that the World Ocean Assessment is a process based on scientific principles and scientific best practices. Fresh thinking is warranted on how the Bureau and Secretariat could improve their knowledge of scientific best practices. (*United States of America*)
- The UNFCCC secretariat supports the views of the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole, and the secretariat of the Regular Process, in determining the best possible and optimal frequency and conducting of meetings of the Bureau. (*UNFCCC*)
- Relevant UN system organizations, bodies, funds and programmes, as appropriate, could have been invited to participate in the meetings of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole, as an observer. (*UNCTAD*)

7. Regarding the Group of Experts:

- New Zealand commends the efforts of the Group of Experts (in particular the Joint Coordinators) to fill gaps in expertise in the Pool of Experts on geographic areas and specific topics and in gender representation. (*New Zealand*)
- Consideration could be given to appointing Regional Coordinators to support the work of the Group of Experts. Regional Coordinators with knowledge of each region's marine science expertise as well regional research and tertiary institutions could help the Group of Experts identify expertise to fill gaps. For example, the recently established Pacific Community Centre for Ocean Science could help identify experts from the Pacific Islands if there are gaps. (*New Zealand*)
- World Ocean Assessment stakeholders should continue to engage with relevant regional and international bodies in its efforts to fill gaps in representation. (*New Zealand*)

- In order to ensure more adequate expertise and geographical distribution in the Group of Experts: – Raise awareness in each country of the relevance of participating in the Group of Experts. (*Portugal*)
- The fields in the existing database are enough and the database is searchable. Maybe one condition to be accepted in the Group of Experts would be to regularly update the information on the database and a red mark would appear in case the expert did not updated the information on an yearly basis. (*Portugal*)
- The experts in the Group of Experts are nominated by the Governments. All Governments should provide the technical capacity for the expert work. (*Portugal*)
- In the RP, the group of experts (GoE) plays a very important role. The GoE is to be composed of a maximum of 25 experts according to paragraph 287 of resolution 70/235. We hope the 25 seats will be filled with a balanced distribution of the professional fields for the next cycle. (*Republic of Korea*)
- The reliance on a small number of Lead GoE Members for a large number of chapters was considered at several meetings of the Bureau to be a “single point of failure” in preparing WOA-II. At the beginning of the WOA-II process the concept of single point of failure was theoretical but at the end of the process the single point of failure was observed. This Lesson Learned occurred in the first cycle and was repeated in the second cycle. (*United States of America*)
- The Group of Experts was constituted and composed through a process ensuring regional decision-making through the election process, and in accordance with the regional groups within the United Nations. There is merit in exploring through sustained outreach and multilateral discussions with electing groups promoting gender balance in the nomination process, prominently showcasing historic statistics on gender representation on the webpage of the Regular Process, to further engagement on this issue in third cycle. (*UNFCCC*)
- The database on the expertise of members is helpful to contextualise or orient oneself with the respective expertise of members of the Group of Experts. In order to ensure adequate information on all members, meetings of the Group, could include an additional item on the agenda regarding their respective background and information, and this information gleaned by the rapporteur could contribute towards enhancing the database. (*UNFCCC*)
- Based on the experience of the UNFCCC secretariat, conducting one-one support sessions with individual members regarding the use of the relevant ICT applications and methods in advance of meetings, and conducting

troubleshooting in real-time in preparation of electronic meetings allowed for greater ease in communication. (*UNFCCC*)

- Communication on the composition of the group of experts could be more transparent. (*UNCTAD*)
- Maybe the information in the expert database could be consolidated/maintained by UN/DOALOS. (*UNCTAD*)

