

International Council for the
Exploration of the Sea

C.M. 1976/E: 30
Fisheries Improvement Committee

"Report on GESAMP-VIII, 21-27 April 1976"

by

Grim Berge

The meeting was held at FAO head-quarter under the chairmanship of Dr. Gunnar Kullenberg. Dr. G. Tomczak, FAO, acted as rapporteur. The Agenda is annexed to this report. An approved report was prepared at the session and will be printed by FAO. It can be obtained free of charge from any of the sponsoring agencies and is available in any of the four working languages of the UN.

In the intersessional period six Working Groups have been in action, and under agenda items 2 - 7 their respective reports were considered by GESAMP.

Agenda item 2. Evaluation of the Hazards of Harmful Substances in the Marine Environment.

Reports from the two intersessional meetings of the WG on the Evaluation of Hazards of Harmful Substances in the Marine Environment were presented by its Chairman Dr. P.G. Jeffery. Hazard evaluation of more than another 230 substances had been made in accordance with the rationale developed at GESAMP IV. Concern was expressed by the WG that insufficient data were available for this task; as underlined at the GESAMP VII lethal toxicity data were highly needed. A report from IMCO informed on the action taken to stimulate membercountries in supplying information on this matter. Its action had so far had limited

effect, but it was expected, however, that some further information was forthcoming. Criticism was received on the way human health aspects were dealt with. The WG Chairman confirmed that the assessments had been made according to the methodology previously adapted by GESAMP IV and the Group agreed that this would be appropriate for the particular purposes of ship transport regulations, underlining that this methodology should not be used for the control of other sources of pollution.

Agenda item 3. Review of Harmful Substances.

No particular action had been taken on updating the Review of Harmful Substances as the paper has not yet been published. The UN Technical Secretary informed that the manuscript now was with the printer. The expected detailed comments from WHO were tabled at the meeting and were duly considered. It was agreed, in support of the decision taken at GESAMP VII, that in updating the Review greater emphasis should be put on the human health aspects, but the importance of continuously consideration of other aspects was also highly recognized. The task will be handled by a separate Working Group where Dr. B. Ketchum was elected Chairman, and the lead agency will be UN in association with WHO. Guidelines for its mode of action and terms of reference were prepared.

Agenda item 4. Impact of Oil on the Marine Environment.

The WG on the Impact of Oil on the Marine Environment by its Chairman Dr. H. Thompson presented its final report. It consisted of three parts: (I), a summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations, (II), a comprehensive literature review and (III), a bibliography. The Group appreciated the extensive work carried out by the Working Group and in particular the comprehensive literature review and the bibliography. Concern was however expressed about part I because of some inconsistencies and emphasis given. An ad hoc group was established to consider the remarks and requested changes brought forward under the discussion, and a completely revised and largely rewritten summary report was produced. This was accepted by GESAMP with only minor further amendments, and it was decided to publish this new version together with part II and III as No. 6 of GESAMP Reports and Studies. The document has

cleared up a number of contraversial points, and pass recommendations to the need for further investigations. The summary report is well supported by the detailed litterature review report and the extensive bibliography, and is of great value both to decision makers as well as scientists.

Agenda item 5. Interchange of Pollutants between the Atmosphere and Oceans.

Responding to a proposition by GESAMP VII, an ad hoc group of WMO experts combined with the session of the WMO/IOC Task Team on Methodology of Monitoring Pollutants, considered the scope of studies and proposed terms of reference for a possible GESAMP Working Group on this matter. Dr. L. Machta chaired the ad hoc group, but in his absense Dr. W. D. Carrett presented the outcome of the elaborations to GESAMP. The proposals went some way beyond problems of obvious relevance to marine pollution, but the meteorological experts argued strongly for retention of items concerned with the exchange of other constituents and properties which might affect the atmospheric processes.

Dr. R. Chesselet informed the session on the outcome of an International Workshop on the Tropospheric Transport of Pollutants to the Ocean held in Miami, where it was recommended that strong international action should be taken on this aspect.

GESAMP agreed to establish the new working group with the full terms of reference as proposed by the ad hoc group, but decided that it should work in stages, giving first priority to pollutants of significant quantities and the mechanism of their exchange. These would include many of the pollutants of interest to the ICES studies. Consideration will also be given to degradation processes in the atmosphere. Dr. L. Machta was elected Chairman of the group, pending his acceptance.

Agenda item 6. Principles for Developing Coastal Water Quality Criteria

The WG on the Development on Coastal Water Quality Criteria presented its final report by the Chairman Dr. M. Waldichuk. The report sets out some 21 guiding principles according to goal,

methodology and implementation of quality criteria. The WG noted that it had not been able to fulfil the task of formulating criteria, but the using DDT as an example the WG described how this could be done.

The report was well received. Some remarks and suggested changes from the Group were taken care of by an ad hoc group working group to prepare amendments and suggestions for rewording of some paragraphs. The amendments were duly discussed and finally adopted and the Group decided to publish the amended version as No. 5 of the GESAMP Reports and Studies.

Agenda item 7. Scientific Aspects of Pollution arising from the Exploration and Exploitation of the Sea-bed.

