

2. THE STRATEGIC VISION

In consultation with GESAMP experts and interested external parties, GESAMP's sponsoring organizations have developed the proactive plan described herein to update and improve GESAMP's organization, management, and work methods in accordance with the recommendations of the independent review. The plan includes clear objectives, strategies, and measures to address concerns raised by CSD and others. More broadly, it represents a strategic vision for a "New GESAMP" that will:

- Maintain and strengthen GESAMP's established **credibility**;
- Strengthen its **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 GESAMP's work methods, management, and product delivery.

2.1 Why GESAMP?

The international policy arena⁸ has repeatedly recognised and reaffirmed that sustainable use of the marine environment and its resources can only be achieved through a policy approach that is both:

- cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary, because "the problems of ocean

space are closely interrelated and need to be considered as a whole"⁹; and

- based on scientific understanding of marine ecosystems and the human activities that affect them.

Despite the almost universally recognised need for a holistic approach to marine environmental affairs, the UN system largely mirrors the sectoral organization of most governments. In a 1968 report, the UN Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) noted that several UN agencies have potentially overlapping responsibilities for marine environmental protection, and that the range of information required to meet these responsibilities spans a wide range of scientific disciplines. The ACC concluded that an interdisciplinary scientific advisory body, independent of the influence of industry, institutions, and governments, was needed to evaluate the available information. GESAMP was created to meet this need. After three decades, the independent review of GESAMP concluded that the UN system and its constituency still need independent, interdisciplinary, scientific advice on the marine environment, and that GESAMP remains the best mechanism to provide it.

In addition to meeting this accepted policy imperative, GESAMP provides the only established, formal mechanism in the UN system for inter-agency

⁸Examples include the Stockholm Conference (1972), UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS, 1982), UNCED (1992), Global Programme of Action (1995), WSSD Plan of Implementation (2002), and UN General Assembly resolutions 54/33 (2000), 56/12 (2001), and 57/141 (2002).

⁹3rd preambular paragraph of UNCLOS



scientific coordination on marine environmental affairs. The informal interactions that take place through GESAMP's Executive Board (formerly known as the Joint Secretariat) are also very valuable. GESAMP thus helps its sponsoring organizations to reduce duplication and identify areas of common interest and potential cooperation, in accordance with the oft-expressed wishes of governments. Indeed, GESAMP was established *inter alia* to encourage its UN sponsors to “disband or refrain from establishing other interdisciplinary groups on the subject and so avoid duplication of efforts.”¹⁰

GESAMP provides its sponsors collectively with an agreed source of advice and individually with expertise and perspectives outside their core areas of interest that would be difficult to access otherwise. GESAMP's assessments of the global marine environment also help the sponsoring organizations put their particular

responsibilities and activities into a broader context.

For governments, GESAMP provides a single “shop front” for scientific advice on marine environmental issues from an international perspective. For many governments it provides access to expertise that may not be readily available nationally. The new GESAMP will also help build scientific advisory capacity, in particular through the establishment of a pool of experts as described below.

2.2 Credibility

Credibility, along with salience and legitimacy, is one of three critical attributes of scientific assessments that are effective in guiding public policy.¹¹ Credibility is particularly important for issues that are scientifically controversial and for which the state of the science is relatively immature¹², both of which arguably apply to marine environmental science. Maintaining GESAMP's credibility is at the heart of its strategic vision.

2.2.1 Scientific Credibility

GESAMP's first and foremost strength is its scientific credibility, which derives from:

- The professional qualifications and reputations of GESAMP members;
- Their scientific independence in acting in an individual capacity and

¹⁰Updated Memorandum (1994) on the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP).

¹¹Eckley, N. 2001. Designing effective assessments: The role of participation, science and governance, and focus. European Environment Agency, Copenhagen - Environmental issue report No. 26 (http://www.reports.eea.eu.int/environmental_issue_report_2001_26/en)

¹²*op.cit.*

not as representatives of governments, institutions, or organizations;

- The range of expertise in GESAMP and its working groups, and a resultant interdisciplinary perspective that is essential to credibility; and
- The widely acknowledged scientific quality of GESAMP's reports.

