

Meeting Report
4th meeting of UN-Oceans
New York, NY, USA
9 June 2006

1. The 4th meeting of UN-Oceans was held at UN Headquarters in New York on 9 June 2006. Present at the meeting were the representatives of the CBD Secretariat, FAO, IAEA, IMO, IOC of UNESCO, UN/DESA, UN/DOALOS(OLA), UNDP, FAO and ISA. UNEP was not present at the meeting but sent an e-mail message to the UN-Oceans secretariat commenting on several agenda items.

2. The meeting was opened at 10:00 a.m. by the Coordinator, Mr. Patricio Bernal (IOC of UNESCO), who proceeded to have the draft agenda of the 4th meeting adopted (Agenda items 1 and 2). The meeting then discussed each of the items on the agenda.

I. Reports from UN-O Task Forces (Agenda item 3)

3. IOC of UNESCO gave a brief account of the activities of the **UN-Oceans Task Force on Post-Tsunami Response**, which was under the lead of IOC of UNESCO. It was recalled that the Task Force members had contributed to the IOC of UNESCO International Coordination Meeting for the Development of a Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System in the Indian Ocean (Paris, March 2005) and identified specific areas of expertise to advance the implementation of such a warning system. Also, under the leadership of UNEP/GPA and the World Bank, the Task Force developed "Twelve Guiding Principles for Charting Environmentally-sound Coastal Rehabilitation", initially presented to Governments at a UNEP meeting in Cairo in 2005. The Guiding Principles were being further refined and are due to be published by UNEP with case studies for review by affected countries and international organizations in 2006.

4. Due note was taken that the bulk of the remaining post-tsunami work has been under the able leadership of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) and WMO, especially with respect to implementing a multilayered approach to natural disasters and supporting the development of national plans. **Therefore and inasmuch as UN-Oceans Task Forces are "ad hoc" and time-bounded task forces, it was decided to discontinue the UN-Oceans Task Force on Post-Tsunami Response .**

5. The CBD Secretariat, with reference to the **UN-Oceans Task Force on Biodiversity in Marine Areas beyond National Jurisdiction**, briefed the meeting on the activities of the Task Force. It was pointed out that at the CBD COP-8 the oceans discussions were dominated by issues relating to marine areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction, and in particular the respective roles of the UNGA and CBD. The COP recognized that CBD had a key role to play in supporting the work of the UN General Assembly with regard to marine protected areas beyond national jurisdiction, by focusing on provision of scientific and, as appropriate, technical information and advice relating to marine biological diversity, the application of the ecosystem approach and the precautionary approach, and in delivering the 2010 targets. The CBD COP-8

also requested the CBD Secretariat, in collaboration with UN/DOALOS (OLA) and other relevant organizations, to further analyze options for preventing and mitigating impacts of some activities on selected seabed habitats.

6. In view of the above, UN/DOALOS (OLA) proposed to the members of UN-Oceans that the UN-Oceans Task Force on Biodiversity in Marine Areas beyond National Jurisdiction be placed under the joint co-lead of UN/DOALOS (OLA) and the CBD Secretariat. In accordance with the existing terms of reference of the task force, DOALOS would coordinate the work relating to the tools (within the international and regional legal regime) available for the conservation and sustainable use of the biodiversity concerned; whereas the CBD Secretariat would continue to coordinate the work relating to the global distribution of biodiversity (including genetic resources) in marine areas beyond national jurisdiction, as well as the status of that biodiversity and the threats that it is under. **After discussion, the members of UN-Oceans agreed to the proposal for a joint co-lead by UN/DOALOS (OLA) and the CB Secretariat of the UN-Oceans Task Force on Marine Biodiversity beyond National Jurisdiction, with the distribution of tasks as described, since it would promote coordination.**

7. UN/DOALOS (OLA) reported on the **UN-Oceans Task force on the Regular Process for a Global Assessment of the Marine Environment**. It was stated that as a result of UNGA resolution 60/30, which launched the start-up phase, the “Assessment of Assessments”, with a 2-year time frame and designated IOC of UNESCO and UNEP as the lead agencies of the Regular Process, there did not appear to be a need for the continuation of the Task Force, which would duplicate the work of the secretariats of the lead agencies. In addition, DOALOS had appointed a staff member as the focal point for the Regular Process to coordinate work with the lead agencies. It was also stressed that coordination work amongst the lead agencies and UN-Oceans would continue. **Accordingly, it was decided to discontinue the Task Force.**

