

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

GESAMP¹ is a group of experts that advises the United Nations (UN) system on the scientific aspects of marine environmental protection. GESAMP is needed first because of the international policy requirement for a cross-sectoral, interdisciplinary, and science-based approach to marine environmental affairs, and second to meet the practical requirement for coordination and cooperation among UN agencies with relevant responsibilities through a joint advisory mechanism.

GESAMP consists of 25-30 experts in a wide range of disciplines relevant to marine environmental protection, including socio-economic ones. Experts act in an individual capacity, not as representatives of their governments or institutions, ensuring the independence of GESAMP's advice. Individual studies and assessments are usually carried out by specialist working groups that also include experts who are not current members of GESAMP. This broadens the network of experts involved in GESAMP activities and provides for the tailoring of expertise to specific projects. From its establishment in 1969 to June 2003, GESAMP produced 43 in-depth technical studies and 4 broad assessments of the state of the global marine environment.

GESAMP's mission is

“To provide authoritative, independent, interdisciplinary scientific advice to organizations and Governments to support the protection and sustainable use of the marine environment.”

To fulfill its mission GESAMP will, in response to requests:

1. Integrate and synthesize the results of regional and thematic assessments and scientific studies to support global assessments of the marine environment;
2. Provide scientific and technical guidance on the design and execution of marine environmental assessments;
3. Provide scientific reviews, analyses, and advice on specific topics relevant to the condition of the marine environment, its investigation, protection, and/or management.

In addition GESAMP will regularly:

4. Provide an overview of the marine environmental monitoring, assessment, and related activities of UN agencies and advise on how these activities might be improved and better integrated and coordinated;

¹ IMO/FAO/UNESCO-IOC/WMO/WHO/IAEA/UN/UNEP Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection

5. Identify new and emerging issues regarding the degradation of the marine environment that are of relevance to governments and sponsoring organizations.

In 2001 GESAMP's eight sponsoring organizations commissioned an independent review that concluded that GESAMP should be continued as an agreed source of independent scientific advice on marine environmental protection to the UN system, but with changes to its organization, work methods, and management. The resulting discussions among GESAMP experts, its sponsoring organizations, and a variety of interested external parties have led to a strategic vision for a "New GESAMP" that will:

- maintain and strengthen GESAMP's established **credibility**;
- strengthen **engagement** both with the broader scientific community and with governments and other major user groups to enhance the relevance and legitimacy of GESAMP's advice; and
- ensure **professionalism** in work methods, management, and product delivery.

A key feature of the strategy is the establishment of a pool of experts from which members of GESAMP and its working groups will be selected. Governments, intergovernmental and regional organizations, scientific bodies, international NGO's, and other major groups will be encouraged to nominate experts to the pool.

Access to this large pool of expertise will ensure GESAMP's inclusiveness and multi-disciplinarity, thereby reinforcing its scientific credibility. Perhaps more importantly, the pool provides a vital mechanism to engage the broader scientific community. Pool experts who are not current members of GESAMP and its working groups will be kept up to date on GESAMP's activities and products, and have opportunities to participate through, for example, peer review, issue identification, and contributing to *ad hoc* task teams. This will not only raise GESAMP's profile but also build capacity to participate, not just in GESAMP but in scientific advisory processes generally.

GESAMP will proactively seek partnerships for its projects and activities. Governments, intergovernmental and regional organizations, scientific bodies, and international NGO's may, for example, propose and/or sponsor GESAMP projects. In addition, GESAMP will regularly report its findings and advice directly to intergovernmental fora such as the United Nations Open-Ended Informal Consultative Process (ICP), Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), and the governing bodies of its sponsoring organizations.

To ensure the relevance, or salience, of GESAMP's advice, members of important user groups such as scientists, environmental management practitioners, and policy makers will be explicitly engaged at all phases of GESAMP projects, including their design and execution and the

peer review of results. GESAMP products will be professionally edited and produced in appropriate formats to ensure their relevance and user-friendliness, and promoted and distributed so as to maximise their visibility and availability, and therefore their impact.

The results of GESAMP's major reviews, analyses, and assessments will continue to be published in the long-standing *GESAMP Reports and Studies* series, with improved production standards to make the reports more visible and user-friendly. Other GESAMP products will include:

- an *Annual Report of the Chair* on GESAMP's activities, conclusions, and recommendations; consensus statements on new and emerging issues and major events related to marine environmental protection;
- biennial overviews of the marine environmental assessment activities of the UN sponsoring organizations and other organizations; and
- an annual business report.

This strategic plan provides concrete mechanisms to ensure GESAMP's professionalism, including its effectiveness, efficiency, transparency, and accountability. A GESAMP Office will be established to provide centralized management and a focal point for GESAMP's interactions with governments and other major groups. All GESAMP activities will be managed on the basis of a two-year rolling work plan, updated annually. Projects will be executed according to a design brief that details the agreed budget, efficient

and effective work methods including deadlines and milestones, and plans for the publication, distribution, and promotion of outputs. The annual business report will include performance auditing of GESAMP activities against the work plan and project briefs.

GESAMP's core activities will be financed from a Trust Fund, an initial budget estimate for which is USD 600,000 annually. Individual project activities will be financed from separate project accounts, which will vary according to project requirements.

Of particular interest to GESAMP's sponsoring organizations, their member governments, and other stakeholders is GESAMP's role in marine environmental assessment, particularly in the establishment of the regular Global Marine Assessment (GMA) process called for in UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/57/141. GESAMP has considerable experience in assessing the state of the global marine environment, and is the only established mechanism for inter-agency scientific cooperation and coordination among UN organizations with responsibilities in marine environmental protection. GESAMP is therefore well-suited for a leading role in a global scientific assessment panel that designs the scientific component of the GMA and synthesises regional results. GESAMP also believes that, to provide the necessary linkages with the overall process, it should be involved at other levels of the GMA, for example in regional assessments, capacity building, and policy review, but in an information exchange and support role rather than a leadership role.