Several features of the new GESAMP will reinforce these existing strengths. GESAMP's sponsoring organizations are establishing a pool of experts from which members of GESAMP and its working groups will be centrally selected on the basis of transparent criteria. This will broaden the collective expertise available to GESAMP, particularly with regard to social science, and reinforce GESAMP's independence; both of these also enhance GESAMP's credibility. The separation of scientific analysis from policy processes (Section 2.5) will also enhance independence. A strengthened peer review process will maintain and improve the quality and credibility of GESAMP's reports.

2.2.2 Sponsorship by the United Nations System

GESAMP's status as an inter-agency organ of the UN system is also a source of credibility and, especially, legitimacy. The GESAMP mechanism will therefore continue to function under the auspices of the UN system. An important strategic goal for the new GESAMP, therefore, is to obtain the support of all UN bodies with responsibilities related to marine environmental protection. This



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can only be achieved by efficiently delivering useful products to the UN system.

2.3 Engagement

Proactive engagement with scientists, governments, intergovernmental processes, and other institutions, organizations, and user groups outside the UN system is a second key component of GESAMP's strategic vision. This engagement will ensure GESAMP's credibility and the utility and impact of its advice.

2.3.1 Participation: Engaging the Broader Science Community

Scientific advisory processes tend to draw repeatedly upon known individuals, developing an unintended institutional inertia with regard to membership change¹³. Measures to



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¹³Fritz, J-S 1998. Report on international scientific advisory processes on the environment and sustainable development. CSD 6th Session. Background Paper 21 (<http://www.un.org/documents/ecosoc/cn17/1998/background/ecn171998-bp21.htm>)



avoid this and ensure the improved and continuing inclusiveness of the new GESAMP include:

- Phasing out GESAMP's longest-serving members, which commenced at its 32nd session in May 2002;
- Enforcing a maximum term of membership of 4 years, except for an additional term of 2 years if members are elected as Chair or Vice-Chair at the end of their term;
- Soliciting nominations to GESAMP's pool of experts from governments, intergovernmental bodies including regional organizations, international scientific unions, and NGOs, thereby ensuring a broad and representative base of available expertise;
- Managing the expert pool as a database, so that members of GESAMP and its working groups can be selected on the basis of transparent criteria including field of expertise and geographic and gender balance; and
- Providing opportunities for pool experts who are not current members of GESAMP to participate, for

example by peer-reviewing reports and calling issues to GESAMP's attention. This will build capacity to contribute not only to GESAMP but to scientific advisory processes in general.

2.3.2 Relevance: Engaging the Users

To effectively support the protection and sustainable use of the marine environment, GESAMP's advice must be salient, i.e. relevant to its intended users in both content and delivery. GESAMP's strategy to ensure the relevance of its outputs is to explicitly consider the needs of users and involve them in designing and developing GESAMP's products, as follows:

- Key user groups for project outputs will be clearly identified when work is initiated;
- Members of those groups will be involved in project design, including the development of terms of reference for GESAMP working groups;
- Members of major user groups will

participate in GESAMP and its working groups;

- *GESAMP Reports and Studies* will be peer-reviewed by members of key user groups;
- GESAMP products will be designed to meet the needs of users in content, language, format, and mode of delivery, while remaining accessible to a broad audience; and
- GESAMP's outputs will be effectively publicised and presented in appropriate fora.

2.3.2.1 Interaction with Governments

Because its advice is generally intended to inform policy formulation, GESAMP's relevance to governments is particularly important. To improve the policy relevance of its advice, GESAMP's expertise in socio-economic aspects of marine environmental protection, including the economic valuation of ecosystems, will be broadened and strengthened. GESAMP will also improve its interactions with governments through mechanisms including:

- Encouraging governments and other organizations to nominate experts to the GESAMP Pool of Experts, as noted in section 2.3.1 above;
- Proactively seeking partnerships and interactions with governments and other relevant organizations and activities;
- Establishing a central GESAMP Office as the focal point for such interactions;
- Encouraging governments and other organizations to propose work for GESAMP; and



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- Direct reporting to the United Nations Open-Ended Informal Consultative Process (ICP), CSD, the UN Secretary-General, and the governing bodies of the sponsoring organizations.

GESAMP has little comparative advantage in policy analysis and formulation *per se* and will not attempt to develop policy recommendations independently. When GESAMP does participate in policy processes it will adopt the multi-tiered approach described in section 2.5, in which scientific review and analysis and policy review are conducted at different stages of the process.