8. Regarding the Pool of Experts:

- New Zealand's experience with the nomination process for New Zealand experts to the Pool of Experts was reasonably straightforward. New Zealand contributors involved in selecting members of writing teams found the list of areas of expertise useful, but occasionally encountered incorrect data in the database, which sometimes hindered the timeliness of appointments. (*New Zealand*)
- Governments should promote, with support of the expert in the Group of Experts, the implementation of awareness sessions in each country to increase the understanding of the relevance of becoming part of the Pool of Experts. Could Governments implement a mechanism where the experts really commit to dedicate their time to the process? In addition, we should also tackle the issue of promoting the participation of active experts. (*Portugal*)
- Maybe the sharing of a list of needed expertise with the National Focal Points would facilitate the identification of at least one expert from the different countries reducing the gaps in expertise. (*Portugal*)
- In order to improve the geographical distribution in the POE, regional workshops dedicated to explain the relevance of the exercise in the region where that is needed should be implemented (*Portugal*)
- Self-nominations indicate that the experts have interest and time (in principle) to be involved in the process. In this sense it would be a pity to lose these experts if the Governments do not consider them for nomination. On the other hand, if the interest is to have experts that are fully committed with the process, Governments should be consulted to nominate them with the aim to guarantee their commitment. (*Portugal*)
- The fields in the existing database are enough and the database is searchable. Maybe one condition to be accepted in the Pool of Experts would be to regularly update the information on the database and a red mark would appear in case the expert did not update the information on a yearly basis. (*Portugal*)
- Efforts to nominate experts and develop a pool of experts for the drafting process were useful. However, the experts group nominated for the peer review process needs improvement. (*Republic of Korea*)

- The two phased sequenced appointment process for the Pool of Experts and the National Focal Points for the Regular Process have to a large extent worked well and should be fully exploited by completely implementing the terms of reference. (*UNEP*)
 - While States are to nominate and interorganisational organisations recommend experts to the Pool of Experts, a method of further outreach for consideration, could be the inclusion of a step wherein international organisations reach out to academic and research-based institutes registered as observers within their respective processes for communicating information regarding experts with expertise in those areas identified in the document on gaps in expertise. These may be provided to States for their consideration during the nomination process. (*UNFCCC*)
 - In order to increase awareness regarding the Regular Process and encourage more participation from regions with lower proportional representation in the Pool of Experts, partnership with regional media and outreach organisations can be explored. Similarly, through sustained outreach and multilateral discussions with electing groups promoting gender balance in the Pool of Experts by, prominently showcasing historic statistics on gender representation may be a step towards achieving gender balance within the Pool of Experts. (*UNFCCC*)
 - We believe that this appointment process to the Pool of Experts is adequate and contains the necessary flexibilities to facilitate participation of experts. (*UNFCCC*)
 - The database on the expertise of members is helpful to contextualise or orient oneself with the respective expertise of members of the Pool of Experts. In order to ensure adequate information on all members, meetings could include an additional item on the agenda regarding their respective background and information, and this information gleaned by the rapporteur could contribute towards enhancing the database. (*UNFCCC*)
 - Communicate requests for needed expertise in the Pool of Experts, including to relevant UN system organizations, bodies, funds and programmes, at an early stage, since many of them have established networks of experts in various areas, with whom they cooperate in their work and projects, and may help with suitable recommendations. (*UNCTAD*)
 - The mechanism for the appointment of experts to the Pool of Experts was not clear and could be improved. (*UNCTAD*)
9. Regarding the National Focal Points:
- The national focal points (NFPs) could play a useful role in improving communication and coordination between the Secretariat and country experts.

They should be used more often, for example to share regular updates with experts on the status of the Assessment process and information concerning the establishment of writing teams. This may also require a communication channel between the NFPs and the Group of Experts, which could be through a Regional Coordinator. *(New Zealand)*

- NFPs should also be kept informed of how experts from their country are being deployed, as this would assist in understanding the role national experts are playing and would enable NFPs to respond to questions and concerns coming from experts. Where experts are brought into the process at a later stage, NFPs can play a role to bring them up to speed on the World Ocean Assessment, its context and the process. *(New Zealand)*
- NFP need to have time to correctly implement their activities. What often is not the case. The current functions foreseeing in the TOR are very relevant and will require dedication in order to be effectively implemented. The virtual meetings are of crucial importance to raise the awareness of the relevance of the NFPs in the fulfilment of their mandate. Meetings with the NFPs are very important to update the NFP on the exercise activities and to ask their support to raise awareness at the national level. *(Portugal)*
- In the case of the IPCC, 186 countries have designated NFPs. It is recommended that all Member States nominate NFPs for UNRP as well. *(Republic of Korea)*
- We believe that designation of NFPs is an essential step in the coordination of the regular process and continued display of historic gender statistics and focus on gender balance in all outreach and communications relating to the nomination process would assist achieving the goal of gender balance. *(UNFCCC)*
- Based on the interaction of the UNFCCC secretariat with the Regular Process, our preliminary view is that the terms of reference of NFPs are adequate, however conducting coordination meetings with NFPs to facilitate their enhanced participation in the process, and creation of a communications database would assist the third cycle. *(UNFCCC)*

