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Agenda items 141 and 76 (a)

Proposed programme budget for 2021

Oceans and the law of the sea: oceans and the law of the sea

Oceans and the law of the sea

Programme budget implications of draft resolution [A/75/L.39](#)

Statement submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly

I. Requests contained in the draft resolution

1. Under the terms of operative paragraphs 258, 311, 312, 322 and 324 of draft resolution [A/75/L.39](#), the General Assembly would:

(a) Request the Secretary-General to convene the fourth session of the intergovernmental conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction from 16 to 27 August 2021;

(b) Recall its decision to launch the third cycle of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects, from 2021 to 2025, and endorse the recommendations adopted by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on the Regular Process at its thirteenth meeting on the programme of work and the resource requirements for the third cycle of the Regular Process;

(c) Recall that the Regular Process shall be overseen and guided by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole, and decide that the Ad Hoc Working Group shall facilitate the delivery of the outputs of the third cycle as outlined in the programme of work for the third cycle of the Regular Process;

(d) Request the Secretary-General to secure the necessary resources, from the regular budget of the Organization, for the programme of work for the third cycle of the Regular Process, as adopted by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole, in accordance with established procedures and within the respective purview of relevant bodies;



(e) Request the Secretary-General to convene, in 2021, up to two meetings of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole of no more than two days total duration for each meeting, one in the first half of 2021 and another in the second half of 2021.

II. Relationship of the proposed requests to the proposed programme budget for 2021

2. The requested activities referred to in the draft resolution relate to programme 1, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management, and programme 6, Legal affairs, of the proposed programme plan for 2021, and to section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management, section 8, Legal affairs, and section 36, Staff assessment, of the proposed programme budget for 2021 ([A/75/6 \(Sect. 2\)](#), [A/75/6 \(Sect. 8\)](#) and [A/75/6 \(Sect. 36\)](#), respectively).

III. Activities by which the proposed requests would be implemented

3. In its resolution [74/19](#), the General Assembly decided to launch the third cycle of the Regular Process, to cover five years, from 2021 to 2025, requested the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole, with the assistance of the Group of Experts and the secretariat of the Regular Process, to develop a draft programme of work for the third cycle, and requested the Secretary-General to prepare the resource requirements for the third cycle on the basis of the draft programme of work, to be developed by the Bureau, and to report to Member States in advance of the thirteenth meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group. The Assembly also requested the Bureau to consider the lessons learned from the second cycle of the Regular Process, including with regard to the duration of the cycle and its outputs, in line with the modalities set forth in paragraph 282 of its resolution [70/235](#) and on the basis of input received from Member States and other participants in the Ad Hoc Working Group and the Group of Experts, as well as from the secretariat. The Assembly further requested the Bureau to inform the Ad Hoc Working Group of the views received and to circulate that information in advance of the thirteenth meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group.

4. As outlined in the programme of work for the period 2021–2025 for the third cycle of the Regular Process ([A/75/362](#), annex), the priority activities undertaken are to be organized under three outputs, namely, output I, assessments of the state of the marine environment, including socioeconomic aspects, output II, Regular Process support for and interaction with other ocean-related intergovernmental processes, and output III, capacity-building.

5. In relation to output I, the Group of Experts will oversee the preparation of assessments of the state of the marine environment, including socioeconomic aspects, with the final goal of strengthening decision-making at all levels. The assessments to be carried out during the third cycle may focus on specific topics in evaluating trends, if the Group of Experts and the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole so decide.

6. In relation to output II, on the basis of the second world ocean assessment, key activities will be identified to support and enhance interaction with other ongoing ocean-related intergovernmental processes, as appropriate. Outputs will be specifically tailored to the requests and needs of those processes. The third cycle of the Regular Process will also consider discussions held in other United Nations processes and relevant assessments prepared under other intergovernmental processes.

7. In relation to output III, the aims of the programme would be to develop the capacities of States in strengthening the ocean science-policy interface at the national, regional and global levels, foster partnerships, cultivate ocean literacy, discuss and develop best practices and share lessons learned, with a view to enabling continuous and collective learning beyond the third cycle. Another aim is to promote the adoption of an integrated approach to supporting efforts for implementing Sustainable Development Goal 14, as well as other ocean-related Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is also in line with and supports the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. The capacity-building programme will be overseen by the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs of the Secretariat, in its capacity as the secretariat of the Regular Process, and implemented in cooperation with the International Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, other United Nations entities, members of UN-Oceans and other partners, as appropriate.

