



## United Nations Report on the Oceans and the Law of the Sea

### *Input from the Directorate for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food*

The Fisheries Division of the Directorate for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has undertaken a number of activities that are relevant for the UN process with regard to the "Oceans and the law of the Sea". The following highlights work that were undertaken in the 2000-2002 Program of Work of the OECD's Fisheries Committee.

#### *i) Protecting vulnerable marine eco-systems*

The OECD Committee for Fisheries finalised in 2002 a major undertaking on fisheries management costs. The purpose in this study is to analyse how fisheries services and their costs vary between countries, fisheries and management systems and to show how countries endeavour to ensure that fisheries services meet the requirements of fisheries management systems. From an economic perspective, a primary objective of fisheries management is to generate resource rent from the exploitation of available fish resources, subject to sustainability considerations. In analysing how fisheries services contribute to this objective, two fundamental principles are particularly relevant. First, management of fisheries should seek to improve the performance of the sector, both in economic, environmental and social terms. Not only should the benefits of management resulting from the provision of fisheries services outweigh the costs of the fisheries services, but management should also be aimed at generating resource rent in the sector. Second, fisheries services should be delivered as cost effectively as possible.

The Study, which will be published in the first quarter of 2003, contributes significantly to better understand the linkages between on the one hand the fisheries management regimes and the costs that are associated with such regimes.

#### *ii) Assessment of the socio-economic importance of the marine environment*

An important part of the 2000-2002 of the Committees for Fisheries program of work has been the development of economic and social sustainability indicators for fisheries. Measurement of progress towards sustainable development goals has become an increasingly important policy focus in recent years. In the fisheries sector, the use of environmental indicators in the development of fisheries assessments and management plans has been standard practice in most OECD countries for many years. However, relatively little attention has been paid to the development of economic and social indicators that serve to assess progress on other aspects of sustainable development. In the report developed by the Committee for Fisheries, a review is provided of recent developments by OECD countries and international organisations on social and economic indicators, together with a survey of the key conceptual and practical issues involved in their use at the international, national and local level. The survey revealed that many OECD Member countries place a particularly high priority on the need for social and economic indicators and have devoted considerable resources to the development of this stream of information. However, few of these initiatives have reached the stage where economic and social indicators are produced and used on a regular basis.



There is a significant degree of diversity across OECD countries regarding the key policy issues to which current efforts to develop sustainability indicators are being applied. In a number of countries the policy priority is the assessment of regional impacts of fisheries policy changes, particularly with respect to the impact on local and regional communities. Other countries are more focussed on the economic performance of their national fleets and of the various fisheries within their EEZs.

The work on economic and social sustainability indicators for fisheries will be published as a special chapter in the OECD Review of Fisheries which will be published in the first quarter of 2003.

*iii) Effective inter agency co-operation*

There is an on-going effort between the OECD and specialised UN agencies (notably the FAO and UNEP) to ensure that overlapping of work on fisheries is avoided or kept at a very minimum. In 2001 an inter agency group on fisheries subsidies was established with participation from OECD, FAO, WTO, UNEP, SADC and APEC. This group has met also in 2002 and is now seeking to broaden its scope to include fisheries trade issues in general as well. The co-operation among the secretariats has revealed that there is limited risk of duplication of work. Rather, the organisation's work and mandates are mutually supportive although an effort could be invested into seeking opportunities for synergy and complementary work in a more coherent way.

**Input from the Environment Directorate**

OECD Environmental Performance Reviews systematically evaluate individual Member countries' performance regarding a range of marine issues, as part of the standard chapter on international commitments and co-operation. This reflects the importance of the challenges faced by member countries, as was summarised in the 2001 OECD Environmental Outlook. Performance is assessed against commitments made by member countries in a range of international agreements related to: i) the protection of the marine environment from pollution (e.g. MARPOL, London Convention on Dumping); or ii) the management of living marine resources (UN Agreement on Straddling and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, International Convention on the Regulation of Whaling). Recent reviews (e.g. Iceland, Germany, Norway, Portugal, Japan, UK, Italy, Netherlands and Poland) demonstrate that several major marine issues continue to present challenges to OECD member countries, including:

- sustainable management of shared fish stocks (relates to Items 29 and 30 of Johannesburg Plan of Implementation);
- conservation of important and vulnerable marine and coastal areas (relates to Item 31 of POI);
- control of land-based pollutant inputs (relates to Item 32 of POI);
- prevention of and response to oil pollution incidents in national waters;
- responsible scrapping of ships, especially end-of-life oil tankers;
- control of discharges from ships (relates to Item 33 of POI).