10. Regarding writing teams:

- Having appropriate writing teams and reviewers is crucial for the success of the RP. For this, we believe active communication between GoE and NFP is very important. It would be useful to have a system or mechanism for this. *(Republic of Korea)*
- While the feedback from members of the writing teams themselves would most accurately suggest tangible improvements regarding the constitution of the teams, the UNFCCC secretariat suggests that there may be merit to a

model for the construction of the writing teams which also includes early-career academicians and experts to provide crucial capacity-building for the next generation of experts capable of supporting the Regular process. *(UNFCCC)*

- As identified above, allocated budgetary resources to a secure and common document-sharing platform is indeed an effective method for working collaboratively. However, the purchase of licenses for using collaboration tools such as Microsoft Teams and Slack may enable coordination relating to the writing process. *(UNFCCC)*
- In the interests of maintaining high quality standards, Intergovernmental Organizations should be invited to identify or submit data, information as well as substantive analytical reports and other research outputs for consideration, so that appropriate material can be integrated by the writing team. IGOs should also be invited to review and/or provide some comments regarding the drafts prepared by the writing teams. *(UNCTAD)*

11. Regarding capacity-building:

- Capacity-building of WOA not only provides technology output and capacity training to developing countries, but also further strengthens the assessment capacity of the project itself, to solve the lack of information and data which are needed for the assessment. Currently, regional workshops held during the first and the second cycles of WOA have analyzed the capacity-building needs of different regions, but substantial capacity-building programmes have not been carried out. The lack of information, data and methods faced by WOA has not been effectively resolved, either. It is suggested to strengthen capacity-building through technical training and the transfer of technology in a targeted way, and to help regions to improve the capacity of monitoring, analysis and assessment, which will solve the lack of information and data in the long run and lay the foundation for the future work of WOA. *(China)*
- Korea will continue to support the activities related to Capacity Building. *(Republic of Korea)*
- The capacity-building inventory is a useful document towards enhancing multilateral cooperation beyond the Regular Process, and its “live” nature ensures that it will remain current and relevant. *(UNFCCC)*
- The secretariat seeks to commend the multi-stakeholder dialogue and capacity-building partnership event for ensuring heightened gender balance in the nomination of moderators. Towards ensuring greater participation of panellists, based on the experience of the UNFCCC secretariat, it is possible to conduct certain sessions in a hybrid form, with a few panellists being allowed to participate remotely, while others participate in-person, to

overcome challenges relating to travel restrictions or availability of funds. (*UNFCCC*)

- This should be broadened to include capacity building material, tools and guidance by relevant IGOs. (*UNCTAD*)

12. Regarding regional workshops:

- The time of expert contributors who participate on a voluntary basis should be used efficiently. In that respect consideration could be given to changing the timing of the regional workshops, which play an important role in bringing stakeholders together, to enable writing teams to meet and coordinate amongst themselves early in the drafting process. (*New Zealand*)
- The guidelines and draft agenda for regional workshops were crucial to have effective workshops. (*Portugal*)
- The regional workshop was very useful in sharing the outputs of the previous report, refining the outline of the report, and communicating with the writing team and regional experts. Consideration for the extended duration and frequency of regional workshops is recommended. (*Republic of Korea*)
- The time interval to prepare Workshops was too short, which reduced potential effectiveness of Workshops. (*United States of America*)
- The Regional Workshops continue to create awareness on the Regular Process, during the second cycle member states have provided more support in the hosting of the workshops, an indication that the Regular Process is getting more buy in from the countries. The Regional Seas Platform continues to be a strong support for capacity building, and marine and coastal environmental assessments are typically one of the principal activities of the Regional Action Plans. (*UNEP*)
- The secretariat expresses its thanks for the detailed yet concise outcomes from the workshops that were published on the webpage. (*UNFCCC*)
- The UNFCCC secretariat commends the transparent selection process for the selection of participants in the regional workshops. A suggestion would be to partner with academic institutions, especially with those who have framework Memoranda of Understanding with international organisations part of the Regular Process for increased engagement. The lessons from the Covid-19 pandemic are particularly geared towards more hybrid or virtual delivery of capacity-building and cooperation events, therefore preparation for and adoption of best practices in virtual capacity-building workshops would be beneficial to sustain the momentum of the Regular Process in its third cycle. (*UNFCCC*)