8. In order to effectively implement the mandates set out in draft resolution [A/75/L.39](#) and deliver the outputs described above, the Secretariat will be required to perform, among other things, the functions set out below, as specified in the programme of work for the period 2021–2025 for the third cycle of the Regular Process.

Output I

9. The following activities will be undertaken:

- (a) The enhancement of working methods and the communications and collaborative document management systems necessary;
- (b) The strengthening of the mechanism to establish the Pool of Experts for the third cycle, including the process of nominating and appointing experts;
- (c) The establishment of the Pool of Experts, including through confirmation of the interest of individuals who served during the second cycle and the nomination and appointment of additional experts;
- (d) The evaluation, enhancement and maintenance of the database of members of the Pool of Experts;
- (e) The evaluation, enhancement and maintenance of the database of recent and ongoing global and regional assessments;
- (f) The scoping exercise for the assessments;
- (g) The development of annotated outlines;
- (h) The constitution of writing teams and development of guidelines;
- (i) The planning and organization of regional workshops to support the scoping exercise, the preparation of the preliminary annotated outlines, the collection of information and the preparation of assessments;
- (j) The holding of in-person and web-based meetings of the writing teams;
- (k) Obtaining subscriptions to scientific publications and databases, as identified by the Group of Experts;
- (l) The preparation of draft assessments, including an editing and review process, for the purpose of, among other things, securing the copyright and ensuring conformity with United Nations standards, including in respect of determining the need for and/or responding to requests for disclaimers;

- (m) The establishment of the modalities of the review process of the assessments, which will be a multi-stage review process consisting of a peer review, a review by competent intergovernmental organizations and a review by States;
- (n) The conduct of the review process;
- (o) A review of comments received by the Group of Experts and a final review by States and their approval;
- (p) The finalization of assessments for digital and print publication, including editing, translation and dissemination.

Output II

10. The following activities will be undertaken:

- (a) The enhancement of working methods and the communications and collaborative document management systems necessary;
- (b) The preparation of the outlines of the brief documents outlining specific policy-relevant information from the second world ocean assessment as they may relate to and support other ocean-related intergovernmental processes;
- (c) The review and approval of the outlines;
- (d) The preparation of the brief documents, including an editing and review process, for the purpose of, among other things, securing the copyright and ensuring conformity with United Nations standards, including in respect of determining the need for and/or responding to requests for disclaimers;
- (e) The consideration and finalization of the brief documents;
- (f) The translation, digital and print publication and dissemination of the brief documents;
- (g) The preparation and holding of briefings or presentations to be held in the margins of events of other ocean-related intergovernmental processes;
- (h) The preparation of outreach and awareness-raising material on the Regular Process to be shared with stakeholders of other ocean-related intergovernmental processes;
- (i) The participation by members of the Group of Experts, the Bureau or the secretariat of the Regular Process, in their capacity as members of the Group, in meetings and proceedings of other ocean-related intergovernmental processes;
- (j) The establishment of mechanisms to strengthen and maintain on a regular basis coordination and cooperation with the secretariats of other ocean-related intergovernmental processes, including through UN-Oceans;
- (k) The identification and implementation of other activities to support and interact with other ocean-related intergovernmental processes.

Output III

11. The following activities will be undertaken:

- (a) The planning and organization of regional workshops on capacity-building and the preparation of summaries of discussions;
- (b) The dissemination of information collected through the regional workshops, including the summaries of discussions, presentations and other resource materials;

(c) The planning and organization of an international symposium and the preparation of a summary, including highlights of the discussions;

(d) The dissemination of information collected through the international symposium;

(e) The establishment of working methods and an online collaboration platform to facilitate continuous exchange of information and knowledge among the multiple stakeholders of the community of practice and of the Regular Process, as well as to promote ocean literacy;

(f) The planning and implementation of public engagement activities on capacity-building;

(g) The implementation of other ongoing capacity-building activities to support the Regular Process, including the compilation and maintenance of a capacity-building inventory, fundraising for the Regular Process special scholarship fund and the implementation of the special scholarship;

(h) The continuous evaluation of the implementation of the capacity-building programme and other capacity-building activities.

12. In addition, conference services would be required for the relevant activities in the third cycle of the Regular Process.