8. As regards the **UN-Oceans Task Force on the Second Inter-governmental Review of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA)**, the meeting had an e-mail message from UNEP/GPA. That e-mail communicated that the TOR-document on the GPA IGR-2 Joint Task Force with UN-Water had been revised following the input received at the 3rd UN-Oceans meeting. But, little feedback had been received thus far. Also, IGR-2 documents were being finalized and the input of UN-Oceans member agencies would be highly appreciated. The documents would be shared with UN-Oceans member agencies soon. It was mentioned that the same low response from both UN-Oceans and UN-Water was similar for the preparatory work for the GPA IGR-2 partnership day. In connection with the Joint Task Force, the GPA Coordination Office had developed a Thematic Issue paper, following the existing examples from UN-Water, so as to further support the focus of the Joint Task Force towards concrete information sharing and possible joint coordinated action. However, the 4th meeting of UN-Oceans, although recognizing the importance of the theme and topic, could not endorse the paper because no one was present at the meeting from UNEP/GPA to explain it fully. **Lastly, the 4th meeting of UN-Oceans agreed in principle that there were no objections to such a thematic paper between UN-Oceans (UNEP/GPA) and UN-Water, but that the Task Force should be convened to discuss it.**

II. Status of the UN ATLAS of the Oceans (Agenda item 4)

9. The UN ATLAS of the Oceans had been developed and maintained under the supervision and editorial responsibility of UN-Oceans, with FAO as the project director. The ATLAS had received financial support (UNF grant) and contributions in kind from a core group of UN organizations as well as from US/NOAA and other national partners. However, the funds had now been exhausted and, without a minimum cost-sharing arrangement by the UN system, the future of the ATLAS was in doubt. The support of CEB High Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) in this effort was sought. The UN ATLAS was presented to the 11th session of the HLCP on 1 March 2006 as an example of UN collaboration on oceans. The presentation was well received. HLCP commended UN-Oceans for the UN ATLAS of the Oceans and insisted that the initiative needed to be financially supported. They agreed to bring the issue of funding for the ATLAS to the attention of the CEB.

10. FAO mentioned that Mr. Patrizio Civili, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy coordination and Inter-agency Affairs, UN/DESA, confirmed that he intended to support the ATLAS and the UN-WTO expressed interest in joining the UN ATLAS. The HLCP report states, inter alia in paragraph 56, that "The Chair urged the organizations most directly concerned to see to it that the project is provided the necessary financial support to ensure its continuation."

11. In the discussion that followed, the CBD Secretariat mentioned that it intended to allocate US \$10,000 to \$15,000 per year in support of the ATLAS. ISA had also contributed financially to the ATLAS. IMO's contribution of US \$10,000 had been transferred on 10 May 2006.

12. Overwhelming support was expressed for the continuation of the UN ATLAS of the Oceans. However, as the work of the agencies contained in the ATLAS was outdated, FAO suggested automatic updating with minimal work by inter-phasing to update the system by each agency. The work would entail one staff member at each agency working for 1 month per year. UNDP, although it did not have a definitive answer as to funding, suggested that the GEF-LME project should be integrated into the ATLAS. IAEA suggested including information on marine radioactivity in the ATLAS, to be either linked or highlighted. IAEA hoped to make a financial contribution to the work of the ATLAS. UNEP's activities on the ATLAS are covered by the Division of Early Warning and Assessment (DEWA). UNEP/DEWA indicated in the e-mail from UNEP that support for the ATLAS could only be given through fund raising following normal procedures within UNEP. So far, this had not been successful. DOALOS mentioned that in view of the HLCP recommendation for support of the ATLAS, the proper procedure for the United Nations was for the UN Controller to allocate funds for the UN's contribution to the ATLAS. **It was therefore suggested that the Coordinator of UN-Oceans should write to Mr. Civili concerning the recommendation of HLCP.**