- Based on the outcomes published, the capacity-build elements were expansive and effective. As a suggestion towards enhancing the capacity-building aspects of regional workshops, we suggest the creation of self-paced e-learning courses that can be taken prior to the workshops, so that participants are familiar with the overview and basic concepts, providing for increased engagement in the in-person workshops. This will also assist in building capacity for those participants who may not be able to travel to workshops in unforeseen or personal circumstances. (*UNFCCC*)
 - Relevant UN bodies/IGOs should also be invited to contribute and/or participate in the workshops. (*UNCTAD*)
13. Regarding interactions with other ocean-related processes:
- Efforts are needed to avoid any duplication between RP and other ocean-related processes. For better communication with other activities additional, budget for GoE's travel to take part in other activities may be required. (*Republic of Korea*)
 - The assistance and contribution by relevant organizations and bodies could be further enhanced by working together in a coordinated manner. (*UNEP*)
 - The duration of the second cycle coincided with significant reportage of findings relating to the marine environment, both by the IPCC and IPBES. Ensuring that all of these processes, respective methods and scientific experts conducted distinct investigations with minimal overlap is evidence of efficient coordination among their governing bodies. The interaction between the Regular Process and other ocean-related processes could be further enhanced through mutual coordination amongst the organising bodies conducting joint sessions on key findings to demonstrate the distinct contribution and expertise contained within each process. (*UNFCCC*)
 - Better coordination and liaison with UN-OCEANS would be appropriate and may yield benefits. (*UNCTAD*)
14. Regarding assistance and contribution by relevant organizations and bodies:
- The UNFCCC secretariat commends the involvement of several intergovernmental organisations in their assistance in implementing the second cycle of the Regular Process, and the horizontal cooperation between organisations sets a positive precedent for greater technical and scientific coordination on the ocean and climate change in the third cycle. (*UNFCCC*)
 - Contribution of relevant UN system organizations, bodies, funds and programmes, may be encouraged by keeping them informed on all stages of the report drafting process, and asking them to provide comments, as appropriate. (*UNCTAD*)

15. Regarding communication:

- At present, face-to-face meetings and emails are the two major means of communication for the WOA working mechanism. In addition, the Group of Experts also holds online conferences, and employs Share Point Online to store, modify and share manuscripts of each chapter as well as other documents. The advantages of telecommuting have been highlighted after the outbreak of COVID-19. Thus, it is suggested to establish a WOA online working platform, which can be exclusively used by the Bureau, the Secretariat, the Group of Experts, the Pool of Experts and writing teams of each chapter. Through this platform, the Group of Experts and writing teams can store, share and modify relevant documents and communicate with each other regularly; members of the Pool of Experts can learn the progress of the project and needs in a timely manner, and better participate in the project. (*China*)
- In order to further expand the influence of WOA, it is suggested to increase the publicity input and broaden the publicity channel, such as online promotion, international conferences, regional training programmes and domestic publicity by Member States. This will attract more experts to participate in the work of WOA, and make the assessment results play a better role. (*China*)
- We found outreaches and awareness-raising activities useful and relevant. To provide any suggestions with a view to further improving these outreach and awareness-raising activities, we recommend strengthen outreach activities at well-known international meetings and events dealing with the ocean. (*Japan*)
- New Zealand welcomes ongoing improvements to communication and coordination between Regular Process stakeholders. (*New Zealand*)
- Communication on the relevance of the assessment is key and the third cycle would need to invest in communication (to everyone involved) in a simple and understandable language (the process is quite complex). (*Portugal*)
- The outreach and awareness-raising activities have been useful and relevant but with a short impact on stakeholders except those already involved on the process. There should be a well-defined communication strategy able to reach in an effective way several target audiences, being society and policy makers the more relevant ones at this special times that we live now. A solid communication strategy should be implemented and shared from the early beginning with the NFPs. (*Portugal*)
- The website could use simpler language and an easy way to explain this relevant but complex process. (*Portugal*)