IV. Financial implications of the proposals

A. Conference-servicing requirements

13. The total estimated costs for 2021 would amount to \$698,800 under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management, and section 36, Staff assessment, to support the following activities:

(a) Pursuant to the request contained in operative paragraph 258 of the draft resolution, it is envisaged that the two-week fourth session of the intergovernmental conference will be held from 16 to 27 August 2021, consisting of 20 meetings in 10 days, with interpretation in all six official languages, constituting an addition to the meetings workload of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management. With regard to the request for documentation services, this would constitute an addition to the documentation workload of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management of 10 pre-session documents (a total of 72,200 words), five in-session documents (a total of 32,200 words) and four post-session documents (a total of 31,000 words) in 2021, to be issued in all six official languages;

(b) Pursuant to the requests contained in operative paragraphs 311, 312, 322 and 324 of the draft resolution, the request for meetings services for the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole would be provided on an “if available” basis. With regard to the request for documentation services, this would constitute an addition to the documentation workload of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management of two post-session documents (a total of 10,700 words) in 2021, six publications (a total of 30,000 words) and one post-session document (5,350 words) in 2022, two post-session documents (a total of 10,700 words) in 2023, two post-session documents (a total of 10,700 words) in 2024 and one publication (264,000 words) and one post-session document (5,350 words) in 2025, to be issued in all six official languages.

14. Details of the additional meetings and documentation resource requirements are provided in table 1. The total conference-servicing requirements to support the third cycle from 2022 to 2025 are estimated at \$1,023,200.

Table 1
Additional conference-servicing requirements

(United States dollars)

| | 2021 requirements | 2022 requirements | 2023 requirements | 2024 requirements | 2025 requirements | Total requirements, 2021–2025 |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management | | | | | | |
| Interpretation | 156 000 | – | – | – | – | 156 000 |
| Pre-session documentation | 231 100 | – | – | – | – | 231 100 |
| In-session documentation | 103 300 | – | – | – | – | 103 300 |
| Post-session documentation | 133 500 | 17 300 | 34 600 | 34 600 | 17 300 | 237 300 |
| Publications | – | 97 200 | – | – | 822 200 | 919 400 |
| Subtotal | 623 900 | 114 500 | 34 600 | 34 600 | 839 500 | 1 647 100 |
| Section 36, Staff assessment | | | | | | |
| Staff assessment | 74 900 | 13 700 | 4 200 | 4 200 | 100 700 | 197 700 |
| Subtotal | 74 900 | 13 700 | 4 200 | 4 200 | 100 700 | 197 700 |
| Total | 698 800 | 128 200 | 38 800 | 38 800 | 940 200 | 1 844 800 |

B. Non-conference-servicing requirements

15. It is estimated that a total amount of \$629,200 would be required under section 8, Legal affairs (\$584,200), and section 36, Staff assessment (\$45,000), of the proposed programme budget for 2021 to cover the costs of three temporary posts (1 Programme Management Officer (P-3), 1 Associate Programme Management Officer (P-2) and 1 Programme Management Assistant (General Service (Other level)) and their associated costs. The required P-3 and General Service (Other level) posts are extensions of the temporary posts from 2020, which were approved to support the second cycle, while the establishment of a new temporary post at the P-2 level is in line with the recommendations made by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole, as endorsed by the General Assembly in operative paragraph 311 of the draft resolution. In view of the considerations from the lessons learned of the second cycle, in which the need to provide additional human resources to the third cycle was stressed, and considering the substantial increase in activities for the third cycle, such as the development and implementation of the capacity-building programme, as well as the development and implementation of the outreach and engagement strategy, which cannot be absorbed by the P-3 post, this additional temporary post is required to enable the subprogramme to effectively discharge its function as the secretariat of the Regular Process, as mandated by Member States. The temporary posts would support the Regular Process, including its established institutions. Non-post resources relating to travel of experts, travel of staff, services of individual contractors to provide technical and substantial support for the editing and preparation of documents for publication, contractual services for database and website maintenance, services for meeting support and desktop software licences for experts and writing teams would be required in 2021.

16. Details of the additional non-conference-servicing requirements are provided in table 2. The total non-conference-servicing requirements to support the third cycle from 2022 to 2025 are estimated at \$4,405,200.

