

First Ocean Assessment under the Auspices of the United Nations

Under the auspices of the United Nations General Assembly and its Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socio-economic Aspects. The United Nations General Assembly, on 23 December 2015 adopted Resolution 70/235 on “*Oceans and the law of the sea*” in which it welcomed with appreciation the first global integrated marine assessment and approved its summary. It includes regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socio-economic Aspects (Regular Process).

The First Global Integrated Marine Assessment, also known as the “World Ocean Assessment I”, is the outcome of the first cycle of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects.

It provides an important scientific basis for the consideration of ocean issues by Governments, intergovernmental processes, and all policy-makers and others involved in ocean affairs. The Assessment reinforces the science-policy interface and establishes the basis for future assessments. Together with future assessments and related initiatives, it will help in the implementation of the recently adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly its ocean-related goals¹.

The assessment covers entire issues related to the oceans which consist of Seven Parts and Fifty-five Chapters. Part I of the Assessment – Summary – includes ten themes: climate change, over-exploitation of marine living resources, the significance of food security and food safety, patterns of biodiversity and the changes in them, the pressures from increased uses of ocean space, the threats from increased pollution, the effects of cumulative impacts, the inequalities in the distribution of benefits from the ocean, the importance of coherent management of human impacts on the ocean, and the problems of delay in implementing known solutions.

A website (www.worldoceanassessment.org) has also been established to make information about the Assessment available and to provide a means of communication among members of the Group of Experts and of the Pool of Experts

The regular process under the United Nations would be recognized as the global mechanism for reviewing the state of the marine environment, including socioeconomic aspects, on a continual and systematic basis by providing regular assessments at the global and supra-regional levels and an integrated view of environmental, economic and social aspects.

Such assessment would support informed decision-making and thus contribute to managing in a sustainable manner human activities that affect the oceans and seas, in accordance with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and other applicable international instruments and initiatives. This would facilitate the identification of trends and enable appropriate responses by States and competent regional and international organizations. The regular process would promote and facilitate the full participation of developing countries in all of its activities. Ecosystem approaches would be recognized as a useful framework for conducting fully integrated assessments.

¹ Foreword by Secretary General, United Nations In the Assessment document titled, “World Ocean Assessment I

The task of the first cycle of the regular process (2010 to 214) was to produce the World Ocean Assessment. To this end, the General Assembly has created an Ad Hoc Working Group of the whole to oversee and guide the regular process, and a Group of Expert to carry out the assessments within the framework of the of the regular process. In addition, a much larger pool of experts has been created to assist the Group of Expert in conducting the assessments and to provide effective peer review to ensure the high quality of outputs. Since the Working Group meets once a year, a Bureau consisting of fifteen Member States, representing the regional groups of the United Nations, was established for inter-sessional periods.

In its resolution 68/70 adopted on 9 December 2013, the General Assembly took note of the guidance to contributors adopted by the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole (A/68/82 and Corr.1, annex II). In that guidance, it is stated that contributors are expected to act in their personal capacity as independent experts, and not as representatives of any Government or any other authority or organization. They should neither seek nor accept instructions from outside the Regular Process regarding their work on the preparation of the Assessment, although they are free to consult widely with other experts and with government officials, in order to ensure that their contributions are credible, legitimate and relevant.

The Division for Ocean Affairs and Law of the Sea, Office of Legal Affairs, United Nations, has been designated by General Assembly to act as Secretariat of the regular Process and it maintains separate website² for regular process, including an archive of relevant documents.

² <http://www.worldoceanassessment.org//>