- The outreach activities such as regional workshops, briefings or side events on the on the Regular Process for States and other stakeholders in the margins of intergovernmental meetings, and the production of brochures on the Regular Process were highly effective initiatives towards creating greater awareness and inviting participation by all stakeholders. Towards enhancing the scope of this outreach, the activities could involve methods creating a direct conduit for the views of civil society and members of the public to share knowledge, views and experiences that contribute towards the writing process. There could be greater sharing of information to relevant UN-Oceans focal points and other relevant focal point to enable wider sharing of information across UN. (*UNFCCC*)
 - The website is accessible, and materials posted have been easy to locate, making them essential for the efficient functioning of the activities within the Regular Process. (*UNFCCC*)
 - Relevant UN system organizations, bodies, funds and programmes need to be more involved. (*UNCTAD*)
16. Regarding resources and funding:
- New Zealand would welcome an update from the Secretariat and the Group of Experts on the suitability and adequacy of the budget at the next Working Group meeting. Some expert contributors from New Zealand consider that that additional resources are needed to improve aspects of the process, including for example related to communication and peer review. (*New Zealand*)
 - New Zealand is pleased to be a contributor to the UN Trust Fund that supports developing country participation in the Regular Process. Broad participation from all geographies is essential for a quality Assessment owned by all. (*New Zealand*)
 - Due to the importance of the communication within writing teams there should be budget within the exercise to support the lead member of a writing team in the implementation of their task. (*Portugal*)
 - Increase of budget and voluntary contributions are necessary. (*Republic of Korea*)
 - The UNFCCC secretariat would defer to the judgment of the Member States regarding the allocation of resources towards the activities of the second cycle, and the third cycle. (*UNFCCC*)
 - The UNFCCC secretariat commends the establishment of the Regular Process voluntary trust fund, and suggests that the creation of a focussed communication strategy towards encouraging contributions, possibly through

greater visibility of the beneficiaries and outcomes of the fund, may positively affect the fund's incoming contributions. (*UNFCCC*)

- Towards encouraging greater contributions to the scholarship fund, greater targeted outreach, and conducting a mapping exercise of potential donors based on express commitments to supporting capacity-building actions, including in other avenues may potentially yield results. Additionally, it is suggested that with the requisite approvals in place, there might be a case for creating a strong brand identity for the fund and project, including nomenclature based on inputs from inputs of key stakeholder including potential donors. (*UNFCCC*)

17. Regarding multilingualism:

- The integration of multilingualism in the activities of the second cycle was an excellent initiative, especially if we also aim to involve civil society in the understanding of the needs of such exercises. (*Portugal*)
- The integration of multilingualism in the activities of the second cycle was satisfactory. However, as we move forward with the activities of the Regular Process, there is a possibility of directing resources towards an approved and permanent live translation software plugin in the process of conducting electronic meetings, to enable greater participation in all six official languages of the UN. (*UNFCCC*)

18. Regarding lessons learned process:

- The COVID-19 pandemic may have impacted the ability of some Member States and stakeholders to input into aspects of the World Ocean Assessment, including potentially the Member State peer review and this lessons learned exercise. The next Working Group meeting may wish to consider including, on its agenda, a discussion on lessons learned, to provide another opportunity for Member States to contribute to this exercise. The Working Group may also wish to exchange views on the nature and extent of impacts of the pandemic on the Assessment to ascertain whether these have been material. (*New Zealand*)
- Comments made through this questionnaire may be very useful. We hope that the aggregated views of experts will be taken into account in the next cycle. (*Republic of Korea*)
- The secretariat expresses its thanks for the invitation to participate in this lesson learned exercise it is important to review and collate experiences through such an information-gathering exercise. We especially commend the detailed and listed nature of questions within the exercise. The list of documents and questions for consideration was comprehensive and accessible. Towards enhancing this process for the future, we suggest tailoring of the

questions to distinguish between Member states and other participants including intergovernmental organisations. The lessons learned exercise could be structured so as to provide distinct focus on procedural issues, substantive issues, and other issues. (*UNFCCC*)

