

Terms of reference and working methods for the Group of Experts of the third cycle of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects

General tasks

1. The general task of the Group of Experts shall be to carry out or coordinate any outputs, including assessments, within the framework of the Regular Process at the request of the General Assembly² under the supervision of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole and its Bureau. In particular, the tasks of the Group of Experts shall be:

(a) To draft an implementation plan and timetable for the implementation of the third cycle of the Regular Process, for approval by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole or its Bureau, and, if necessary, to propose amendments to that plan and timetable for approval in the same way;

(b) To carry out implementation plans in accordance with their timetables and any such general guidance;

(c) To develop a series brief documents outlining specific policy-relevant information from the second *World Ocean Assessment* as they may relate to and support other ocean-related intergovernmental processes;

(d) To oversee the preparation of assessment(s) of the state of the marine environment, including socioeconomic aspects, as outlined in the programme of work for the third cycle of the Regular Process, with the final goal of strengthening the decision-making at all levels;

(e) To provide specifications of the types of additional expertise that the Group of Experts will need to carry out any assessment(s), as a basis for appointments, through the regional groups, of members of the pool of experts;

(f) To designate from among its members a lead member and, as appropriate, other members to take responsibility, under the overall responsibility of the Group of Experts, for each part, section or chapter of any assessment(s) or other output, subject to the approval of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole or its Bureau;

(g) To propose assignments for approval by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole or its Bureau of members of the pool of experts:

(i) To work with the designated lead member of the Group of Experts in drafting working papers and/or draft chapters of any assessment(s) and/or other output;

(ii) To review and comment on material produced for any assignment;

(h) To propose general guidance to all those involved in producing any assessment(s) or other outputs, based on the principles and documents approved by the General Assembly, for approval by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole or its Bureau, and taking into account lessons learned from the first and second cycles;

(i) To review all material produced for any assessment(s) or other output, to take such steps as it considers necessary to assure the quality of data and information used in such material, and to take any further steps necessary to bring the assessment or other output to a satisfactory conclusion, subject to the approval of the Bureau if any such action would require expenditure from the trust fund for the Regular Process;

² It is understood that to carry out any assessment the approval of the General Assembly is required.

(j) To propose arrangements for approval by the Bureau for the peer review of the draft of any assessment(s) or other output;

(k) In the light of the comments from the peer review, to agree on a final text of any assessment(s) or other output for submission through its Bureau to the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole, and to present that text to the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole;

(l) To provide input with regard to other activities taking place during the third cycle of the Regular Process, including the development and implementation of the capacity-building programme and the outreach and engagement strategy, as appropriate;

(m) To promote engagement among bodies which can contribute to marine assessment, including United Nations agencies, bodies, funds and programmes, other intergovernmental organizations, relevant non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, the scientific community, private-sector bodies and philanthropic organizations, as appropriate;

(n) To perform any other tasks assigned to it by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole.

Composition and appointment

2. The Group of Experts shall be composed as follows:

(a) The Group of Experts shall be composed of a maximum of 25 experts and no more than 5 experts per regional group. Its composition shall reflect geographical distribution and gender balance;

(b) The composition shall ensure a mix of disciplinary expertise and involve participants from all regions in order to take into account different regional circumstances and experience. All of the main disciplines in the social, economic and environmental sciences should be considered for inclusion;

(c) The experts may be drawn from any type of affiliation (e.g., a Government, a non-governmental organization, an intergovernmental organization, the private sector, academic and research institutions, holders of traditional knowledge³);

(d) The experts shall have recognized excellence in their field or fields of expertise;

(e) The experts shall have demonstrated high-level participation in processes relevant to the marine environment.

3. Members shall be in a position to devote substantial amounts of time to the work of the Regular Process.

4. Members shall participate in the Group of Experts in their personal capacity and not as a representative of a Government or of any authority external to the United Nations.