III. UN-Oceans Website location and responsibilities (Agenda item 5)

13. FAO stated that UN-Oceans site (<www.un-oceans.org>) had been sent to FAO to be hosted by the UN ATLAS of the Oceans site. The UN-Oceans site was not a dynamic site but rather a static one. Although the UN-Oceans' web address was purchased by FAO, the UN-Oceans site is owned by UNESCO. Nonetheless, both agencies agreed to make the best use both web addresses. **A number of technical problems remained to be resolved. Nonetheless, the UN-Oceans Task Forces were encouraged to use the site, which is to remain on the UN-ATLAS of the Oceans website.**

IV. Report on the Regular Process (“GMA”) (agenda item 6)

14. DOALOS reported that the Regular Process had been transferred by UNGA resolution 60/30 from the UN to UNEP and IOC of UNESCO. Cooperation between DOALOS and UNEP and IOC of UNESCO was continuing and a DOALOS focal point had been designated by the DOALOS Director. It was also mentioned that an oral report on the recent developments with respect to the Regular Process was to be made during the 7th meeting of the Consultative Process during the week of 12 to 16 June 2006. It was underscored by IOC of UNESCO that funding was proving to be difficult to obtain and that the question of the observer status of GESAMP, IGOs and NGOs at the meetings of the Ad Hoc Steering Group (AHSG) was under review and would be resolved shortly. IAEA-MEL also expressed an interest in obtaining observer status with the AHSG.

V. Recent Developments concerning GESAMP (Agenda item 7)

15. IMO, the Administrative Secretariat of GESAMP, stated that an agency-led process to revitalize GESAMP (Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection) was underway. In addition, funding for strengthening GESAMP had been recently provided by the Government of Sweden (SIDA). GESAMP was embarking on a number of projects, e.g., short-term activities with IAEA-MEL as well as FAO, the development of a database of pool of experts and a GESAMP website. An MOU to revitalize GESAMP was being discussed with its sponsoring organizations. Also, GESAMP had received funds from SIDA to contribute to the Regular Process, in particular by organizing a workshop for a peer review of the survey on an assessments project conducted by UNEP and WCMC. GESAMP also envisaged working with the CBD Secretariat in order to meet the 2010 targets. It was stressed that as the sole expert group within the UN system for independent scientific advice on the state of the marine environment, it should be sought after more often by UN agencies. The next meeting of GESAMP was scheduled to take place in November 2006 in Paris.

VI. Coordinating UN efforts to advance Establishment and Conservation of Marine Protected Areas (Agenda item 8)

16. The proposal for a new Task Force on marine and coastal protected areas was presented by IOC of UNESCO and the draft TOR was presented to the meeting. After a discussion on the objective of the Task Force and scope of the TOR in view of the mandate of the agencies concerned, **it was decided that the TOR should be redrafted and resubmitted to the agencies, taking into account the time-bound nature of UN-Oceans task forces.** In this connection, FAO mentioned that it would share with UNEP and the CBD Secretariat its integrated assessment of an MPA.

VII. Other matters (Agenda item 9)

17. Mr. R. Fauzi C. Mantoura, IAEA-MEL, made a PowerPoint presentation on the work of **IAEA Marine Environment Laboratory (MEL) in Monaco**. It was pointed out that it was the only marine laboratory in the UN system that focused on worldwide marine assessments. (The presentation could be made available by the UN-Oceans Secretariat upon request.)

18. UNEP/GPA also communicated to the meeting in its e-mail message a proposal by the NGO **Global Forum on Oceans, Coasts and Islands**, to contribute to the work of UN-Oceans by

sharing the road maps being developed and other compilations of UN-Oceans wide overviews and to support the secretariat functions of UN-Oceans. **The meeting took note of the generous offer by the NGO. However, in view of its role as the coordinating mechanism amongst the secretariats of UN agencies, UN-Oceans decided to suggest to the Global Forum that its participation in the work of UN-Oceans would be more effective through its Task Forces on account of its expertise.**

The meeting ended its deliberations at 18:05.