2.3.2.2 Interaction with Regional Bodies

GESAMP has heretofore functioned on a primarily global level, but its independent evaluation, various



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international fora, and indeed GESAMP itself¹⁴ have noted the desirability of greater involvement at a regional level. Such involvement, however, should be initiated by regional organizations and institutions. GESAMP's strategy for increased regional involvement is first to raise awareness of GESAMP and its capabilities at the regional level and second to provide mechanisms for cooperation with regional bodies. These include:

- Nomination by regional bodies of experts to the GESAMP pool;
- Accepting proposals for GESAMP projects from regional bodies; and
- Potentially, joint execution of projects with regional bodies.

In addition, an informal network of focal points/liaisons within regional seas organizations and regional scientific bodies will be developed.



2.4 Professionalism

A professional, businesslike approach to planning, management, work methods, and product delivery will ensure GESAMP's continuing efficiency, transparency, accountability, and effectiveness.

2.4.1 Planning and Management

The planning and management of GESAMP's work programme, previously distributed among the sponsoring organizations, will be centralised in the newly created GESAMP Office. The work programme will be managed on the basis of a rolling 2-year work plan, updated annually, that includes agreed budgets, milestones, and deadlines for each activity. Among other advantages, the centralisation of planning, budgeting, and management:

- Achieves cost efficiencies;
- Provides a uniform, professional GESAMP identity;
- Improves the integration of activities;
- Facilitates the selection of GESAMP members and scheduling of sessions around the work programme;
- Fosters transparency and accountability; and
- Allows regular performance auditing against the work plan.

2.4.2 Work Methods

GESAMP must not only deliver reports and other products of high scientific quality, it must produce them

¹⁴GESAMP (IMO/FAO/UNESCO-IOC/WMO/WHO/IAEA/UN/UNEP Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection) 2002. Report of the Thirty-first Session, New York, 13-17 August 2001. Rep. Stud. GESAMP No. 72, 56 pp. (http://gesamp.imo.org/no72/GESAMP_No_72.doc)

in the most efficient and timely manner possible. To accomplish this, GESAMP and its working groups will adopt modern, businesslike work methods including:

- Increased emphasis on intersessional work, in a planned and structured manner;
- Scheduling GESAMP sessions around the requirements of the work plan, rather than at fixed time intervals;
- Performing the regular functions of GESAMP (functions 4 and 5) by very small working groups that work primarily by correspondence and meet only in conjunction with GESAMP sessions;
- Businesslike management of individual projects and working groups on the basis of project briefs that detail terms of reference, work plan and methods, deadlines and milestones, provisions for the peer review, publication, distribution, and marketing of reports, and a realistic budget;
- When appropriate, realistic provisions for compensating experts or their employers to ensure the timely completion of projects;
- A target of 12-18 months for the production of most major studies and reports;
- The detailed review of working group reports at no more than one session of GESAMP, with the review focusing on scientific and technical issues rather than editorial matters; and
- Final approval of GESAMP reports by correspondence as a matter of routine.



2.4.3 Impact of GESAMP Products

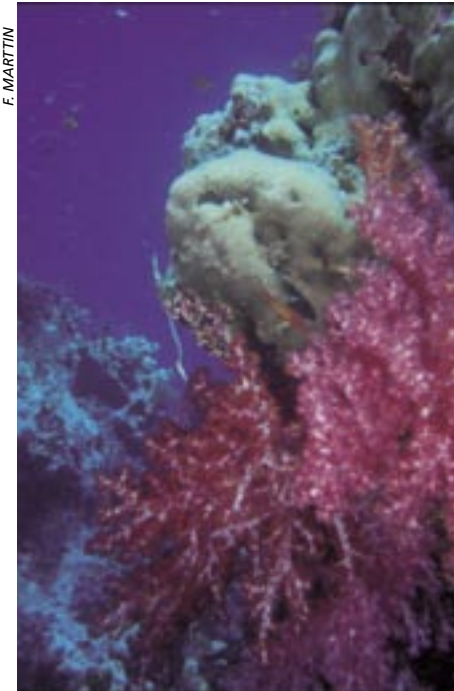
Ultimately the effectiveness of GESAMP depends upon the extent to which its products contribute to planning and policy-making. This requires not only high scientific quality and relevance to users, but also that GESAMP products are visible, user-friendly, and readily available. In addition to engaging governments and other user groups as described in section 2.3, the strategy to ensure the impact of GESAMP products includes:

- Higher publication standards to make GESAMP products attractive and easy to read;
- Greater emphasis on publicity and marketing of GESAMP products;
- An improved GESAMP web site and increased emphasis on electronic product dissemination; and
- An increased role for the GESAMP Chair and Vice-Chair in promoting GESAMP and its products to users.