5. If a member of the Group of Experts for any cause can no longer perform their duties (including where this is owing to pressure of other commitments) or wishes to resign, they shall immediately inform the Joint Coordinators and, through them, the secretariat of the situation. In that case, or if it becomes obvious that the member cannot deliver the assigned tasks within the timetable set out under the approved work plan, the Joint Coordinators can propose to the Group of Experts to reassign the tasks to other members of the Group of Experts to ensure delivery within the approved

³ See resolutions [66/231](#), [65/37 A](#) and [64/71](#).

timetable, or another member appointed from the same regional group shall serve for the remainder of the predecessor's term.

6. An appointment to fill a vacancy occurring during a cycle may be made at any time.

7. Membership shall be renewed at the start of each cycle of the Regular Process. Existing members of the Group of Experts may be reappointed, taking into account the desirability of some degree of continuity.

Rules and regulations

8. Members shall serve in their personal capacity and not as representative of a Government or of any authority external to the United Nations. In addition, members shall neither seek nor accept instructions regarding their service for the United Nations from any Government or from any authority external to the United Nations. Members cannot represent the Group of Experts at any meetings or conferences for which they are acting as representatives of a Government or any authority external to the United Nations.

9. Members, during the period of their service with the United Nations, may not engage in any activity that is incompatible with the discharge of their duties with the United Nations. Members are required to exercise the utmost discretion in all matters of official business of the United Nations. Members may not communicate at any time to any other person, Government or authority external to the United Nations any information known to them by reason of their association with the United Nations that has not been made public, except in the course of their duties or by authorization of the Secretary-General or his/her designate, nor shall they at any time use such information to private advantage. These obligations do not lapse upon cessation of their service with the United Nations.

Proprietary rights

10. The United Nations shall be entitled to all proprietary rights, including but not limited to patents, copyrights and trademarks, with regard to material which bears a direct relation to, or is made in consequence of, the services provided to the Organization by members of the Group of Experts.

Compensation

11. Members of the Group of Experts shall not receive any honorarium, fee or other remuneration from the United Nations for their participation in the Group of Experts.

12. Members from developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing States, will, subject to the availability of resources, receive travel assistance to participate in the meetings to be convened by the United Nations in conjunction with the work of the Group of Experts.

13. A limited amount of funds will be made available to cover the travel-related cost of members from developed countries to participate in the meetings to be convened by the United Nations in conjunction with the work of the Group of Experts.

Working methods

14. The working methods of the Group of Experts shall be as follows:

(a) The Group of Experts may operate even if there are vacancies in its composition;

(b) The Group of Experts shall designate two coordinators from among its members: one from a developed country and one from a developing country. The task of the coordinators shall be to take such actions as they jointly consider will facilitate the discharge by the Group of Experts of the tasks which it has been given. The Group of Experts may change the designation of the coordinators at any time;

(c) The Group of Experts shall also designate deputy coordinators to support the work of the coordinators, taking into account gender balance and geographical distribution among the coordinators and deputy coordinators. The task of the deputy coordinators shall be to assist the coordinators in performing their coordinating functions, including the assistance to coordinating meetings, as well as, in the absence of the coordinators, perform the functions of the coordinators, including for regional workshops and meetings of the Group of Experts. The Group of Experts may change the designation of the deputy coordinators at any time;

(d) Communications between the Group of Experts, the secretariat of the Regular Process and States shall be made preferably through a secure website or, if need be, other means, as appropriate;

(e) The Group of Experts shall communicate with the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole and its Bureau through the secretariat of the Regular Process and through meetings convened by the secretariat of the Regular Process, within available resources;

(f) When needed, and within available resources, the Group of Experts may meet to discuss areas of work which cannot be dealt with through electronic meetings or other forms of electronic communication;

(g) The Group of Experts shall aim to work by consensus. Where consensus cannot be achieved, the Group of Experts shall ensure that all divergent opinions are appropriately reported in any document produced by the Group of Experts or the secretariat.

Secretariat

15. The Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, as part of its functions as secretariat of the Regular Process, shall serve as the secretariat of the Group of Experts and provide advice to the Group of Experts when appropriate.