



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FIFTH MEETING OF THE INFORMAL CONSULTATIVE PROCESS: THURSDAY, 10 JUNE 2004

On Thursday, delegates to the fifth meeting of the UN Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (Consultative Process) convened the second session of the International Workshop on a process for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socioeconomic aspects (GMA International Workshop). Delegates heard a report from the Friends of the Co-Chairs group and made statements. Following preliminary statements in the morning, the Friends of the Co-Chairs reconvened throughout the afternoon to reach agreement on contentious issues, and prepare draft conclusions. *Editor's note: recording of discussions within the Friends of the Co-Chairs group was not permitted.*

GMA INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP

REPORT: The UK, Coordinator of the Friends of the Co-Chairs group, reported on discussions held by the group on Tuesday and Wednesday. He said agreement had been reached on, *inter alia*: the assessment of assessments; the need for assessment regions to be based on ecological and political aspects; the participation of all UN agencies, including the Secretariat of the Convention on Biodiversity; and the need to avoid duplication of work. He highlighted disagreement on the mandate of the GMA and its scope.

STATEMENTS: Framework: Iran, on behalf of the G-77/CHINA, supported by JAPAN and ICELAND, noted that the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Johannesburg Plan

of Implementation (JPOI) provide the overall framework for establishing the GMA. The G-77/CHINA stressed that all aspects of sustainable development should be included. The US and INDONESIA said the JPOI holds the high-level political mandate to establish the GMA.

Scope: SOUTH AFRICA said the GMA should be comprehensive and avoid creating artificial prioritization and hierarchy. While NORWAY stated that the GMA must be based on the ecosystem approach, INDIA and ICELAND called for clarifying the concept, noting that it may not be mature enough to be operational. INDONESIA and ITALY said the assessment should include both socioeconomic and environmental aspects.

Ireland, on behalf of the EUROPEAN UNION (EU), stated that the purpose of the GMA was to improve the scientific understanding of the oceans for sound decision making and, supported by NORWAY, AUSTRALIA, ICELAND and the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, said it should not encompass fisheries assessment or management. ITALY clarified that the assessment, although not aimed at addressing management of living resources, should encompass the effects of pollution on marine flora and fauna. AUSTRALIA underlined that excluding living marine resources from the GMA would imply failure to respond to the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD).

The US stated that the scope of the GMA had been set by the WSSD. ICELAND opposed, noting that the JPOI only includes recommendations. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION suggested that the scope of the GMA be agreed upon at a later stage in order to avoid delays in its establishment.



Start-up phase: The G-77/CHINA said the first step should be to identify challenges and opportunities for enhancing cooperation on the basis of available resources.

SOUTH AFRICA expressed support for a staged development, with a first phase assessing existing regional and global mechanisms and capacity-building programmes. CHINA and JAPAN suggested the first stage focus on identifying gaps in existing assessment mechanisms, with JAPAN suggesting to establish task forces.

ARGENTINA reminded delegates that the WSSD mandate requires the adoption of specific measures within the year, and stressed the need for full participation of all stakeholders in the process of establishing the GMA and its subsequent operation.

Organizational approach: INDIA expressed doubts regarding the concept of GMA regions. ARGENTINA stressed that regional arrangements for assessment can only be based on States' consent and that States should be free to contribute individually, and said the assessment of assessments should not include the identification of new regional units. CHINA said biology should not be the only criterion for defining assessment regions, and the RUSSIAN FEDERATION favored equitable geographical representation.

Capacity building and technology transfer: The G-77/CHINA highlighted the importance of capacity building and technology transfer to enable all countries to participate in the assessment. SWEDEN and CHINA said capacity building in developing countries should be a priority for the GMA.

Inter-agency coordination and cooperation: The G-77/CHINA and ICELAND recommended drawing on existing organizations, UN agencies and institutions, rather than creating a new mechanism, in order to avoid duplication of work. The G-77/CHINA also requested clarifying the relation between the terms of reference of the GMA and relevant UN agencies.

Reporting: The G-77/CHINA cautioned against the burden and costs resulting from additional reporting.

Funding: The G-77/CHINA and JAPAN called for clarifying the financial modalities of the process' operational activities. SWEDEN noted the imprecise figures contained in the Experts Group's report, and suggested further discussion on financial issues.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Discussions on the global marine assessment (GMA) took on a clearer negotiating spin on Thursday as positions further polarized in the Friends of the Co-Chairs group on the scope of the GMA. Initial frustrations turned to cynicism later in the day with some delegates noting that a global marine assessment without living resources would be an empty shell. This was reinforced by thoughts that a compromise could eventually be reached on a "global" assessment that would include living resources but only encompass specific regions.

As the Friends of the Co-Chairs were arduously addressing the establishment and mandate of a "task force charged with initiating and coordinating the next stage of preparatory work necessary to establish the formal GMA," some delegates were disillusioned by the fact that after over three years of preparatory work for the process, it may be back to square one. Noting that the GMA is the first process to follow up on the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, some thought that the opportunity to lead the way was being missed. Echoing one of the Co-Chairs' remark, at the opening of the GMA International Workshop, on whether delegates were aiming at a Rolls Royce or a Volkswagen, one delegate noted that, at this stage, everyone may be walking home.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

GMA INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP: The GMA International Workshop will convene from 10:00-10:30 am, in Conference Room 1, to consider draft conclusions prepared by the Friends of the Co-Chairs group.

PLENARY: Plenary will convene throughout the day, starting at 10:30 am, in Conference Room 1, to finish discussing areas of concern and actions needed, identify issues for further consideration, and discuss the meeting's draft recommendations prepared by Co-Chairs Felipe Paolillo (Uruguay) and Philip Burgess (Australia).

ENB REPORT: The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* report containing a summary and analysis of this meeting will be available online on Monday, 14 June, at <http://www.iisd.ca/oceans/icp5/>