The Chairman of the WG on this matter, Dr.H.Cole, introduced the final report resulting from a two year's period of efforts. The report was comprehensive, and covered a wide range of subjects. Some of them went beyond the scientific aspects and the Group decided to include most of them and amended the title of the report to "Aspects of Pollution Arizing from "Exploration and Exploitation of the Sea-bed". One of the subjects the Group decided to omit was the chapter on "coastal area development". It was agreed that this matter had wideranging implementations and deserved its separate Working Group. At the end such a Working Group was set up, and Dr.H. Cole was elected Chairman for the next intersessiona¹ period.

The Group, decided to retain some of the general conclusions regarding consequences of coastal area development in the above report. A section on "incineration of waste at sea" was also considered to be outside the WG's terms of reference and was consequently taken out of the report. With some minor further amendments and an inclusion of a broader coverage of the section on estuaries, the amended report was approved for printing in the GESAMP Reports and Studies. The report will obviously become an important source of information on a rapidly developing industry and particularly on its impact on other uses of the sea and its resources. The Working Group was commended for the excellent work on a comprehensive subject.

Agenda item 8. The next meeting of GESAMP will be held in March 1977 in New York, where U.N. will act as host agency.

Agenda item 9. (1) GESAMP Definition of Marine Pollution.

At the request of United Nations Law of the Sea Conference the Group considered a proposal of three changes in the GESAMP definition. There was general agreement that the existing definition had served GESAMP's purpose so far and consequently the Group decided to make no changes. It was obvious that one of the suggested changes would cause substantial scientific difficulty.

(2) Removal of Harmful Substances from Waste Water.

Discussion on this point centered around a WHO working paper, the main point being to establish the efficiency of different treatment plants in removing certain dangerous materials. It was argued that such information already was available and that in any case economy and technology would strongly be involved and be beyond the scope of GESAMP. The Group supported a proposal of a review of the scientific aspects involved, on condition that specific terms of reference were produced and submitted to GESAMP. The matter was referred back to WHO, which in cooperation with FAO may wish to start some preliminary work.

(3) Effects of Thermal Discharges on the Environment.

This subject was introduced by the FAO Technical Secretary who had prepared a short working paper. The problem was put as a need to understand the effect of heated sea water discharges on the marine environment and especially how to decide on the siting of such discharges. The Group was aware that the recently established UNESCO Working Group under its International Hydrological Programme would deal with similar problems of discharges both to lakes, rivers estuaries and seas. However, it was felt that GESAMP's expertise would contribute especially to problems and benefits of discharges to the coastal waters and the sea, and that overlapping only would possibly occur for estuaries. It was therefore decided to establish a GESAMP Working Group on Effects of Thermal Effluents to the

Marine Environment, with Mr. Grim Berge as Chairman for the next intersessional period. The terms of reference were agreed and include a review of effects and guidelines for siting of discharges.

The Chairman was asked to establish contact with the IHP Working Group for coordinating purposes.

(4) London Dumping Convention.

After a brief introduction of this subject by the Administrative Secretary of GESAMP, Director Dr. Y. Sasamura, it was decided merely to record that GESAMP would be willing to provide any marine scientific advice requested by the London Dumping Convention signatories.

(5) Monitoring Biological Parameters of Marine Pollution

The Technical Secretary of UNESCO announced his organization's interest in having GESAMP to address itself again to the problem of monitoring biological response to marine pollution. UNESCO would in the intersessional period prepare a document with a proposal of establishing a Working Group at the ninth session of GESAMP. Reference was made to the ICES efforts in this field, and this new action would probably call for some coordination of possible future efforts to avoid repetition.

Agenda item 10. Dr. Gunnar Kullenberg was re-elected Chairman for the intersessional period and GESAMP IX with Dr. H. Thompson re-elected Vice-Chairman.

The finished session of GESAMP was as usually very busy. Due to the many working groups in intersessional operation much of the time was devoted to plenary session considering their respective reports. Over the last three years this seems to be the new mode of operation which is preferable in the sense of effectiveness. Its success is, however, dependant upon an early distribution of the reports to allow for careful preparation by each member for sensible comments, and that the members have the time and the willingness to do so.

These prerequisites were partly fulfilled and altogether the meeting must be characterized as successful.

GESAMP VIII/1
14 January 1976

ENGLISH ONLY

IMCO/FAO/UNESCO/WMO/WHO/IAEA/UN
JOINT GROUP OF EXPERTS ON THE
SCIENTIFIC ASPECTS OF MARINE POLLUTION
8th session

PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE EIGHTH SESSION OF THE
IMCO/FAO/UNESCO/WMO/WHO/IAEA/UN JOINT GROUP OF EXPERTS
ON THE SCIENTIFIC ASPECTS OF MARINE POLLUTION (GESAMP)

to be held at FAO Headquarters, Rome,
from Wednesday 21 April at 10.00 a.m.
to Tuesday 27 April 1976

Opening of the meeting

1. Adoption of the Agenda
 2. Evaluation of the hazards of harmful substances in the marine environment
 3. Updating of the Review of Harmful Substances
 4. Impact of oil in the marine environment
 5. Interchange of pollutants between the atmosphere and the oceans
 6. Principles for developing coastal water quality criteria
 7. Scientific aspects of pollution arising from the exploration and exploitation of the sea-bed
 8. Date and place of next session
 9. Other matters
 10. Election of Chairman and Vice-chairman for the next intersessional period and for the ninth session
 11. Consideration and approval of the Report of the session
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