19. Regarding the third cycle of the Regular Process:

- While the scope of the first cycle is to establish a baseline concerning the state of the marine environment, the scope of the following cycles is extended to evaluating the trends of marine environment and identifying gaps. In order to organize the future work better, it is suggested to fix the outline to some extent and update it as appropriate on the basis of state-of-the-art knowledge of marine environment. Based on a relative fixed outline, it is suggested to provide the requirements for the professional background of writing teams for each chapter. This will be helpful for the establishment of writing teams and will ensure the smooth running of the subsequent writing work. (*China*)
- Sustainable and ecosystem-based policies and measures for oceans and coasts need to be supported by strong institutional frameworks. A number of organizations have long recognized the need for a mechanism for global reporting and assessment on the state of the oceans, in order to generate the information needed for policy formulation. It was to that end that the General Assembly launched the start-up phase of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, entitled “Assessment of assessments”, in 2005, followed by the official launch of the Regular Process in 2010. (*Morocco*)
- It is now indispensable that States Members of the United Nations provide adequate support to the Regular Process, so that the planned global assessment could be conducted and repeated efficiently every five years for consideration by the Commission on Sustainable Development. (*Morocco*)
- It is therefore essential to promote the commitment of Member States and international financial institutions to provide the Regular Process with the necessary resources for its operation. In that regard, it is important to boost the capacities of the Global Ocean Observing System, to conduct a global and regional assessment of capacity-building needs, and to promote effective management and conservation measures in developing countries through scientific assessment. (*Morocco*)
- This would result in improved knowledge of the impact of human activities on marine ecosystems and stronger scientific bases for decision-making on a more secure footing in the context of the precautionary approach. (*Morocco*)
- We believe there should be a third WOA, more focused on identified topics, taking into account the implementation of the operative parts of related UNEA

resolutions and emerging pressures on the marine and coastal environment
(European Union)

- The third cycle should seek further synergies with other assessments, such as done in the context of the EU and the Regional Seas Conventions around Europe and elsewhere *(European Union)*
- In order to render WOA III even more relevant for policy making, it should highlight the role of adequate monitoring at the appropriate (e.g. national, regional) level and the connection between monitoring and measures, in order to assess their efficiency in reducing pressures and improving state and, eventually amend or complement measures *(European Union)*
- The third cycle of the Regular Process should provide a good opportunity to further promote synergies and opportunities for cooperation and coordination with respect to capacity-building initiatives and partnerships and regional workshops. The points drafted regarding the possible outcomes and building blocks of the third cycle of the Regular Process ([A/74/315](#), Annex II) are very comprehensive and there should be a close follow up, in particular to facilitate the collection of regional-level data and information for the future integrated assessment(s) and to more generally reinforce the science-policy interface with the EU and the European Environment Agency. *(European Union)*
- Regarding the outcome of the third cycle, and in particular on the question on how avoiding overlaps with different global assessments, the revision of the Global Environment Outlook (GEO) process, taking place this year, is specifically addressing this question within its Steering Committee in order to foresee different options and to present them at UNEA-5 for further discussions on the future of the GEO process. *(European Union)*
- Socio-economic aspects are essential dimensions within the sustainable development concept and should be carefully addressed within the third cycle *(European Union)*
- Regarding the interactions between the Regular Process and other United Nations bodies and processes, the UN Environment Assembly should be included in p.16, point 5. We support a targeted contribution of WOA III in implementing operative provisions of UNEA resolutions; this is particularly evident, for example, concerning its resolutions on marine litter and microplastics but also for considering the discussion on the future of the GPA. *(European Union)*
- There is the need for harmonization of scientific assessments using building blocks that enable action to be taken at scale. The regions provide the means to strengthen monitoring and data/information sharing to support such development and address the targets and indicators particularly under the

Sustainable Development Goal 14 and the Global Biodiversity Framework post 2020. UNEP is considering an innovative Global Environment Monitoring System for oceans and coasts to complement its own portfolio of observatories that shall in future inform and enable action at scale. This will draw on the regular process on the one end and rely on a broader partnership effort to embrace the notion of maintaining and building natural coastal and ocean capital. (*UNEP*)