

1. INTRODUCTION

GESAMP¹ is a scientific advisory body of the United Nations system, consisting of experts in a range of disciplines relevant to marine environmental protection who are appointed by GESAMP's sponsoring organizations. In 1969 growing concern about marine pollution led several UN agencies to establish GESAMP to provide multidisciplinary advice on marine pollution issues and to help the agencies coordinate, collaborate, and minimise duplication of effort. GESAMP has since widened its activities to encompass all scientific aspects of marine environmental protection, including socio-economic ones.

More than 500 scientists from at least 50 countries have participated in GESAMP and its working groups. GESAMP has produced 43 technical reports on a spectrum of marine environmental issues, and four broad assessments of the state of the global marine environment. This work is held in considerable esteem by the scientific community, as evidenced by its frequent citation in peer-reviewed literature, particularly during the 1990s². GESAMP has made important contributions to the development of international initiatives for marine environmental protection including the 1972 Stockholm Conference, the MARPOL 73/78 Convention, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the

World Commission on Environment and Development ("Brundtland Commission"), UNCED Agenda 21, and the 1995 Washington Declaration on land-based activities. More recently, GESAMP has participated in the process leading to the UN General Assembly's call for the establishment of a regular process for assessment of the global marine environment³.

The UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), at its fourth (1996) and seventh (1999) sessions recognised GESAMP as a "source of agreed, independent scientific advice"⁴ but invited GESAMP's sponsoring organizations to review the group "with a view to improving its effectiveness and comprehensiveness"⁵ and "establishing a means for GESAMP to interact with scientific representatives of governments and major groups⁶." In 2000 the sponsoring organizations commissioned an independent review to evaluate how GESAMP might be improved in light of CSD's concerns, and more fundamentally whether GESAMP is still relevant and needed at all. The review, completed in 2001, strongly recommended that GESAMP should be continued. It also recommended sweeping changes in GESAMP's *modus operandi*, products, and product delivery, concluding that such changes "would result in GESAMP becoming the world's first choice for marine environment protection advice and guidance."⁷

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



²Cordes, R. 2004. Is grey literature ever used? Using citation analysis to measure the impact of GESAMP, an international marine scientific advisory body. *Canadian Journal of Information and Library Science* 28:45-65.

³UN GA resolution A/RES/57/141 paragraph 45 (<http://ods-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N02/547/54/PDF/NO254754.pdf?OpenElement>).

See further: http://www.un.org/Depts/los/general_assembly_resolutions.htm. <http://www.un.org/documents/ecosoc/docs/1996/e1996-28.htm>

⁴CSD, Report on the Fourth Session, doc. E.CN.17/1996/38, decision 4/15, para 45c.

⁵op cit.

⁶CSD, Decision 7/1 Oceans and seas, 1999, doc. E/1999/25, Section I.C, para. 32a.

⁷Independent and in-Depth Evaluation of GESAMP. Report of the Evaluation Team, July 2001. p. 9.