



**UNITED NATIONS OPEN-ENDED INFORMAL CONSULTATIVE  
PROCESS ON OCEANS AND THE LAW OF THE SEA**

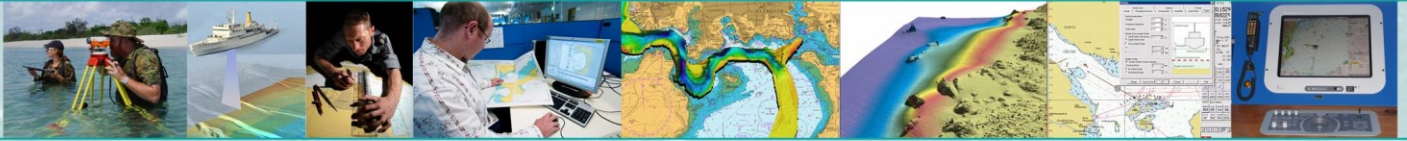
**Twenty-Second meeting UN Headquarters, New York, USA, 6 – 10 June**

<b>Contribution to the IHO Work Programme 2022</b>	
Task 11.12.2	Maintain relationship with United Nations (UN) organizations based in New York, including the UN Division on Ocean Affairs and Law of the Sea (UN-DOALOS)

1999, the UN General Assembly decided to establish the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (the Consultative Process) in order to facilitate the annual review by the General Assembly, in an effective and constructive manner, of developments in ocean affairs and the law of the sea by considering the report of the Secretary-General on oceans and the law of the sea and by suggesting particular issues to be considered by it, with an emphasis on identifying areas where coordination and cooperation at the intergovernmental and inter-agency levels should be enhanced (resolution 54/33).

The Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS) of the Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) has been providing an ongoing programme of assistance to States and intergovernmental organizations in the field of oceans and the law of the sea since the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in 1982. DOALOS is the designated body to conduct the annual meetings of the Informal Consultative Process. This year’s meeting focused its discussions on the theme "Ocean observing". The event was deliberately placed next to World Ocean Day and offered the opportunity to be part of the celebrations at the UN building.

Around 30 UN Member States, the EU and a dozen of IGOs and NGOs contributed to the deliberations. The IHO was represented by Secretary-General Dr Mathias Jonas. He contributed as panelist to Segment 2 “International cooperation and coordination in advancing ocean observing and addressing related challenges”. By means of his presentation titled “Mapping the Ocean to deliver base line information for all specific observations & interoperable ocean data in support of the digital twin” he stressed that the shape of the seabed influences a variety of ocean processes: the movement of pollutants, ocean circulation and climate, and provides habitats for marine species. Yet we still know very little about the ocean floor. The first part of his presentation focused on actions how the global situation can be improved and why UNCLOS is affected. In the second part he presented a way forward towards the digital twin of the ocean through IHO’s S-100 standardization framework for customized data products addressing a wide range of marine geospatial data across domains.



The panel discussions were dominated by the presentation of global oceanographic observing systems like GOOS, operated under the auspices of IOC-UNESCO, and the ARGO program.

The practical operational issues of both programs, in view of the UNCLOS legal framework

**What is a Blue Economy?**

The blue economy encompasses all economic benefits of the ocean, including ocean resources, industry sectors that depend on or exist on the ocean, livelihoods, ecosystem services like carbon sequestration and coastal protection, biodiversity, and cultural values.

Source: World Bank Group and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

UNITED NATIONS WORLD OCEANS DAY 2022

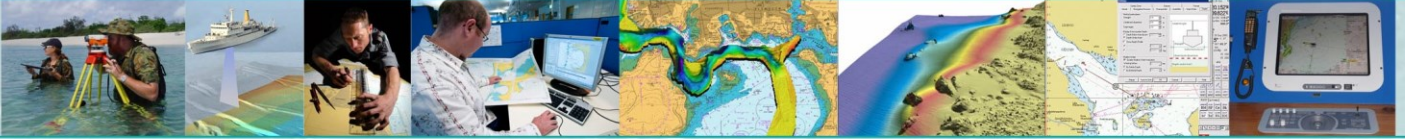
for Marine Scientific Research and its application in the EEZ, was of particular relevance for similar issues of IHO's Crowd Source Bathymetry program. GOOS operators criticized the UNCLOS MSR process being incompatible with the operational reality of sustained ocean observing because of:

- No consistency in the practice among coastal states for MSR clearance
- National MSR procedures often not sufficiently flexible to adapt to changes in operations
- MSR procedure is non-trivial and time consuming
- Sometimes disproportionate demands that are costly and/or impossible to comply to
- It is not unusual to receive consent for MSR at a very late stage.

This triggered intense discussions about the future evolvement of the

applying UNCLOS regulations, hence numerous Coastal States insisted on their granted sovereignty rights being in control of all MSR activities in their respective areas of jurisdiction. The management of ARGO floats intruding into EEZs was highlighted as practical solution based on individual consent between the ARGO operators and the affected Coastal State.

The meeting delivered valuable insight about the current situation in ocean observation which is funded 40% through project money. This unsustainable arrangement was identified as one of the main obstacles to evolve to a more integrated observation environment as



required to meet the aspirations articulated under the goals of the UN Decade for Ocean Science. Further shortcomings presented were:

Observing Systems are only partially adequate

- Gaps in coverage
- Some processes insufficiently observed

Most observations cannot be used to their full extent

- Many observations not FAIR
- Many observations not fit for multipurpose use

Duplication of efforts

- Non-optimal use of resource

Another important item to note was the presentation of Mercator Ocean International - A Global Ocean Prediction Centre, sponsored by six European Countries, namely Italy, Spain, Portugal, France, Norway and UK. This organization is underway to become an IGO and has created a clear strategy to develop the prediction of ocean processes based on all satellite and in-situ observation capabilities to the next level. Three domains which are of relevance for the ocean decade and consequently for IHO were identified: Blue Ocean (physics), White Ocean (sea ice) and Green Ocean (Biogeochemistry).

The yearly theme of the Informal Consultative Process is to be set every December by means of an UN General Assembly Resolution for the forthcoming year. The Secretariat will decide on future participation according to the relevance of the particular theme.