



The Permanent Mission of Iceland to the United Nations

**Statement by
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**Regular process for global reporting and assessment
of the state of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects:
the “assessment of assessments”**

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Seven years after world leaders decided in Johannesburg to launch a regular process under the United Nations for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects, the time has come to give body and weight to that momentous decision. Iceland would like to convey its special thanks to the Ad Hoc Steering Group, the two lead agencies and the Group of Experts for guiding us through the start-up phase of the process. As a result of their devotion and hard work over the last two years, we are now in a much better position to get the process up and running.

Consistent with General Assembly resolution 63/111, our task is to recommend a course of action to the 64th Assembly, based on the report of the Ad Hoc Steering Group. Let me state right up front that Iceland fully supports the establishment of the regular process and will work with other member states in a constructive spirit to fulfill the mandate given to us. We believe that the tasks already carried out have served to guide the development of the regular process in the direction originally intended. However, the approach set out in the findings of the Group of Experts is undeniably an ambitious one, presenting a number of challenges that member states may have to evaluate carefully before specific recommendations to the General Assembly can be made. In that context, it is important to keep in mind that the effective use of resources is key for the effective implementation of the regular process.

As the Group of Experts rightly points out, there is currently no systematic effort to keep under continuing review the state of the world's oceans or the sustainability of how human beings use and manage them. Certainly, the main objective of the regular process we are about to initiate should be to address that deficiency. In order to do so, we will need to gradually develop our capacity to assemble, analyze, assess and integrate information on the marine environment, including its economic and social aspects. At the same time, capacity-building needs to be seen as a cornerstone of the effort, stimulating national, sub regional and regional assessment where the necessary processes are not in place.

Turning to the institutional framework, our preference is to work within existing structures to the extent possible. Consequently we would support the option of having UNICPOLOS operate as a forum for all Member States to consider the objective and scope of each individual assessment and to answer key questions on the design of every regular cycle

Iceland shares the view that particular attention should be focused on the interface between scientific assessments and authorities responsible for formulating relevant policies. In order for the regular process to have the necessary impact, it is imperative that we not only improve our science-based, integrated knowledge of the world's oceans, but also make it easier for governments to take informed decisions about their sustainable use.

There can be little doubt that through the Assessment of Assessments we already have a substantial down-payment towards the setting up of an effective regular process of precisely that kind. To build on that achievement, our priority should be to initiate the first cycle of the process as soon as possible by signing off on the necessary arrangements for the establishment of a panel of experts.

At the same time, let me underline a related point. The main recipients or end-users of the products of the regular process are national governments and intergovernmental organizations at the global and regional levels. As the Ad Hoc Steering Group correctly observes in its report, the aim of the process is to support existing governance mechanisms by providing information which is relevant to policymaking, but not prescriptive of what policies should be adopted. In other words, our objective in setting up the regular process is neither to supplant nor to complement existing governance mechanisms, but rather to reinforce them. For that reason, care should be taken not to encumber the institutional framework unnecessarily through the setting up of costly, complex and duplicative procedures.

Much is at stake in getting the arrangements for the regular process right. While bearing in mind that any institutional framework we choose to set up must be consistent with the United Nations Law of the Sea Convention, our approach should be guided by flexibility and pragmatism. The Icelandic delegation will certainly work in that spirit over the coming days.