2.5 GESAMP and Assessment of the Global Marine Environment

GESAMP is the only inter-agency body available to provide advice to the UN system on marine environmental

assessment, and has extensive experience in assessing the state of the global marine environment¹⁵. The independent evaluation concluded that GESAMP's assessments have been its most influential work, and marine environmental assessment remains central to its mission and functions. The strategic approach outlined herein is designed to further enhance GESAMP's existing credibility, salience, and legitimacy, the three key requirements of effective assessment processes.



GESAMP's strategic approach to assessments of the global marine environment is a three-step process of:

- **Design**, including interaction with international bodies, governments, NGOs, and other stakeholders to define the nature, scope, and structure of the assessment;
- **Execution** of the assessment as an essentially scientific exercise independent of political influence;
- Participation in **policy review** through interaction with governments and other bodies to assist in the analysis of the policy implications of GESAMP's advice and the formulation of policy options.

This approach parallels the approach outlined in the report of the Bremen technical workshop on establishing a regular process for global marine assessment (GMA)¹⁶, including the two-tiered reporting format of separate scientific and policy reports described in paragraph 57 of that report. Given its experience in global marine assessment and its inter-agency support, GESAMP is well-placed for a leadership role in the global scientific panel during both the initial Design/Stakeholder Engagement phase and in the synthesis of national and regional assessments into the global scientific assessment¹⁷.

¹⁵GESAMP, 1982. The review of the health of the oceans. *Rep. Stud. GESAMP* No. 15, 108 pp.

GESAMP, 1990. The state of the marine environment. *Rep. Stud. GESAMP* No. 39, 111 pp.

GESAMP, 1994. Guidelines for environmental assessment. *Rep. Stud. GESAMP* No. 54, 28 pp.

GESAMP, 2001. A sea of troubles. *Rep. Stud. GESAMP* P No. 70, 35 pp.

GESAMP, 2001. Protecting the oceans from land-based activities. Land-based sources and activities affecting the quality and uses of the marine, coastal, and associated freshwater environment. *Rep. Stud. GESAMP* No. 71, 162 pp.

¹⁶Proceedings of the Technical Workshop for Establishing a Regular Process for the Global Assessment of the Marine Environment. Bremen (Germany): 18-20 March 2002.

¹⁷*Op cit.*, para. 52 and Annex X.

Global assessments depend almost entirely on information provided by national and regional assessment programmes. GESAMP's experience has been that existing national and regional assessments generally lack sufficient data and comparability for the purpose of a global synthesis. A recent survey of assessment activities relevant to the GMA reached similar conclusions.¹⁸ Thus, improved global assessments of the marine environment require significant improvements in the quality, comparability, and regularity of regional and national assessments. Facilitating such improvements could be a major benefit of the *regular* GMA process called for by the UN General Assembly¹⁹. The most appropriate role for GESAMP in regional assessments and capacity building is a supporting rather than leading one, for example in providing guidance on the design and execution of assessments or undertaking thematic studies to support national or regional assessments. In this support role GESAMP will seek to cooperate with regional bodies and other mechanisms and organizations, such as GIWA, GEO, and the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment.

The role of the Global Coordinating Mechanism²⁰ for the GMA is probably best performed by UN bodies with responsibilities related to the marine environment, through appropriate



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existing interagency cooperation. This role is not suitable for GESAMP, but it would be essential for GESAMP's scientific role to be closely linked to the Global Coordinating Mechanism. The GESAMP Office would provide a useful mechanism both to support GESAMP's scientific role in the GMA and for linking the broader science components of the GMA with the Global Coordinating Mechanism.

¹⁸UNEP-WCMC/UNESCO-IOC, 2003. A survey of global and regional marine environmental assessments and related scientific activities.

¹⁹UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/57/141, para. 45.

²⁰*Op cit.*, Annex IX.