Table 2
Additional non-conference-servicing requirements

(United States dollars)

| | 2021 requirements | 2022 requirements | 2023 requirements | 2024 requirements | 2025 requirements | Total requirements, 2021–2025 |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Section 8, Legal affairs | | | | | | |
| Posts (3 temporary posts (1 P-3, 1 P-2 and 1 GS (OL))) | 319 900 | 375 300 | 375 300 | 375 300 | 375 300 | 1 821 100 |
| Hospitality (meetings and events) | 400 | 400 | 400 | 400 | 400 | 2 000 |
| Travel of experts | 139 000 | 720 600 | 1 082 200 | 218 600 | 74 300 | 2 234 700 |
| Travel of staff (to regional workshops and intergovernmental meetings) | 18 000 | 92 700 | 91 900 | 18 000 | 18 000 | 238 600 |
| Contractual services (data processing services and operational support) | 60 600 | 36 800 | 20 800 | 52 800 | 40 800 | 211 800 |
| General operating expenses (communication and audiovisual services) | 4 700 | 3 400 | 6 300 | 4 400 | 3 400 | 22 200 |
| Supplies and materials (stationery) | 600 | 600 | 600 | 600 | 600 | 3 000 |
| Furniture and equipment (office furniture and equipment, Microsoft Office and survey software) | 20 400 | 8 400 | 65 000 | 65 000 | 75 000 | 233 800 |
| Alteration of premises (office space renovation) | 20 600 | – | – | – | – | 20 600 |
| Subtotal | 584 200 | 1 238 200 | 1 642 500 | 735 100 | 587 800 | 4 787 800 |
| Section 36, Staff assessment | | | | | | |
| Staff assessment | 45 000 | 50 400 | 50 400 | 50 400 | 50 400 | 246 600 |
| Subtotal | 45 000 | 50 400 | 50 400 | 50 400 | 50 400 | 246 600 |
| Total | 629 200 | 1 288 600 | 1 692 900 | 785 500 | 638 200 | 5 034 400 |

Abbreviation: GS (OL), General Service (Other level).

V. Summary of resource implications

17. A summary of the additional resource requirements for 2021 is provided in table 3.

Table 3
Summary of additional resource requirements

(United States dollars)

| | 2021 requirements | 2022 requirements | 2023 requirements | 2024 requirements | 2025 requirements | Total requirements, 2021–2025 |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management | 623 900 | 114 500 | 34 600 | 34 600 | 839 500 | 1 647 100 |
| Section 8, Legal affairs | 584 200 | 1 238 200 | 1 642 500 | 735 100 | 587 800 | 4 787 800 |
| Section 36, Staff assessment | 119 900 | 64 100 | 54 600 | 54 600 | 151 100 | 444 300 |
| Total | 1 328 000 | 1 416 800 | 1 731 700 | 824 300 | 1 578 400 | 6 879 200 |

18. The resource requirements estimated for the period 2022–2025 would be included in the budget proposals for the respective years.

VI. Potential for absorption

19. No provisions have been made in the proposed programme budget for 2021 for the implementation of the activities requested in the draft resolution. At this stage, it is not possible to identify activities within the relevant sections of the proposed programme budget for 2021 that could be terminated, deferred, curtailed or modified during 2021. It is therefore necessary that the additional resources in the amount of \$1,328,000 be provided through an additional appropriation for 2021.

VII. Contingency fund

20. In its resolution [72/266 A](#), the General Assembly approved the proposal of the Secretary-General to continue to apply, in the context of the annual budget, the provisions governing the contingency fund established in its resolutions [41/213](#) and [42/211](#).

VIII. Conclusion and action required of the General Assembly

21. Should the General Assembly adopt draft resolution [A/75/L.39](#), additional resource requirements in the amount of \$1,208,100 for 2021 would arise under the proposed programme budget for 2021, comprising \$623,900 under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management, and \$584,200 under section 8, Legal affairs. The amount of \$1,208,100 would require an additional appropriation for 2021 to be approved by the Assembly and, as such, would represent a charge against the contingency fund.

22. The General Assembly is also requested to approve the establishment of one new temporary post (P-2) in 2021 and to approve the extension of two temporary posts (1 P-3 and 1 General Service (Other level)) from 2020 under section 8, Legal affairs.

23. Furthermore, an amount of \$119,900 would also be required under section 36, Staff assessment, of the proposed programme budget for 2021, to be offset by an equivalent amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment.